

# **Mini-Book Set for Units 4 & 6**

*Teacher's Resource*

First Edition, 1999  
Institute for Excellence in Writing, L.L.C.

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First Edition, 1999

Second Printing, March 2012

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Printed in the United States of America



## THE HUMMINGBIRD



There are over three hundred species of hummingbirds in the world. Seventeen species live in the United States. Only the Ruby-throated Hummingbird resides in the eastern part of the United States, however. The Bee Hummingbird is the smallest bird in the world. It measures only 2.25 inches long. The Giant Hummingbird, which is the largest of all the hummingbirds, is eight inches long and lives in the



Andes Mountains of South America. The many species of hummingbirds are quite varied.

Tiny hummingbirds have a large range. They live in North, Central, and South America. Most species inhabit South America. They do not live in other parts of the world. Each year, some hummingbirds fly from North to South to find food and warm weather. Others stay in the same place all year. The various hummingbirds' ranges are considerable.



Hummingbirds have beautiful, magnificently colored feathers. They shimmer like jewels in the sunshine. They shine so much because of the way they reflect the light. Some are red, green, violet or orange. They look like tiny gems with wings.

Truly, hummingbirds are flying experts. They fly so fast their wings make a humming sound. Their wings flap eighty beats per second. They can fly upside-down or backwards. Like a helicopter, they can hover in one place. Hummingbirds can fly like acrobats.

A hummingbird's nest is a tiny work of art. The mother bird lines it with spider webs and soft wool from cattail plants. The birds build the nest high up in the tree branches and hide it among the leaves. The eggs in the nest are only the size of raisins. Hummingbirds make wonderful nests.



## HIPPOPOTAMI: RIVER HORSES

*Dedicated to the staff of Kudya Discovery Lodge, Liwonde, Malawi for the holidays they have made enjoyable for the writer.*

*By J.B. Webster as part of a wildlife series used in assisting students to learn the process of research and writing up the results. Stylistic techniques employed include: 1. The six-point dress-up shown in italics in each paragraph, 2. Every paragraph ends with "river horses," 3. Paragraph four experiments with alternating short and long sentences, 4. Paragraph five employs an overload of "ly" words.*

An African legend explains *why* hippos scatter their dung about. When the Creator was giving each species of animal its place on earth, a pair of hippos begged to be assigned to rivers. Looking at them doubtfully, the Creator explained he had already assigned the rivers to the crocodiles which were *fierce* and *hungry* predators. "It would not be fair to the fish," the Creator argued, "to place two nasty predators among them." The hippos *wept* and *wailed*. On their knees they solemnly promised never to harm the fish but eat only grass for the rest of their lives. Reluctantly, the creator agreed. To this day, hippos *vigorously* scatter their dung along the river banks *because* they want the Creator to see it contains no fish. Thus the legend had been designed to explain a peculiar habit of the river horse *which* scientists have failed to understand and to illustrate how hippos changed from carnivores to grazers.

The best viewing of hippopotami occurs at Kudya Discovery Lodge, a resort on the banks of the Shire (Sherray) River and only two kilometers from the M1 or main highway in Malawi. Two hippo families live at Kudya, *where* the river widens. Outstandingly attractive, the eye-catcher at Kudya Lodge involves the blended structure and style of the three lounges *which* are

located on the banks of the river. Designed on the circle rather than the square, the lounges are circular with steep, thick thatch roofs and circular windows and doors on all sides. From both inside and outside the impression is quite unusual, *extremely* pleasant and instantly inviting. Happily, two hippo families make their homes in the river just a few meters from the lounges. As guests enjoy a full meal, snacks, or drinks, the river horse family directly in front of the Hippo Lounge twitch their nostrils, flick their *swiveling*, *periscope* eyes and wiggle their tiny ears, occasionally lifting a head above the water, letting fly a small bellow or low, satisfied grunt as one family converses with another. They *grunt* and *snort* like trumpets warming up before a recital, like rusted bugles blown by amateurs or like snorkelers in two feet of water. You watch them. They watch you. Everyone is happy. Hence, for watching river horses in comfort and ease, there is no place in the world to equal Kudya Discovery Lodge *because* the food is tasty, drinks cold, and service in the tradition of the Malawian national slogan, “The Warm Heart of Africa.”

Family life centers around the group, between six and twenty animals, *since* hippos appear highly gregarious. At Kudya, the pods containing from six to eight individuals represent family groups rather than herds. While there is one *specific* and *favored* spot in the river or lake where the pod congregates—a kind of home base—it is normally surrounded by a water and land territory belonging exclusively to that family *which* might stretch for two kilometers along the river. Ideally the territory should contain

