

# I, CROCODILE

## **I, CROCODILE**

by Fred Marcellino (HarperCollins)

Themes: Animals, Environment, Fantasy, Geography

Grade Level: K–5

Running Time: 10 minutes

### **SUMMARY**

When Napoleon invades Egypt, he loads up on souvenirs: temples, obelisks, mummies—and Le Fantastique Crocodile Egyptien, a live crocodile. This story relives Napoleon’s invasion from the crocodile’s point of view. With droll humor, the crocodile tells the sad story of his cruel and abrupt departure from his paradise on a mudbank by the Nile, his beastly ocean voyage and his humiliating transportation to a fountain in a park in Paris — what amounts to a fancy bathtub. For a while he’s all the rage, but when the crocodile fashion fades, he escapes into the Paris sewers. At the end, he’s dining on fashionable Parisians. This tale is based on an anonymous satire from 19th century France, and the wry text and drawings reflect the spirit of the original.

### **OBJECTIVES**

- Children will watch and hear a funny animal story that is also a satire.
- Children will compare the behavior of animals in a story to the behavior of people.
- Children will identify and describe visual details about the early 19th century.

### **BEFORE VIEWING ACTIVITIES**

Ask children what a crocodile is and ask them to list what they know about crocodiles. Use a globe

to locate the Nile River in Egypt, one habitat of the crocodile. Explain that this story takes place about 200 years ago in France, at a time when the army and navy of France invaded Egypt. Locate France on the globe as well, and trace the route between the Nile and Paris. Alert children to listen for the name of an important leader of France. He and the crocodile are the two main characters in the story.

### **AFTER VIEWING ACTIVITIES**

Ask students to recall details from the story about exactly where it took place (on the Nile River in Egypt and in Paris, France) and when (starting August 17, 1799). Then have them share memories of the pictures: how the people dressed, how they traveled and how they amused themselves. Have children compare how the crocodile lived in Egypt to how he lived in Paris. Ask them to name Napoleon and recall the specific acts of Napoleon that changed the crocodile’s life. Discuss which character was worse, the crocodile or Napoleon.

Ask children to recall ways in which the crocodile acted like a real crocodile (eating other animals, sunning himself) and ways in which he acted like a person (basking in admiration, showing off, understanding human talk). Remind them of other stories they know in which animals take on human speech and behavior. Encourage children to write and illustrate their own fantasy stories, plays, poems and songs about animals who act like people. Arrange an all-animal revue and perform it for another class.

To reinforce the idea of using humor in stories, hold a crocodile joke contest. Or expand the rules to include jokes about any animal that lives in Egypt and cartoons as well as spoken jokes.

Use the pictures in the program to connect the story to American history. With younger students, compare costumes with those of early 19th century Americans. Have older children research and report on acts by Napoleon that directly affected the United States, especially the Louisiana Purchase and the War of 1812. Use a history atlas and timeline.

Connect the story to science by having children research and report on crocodiles. Visit an actual zoo or Internet site to watch crocodiles in action. Older children can report on the habitats of crocodiles and the current environmental threats to crocodiles.

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