



# A trip to the Top End

Written by Angela Weeks with additions by Jan Polkinghorne.  
Illustrated by Trent Lambert.

**SPELD SA**  
**Phonic Book Series**

# Learning to read

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SPELD SA Phonic Books support the teaching of reading by using a structured synthetic phonics approach. They are designed to build on the pre-reading skills of oral language and phonological awareness needed for reading success. The books support the learning of letter-sounds and blending in a sequential phonic order, helping students to develop their independent decoding skills. The books also contain limited high frequency words that need to be taught before reading the book. The questions and activities focus on increasing a student's vocabulary and fluency and encourage the student to make deeper connections with the author's message.

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## A trip to the Top End (190 words)

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Before reading the book, use the practice page to:

### 1. Revise the alternative spellings for sounds

### 2. Teach the blending of letter-sounds in regular words

The student points to each letter or combination of letters, saying the sound they represent. Swipe left to right under the letters, saying the sounds quickly and smoothly together to read the word. e.g. *s-t-r-i-ke* is 'strike'; *r-i-s-k-y* is 'risky'; *t-a-s-te-s* is 'tastes'.

During single word practice, check that the student understands the meaning of the word.

If the student is having difficulty hearing the word when blending:

- repeat the sounds more than once in succession to help the student 'hear' the word
- model stretching the sounds together without pauses, e.g. *nnnniiiiip*, is 'nip'
- use letter tiles and push them together while saying the sounds.

### 3. Teach the high frequency words

Tell the student the words and determine any 'tricky' parts by breaking up the word into its sounds. Many high frequency words will be able to be sounded out later as the student learns more sounds and how they are written.

## Reading tips

A combination of letters can represent a sound, such as in boat (b-oa-t), song (s-o-ng), fern (f-er-n), shout (sh-ou-t), or night (n-igh-t).

A sound can be written as different letters or letter combinations, such as the sound /ai/ in 'rain', 'play', 'make', the sound /ee/ in 'sleep', 'heat', 'happy' and the sound /ou/ in 'shout' and 'brown'.

A letter or letter combination can also represent different sounds, such as <ow> in 'how' and 'grow' or <y> in 'yellow', 'try' and 'mystery'.

Words can contain split vowel digraphs, such as in 'make', 'eve', 'bite', 'note' and 'tune'.

The suffix <ed> can represent the sound /d/ as in 'rubbed', /t/ as in 'packed' and /id/ as in 'landed'.

Words can contain schwa vowel sounds. The schwa is pronounced as an /uh/ sound, such as in, 'Nana', 'butter', 'across', 'the'. Explore with the student which part of the word has the schwa sound by breaking the word into its sounds. Take note of how the schwa sound is spelt.

## Practice page

Set 8 includes words with alternate spellings for the sounds /ai/, /ee/, /ie/, /oa/ and /ue/.

Practise blending sounds in words

y /ee/	risky	muddy	sleepy
a-e /ai/	mates	make	
i-e /ie/	strike	crocodile	reptile
o-e /oa/	home		
u-e /ue/	used		
a /ai/	tastes	baby	
e /ee/	he	be	

Practise high frequency words

the	to	you	of
after	saw	their	are
before	when	hatching	meat
Australia			

# Vocabulary

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The words on this page can be used to help the student's comprehension before, during or after reading the book. Link the meanings of words with what the student already knows, show examples or have students act out the words.

**shot** – photo

**predator** – an animal that hunts, kills and eats other animals

**reptile** – an animal that uses the heat of the sun to keep its blood warm, lays eggs and often has scaly skin

**risky** – a high possibility that something bad might happen

**soaking up** – making the most of something

**strike** – attack quickly

**Web** – Internet

**product** – the result of a manufacturing process

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## Help with syllables

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Dar/win

sleep/y

croc/o/diles

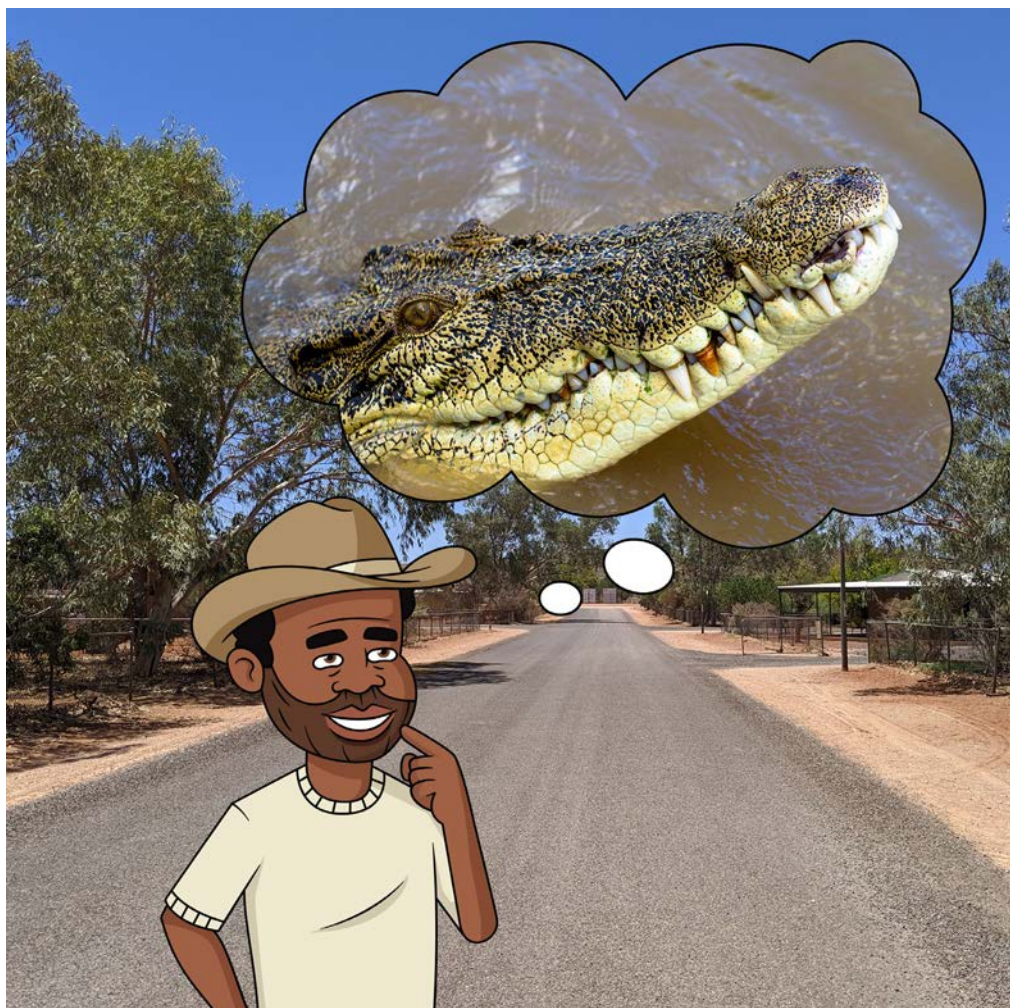
pred/a/tor

vis/i/ted

per/son

hand/bags

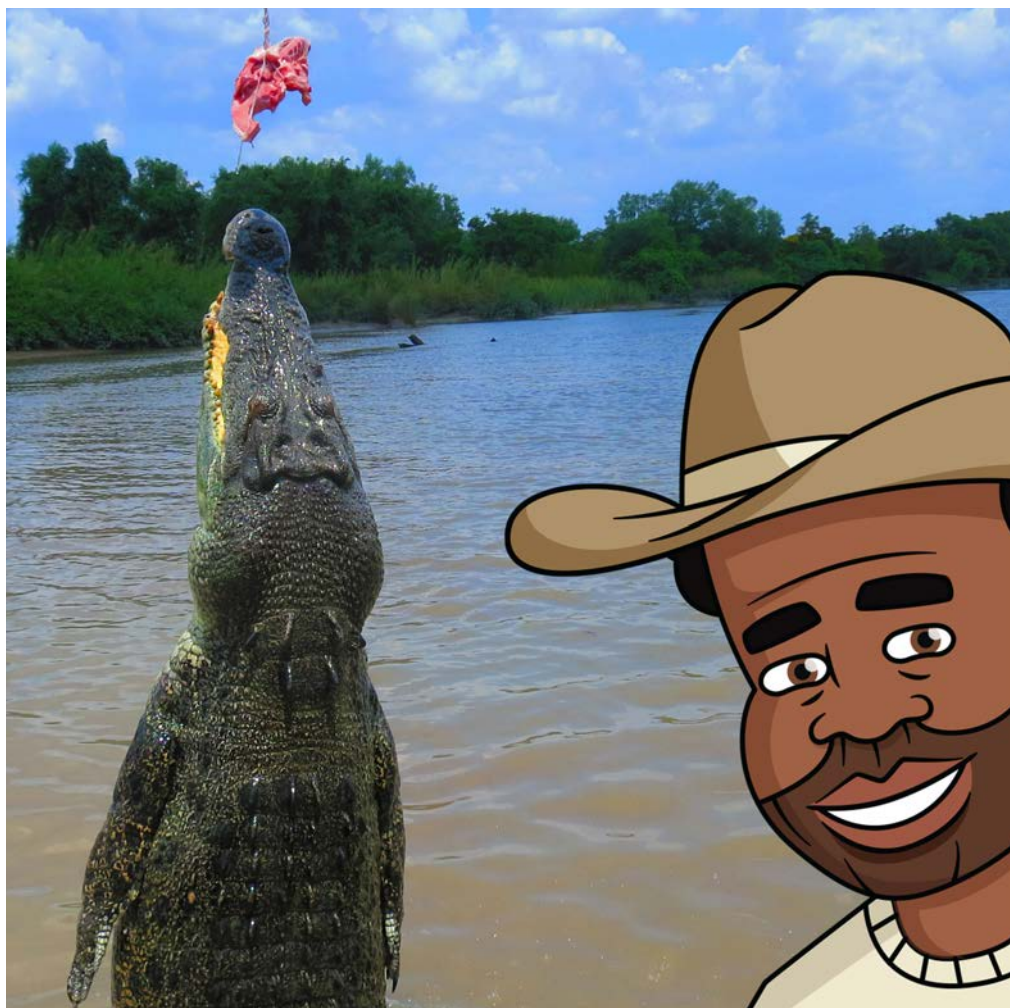




Bob's big wish was to film  
Australia's top predator, the big  
croc.



He took the train to Darwin and then a bus to Fogg Dam for the boat trip. Can you see Darwin and Fogg Dam on the map?



It is best to see these big reptiles from a boat. They swim up to the boat, jump up and snap at food.





Bob took this shot of a sleepy croc soaking up the sun on the muddy riverbank. It is risky for a person to be on the riverbank, as crocodiles can strike quickly before a person can react.

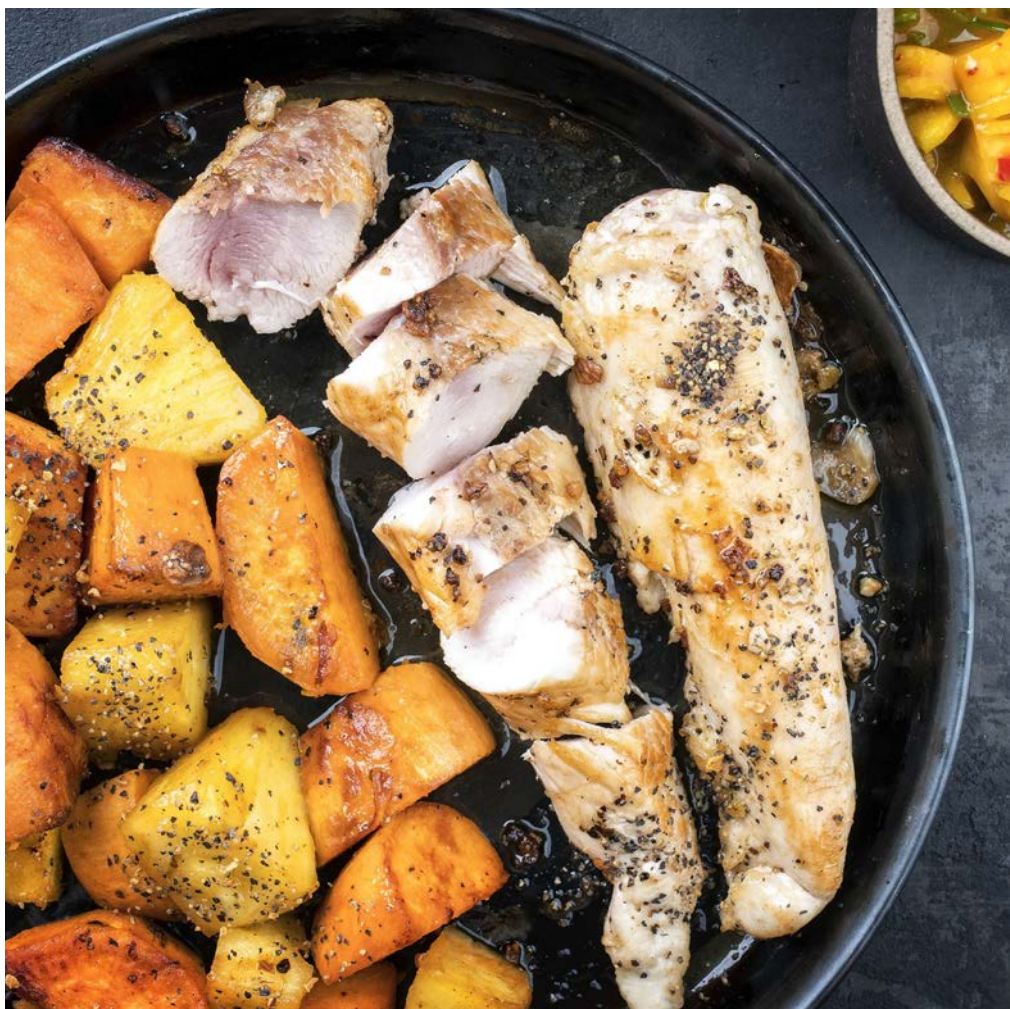




After the boat trip, Bob visited a crocodile farm and saw thousands of crocodiles. This is Bob's shot of a baby croc hatching out from its egg. It will be an adult in 24 weeks.



Bob found out that crocodiles are farmed for their skins and their meat.



The skins are used to make products such as handbags, hats and belts. Crocodile meat tastes a bit like chicken.





Bob was happy. When he got home, he loaded his shots of crocodiles on the Web for his mates to see.

# From blending to fluency

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To develop fluency, the student needs to re-read the same book multiple times. Students might initially sound out every word and re-read every sentence but, with practice, blending will become more automatic. The fluency chart can be used to develop automaticity of blending by providing single word blending practice.

While reading the book, the student:

- blends the sounds of each unknown word in the sentence
- identifies and reads high frequency words
- re-reads the sentence from the beginning
- discusses the meaning of the sentence

When finished, the student needs to re-read the whole book and practise reading the same book until they can read at a steady pace with minimal sounding out.

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## Making connections - questions and discussion

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After the student has read the book, or the relevant page, ask them one or more of the following questions and discuss:

1. Do you have a place that you would like to visit?  
Talk about what you would like to see there.
2. Talk about how crocodiles behave and why it's risky for people to see crocodiles from the riverbank.
3. Why was Bob feeling happy at the end of the story?
4. Describe a crocodile. The story gives you some clues.  
Have you seen a crocodile? Or maybe do some research or see a film about crocodiles.
5. Crocodile babies are adults in 24 weeks. How long does it take a human to become an adult? And other animals?

## Fluency chart

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web

egg

end

that

such

boat

shot

wish

bank

trip

snap

river

belts

adult

skins

react

risky

sleepy

person

quickly

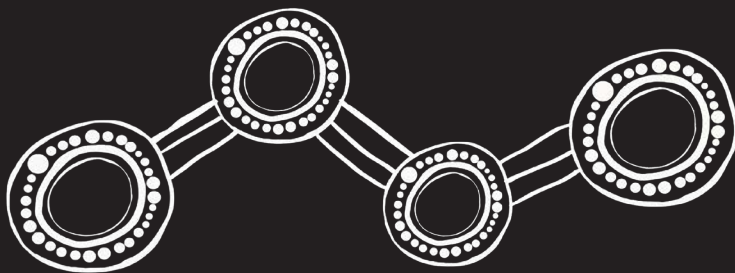
strike

reptile

predator

crocodile





## Cover artwork by Elizabeth Close

Elizabeth Close is an Anangu woman from the Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara language groups in the APY Lands in outback South Australia. She was born in Adelaide and spent much of her upbringing in remote communities, learning her language and receiving cultural education.

*'This artwork represents the literacy and numeracy learning journey, and the path towards independent learning. The circles represent the collaborative learning and supports around children with specific learning difficulties, including children, schools, families, SPELD SA and others.'* **Elizabeth Close**, Artist.

## About this series

The SPELD SA Phonic Book Series complements the teaching of reading and writing using a structured synthetic phonics approach. SPELD SA aims to help Aboriginal students engage with phonic books by having characters, content and settings that reflect Aboriginal communities. In developing this series, SPELD SA has consulted with people who live and work in the Anangu, Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands. We understand that the content, settings and characters may not reflect all Aboriginal people and their experiences but hope that Aboriginal students learning to read can find some familiarity in and connection with these books in their literacy journey.

Each set of books introduces a group of sounds for students to blend to read words. The books with a single star icon on the front cover contain a lower word count and less high frequency words. The books with two stars contain a higher word count, a greater number of high frequency words and/or more complex word structure. Please consider your student's ability when choosing a book for them to read. For a comprehensive explanation of the structure of the series, please refer to the SPELD SA website.

## Acknowledgments

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**Government of  
South Australia**

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SPELD SA is grateful for the contributions of volunteers for: consultation and project development; writing texts, comprehension questions, charts and games; illustrating, photography and graphic design; character development and cultural advice; speech and language advice. This is a wide community project, with talents, expertise and knowledge being shared for a common purpose – to improve literacy. Thank you all.

Book design by Tricia Smith Design, compilation and additional design by Janet Stone.

SPELD SA Phonic Books follow the sequence of letter-sounds used in the Jolly Phonics synthetic phonics program. The books can be used with other phonics programs.

Set 1	<b>s, a, t, p, i, n</b>
Set 2	<b>c, k, ck, e, h, r, m, d</b>
Set 3	<b>g, o, u, l, f, b</b>
Set 4	<b>ai, j, oa, ie, ee, or</b>
Set 5	<b>z, w, ng, v, oo (book), oo (room)</b>
Set 6	<b>y, x, sh, ch, th (think), th (that)</b>
Set 7	<b>qu, ou, oi, ue, er, ar</b>
Set 8	<b>y (sunny), a (apron), a-e (cake), e (female), e-e (eve), i (silent), i-e (kite), o (open), o-e (home), u (student), u-e (tune)</b>
Set 9	<b>ay (play), ey (they), oy (toy), y (mystery), ea (dream), ie (chief), y (dry), igh (night)</b>
Set 10	<b>oe (toe), ow (rainbow), ow (now), ir (bird), ur (turn), ew (few), au (launch), aw (paw), al (talk)</b>



**Specific Learning  
Difficulties SA**

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