



Toad Delight

Morris Gleitzman

SYNOPSIS:

Even more desperate to save his family from ending up on his stack of squashed relatives, Limpy takes his quest to the airwaves. When a TV cooking show kidnaps Goliath to be their main ingredient, Limpy sets out to rescue him and ends up on camera himself. Can Limpy use his 15 minutes of fame to get humans to lay off the cane-toad squashing? Or will that be a recipe for disaster? A stirring saga of bravery, sacrifice and prime-time warts-and-all adventure. Tasty.

WRITING STYLE

Morris's books dominate the children's choice awards, and there is a huge supply of fans awaiting his novels as they are published. Both past readers of his Toad series and any fan of Morris's fabulous humour will love this next episode in the adventures of Limpy, the slightly squashed cane toad!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Morris Gleitzman grew up in England and came to Australia when he was sixteen. After university he worked for ten years as a screenwriter. Then he had a wonderful experience. He wrote a novel for young people. Now, after 36 books, he's one of Australia's most popular children's authors. Visit Morris at his website: morrisgleitzman.com

STUDY NOTES/ACTIVITIES FOR TEACHERS

These notes have treated the novel as a stand-alone text, so that previous knowledge of the characters is unnecessary.

PRE-READING:

- Why were cane toads introduced into Australia?
- Why did they prove to be unsuccessful?
- Where were they initially introduced?

- Examine a cane toad map. How far does the cane toad population now spread? How have they managed to migrate so far around Australia?
- How do most people feel about cane toads?
- What types of methods of elimination have we adopted to remove them from our local area?

CHARACTERS:

- What types of personality does each of the characters have? (Add others to this table).

CHARACTER	PERSONALITY
Limpy	
Goliath	
Mosquito	
Dog	

- In what way might it seem surprising to give these animals such distinct characters?
- Do you usually think about these types of animals as having personalities?
- The technique of assigning human characters to animals is called anthropomorphism. It is a well-known and effective literary style used in texts such as 'Animal Farm', 'The Midnight Zoo' etc. what effect does it have on the reader to portray animals as if they are humans?

Activity

- Think of another animal that Limpy may meet on his adventure. Write a short dialogue between Limpy and this character. Try to show their personality and attitudes through the character's dialogue.

THEMES:

Family:

- Limpy has been 'saying goodbye to relatives for most of his life' (p1). How would this make him feel?
- What does it reveal about Limpy that he keeps all of his dead, flat relatives?
- What other evidence is there that Limpy is loyal and dedicated to his family?
- In what way does his family rely on him?
- Why does Limpy not want to tell his parents why humans hate cane toads?
- How does his family react to this information?
- Would it be easier for Limpy to tell them the truth if they were not related to him?
- How can family be seen to be both a strength and a weakness for Limpy?

Pollution:

- How has pollution affected the environment and its inhabitants?
- Why is Charm physically impaired?
- How is pollution caused?
- Who causes pollution?

Ecosystems:

- What is an ecosystem?
- How can the introduction of a new species affect the existing ecosystem?
- What problems can this create?
- What challenges to the ecosystem are mentioned in this book?
- Consider the notion that we as humans place animals into a hierarchy. (Look at the way the dog in the story is treated in contrast to the other animals). What animals do we tend to value over others?
- Given the notion of an ecosystem, should we value some animals over others?
- What are the inherent dangers in doing so?
- Is it fair to blame toads and their greed for all the environmental issues?
- What other challenges are there to the ecosystem?
- Would there be any negative impact from eliminating all the cane toads?

Responsibility:

- Why is it always easier for people or groups to blame others for the problems rather than accept any blame themselves?
- Ancient Abigail's instinct is to protect herself rather than to do the right thing by others. Do you think it is only cane toads that do this?
- What characteristics does it take to accept responsibility and make a difference?
- Is it possible to blame anyone group for environmental issues?
- Why do Limpy's parents take it as a personal insult that cane toads are seen to be greedy?(p27)
- *Maybe the world is too big and complicated and full of problems for one individual to make a difference* (p34). What is the problem with thinking like this?
- Limpy says *'In my family we believe one individual can make a difference'* (p65). Do you agree with this statement?

Technology

- Throughout the novel, Gleitzman makes a lot of comments about humans' obsession with technology and social media.
- *'He knew how important social media was to humans. You could tell by the way they gawked at it on their phones while they were walking into mud holes'* (p37). What does this suggest about humans?
- Consider the sort of programs the film crews are making. What does this suggest about our current obsession with reality tv?
- What examples of consumerism and commercialism can you find in the novel? What does this suggest about our attitude towards products and towards the environment?
- Consider the mosquito's words, *'I am so embarrassed. Please forgive me. I shouldn't have said any of those terrible things. I should have waited til I could post them online anonymously'* (p117). What does this reveal about the way we use social media? Why are people prepared to post dreadful comments that they would never say to someone in person?

Looking after others

- Limpy says ‘A sure fire way to forget your woes is to help others in desperate need’ (p41). Why do you think this is the case?
- Do you agree with this statement?
- Limpy decides the best way to save his family is to do something nice for the humans. Do you agree with this approach? What else could he do?
- How does helping others also help Limpy?
- What does this suggest about how humans should behave?
- While filming in Limpy’s swamp the dog tells him, ‘Humans are in trouble. Too many cars, too many power stations, they and the weather are not getting on. While they work out how to fix the friendship, they need leaves’ (p129). What does this suggest about the need for humans and nature to work together?

Danger:

- Humans often only think about the danger animals cause for them. But what about the danger humans cause for animals. For example, Limpy talks about cars deliberately swerving to hit toads; he calls bikes ‘silent death’. What other dangers to humans pose to animal species?
- When animals harm humans, why do they usually do so?
- Is it possible for humans and animals to exist cooperatively and safely? What would it take in order to do so?

WRITING HUMOUR

- The story is about quite a serious issue of environmental matters, yet Gleitzman manages to make it quite humorous. How does he add humour to his writing?
- Why is it often best to tell serious messages in a humorous way?
- One way to create humour is to have characters say unexpected things. For example when the little girl explains the weather issues to Limpy she says, ‘It’s just Mr Weather being grouchy. Our teacher told us how Mr Weather gets cross sometimes. Mostly because accelerating non-renewable energy transfers are permanently altering carbon dioxide ratios’ (p109). How does the combination of childish vocabulary and scientific vocabulary create humour?

CHANGING THE POINT OF VIEW

- As humans, we are used to hearing our stories told from our perspective and in our words. Have you ever thought about how cane toads might feel about the way we treat them and feel about them?
- What effect does it have to tell this story through the eyes of the toads?
- How does Gleitzman position us to feel sympathetic towards the toads?
- Does this change your attitude towards them in any way?
- Why can it be a very effective writing device to tell a story through an unexpected point of view?

Activity:

- Choose a scene from the novel and re-write it through the eyes of a different character – animal or human. How does the scene change when told through a different character’s perspective?

