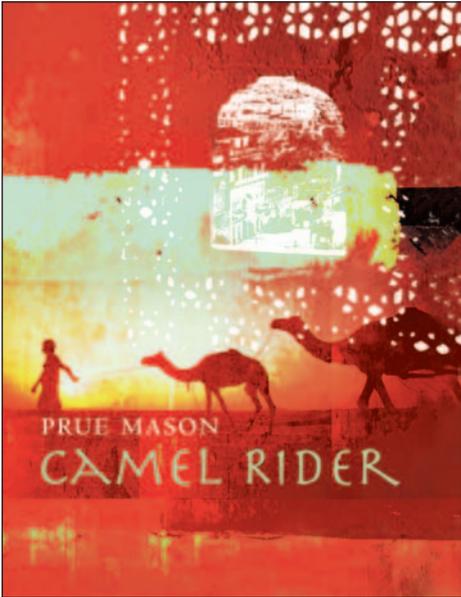


CAMEL RIDER Discussion and Activity Guide

Developed by Don Robb



978-1-58089-314-5 \$15.95, HC • Ages 10-14

A story of adventure, and two boys from different worlds . . .

War has broken out in the Middle East and all foreigners are fleeing. Instead of escaping with his neighbors, Adam sneaks off to save his dog. Lost in the desert, Adam meets Walid, an abused camel boy who is on the run. Together they struggle to survive the elements and elude the vengeful master from whom Walid has fled. Cultural and language barriers are wide, but with ingenuity and determination the two boys bridge their differences, helping each other to survive and learn what true friendship is.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ▶ Adam tells us that his mother is glad he's in an international school, where he can meet young people from other countries.
 - What countries do his schoolmates come from?
 - How many Arab students does he know well?
- ▶ Adam and Walid meet in the mountains, where both boys are stranded.
 - What is their first impression of each other?
 - How does that impression change as the story continues?
- ▶ From their first meeting, the two boys have problems understanding each other.
 - How is language a barrier between them?
- ▶ Walid is an Islamic Bangladeshi. Adam is from an Australian family.
 - How do their different cultural backgrounds make it difficult for them to understand each other?
- ▶ At the end of the story, Adam's sister Sarah says "I'd really like to know how you two were able to communicate, so you could work out what to do" (page 170). In answer, the two boys shrug, then jump up and slam their hands together "in a perfect high five."
 - How did Walid and Adam learn to communicate?
 - What kinds of misunderstandings did they have to clear up?
 - What were some of the steps in the process?
- ▶ Many of our favorite stories include a journey of one kind or another. For example, Little Red Riding Hood goes on a "real" journey through the forest to her grandmother's house; Harry Potter takes a "learning" journey as he goes through each year of study at Hogwarts; and the Great Gilly Hopkins experiences both as he goes from one foster home to another, looking for a family to love.
 - How is *Camel Rider* a story about a journey?
 - Is it a "real" journey or a "learning" journey?
 - Is it the same journey for Adam that it is for Walid?

- ▶ Sometimes the characters in a journey story are trying to get away from something. In other stories they may be trying to find something.
 - Are the characters in *Camel Rider* running away from something or trying to find something?
- ▶ A hero in a story is the main character, the one who must overcome a challenge to reach a goal. *Camel Rider* is a story with two heroes.
 - What is Adam's goal in the story? What challenges does he face?
 - What is Walid's goal? What are his challenges?
 - When do Adam and Walid realize they share a common goal?
 - What does Adam contribute to meeting the common goal?
 - What is Walid's contribution?
- ▶ The setting of *Camel Rider* is the desert. Sometimes the challenges, or obstacles, that a hero faces are not just other characters in the story, but nature itself.
 - How is the desert an obstacle to Adam and Walid?
- ▶ A stereotype is a way of categorizing someone or something, often without really knowing much about the person or thing.
 - What stereotypes does Adam hold about people like Walid?
 - What stereotypes does Walid hold about people like Adam?
 - What causes people to believe in stereotypes?
 - How are the stereotypes changed by the end of the story?
- ▶ In chapter 1, we get a description of Adam waking up one morning (page 5). In chapter 2, there is an account of Walid waking up that same morning (page 10).
 - What does the way each boy wakes up tell us about the differences between the lives of Walid and Adam?
- ▶ Walid's real name is Emir, which is what his mother calls him.
 - Why does Old Goat call him "Walid" instead of using his name?
- ▶ Walid knows his mother truly loves him. She named him Emir Sagheer, which means "Little Prince."
 - What other indications confirm that Walid's mother loves him?
 - If she does love him, why would she send him off with men like Old Goat and Breath of Dog?
- ▶ Walid's father once told him "to feel anger is better than to let fear into the heart" (page 34).
 - Do you agree or disagree? Why?
- ▶ Adam tells us, "My dad reckons that in the future everyone in the world will be living in compounds like ours anyway, with high walls and guards at the gates. He says it will be the only way people will feel safe" (page 7).
 - Is Adam's father correct? Why or why not?
- ▶ *Camel Rider* addresses differences in language and culture.
 - Are there different languages or cultures in your classroom? If so, what are they?
 - What are some ways that people can share each other's traditions and beliefs?
- ▶ Walid and Adam are unlikely friends, but circumstances throw them together.
 - What unlikely friendships have you experienced?
 - How and why did they happen?
- ▶ Many stories do more than just tell us what happens to the characters. They also have a deeper meaning; that is, they tell us something about ourselves or about people in general.
 - Beyond just the story of Walid and Adam, what does *Camel Rider* tell us about ourselves and about our world?

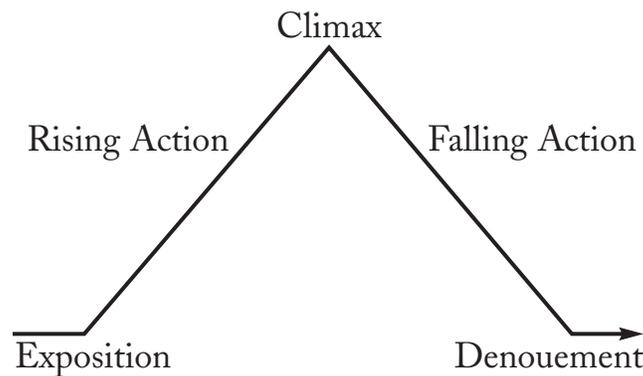
ACTIVITIES TO TIE-IN WITH CAMEL RIDER

- Ask students to write an article about Walid’s and Adam’s homecoming for an imaginary newspaper.
- Have students write an alternate ending to the story.
- Have students draw a “Wanted” poster for the character who they think is the worst villain in the story.
- Talk to students about dramatic structure and incorporate the plotting sequence: exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and denouement (or conclusion).

Discuss how to plot *Camel Rider* according to the sequence of dramatic structure. Or, have students try it on their own first, then discuss as a class.

Read an explanation of dramatic structure at

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dramatic_structure



- *Camel Rider* takes place in and around the fictional city of Abudai. Author Prue Mason, however, actually lived in the Middle East in the real city of Dubai when she wrote this story. Post a map of the Arabian Gulf region and plot Walid and Adam’s journey using Dubai as their city. Explore the history and traditions of the region along the way through books and websites, such as:
 - *The Bedouin of the Middle East* by Elizabeth Losleben. Lerner, 2003. Kids Can Press, 1997. Ages 9–12.
 - Cultures of the Past series. Benchmark, 2003. Ages 10+
 - *Mosque* by David Macaulay. Houghton Mifflin, 2003. Ages 10+
 - *National Geographic Atlas of the Middle East*. National Geographic, 2003. Ages 10+
 - *Our Children: Drawings and Captions*, edited by Amal Al-Ghanem. Center for Research and Studies on Kuwait, 2002. Ages 10+

- *The Librarian of Basra: A True Story from Iraq* by Jeanette Winter. Harcourt, 2005. Ages 5–9.
- *Muhammad of Mecca* by Elsa Marston. Watts, 2001. Ages 10+
- *Rumi: Poet and Sage* by Denys Johnson-Davies. Illustrated by Laura de la Mare. Hood Hood Books, 1997. Ages 8–12.
- *Breadwinner* by Deborah Ellis. Groundwood Books, 2001. Ages 9–12.
- *Camel Bells* by Janne Carlsson. Groundwood Books, 2002. Ages 9–12.
- *Shabanu: Daughter of the Wind* by Suzanne Fisher Staples. Laurel Leaf, 2003. YA
- *Habibi* by Naomi Shihab Nye. Simon Pulse, 1999. Ages 9–12.
- Wikipedia, “Middle East” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Middle_east
- BBC News, “Middle East”
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/default.stm
- New York Times, “Middle East” <http://www.nytimes.com/pages/world/middleeast/>
- SUNY-Albany, “History in the News” <http://www.albany.edu/history/middle-east/>
- Google Directory, “Middle East”
http://www.google.com/Top/Society/History/By_Region/Middle_East/

Comparing and Contrasting Two Characters

Using the topics in the first column, write down some details about each of the two main characters. Then in the last column, write a sentence or two to describe how they are alike or different according to each characteristic.

	<u>Adam</u>	<u>Walid</u>	<u>Alike or Different?</u>
Physical Description			
Family Background			
Language			
Birthplace			
Special Talents			
Feelings About Animals			

Points of View

What do they think? Many times, each character sees a situation from a different point of view. Often these different points of view are the result of stereotypes each character holds. What does Adam think about Walid, and Walid about Adam, at each of these points in the story?

	<u>Adam About Walid</u>	<u>Walid About Adam</u>
Adam and Walid first meet.		
They wonder why the other one is in the mountains.		
Adam uses his cell phone.		
Adam shares his chocolate.		
Adam gives clothes to Walid.		
Adam gives Walid his money.		
The boys capture a goat.		
The goat escapes.		
Adam gives Walid his knife.		
Adam takes out the dog food.		
Walid kills the goat.		
Walid is called to prayer when they are being chased.		
Tara is about to be shot.		

Plotting the Story

The action of a story begins with a setting and a conflict—something the hero must overcome to reach his goal. The action rises as the story progresses. Each event is another attempt by the hero to reach his goal. The action builds to a climax—the point where the hero either succeeds or fails. The rest of the action leads to the conclusion—the final result of the story.

Using the details listed on the following page, complete the action chart for *Camel Rider*.

Action Chart

Climax

Walid frees himself and Adam. The traders flee, and the boys are caught by the police.

12. _____

11. _____

10. _____

9. _____

8. _____

7. _____

6. _____

5. _____

4. _____

3. _____

2. _____

1. _____

Rising
Action

Conclusion

Setting and Conflict

War breaks out in the desert, so Adam must leave his home.

Events in the Story

These events are out of order. Put them in the correct order on the *Action Chart*.

- A The goat escapes and is recaptured.
- B The car breaks down.
- C Walid is dropped off in the mountains.
- D Adam gives chocolate, money, and clothes to Walid.
- E The traders capture Walid and Adam.
- F The boys are caught, and the traders offer to pay for the stolen camel.
- G Adam and Walid meet.
- H Adam and Walid escape the traders and steal a car.
- I The boys steal a camel.
- J Adam decides to leave the caravan and return to find Tara.
- K The boys find a goat.
- L Walid kills the goat.



PRUE MASON

After growing up in Australia, Prue Mason traveled the world as a flight attendant on a private airplane with her husband, a professional pilot. They lived in Canada for three years, and then the Gulf region of the Middle East for 12 years.

While there she worked as a writer, editing the memoirs of an Iranian lady who grew up in a wealthy but conservative family and who became a diplomat in the Shah of Iran's government before escaping to Dubai after the revolution. This book, *Zelzelah, A Woman Before Her Time*, was published by Motivate Publishing in London and Dubai.

Prue also wrote articles and stories for a children's newspaper that was distributed

throughout the region. She also wrote a counseling column in which she answered problems from mainly Indian, Pakistani, and Arab teenage readers—ranging from how to prevent pimples to how to get out of an arranged marriage. As a CELTA trained teacher, Prue also taught English as a foreign language to Arabic speakers.

Her first book for children, *Camel Rider*, is a best selling, award-winning novel based on her experience of life in the multicultural city of Dubai in the 1990s.

In 2005, *Camel Rider* won the Queensland Premier's Literary Award and was a CBC Notable Book for Younger Readers.

DON ROBB is a former educator who taught high school and junior high Spanish, French and English as a second language. He moved from teaching into publishing and worked as a foreign language consultant for Holt, Rinehart & Winston. He also worked with Houghton, Mifflin and as vice president of the Charlesbridge school division. Don is currently an author of children's nonfiction books, including *Ox, House, Stick: The Story of Our Alphabet*, *Hail to the Chief*, and *This is America: The American Spirit in Places and People*.