

Journey to the River Sea - Eva Ibbotson

Lesson 1

Before reading...

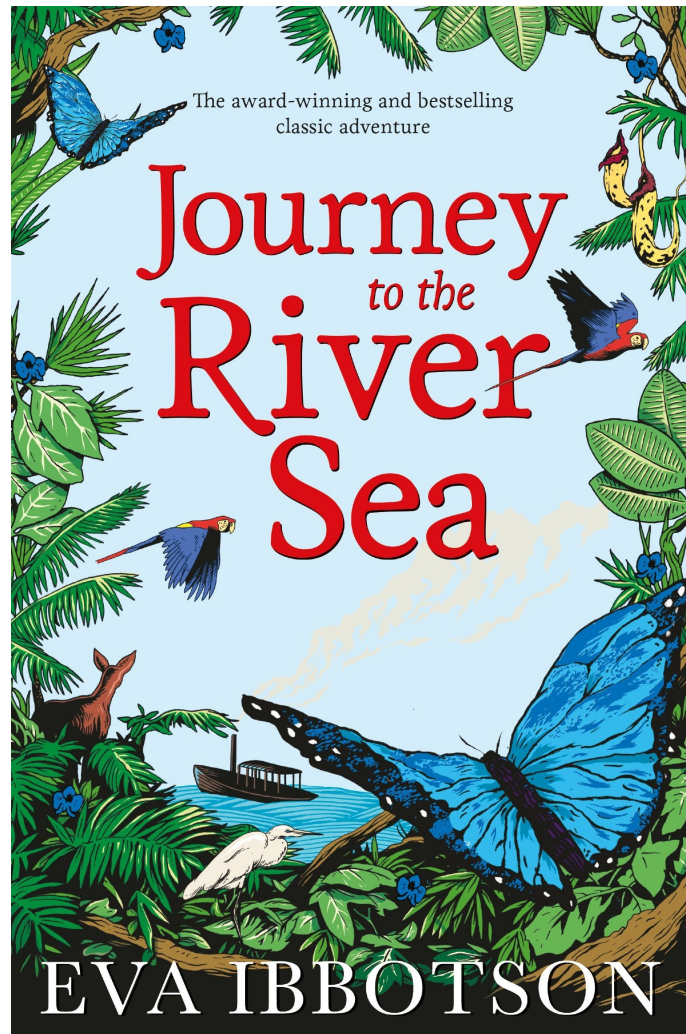
Look at the front cover.

- What do you think the book will be about?
- What things can you see on the front cover?
- What sort of story will it be?
- Who might enjoy it?

Now read the blurb...

- Were any of your predictions correct?

Front Cover



The Opening Lines

It was a good school, one of the best in London.

Miss Banks and her sister Emily believed that girls should be taught as thoroughly and as carefully as boys. They had bought three houses in a quiet square, a pleasant place with plane trees and well-behaved pigeons, and put up a brass plate saying: THE MAYFAIR ACADEMY FOR YOUNG LADIES – and they had prospered.

For while the sisters prized proper learning, they also prized good manners, thoughtfulness and care for others, and the girls learnt both algebra and needlework. Moreover, they took in children whose parents were abroad and needed somewhere to spend the holidays. Now, some thirty years later, in the autumn of 1910, the school had a waiting list, and those girls who went there knew how lucky they were.

All the same, there were times when they were very bored.

Miss Carlisle was giving a Geography lesson in the big classroom which faced the street. She was a good teacher, but even the best teachers have trouble trying to make the Rivers of Southern England seem unusual and exciting.

'Now can anyone tell me the exact source of the River Thames?' she asked.

She passed her eyes along the rows of desks, missed the plump Hermione, the worried-looking Daisy – and stopped by a girl in the front row.

'Don't chew the end of your pigtail,' she was about to say, but she did not say it. For it was a day when this particular girl had a right to chew the curved ends of her single heavy plait of hair. Maia had seen the motor stop outside the door, had seen old Mr Murray in his velvet-collared coat go into the house. Mr Murray was Maia's guardian and today, as everyone knew, he was bringing news about her future.

Maia raised her eyes to Miss Carlisle and struggled to concentrate. In the room full of fair and light brown heads, she stood out, with her pale triangular face, her widely spaced dark eyes. Her ears, laid bare by the heavy rope of black hair, gave her an unprotected look.

Comprehension

Use the extract above to help you answer these questions:

1. What was the name of the school the children went to?
2. What year is this book set?
3. What subject were they studying?
4. In what city is the River Thames?
5. What news was Mr Murray bringing Maia?
6. Why did Maia stand out in the class?
7. How does the writer build excitement in this opening?
8. What do we learn about the main characters from this passage?
9. How do you feel about Maia after reading this extract?
10. Describe Maia in your own words.

Vocabulary

1. Thoroughly
2. Source
3. Proper
4. Guardian
5. Abroad
6. Peculiar
7. Emigrate
8. Nameless
9. Heroine
10. Grimey
11. Farewell
12. Tremendous
13. Shriek
14. Gulp
15. Fortunate
16. Undisturbed
17. Phrase
18. Tremble
19. Pimple
20. Fond

HOMEWORK

How does the writer build **tensions** at the start of the book?

OR

Write a **short story** using **at least 5 new words** (above) that we learned from these chapters.