



Teaching Notes & Resources

Key Stage 2 / 3

Themes: Animal Adventure | Conservation |
Friendship

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CHARACTER STUDY MARTINE

THE WHITE GIRAFFE

While reading *The White Giraffe series* by Lauren St John, gather information about the main character, Martine. You should add to each category as the story develops, and you learn more about her.



What do you know about Martine?



How would you describe Martine's personality?

What or who does Martine feel strong connections to?

How does Martine change throughout the story?



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

THE WHITE GIRAFFE

Extract taken from Chapter 9: Elegant Ghost of *The White Giraffe* by Lauren St. John.

she opened one eye. A pair of liquid-black eyes framed by impossibly long lashes stared down at her.

'You saved my life,' she said.

The white giraffe drew back with a nervous snort. It stamped the ground, like a horse, and retreated to a safe distance. Martine climbed carefully to her feet. The white giraffe towered over her. The sky had cleared a little. In the dim light of the watery moon, Martine could see that the shy creature was heart-stoppingly, breathtakingly beautiful. Its coat shimmered like sunlit snow, and it was patterned all over with patches of silver tinged with cinnamon.

She reached out a hand, and it wheeled around and made as if to flee before sliding to a halt, snorting and shaking. The wildlife book in her room had explained that although giraffes were gentle giants, they were quite capable of using their long front legs to kick or even kill if they felt threatened. But something told Martine that this particular giraffe would never hurt her.

She took a couple of steps towards it. 'It's all right,' she said soothingly. 'I only want to stroke you, not to harm you.'

This time, the giraffe stood still. When her fingers made contact with its silken coat, it quivered with fear, but didn't move away. Martine felt a tingle of electricity run up her arm – the same tingle she'd felt when Grace had put a hand on her forehead. In that instant, she had the strangest sense that she knew exactly what the animal was thinking.

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Without knowing how she knew, she was quite certain that the giraffe's name was Jeremiah – Jemmy for short. And she understood that Jemmy was lonely. Every bit as lonely as she was.

'I'm alone, too,' Martine told the giraffe. 'Five weeks ago, I lost everyone and everything I loved in a fire in England. Now I live with my grandmother who doesn't want me, and go to a school where I don't fit in.'

The white giraffe watched her warily. He didn't respond. Instead, he sidled restlessly out of range so she could no longer touch him. Perhaps, thought Martine, he was waiting for a sign that he could trust her. And who could blame him? If she wanted to get close to him she was going to have to prove to him that she was a friend. But how?

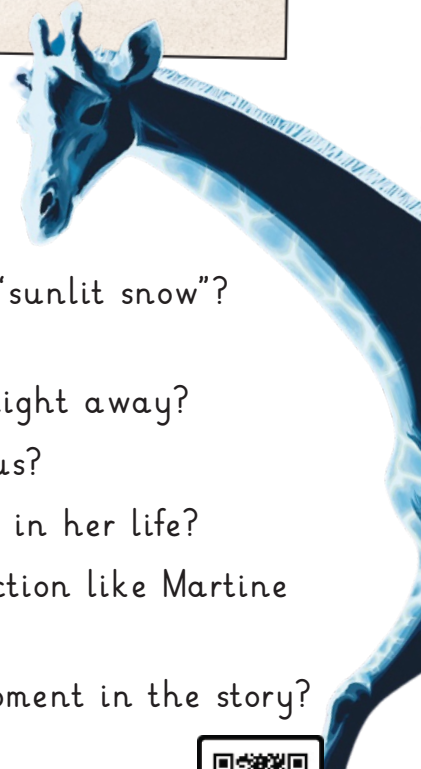
Then it came to her. In England, her mum and dad had had a poster in their bedroom of a dove being released into a sunset. On it was written: *If you love something, set it free. If it comes back to you, it's yours. If it doesn't, it never was.* Martine could remember as if it were yesterday her mum saying with a smile: 'When you're older, you'll realise how true that is, Martine. The more you love something, the more you have to give it space to find its own way in the world. That way you'll know that if it comes back to you, it truly cares for you.'

As miraculous as it was that she'd found the white giraffe, Martine knew that she had to walk away from him. She took a last lingering look at him. Her heart

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How is Jemmy described when Martine first sees him? Which words or phrases make him stand out to you?
- What is Martine's immediate reaction to seeing the giraffe?
- Why do you think the author chose to compare Jemmy's coat to "sunlit snow"? What feeling does that give the reader?
- What clues show that Jemmy and Martine feel a connection straight away?
- Which words and images make Jemmy seem magical or mysterious?
- Why might Martine feel a special bond with Jemmy at this point in her life?
- Do you think wild animals and people can really have a connection like Martine and Jemmy's? Why or why not?
- Why is Martine's first meeting with Jemmy such an important moment in the story?



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LION REPORT

THE WHITE GIRAFFE

After reading *The Lion Cub's Secret* by Lauren St. John, write a report about lions. Use the internet to research. The Born Free Foundation have useful information on their website - www.bornfree.org.uk/animals/lions

AFRICAN LION

Scientific Name:

Habitat:

Diet:

Enemies and Threats:

Other Interesting Facts:

Sketch a lion.

Special Adaptations:
(how their bodies are designed to help them survive)



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