

level
A2

READING ACTIVITY 1/7



ALL CREATURES GREAT AND SMALL

INTRODUCTION

All Creatures Great and Small by James Herriot is the unusual story of a young vet who gets a job in Britain's wild and windy Yorkshire Dales. The story is set between 1937 and 1989.

The author loved and respected animals, but his work and his adventures were not always easy. He used his real experiences as a vet with all kinds of animals, farmers and pet owners to write his interesting stories. This book has inspired several TV series, films, a play and children's stories.

PREDICTION • WHAT DO YOU THINK?

1. Are the following sentences true (T) or false (F)?

1. James Herriot did not like the weather in the Yorkshire Dales. T F
2. Herriot was a kind man with animals, but he was impatient with the farmers and owners of pets. T F
3. During his work as a vet, Herriot had money problems. T F
4. People in the Yorkshire Dales were not very friendly. T F
5. Herriot was able to start his own family in the Yorkshire Dales. T F

Mark your answers and when you finish reading the story, check them to see if you predicted correctly.



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READING ACTIVITY

Part 1 – Read the excerpt and then do the activity below.

The story is told in the first person by the young vet, James Herriot.

One winter night in 1937, I was helping a cow to give birth¹. I was lying next to the cow on a cold, dirty barn floor because it couldn't stand up. Snow was coming into the barn too, and falling on my back. The birth wasn't going well because the calf was in the wrong position² to be born. Again and again, I tried to turn the calf around. It was very hard work, but I couldn't have a rest. Some farmers were standing in the barn and watching...and they weren't helping.

'If it isn't born soon, it'll die,' one farmer said. I didn't need him to tell me that! 'The last vet had lots of experience.' And old man said, 'Births were easy for him. Are you new at this job?'

'Yes,' I answered. 'It's been seven months.'

The old man smiled³. 'The last vet knew what to do, alright,' he said. 'But you're having problems. You can't learn everything from books you know.'

Many Yorkshire farmers talked like this. They thought they knew more about animals than vets. But the old man was probably right: I did have a lot to learn. The year before, when I was studying at veterinary college, the teacher didn't tell us how difficult a vet's life can be. They didn't talk about getting up at 2 a.m. and driving miles in the snow, then walking over fields in the dark to work in a freezing⁴ cold barn.

(from Chapter 1)

- 1 **give birth** : (phr v) to have a baby
- 2 **position** : where you are or how your body is
- 3 **smiled** : how your mouth looks when you're happy
- 4 **freezing** : very cold



READING ACTIVITY

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2. Circle the correct answer.

1. One night the vet was *sitting/lying* next to a cow in a *big field/cold barn*.
2. The birth was not going well because the calf was *too big/in the wrong position*.
3. The farmers in the barn were *helping the young vet/looking at the young vet*.
4. The young vet *knew a lot of things/had a lot to learn*.
5. The teacher at the college did not say anything about the difficulties of a *farmer's life/vet's life*.

QUICK QUIZ!

3. WATCH THE VIDEO (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vI58dhyF_LY).

Then complete the sentences with the correct word: **LOOK AFTER, LOOK AT, LOOK FOR.**

1. He can't find his shoes. He must them.
2. The kind vet his animals.
3. Come here and this beautiful picture!
4. The teacher the children in the playground.
5. I lost my pet cat! Please help me it!
6. Come to the window and the snow!



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PART 2

Read the excerpt and then do the activity.

The young vet is now working for Siegfried at the veterinary surgery at Skeldale House.

The Yorkshire Dales did look wild¹ from up there on the hill. Big rocks² lay here and there, and there was dark mountain above us. But the air was fresh, and I could smell³ the summer flowers. The birds were singing, and the river in the valley below was bright silver in the evening light. It felt great to be in the countryside after years in a big, dirty city. So I took the job immediately. But Siegfried was right—it wasn't easy to be a Yorkshire Dales vet! My first day in the job didn't start well. I went to a big farm to look at a horse, and Mr Soames, the farm manager, was waiting for me when I arrived. His first words were an angry 'You're late!' When I saw the horse, I knew that it was very ill. I looked at the animal carefully, then said, 'We can't do anything for this horse, Mr Soames. It's dying.' Soames was really angry when he heard that. 'This is a very expensive horse,' he said, 'It wins races, you know...and you say you can't do anything! That's not good enough!' 'I'm really sorry,' I said. And I was—it was a beautiful animal, but there was no way to help it. 'You're new and you don't know anything!' Soames said when I left. 'Siegfried is a good friend, and I'm going to talk to him about you. If you're wrong about that horse, you'll be sorry!'

(from Chapter 2)

- 1 **wild** : not easy to live in and far from most people
- 2 **rock** : a big stone
- 3 **smell** : you do this with your nose



READING ACTIVITY

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ODD ONE OUT!

4A. Circle the word that does not belong.

- 1. dirty fresh clean nice
- 2. city nation town village
- 3. pleased angry upset worried
- 4. beautiful attractive ugly pretty
- 5. high-priced costly cheap expensive

4B. Complete the sentences with the odd words.

- 1. The scary monster was very
- 2. The price of the tickets was
- 3. The dark streets in the big city were
- 4. She was with the big gift.
- 5. Great Britain is an important

QUICK QUIZ!

5. Complete the table with the past simple of the verbs.

VERB	PAST SIMPLE
1. feel
2. leave
3. know
4. hear
5. see
6. win

