

# Unit 2 Academic reading

## The elephants of Samburu

### Learning aims

- **topic: the media**
- **skills: understanding vocabulary in context**
- **critical thinking: evaluating conclusions**

**1** The questions in this task are designed to activate knowledge and vocabulary on the topic of elephants.

Give pairs a one- or two-minute time limit to share what they know, e.g. where elephants live, what they eat, how they live, what they are threatened by, etc.

Use the photos to pre-teach some key vocabulary from the text – *trunk, tusks, calf/calves* and *to charge*. Try to establish that there is a close bond between mothers and calves and they will try to protect them fiercely. When threatened, they fan out their ears, make a loud noise and run forwards (*charge*). Ask the class what might make an elephant feel threatened, e.g. lions, humans.

Allow students to discuss question 3 then feed back answers in open class. It's useful to spend some time on feedback here as students' ideas provide the basis for the first reading task.

### ANSWERS

**3** A – possible, though elephants are faster than humans. It's best not to run in a straight line, but in a zigzag pattern to confuse the elephant and make it harder for them to make quick turns.

B – good advice, especially if you think the elephant is not really going to charge.

C – not advisable.

**2** Explain to the class that they are going to read part of an article from *National Geographic* magazine. The journalist was visiting a biologist, Iain Douglas-Hamilton, in Samburu, Kenya to interview him about his work with elephants in the region. If students are unfamiliar with this part of the world, then show them a map if possible, allowing them to locate Kenya and Samburu. Tell students there are three people in the extract – the journalist, a boy and the biologist Iain Douglas-Hamilton. Give them a time limit of seven to eight minutes to find out which advice each person followed from Exercise 1 (A, B or C). Ask students not to use their dictionary at this point.

### ANSWERS

Journalist and boy: A

Biologist: first A, then B.

**3** Ask students to read the extract again and decide if the statements are true, false or not given (i.e. there is no information about this in the text). Encourage students to discuss their answers and give reasons from the text.

### ANSWERS

**1** T – there are far lower levels of conflict than in most other areas of Africa where elephants range.

**2** F – he says 'yes indeed', and 'we could' to the journalist's suggestions – he is easily persuaded.

**3** NG – although the text says going on foot was 'inadvisable' it doesn't directly state why.

**4** T – the text says Mwaniki *muttered a warning*, then the others looked up and saw the elephant.

**5** T – he *thought better of it*, perhaps he knew it was too late to run and he knew how to frighten the elephant.

**6** F – he says *I couldn't see whether she had hurt him*.

**7** F – the journalist ran back when the elephant had *marched off*.

**8** F – *We decided that this female must have been the elephant known as 'Diana'*, which means Douglas-Hamilton didn't recognize her, they reached this conclusion after the event.

**4** Read through the Skills focus box with students. To help students understand the idea of using the context to help understand the meaning of a word, give them an example: if they saw the word *sour* on its own, they might not know the meaning, but if they were reading a text called *The Five Basic Tastes* and they read the sentence *many people cannot eat a piece of lemon because it tastes too sour* then they would be able to use the topic of the text and the information about eating a lemon to help them guess the meaning of *sour*.

All the words in bold are taken from the text about elephants and all describe an aspect of elephant behaviour.

### ANSWERS

**1** a plural noun; b emphasizing that herbivores have no reason to come into conflict with dangerous creatures or to try to kill them; c plants.

**2** a where the elephants live; b verb; c live.

**3** a verb, the elephants; b safe; c further away.

- 4 a it describes a sound; b a brass instrument, the sound is loud; c it made a similar noise again, therefore *honk* must be similar to *trumpet*.
- 5 a she threw him to the ground, she felt angry/aggressive/threatened; b they are long and pointed, like a knife or a dagger; b aggressive.

**5** This exercise gives students practice in guessing the meaning of words for themselves using the context to help. Ask students to underline the word or words they need to find in the text, then use the sentences around the words to help them to work out the meaning.

#### ANSWERS

- 1 *Calculate* is a verb, *risks* is a noun. The sentence following this one is helpful – *they can be dangerous, but they prefer to avoid conflict* – this suggests they choose to walk away from potentially dangerous situations. *Calculate risks* means they think about how dangerous a situation is likely to be.
- 2 *Winding* is an adjective. It is describing how the river was moving. The text says it was moving downstream – students can imagine that as it did this it followed lots of bends, it didn't go in a straight line.
- 3 *Mischievous* is an adjective. It is describing how his eyes looked. We know in this paragraph that the writer is suggesting walking which is not a good idea. First they climbed one hill, now he is suggesting they climb another – though it's not safe, they are doing it to have fun. The mischievous look shows he is agreeing to have some fun, although it is the wrong thing to do.
- 4 *Brave* is an adjective, *challenge* is a noun. The previous sentence is helpful in understanding this phrase – Douglas-Hamilton threw out his arms, and shouted loudly to stop her – this was his *brave*

*challenge* – he tried to show he wasn't scared and wanted to fight. He hoped that this would make the elephant stop the attack.

- 5 *Backed off* is a phrasal verb. *Ten steps* tells us that the elephant moved. We later in the text read that she turned away and marched off. Therefore we can guess that *backed off* means she moved away from him.

**6** Ask students to decide whether they can come to the conclusions listed in this exercise based on what they have read in the extract. If you think this exercise will be hard for your students then look at the first conclusion together as a class.

#### ANSWERS

- 1 No. Although the extract is about a dangerous encounter, we can't conclude that all visitors to the reserve would have the same experience.
- 2 Yes. The situation in the extract would not have occurred if they had been in a vehicle. The journalist writes that walking was 'inadvisable'.
- 3 Yes. The last paragraph tells us that Diana made a choice, but no-one will ever fully know why.
- 4 Yes. The extract describes two ways – running or staying and trying to intimidate the animal.
- 5 No. Although this close encounter ended badly, paragraph one tells us humans and animals usually live together well, and at the end we learn that Diana had not shown aggression towards others before.

**7** Encourage students to discuss their answers together making reference to the text to say why. The main conclusion we can make from the text as a whole is number 3.