

Whale Coast Caper

by Niki Daly • illustrated by Pappy Onwuagbu

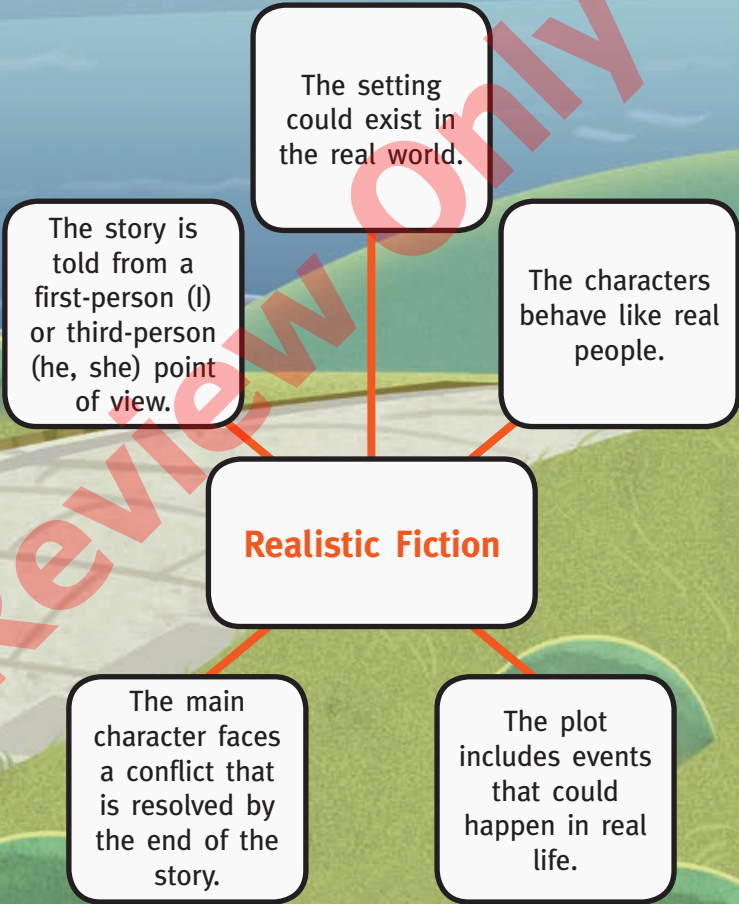


**REALISTIC FICTION
LITERATURE**

Level R/40
Lexile® 670L

Realistic Fiction

Look for the genre features noted below as you read this book. Use the features to help you understand the text.



© Benchmark Education Company, LLC. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. ©
Printed in Guangzhou, China. xxx-xx-xxxx

LEXILE® is a trademark of MetaMetrics, Inc., and is registered in the United States and abroad.

E-books and additional digital resources available at benchmarkuniverse.com.

ISBN: 978-1-5322-8010-8

Toll-Free 1-877-236-2465
www.benchmarkeducation.com
www.benchmarkuniverse.com

BENCHMARK EDUCATION COMPANY
145 Huguenot Street • New Rochelle, NY • 10801

Destination: South Africa

When Cyrus's dad said they were going to Africa, Cyrus pictured a safari with lions and elephants. But when Cyrus told his dad that, he laughed and said, "No, no—we'll be staying with your aunt Sandra outside of Cape Town. It's a big city on the southwest coast of South Africa."

His dad would be writing about South Africa for *Far Away*, the travel magazine he worked for, and Cyrus would hang out with his aunt Sandra and cousin Flip.

The flight from San Diego, California, to Cape Town was going to be almost a full day. Luckily, Cyrus had a new game to play, and his skateboard and helmet were safely stowed away.

When they arrived, they were jet-lagged. Cyrus could hardly stay awake, even though it was the morning. As Dad drove them from the airport to their hotel, Cyrus nodded off. He dreamed about a view of the ocean and a beautiful pool.

When Dad woke him, Cyrus saw a large house with a sign that said Rock House Bed & Breakfast. True, it had a view of the ocean, but he was disappointed when he didn't see a pool. "Where are we?" Cyrus asked, still groggy.

“We’re about thirty miles south, on the Whale Coast. This is your aunt Sandra’s bed-and-breakfast.”

As they pulled up to the house, Aunt Sandra came out the front door waving. “Hi, Sandra,” Dad said, hugging her. Aunt Sandra hadn’t seen Cyrus since she moved to South Africa when he was a baby. But they video-chatted often.

“Hi, Cyrus. Welcome to the undiscovered Jewel of the Cape,” Aunt Sandra said. “It’s called that because of all the flowers.”

Cyrus looked around and thought, *There are a lot of flowers.*

“Your cousin Flip is around here somewhere. You’ll see him later,” said Aunt Sandra. “Let’s get you settled. You look as if you’ve been traveling for a week.”



Cyrus took another nap. After he woke, he looked out the window and saw a boy, a little older than him, skateboarding on the driveway below. *That must be Flip.* He grabbed his helmet and skateboard and went downstairs.

“Hey, Cyrus, welcome to South Africa,” said Flip. “I see that you skate, too. Let’s see what you can do with your board.”

Cyrus gave him a broad smile and kicked off. He would’ve pulled off a perfect ollie, but he didn’t do well when he was being watched. So instead of lifting into the air, Cyrus clunked the board heavily onto the ground.

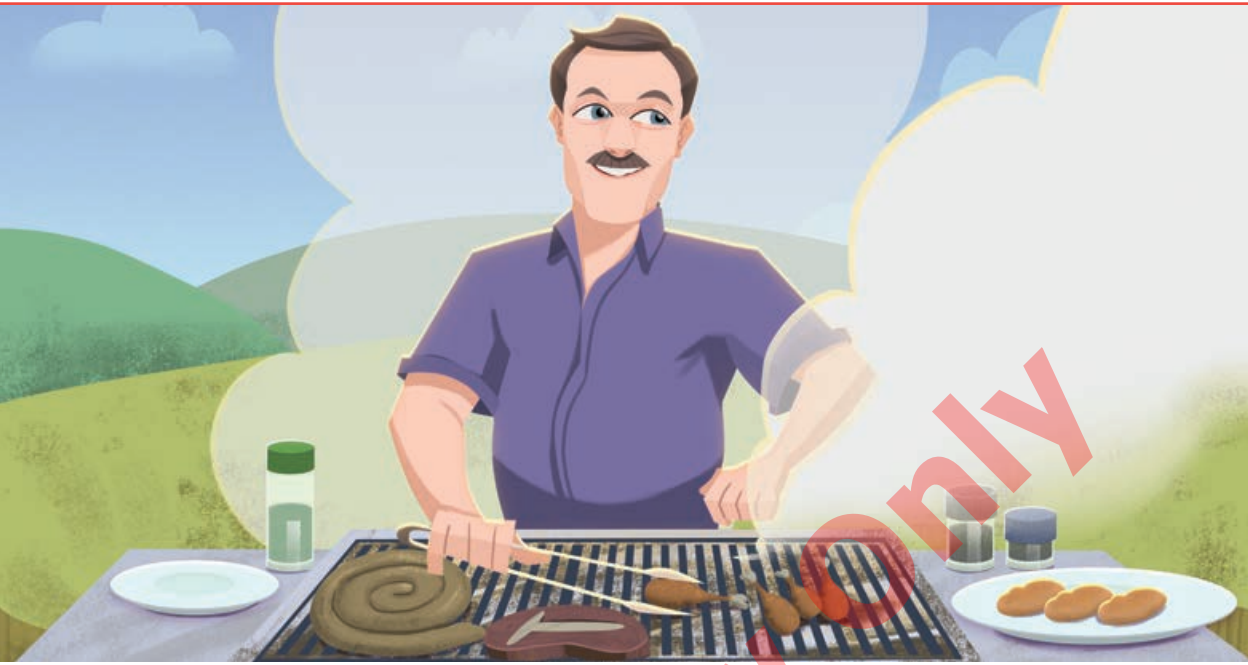
“Pretty good, bro,” said Flip, pulling up beside him. “Are you excited to see the Whale Coast?”

“What is there to do here?” asked Cyrus.

“The Whale Coast is awesome,” said Flip. “There’s a path that’s really good for skating that runs along the coast. You can meet my best friend, Lizo.”

When the boys went out to the patio, they saw a big man barbecuing meat. Aunt Sandra and Cyrus’s dad were helping him. “Jan Lekhart ... Detective Lekhart ... call me Lucky,” he said, shaking Cyrus’s hand. “I’m with the Wildlife Protection Squad.”

“Lucky’s investigating a gang of poachers,” Aunt Sandra explained.



“It’s a terrible crime,” said Lekhart. “Abalone are an endangered species. In a decade, there may be none left.”

“What’s abalone?” Cyrus asked.

“An abalone looks like a clam. It’s a kind of mollusk, which, like abalone, can have shells,” explained Lekhart. “It’s very tasty when cooked properly. Pirates pay a fortune for abalone. They can sell for upward of two hundred dollars a pound in China, where it’s considered a special treat. The poor fishermen along this coast have to do what they can to earn a living, so many of them catch abalone illegally and sell them to poachers who then sell them to the pirates.”

“What happens if they’re caught?” asked Dad.

“Big fines and prison time,” said Lekhart, “Up to fifteen years.”

When Cyrus woke up the next morning, Dad was packing his backpack. “Where’re you going?” Cyrus asked, rubbing sleep from his eyes.

“We are going on a nature walk after breakfast,” said Dad. “There are some famous botanical gardens near here with these huge flowers that will blow you away.”

As they were heading down to breakfast, Dad’s phone rang. “Go ahead and eat. It’s my boss. I need to take this.”

When Dad came downstairs he was frowning. “We have to leave. I have to go to Cape Town for some interviews with the top hotels. It’s going to involve a bit of hanging around for you,” Dad said.

Cyrus didn’t jump at the offer. “Aw, Dad! Can’t I stay here with Flip?” he asked. “He was going to show me the skateboard trail.”

“Cyrus, I can’t leave you here alone.”

Aunt Sandra overheard them. “Cyrus can stay with us,” she said as she brought Dad a cup of coffee. “Flip has a bunk bed.”

“What do you think?” asked Dad, eyebrows raised. “I’ll be gone only for a few days.” But there was no need to ask. Cyrus nodded enthusiastically.

As Dad got ready to go, Cyrus tried a traditional South African breakfast.

“Bye!” said Dad. “I’ll be gone for only three days, and I’ll call you every evening. Listen to your aunt Sandra.”

After breakfast, Cyrus moved his stuff into Flip’s room. “So what do you want to do, coz?” asked Flip.

“Check out that coastal path!” said Cyrus, grabbing his skateboard.



Woza Woza

The coastal path was smooth and long—perfect for skating, with surprise bends and unexpected dips. When Cyrus and Flip reached the beach, the boys stashed their boards in the lifeguard's hut.

“Hey, Flip!” called a tall, lanky teen with a smile as wide as the horizon.

“Hey, Lizo!” Flip greeted his friend. “This is my cousin Cyrus, from California, U.S.A.” Lizo gave Cyrus a handshake that totally confused Cyrus; Lizo gripped his hand, gave it a shake, and grabbed Cyrus's thumb.

“What are you doing during the holiday?” Flip asked Lizo as they scaled a dune.

“Practicing our gumboot dance routine for the talent show,” said Lizo.

“Gumboot dance?” asked Cyrus.

“One of our dances,” explained Lizo. “We wear gumboots, which we slap with our hands, and stamp our feet to make a beat.” Cyrus looked bewildered.

“Gumboots are tall rubber boots,” explained Flip. “You know, you wear them when it rains.”

Cyrus shrugged. In Southern California, it barely rained at all.

“Our group is called Woza Woza, which means ‘Come! Come!’” in the Zulu language said Lizo. “You should come-come and check us out. We’re practicing at my house today.”

As they entered Overhills, the neighborhood where Lizo lived, Cyrus’s eyes widened. A few houses were built with bricks, but mostly it was a village of shacks and painted shipping containers turned into small shops. No shack was the same—no space wasted. Kids played ball in narrow lanes, and scrawny dogs frolicked alongside them. So much life!

