



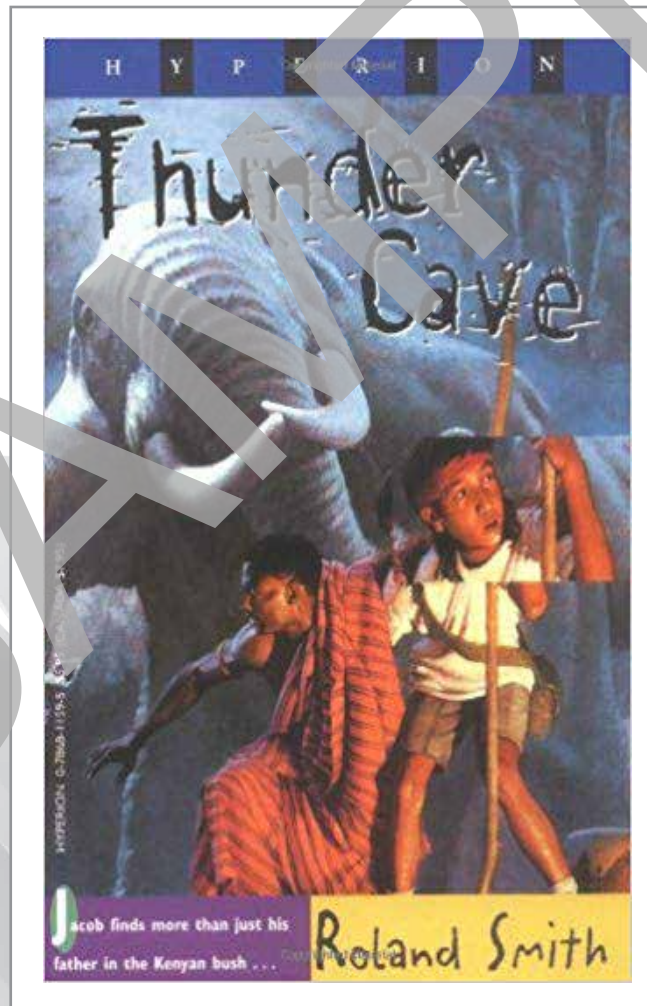
**TEACHER GUIDE**

**GRADES 6-8**

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

# Thunder Cave

Roland Smith



**READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT**

# Thunder Cave

Roland Smith

## TEACHER GUIDE

**NOTE:**

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

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## Skills and Strategies

### Thinking

Research, brainstorming, creative thinking, critical thinking, compare/contrast, decision making, attributes, multiple perspectives, literary interpretation

### Comprehension

Predicting, sequencing, foreshadowing, cause/effect, inference, summarizing

### Listening/Speaking

Discussion, presentations, charades, plays

### Vocabulary

Pictionary, word maps, defining, parts of speech

### Writing

Personal writing, creative writing, poetry, reports, essays, plays

### Literary Elements

Literary analysis, story mapping, plot development, setting, character analysis, similes, metaphors

### Across the Curriculum

Social Studies—developing maps, research, time lines, geography; Science—endangered animals, extinction, poaching; Math—distance measurement; Language—poetry, outlines, research, Swahili words; Music—composing lyrics; Art—illustrations, dramatization; Health—diet, cleanliness, purification

**Genre:** fiction

**Setting:** present-day New York City; Kenya, Africa

**Point of View:** first person

**Themes:** coming-of-age, physical survival, courage, friendship, trust, perseverance, death

**Conflict:** person vs. person; person vs. self; person vs. nature

**Date of First Publication:** 1997

## Summary

Jacob Lansa's life is changed forever after his mother is hit by a car and dies. Jacob is unable to reach his father, a field biologist studying elephant behavior in Kenya, so Jacob's grieving stepfather decides that Jacob will live with a cousin in Nebraska. Armed with a bicycle, a knife, food, and water purification tablets, Jacob decides to find his father in Kenya instead. Without his father's knowledge, he arrives in Kenya and faces numerous dangers including being beaten and robbed, a wild animal attack, lack of food and water, and illness. A Masai tribesman named Supeet teaches Jacob how to survive in the wild. Jacob eventually locates his father and helps African authorities capture Donovan, the leader of the elephant poachers.

*Teacher note:* This novel contains references of a sexual nature, which help the reader understand the living conditions in drought-stricken Kenya. Swear words are used in places where tension is high.

## About the Author

Born and raised in Oregon, Roland Smith wanted to be a writer as early as age five. Practicing on his typewriter, Smith would spend hours listening to the sound of the keys hitting the paper making letters, and later, words. While studying English in college, he got a job in a zoo. Eventually he became a zookeeper, a job he held for over 20 years. During this time Smith continued writing, eventually quitting his job as zookeeper to pursue a full-time writing career. When he's not writing, Smith enjoys traveling, taking photographs of animals, and doing research for future books. He lives with his wife in Portland, Oregon.

## Characters

**Jacob Lansa**—teenager; his mother's death leads him to find his father in Africa; makes decisions without considering the consequences; often refers to wisdom passed on from his father, mother, and grandfather; eventually comes of age and aids in the capture of a poacher

**Beth Walters**—Jacob's mother; dies after being struck by a car

**Sam Walters**—Jacob's stepfather; doesn't get along with Jacob; doesn't want to care for Jacob after his wife's death

**Taw**—Jacob's grandfather; elderly Hopi Indian; lives in a convalescent home and has visions about Jacob

**Supeet**—Masai tribesman; on a mission to find Sitonik to get instructions on how to make it rain in Kenya so the drought will end; befriends Jacob; helps Jacob thwart poachers' efforts to kill elephants

**Donovan**—lead poacher; evil; greedy

**Dr. Robert Lansa**—Jacob's father; spent last several years tracking and protecting African elephants in the bush of Kenya

# Word Map

**Synonyms**

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\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Magazine cut-out, drawing, or symbol that shows what the word means**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Word**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Definition in your own words**

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\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Word used in a sentence**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

SAMPLE

## Supplementary Activities

1. Science/Research: Use the Internet and books from the library to compile a list of poisonous creatures living in Kenya. Find more information about spitting cobras and write a report about the affects of their spit on prey.
2. Creative Writing: Rewrite part of the book imagining Jacob had decided to leave Supeet and go for help from his father instead. How might the chapter have ended differently?

## Chapters Twenty-four–After, pp. 209–250

Robert Lansa agrees to help Donovan get the ivory from the elephants in his herd using tracking devices previously placed on the animals. When he fails to dart an elephant, Jacob offers to try and is successful. It begins raining, and Donovan breaks his deal and decides to go after the elephants his own way. The elephants retreat to the cave and eventually trample Donovan's men. Donovan temporarily escapes but is apprehended because Jacob places a tracking device on his plane. Supeet goes back to live with the Masai, and Jacob and his father return to New York to live near Taw.

Vocabulary
contour (210)
circumstances (211)
impact (216)
humane (217)
wincing (235)
cached (236)
bivouac (241)
dispersed (242)
simultaneously (243)
contraband (246)

### Discussion Questions

1. Why does Jacob's father choose to ignore Donovan's comments about Moja's feelings about Jacob? (*He is focused on saving the elephant's lives and the life of his son. p. 212*)
2. Can you think of another way Jacob could have shared the news of his mother's death with his father? Explain. (*Answers will vary.*)
3. Which would be better for the elephants in your opinion: to have their tusks surgically removed or to simply be killed? Consider the possibility of infection, the tusks as a line of defense, and aesthetics in your answer. (*The surgical removal of the tusks is probably better, though the possibility of infection and being less able to defend themselves would not be good for the elephants. p. 217*)
4. How does Jacob get close enough to dart an elephant? (*He uses the technique Supeet taught him. pp. 221–222*)
5. What is so frustrating to Donovan and Moja? (*They are frustrated because the method of recovering tusks is taking too long, and it is beginning to rain. p. 225*)
6. What problems might the elephants face if the poachers trap them inside the sacred cave? (*It would be easier for the poachers to kill them all. p. 227*)
7. How does Jacob's knowledge of Lumeya unnerve Moja? (*Moja understands that Lumeya's grave is a sacred place and that bad things can happen to people who trespass there. p. 229*)
8. How does Jacob use Supeet's technique of "borrowing" to save himself, Supeet, and the elephants? (*The first lesson in borrowing is to frighten away the predator from the prey. In this case, the predators were poachers, and by screaming, Jacob frightens the elephants and they trample the poachers in their haste to get out of the cave. p. 231*)
9. How do you think Supeet got the kachina from Sitonik? (*Answers will vary.*)

10. What effect does Supeet's necklace have on Gilosho and his opinion of Jacob? (*He realizes Supeet is a Laibon and has declared Jacob a man. p. 239*)
11. What caused Donovan to be captured in the end? (*his greed and the fact that he tried to escape in his airplane, p. 243*)
12. How does Donovan react to his capture? (*He doesn't become angry when he realizes how he was captured. He only laughs and says Jacob is clever. p. 245*)
13. Why do you think Supeet returns the amulet to Jacob? (*Answers will vary. Possible answer: He knows the amulet is a very important part of Jacob and the man he will become. p. 247*)

### Supplementary Activities

1. Geography: Locate Lake Natron on a map of Africa. Calculate the distance from the lake to the Tanzanian border.
2. Research/Science: Research the African elephant. Find out about its body, life cycle, average life span, how it keeps cool, etc. Write a report showing what you learned.
3. Creative Writing/Poetry: Write a poem or song summarizing the ending of the book.
4. Compare and Contrast: Use a Venn diagram to compare the personality of Robert Lansa to that of Donovan.
5. Character Analysis: Complete the Sociogram on page 12 of this guide.