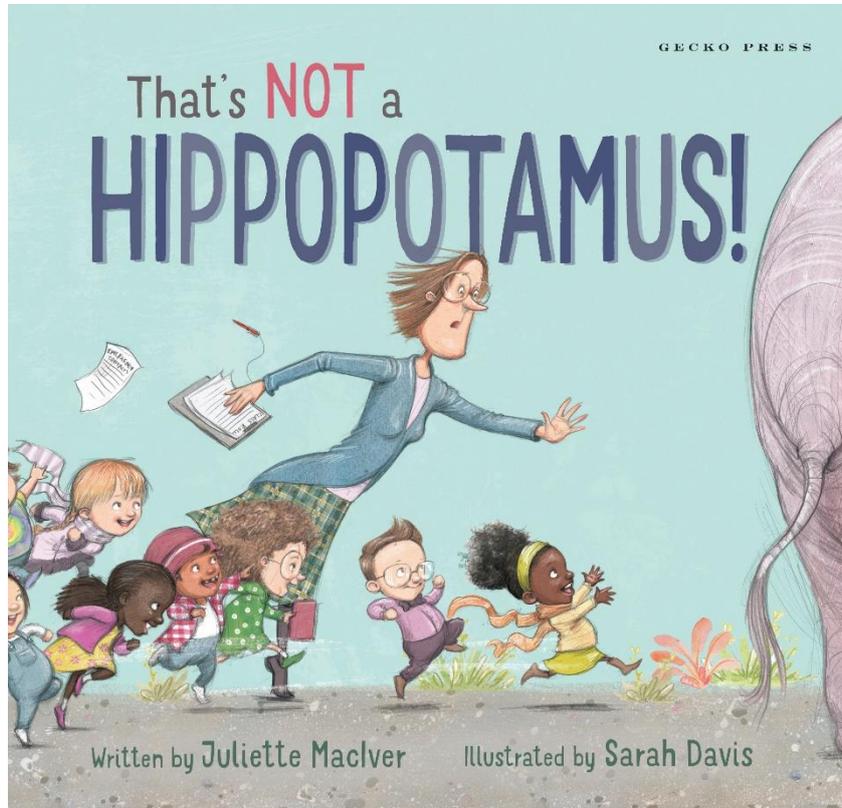


Teaching Notes

***That's Not a Hippopotamus***

Written by Juliette MacIver and illustrated by Sarah Davis



**Synopsis**

A class trip to the zoo descends into a chaotic hunt for the missing hippopotamus. Teacher, zookeeper and all the children join the search. The noise and drama reach a pitch, and no one thinks to listen to quiet Liam, who really might know where the hippo is hiding.

**The Author**

**Juliette MacIver** is a picture-book writer and mother of four, who lives in Wellington, New Zealand. Her popular books are regularly shortlisted for book awards.

**The Illustrator**

**Sarah Davis** began illustrating picture books in 2008 and has illustrated more than 30. She is one of New Zealand and Australia's leading illustrators with a wide portfolio of award-winning books in both countries. She has won and been shortlisted for numerous awards in Australia and New Zealand, including the 2009 Children's Book Council of Australia's Crichton Award for Best New Illustrator for her first picture book.

## **Themes**

This delightful picture book, packed with wordplay, has several themes.

The themes of fun, entertainment and joy are all evident, as the children delight in visiting Don's Safari where a madcap search for the missing hippopotamus ensues.

Other themes illustrated are those of confusion and misconceptions as the majority of the children confuse the other animals they see for the missing hippopotamus.

Another theme explored is the differing powers of observation between some children and adults. This is seen when Don and the teacher are oblivious to the hippopotamus, even when it is joining in the search with them.

Some final themes found in the book are the importance of confidence, belief in one's own ability, and persistence. Liam knows exactly where the hippopotamus is but his quiet demeanor ensures that he is either overlooked, ignored or hushed by both his peers and teacher. However, through good manners and persistence Liam succeeds in getting everyone's attention and his hippo-hunting abilities are recognised and celebrated as they finally discover the missing hippopotamus.

## **Activities**

1. Before reading the book, look at the cover image and title. Discuss what you think this story might be about?
2. In pairs, or with an adult to help, take turns to read the story aloud to one another. Discuss which is your favourite page and why. Do you agree with your partner's choice? Why/why not?
3. This book is full of rhymes. Find and list all the rhyming words in the book. Pick two and think of five more rhyming words for each. Use these words to write your own rhyming poem.
4. Throughout the book the author has used different font sizes for different words. Why has she done this? What do they help tell the reader about the speech or action? Have they been used effectively? Find some examples from the book.
5. The author uses a lot of exclamation marks. Why do you think she does this? Find examples of other punctuation used in the book.
6. List all the animals featured in the book and then choose one of the animals to investigate, for example, where do giraffes live, what is a giraffe's natural habitat, call, food, predators, etc.? Present your findings to your class. Create a diorama of your chosen animal and its natural habitat.
7. Choose your favourite character from the book, either an animal or a person. Use it as the main character and inspiration for a short story. Write, illustrate, bind and publish your own children's picture book of your story.



8. Choose your favourite hiding place of the hippopotamus from the book. Imagine you are the hippopotamus in this hiding place. Think about how you would describe the physical scene, as well as your feelings about what is happening during the search for you. Either describe the scene orally in pairs or write a descriptive paragraph or poem.
9. The book is set in 'Don's Safari'. In pairs, create an advertisement for Don, including all the animals you can see there. Remember to use persuasive and descriptive language for your advertisement.
10. There are many animals featured in the book. Choose two animals and describe them using only three statements. In pairs, try and guess which animals each other has described.
11. Imagine that the children from the book are going to set up a 'Hippo-hunting business'. Design a marketing campaign for the business. Your campaign could include elements such as pamphlets, radio jingles, posters, slogans, etc. Remember to use persuasive and descriptive language to get people to use your service. You could use phrases taken from the book.
12. Examine the illustrations in the book. What attracts your attention to a particular picture? What colours are used? What kinds of lines and textures are used? Which is your favourite illustration and why? Do you like the style? Choose your favourite illustration from the book and create your own artistic interpretation of it, for example, a painting, drawing, photograph, model, poem, etc. Or, design your own illustrations for the cover and/or one page of text.
13. Find another book by Juliette MacIver and illustrated by Sarah Davis, such as *Toucan Can* (Gecko Press, 2013). Write a plot summary and/or a book report on it, as well as compare and contrast the illustrations with those in *That's Not a Hippopotamus*. List any similarities or differences.
14. In groups, adapt the book for a performance in your classroom. Devise a script, create scenery, choose music and make costumes or puppets to represent each animal. Act out your adaptation for your class. If you have access to a video camera, tape it.
15. Review the book for your favourite magazine or website. What do you like about the book? Why? What did you dislike about the book? Why? Give it a rating, such as stars or a number out of ten.