



GCSE

4942/02-A

**ENGLISH LANGUAGE
HIGHER TIER
UNIT 2**

A.M. THURSDAY, 5 June 2014

Resource Material for use with Section A

South Africa's Animal Rescue

At the Shamwari Reserve in South Africa, rescued animals recover from ill-treatment in zoos and circuses, and humans are quite well treated too.

'Get here before sunset.' The warning loomed in my mind as we raced the fading light across the rugged landscape towards Shamwari Reserve.

As we reached the dirt road at the entrance, the sky darkened and a sleek, tawny-and-white animal I'd never seen before skittered across our path. We stopped to let her pass undisturbed, but she stopped and stared at us, her liquid eyes glowing in the dark. This animal, an oryx, makes a life for itself in the harshest conditions – a reminder of why we'd gone there.



Stretching across 61,000 acres of bush, Shamwari is a rare mixture of luxury game park and animal sanctuary. Here you can spot wildlife or do volunteer work at the Born Free Foundation, where lions and leopards that have been mistreated in captivity are resettled. On the edge of the reserve, Born Free offers volunteers a chance to help tend the big cats and other rescue animals such as orphaned antelopes and giraffes.

We ate dinner by a crackling fire and were escorted to our lodge by an armed guard, there to protect us from any predators. Monkeys darted across the paths and at our door, the guard reminded us to lock the windows and doors at night as 'the monkeys will swoop in and steal everything'. Our romantic lodge had all the comforts of a hotel: vintage copper bath, four-poster bed and a private sundeck. Beyond the glass doors, the trees and grassland stirred with the rustlings of the wild.

Shamwari is an important force for good. It immerses volunteers in one of South Africa's last great wilderness areas, where they can do a little of everything from the exciting and the dramatic (helping vets to nurse the casualties of forest fires or putting radio collars on predators) to the practical (maintenance work). When we arrived, there were many young people hard at work with the staff, clearing scrub and repairing fences.

The following morning, we met the so-called Big Cat doctor, Johan Joubert. He had a fresh scar across his cheek from a close encounter with a lioness that didn't take too kindly to his treatment table. He runs the Born Free centre which nurses traumatised animals that have been rescued from captivity. He also oversees an armed unit that acts as a deterrent to poachers. Working as a resident vet and wildlife manager since 1995, Dr Joubert has had many scrapes with the wildlife.

'The scariest thing happened when I was walking through the bush and this angry black rhino came out of nowhere. I scrambled up the nearest tree, which unfortunately was a prickly pear. I was in agony because I was covered in thorns and then my mobile went off and the rhino went mad and charged the tree. I fell out of the tree onto her back and she tried to gore me. Fortunately, I got away with a few cuts and bruises.'

After showing us the lions sunbathing in their compound, the Big Cat Doctor took us to a hiding place to see a leopard. He spotted this shy, elusive cat lurking in the bushes. 'Don't try this at home,' he whispered, before creeping towards the leopard, clutching the rifle he said he had never used. The leopard, overcome by curiosity, peered out. Encounters such as this are, he says, one of the thrills of the natural world.

The next day we were whisked off to Born Free to meet the lions. We were told about their harrowing experiences in circuses and zoos by one of the staff. As we walked past the lion cubs, they thrust their paws through the fence in search of the touch of another mammal. Playful and curious, they were abandoned pets, found in an empty flat in Romania.

We were introduced to a lively baby elephant that was saved by rangers when his mother died. Like humans, baby elephants need constant care so the staff take turns in sleeping beside him, getting up to feed him when he cries.



In a neighbouring enclosure, I fed milk to a two-month-old giraffe from a litre bottle, though at seven feet tall, he towered over me.

Leaving Born Free, we found ourselves in a gridlock of elephants crossing the road. The driver switched off his engine and we sat in silence, watching these grey ghosts of Africa melting into the dusk.

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