



## THE HUNT

- 1 Miyere cast a sidelong glance at his brother. The older boy stood tall, his hair long and braided, decorated with the blue beads that marked him as a favourite of the elders. His head tilted upwards to better display the lion's mane he wore proudly as a headpiece. Thick and luxurious, it signalled his bravery to all the tribe, for he had killed that lion himself, alone.
- 2 Miyere scowled at the sight of his spear; the familiar carvings on the handle had always given him pleasure, identifying it as his own. Its shape now filled him with anger, an inner

hostility towards his weapon. A child's spear! The carvings were a symbol of his low status as *ilkiliyani* — a junior warrior, unable to wear his hair long or take part in the most important activity of a warrior's life — lion hunting.

- 3 As he crouched low behind a patch of prickly scrub, Miyere listened to the secret plans of the *empikas*, the delegation preparing for the hunt. To be caught would surely result in the confiscation of his shield and spear, but Miyere felt fearless.

- 4 Tomorrow the warriors would leave at dawn while the elders and women still slept. They would meet at the ancient rock shaped like a crouching man and track the lion by following his footsteps and the flight of vultures.

Only warriors who were prepared to die were chosen for the hunt. Only the very bravest. Miyere clenched his jaw; he was brave, as brave as his brother, who had only accidentally come across his lion while herding the family's goats. But Miyere would track his lion and kill it! Then the tribe would have to accept him as a man.

- 5 Miyere shut his eyes and dreamed of the week long celebrations that would be held for him when he brought home his lion. The community would honour him as *Olmarani lolowauru*, the hunter. Word would spread of his deed and women from other villages would embrace him. In his tribe, songs of praise would be sung for Miyere and no one would ever dare mess with him again.

- 6 The knowledge that solo hunting was no longer allowed pricked at Miyere's conscience. With the spread of rabies, the lion population had diminished. Group hunts allowed for the lions to replenish while still giving warriors the opportunity to face danger and become heroes.

What difference would one lion make, Miyere thought as he watched the warriors disperse to eat and prepare their spears for the hunt. He knew they would cook a meal and eat together in the bush, well away from the camp, as custom forbade the women seeing men eat meat.

- 7 Miyere stretched and felt the tingling rush of blood to his calves. Leaden and heavy, his legs had gone to sleep while he crouched awkwardly, listening to the warrior's plans. He moaned softly as the sensation returned to his limbs. As if in reply, a low growl answered him from nearby. Miyere stiffened, silently gripping the spear by his side. It was unmistakable. The voice of a lion.

It growled again. This time louder. Calling him, challenging him.

- 8 Slowly, Miyere raised himself to a crouch, wrapping his goatskin cape around his slight body. He turned.

Two golden eyes stared at him, unmoving. With one leap the giant, sand-coloured creature could crush him and tear him apart with its mighty claws.

Suddenly, Miyere felt small and young. His legs trembled and the short spear shook in his hand. He held it up, high over his head, knowing the creature would snap it like a twig. Snap him like a twig. Jaws opened emitting a sound so terrifyingly fierce that Miyere seemed to sway as its force hit him.

- 9 But still he held his ground. He stilled his beating heart.

And prepared to die.

The beast took a step forward; a giant paw slicing the distance between them in two.

- 10 "Miyere!" A familiar voice and a mighty arm hooked him, pulling him away; his heels



dragging channels in the dust away from the trampling feet and the shouts. Furore erupted as warriors, not hunting or stalking, but waving arms as if shooing a million flies, gathered in on the startled lion. A final roar split the air as the disappointed beast turned its huge rump towards them, running, fleet-footed into the distance.

As the strong arms of his brother circled Miyere he felt hot tears of humiliation flow down his cheeks.

“Miyere, brother, why do you weep? You are a hero!”

- 11 Miyere couldn't believe his ears or the broad smiles of the warriors as they slapped his back, jostling to touch and praise him. “What, what do you mean? Surely you are

angry at me.” Miyere whispered into the noisy group.

“Angry? No young Miyere, we are proud,” replied his brother. “Proud of you for keeping that giant lioness at bay with your tiny spear. Proud that you did not foolishly try to harm her and thus break our sacred responsibility to protect the female and bearer of life. You acted wisely and bravely, Miyere, and have proven yourself worthy of being a true warrior.”

- 12 Miyere's voice had disappeared. A smile split across his face as two warriors raised him onto their shoulders, carrying him towards the encampment. They moved swiftly past his family dwelling to the manyatta, the warrior compound that would now become his home.

## Questions

- 1 What did a lion mane headpiece symbolise?  
a the favour of the elders  
b low status as a junior warrior  
c bravery for killing a lion alone
- 2 Who would leave tomorrow at dawn?  
a the warriors  
b the women  
c the elders
- 3 How had Miyere's brother found the lion he killed?  
a He tracked it by himself.  
b He accidentally came across it while herding goats.  
c He was helped by an empikas.
- 4 Why was solo hunting no longer allowed?  
a It was too dangerous.  
b It allowed the lion population to replenish.  
c It was unfair for the junior warriors.
- 5 Why did the warriors think Miyere was a true warrior?  
a by killing the lion  
b by running away from the lion  
c by not killing the lion
- 6 What line tells us that Miyere was actually scared of the lion?  
a Miyere stretched and felt the tingling rush of blood to his calves.  
b He held it up, high over his head, knowing the creature would snap it like a twig.  
c His legs trembled and the short spear shook in his hand.

## Vocabulary

Find words in the text that match the meanings below. The word is in the section shown in brackets.

- 7 To take a quick look at (1)  
8 Made smaller or reduced (6)  
9 Single or alone (6)  
10 A squatting position (8)  
11 Shame and embarrassment (10)

## Grammar

Find a **verb** (an action word) in these sentences from the text.

- 12 His head tilted upwards.  
13 He crouched low behind a patch of prickly scrub.  
14 Miyere raised himself to a crouch.  
15 Miyere whispered into the noisy group.

## Back To The Text...

- 16 In which part of the library would you find this text?  
a fiction                      b non-fiction
- 17 From now on Miyere's character should  
a remain fairly childlike.  
b continue to grow in confidence.
- 18 Another good name for this text would be:  
a Caught By Surprise  
b Lions Everywhere

## Sequencing

Look back through the card to find what happened first. Choose **a** or **b**.

- 19 a Miyere dreamed of the celebrations.  
b Miyere stretched his legs.
- 20 a Miyere was dragged by his heels.  
b Miyere gripped the spear by his side.
- 21 a Miyere was lifted onto the warriors' shoulders.  
b Miyere asked if his brother was angry.

## Think About This

- 22 What is the most important information given in section 7?  
a Miyere's legs had gone to sleep.  
b Miyere wanted to hear the plans.  
c The lion had found Miyere.
- 23 The illustration on the front of the card represents  
a a lion in a green ball.  
b a lion's reflection in Miyere's eye.  
c a lion's image on a marble.

## Challenge Option

Writing: Write an acrostic poem called LIONS.

