

PM

Oliver loves going to the zoo, and this time, he also has a chance to win a competition – if he can visit all the animals on his entry form in time. While Oliver and his little sister, Maddy, are looking for the armadillos, they come across a strange enclosure at the back of the zoo, with an unusual animal inside.



Narrative

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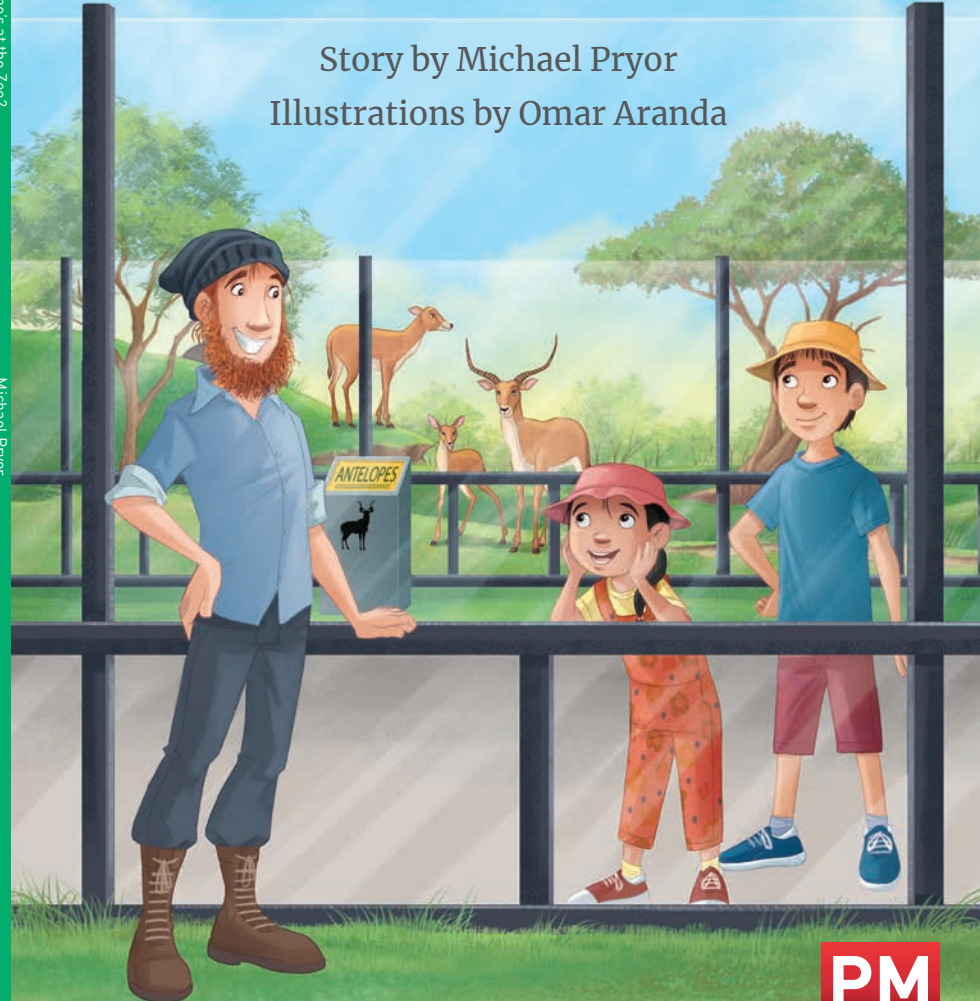
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Nelson

Level
25

Who's at the Zoo?

Story by Michael Pryor
Illustrations by Omar Aranda



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Chapter 1

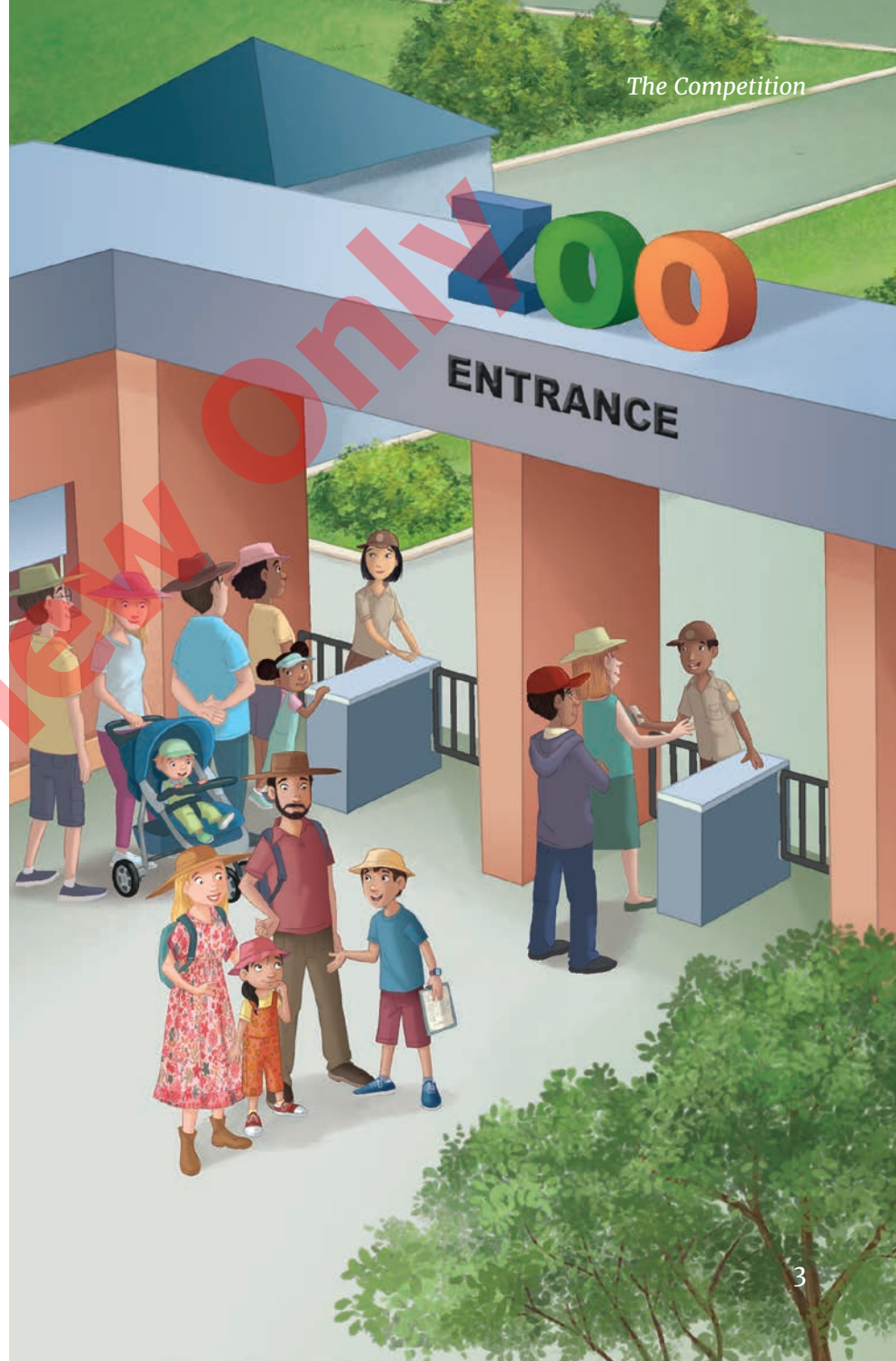
The Competition



My sister, Maddy, counts everything. She counts the flowers on the wallpaper. She counts the flakes in the cornflakes box. She counts the hairs in Grandpa's nose. Everything! I know she's only five, but this counting *really* gets on my nerves, sometimes. Like the time we went to one of my favourite places – the zoo.

You know how you really look forward to something and then it all goes wrong? It happens to me all the time, and our zoo trip really started going wrong when we got through the crowded zoo entrance. Mum said, "Oliver."

When I heard that, I knew it was trouble. It's always trouble when she calls me "Oliver."



"Oliver," Mum repeated. "We have a job for you. We know how much you like the zoo, so we want you to look after Maddy and show her all the interesting animals."

Mum explained, "Your father and I want to draw some animals. Make sure you stay close to us, and keep an eye on Maddy."

Mum and Dad are always drawing. Rocks, trees, bits of sky, that sort of stuff. They even used to make *me* hang *their* drawings up on the fridge. Parents! I just can't understand them, sometimes.

"But, but, but – the competition!" I spluttered. "I can't look after Maddy *and* fill out the competition entry form at the same time!"

The competition was the whole reason I'd suggested the zoo trip. It was a chance to win a Lifetime Gold Pass to the zoo, just by answering some questions about zoo animals. When I grow up, I'd like to work with animals, so walking around the zoo is my idea of a good time.



"I'll help you, Ollie," Maddy said. "I'll count all the animals for you."

I groaned.

"Don't look so sad, Ollie," Dad said.

"It's going to be a fun day!"

Mum and Dad started to wander off with their sketchbooks and pencils.

I'd seen the results of Mum and Dad's drawings before. Their trees looked like blobs with leaves. Their hills looked like blobs with trees. Their people looked like blobs with hair.

It was good they had a hobby, I supposed.

"Hey," I called to them, after checking my competition form. "The leopards would be good to draw." I took Maddy's hand. "This way!"

Mum and Dad turned to follow us, and we were on our way.

