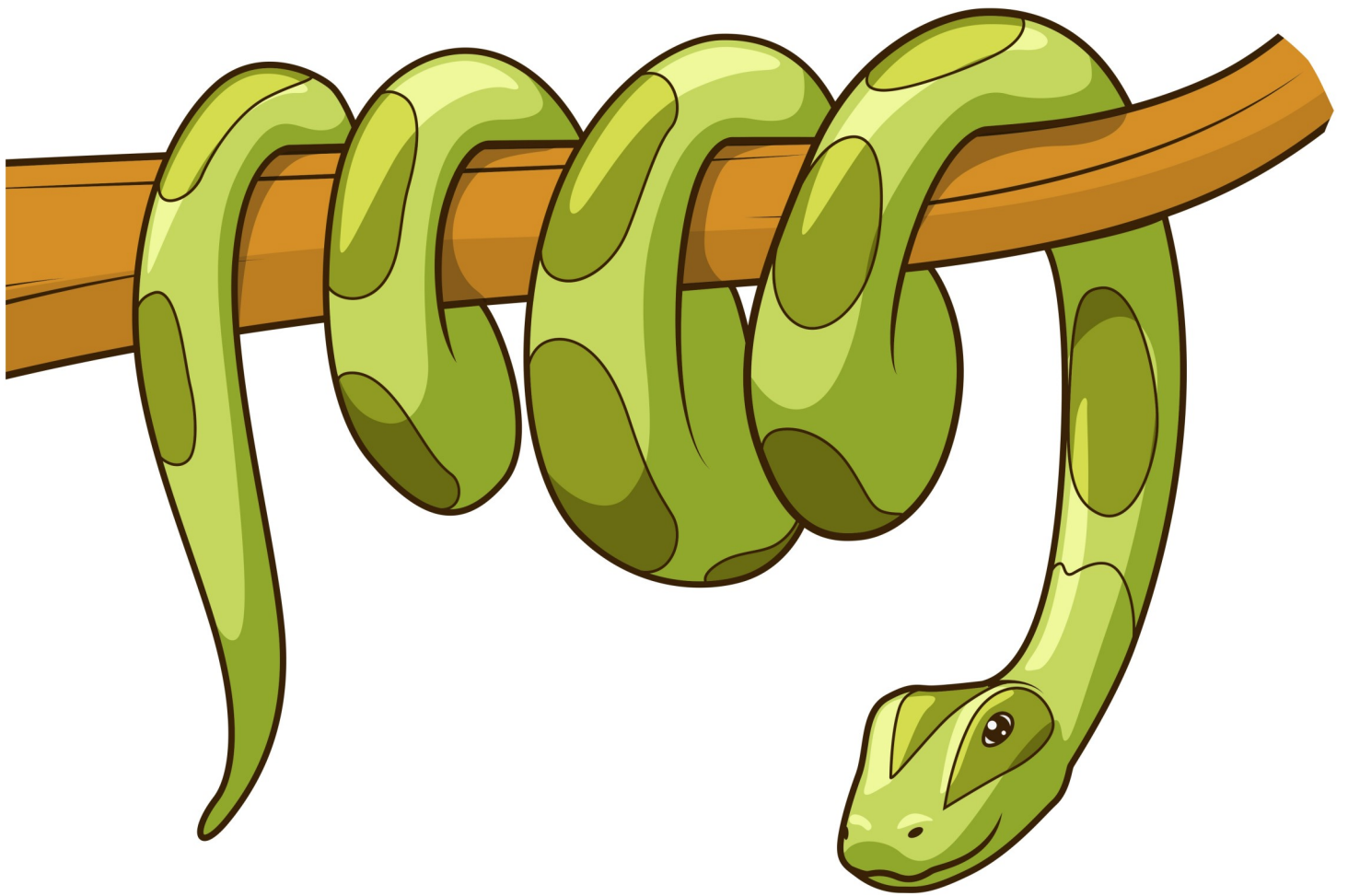


# Lake of the Big Snake



*Unit Study*

# Lake of the Big Snake Unit Study

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Unit study prepared by Celia Hartmann

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## **Social Studies: Nigeria, Africa**

Locate Nigeria on a map. Print out a map and flag. Nigeria is part of West Africa. It is about twice the size of the state of California. Discuss the varied terrain and climate of Nigeria, explaining terms where necessary. In southern Nigeria are lowlands and the climate is equatorial. Central Nigeria has hills and plateaus and the weather is tropical. Northern Nigeria has plains and is arid. (Source: *Visualize World Geography in 7 Minutes a Day* by Theresa A. Blain)

## **Social Studies/Science: African Rain Forest**

Explain to your student that a tropical rain forest is an environment that has lots of tall trees and receives lots of rain (160 to 400 inches each year!). Show him on a globe that tropical rain forests exist in Africa, Australia, Asia, and Central and South America. Not all of Africa is a rain forest. The African rain forest makes up only about a fifth of the continent.

## **Relationships: Best Friends**

In this story, the two boys were best friends, as were their mothers. What makes a person a "best" friend? Can you have more than one best friend? Discuss friendships with your student. You may also want to discuss that there may be times during your student's life when they won't have a "best" friend.

## **Relationships: Peer Pressure**

Discuss peer pressure with your student. Peer pressure can be defined as the influences that people of the same age or rank have on each other. This can be positive or negative. Discuss positive and negative influences with your student. Discuss the importance/necessity of learning to stand alone even when others are doing what is wrong. You may want to include the Bible story of Daniel in this discussion. Daniel prayed three times a day at his window even when it wasn't popular. It got him thrown into a den of Lions (yikes!). There are more instances when Daniel did what was right even when others were pressuring him to do what was wrong. He would be a great character study.

## History: Explorers & Missionaries of West Africa

This would be a great time to discuss different explorers and missionaries of West Africa. Choose one of the following to research: Richard Lemon Lander, Mary Kingsley, Mary Slessor, Samuel Crowther, or Mongo Park.

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## Language Arts: Alliteration

Alliteration is the repetition of the same initial consonant sound. Here are some examples from the book:

babbling brook

sudden splash sent ripples across the still lake

snake slithered smoothly

waiting, watching

stopped bickering and began

limb landed limply

Can your student create an example of alliteration?

## Language Arts: Vocabulary

Read author's note for definitions unfamiliar words.

## Language Arts: Parts of a Story

Most stories include the same basic components: characters (who the story is about), setting (where the story takes place), conflict (problems between characters), and a solution (also called the denouement, it is how the characters solved the problems). Ask your child to identify all the parts of *Lake of the Big Snake*.

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## Math: Patterns

The African people use lots of different colors and shapes in their decorations. Use

magnetic pattern blocks to make designs and/or patterns for your child to copy. Allow him or her to make their own designs and patterns for you copy.

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### **Art: Make Dashikis**

Buy 45-inch African print fabric. Measure the length from your shoulder to desired hem. Double that number and add 2 inches for the hem. That is the length of fabric needed. Supplies needed: sewing machine, needle and thread, or tacky glue

- 1) Wash the fabric to preshrink and press.
- 2) Fold up an inch hem on both cut edges of the fabric. Stitch or glue it down to prevent unraveling.
- 3) Fold the fabric in half, wrong sides together, with the finished edges (selvedges) together and the sewn hems together.
- 4) For the neck hole, cut a slit along the top center fold about 10 inches across. From the center of the slit, on the front edge only, cut 10 inches towards the hem. Slip this over the head. If it won't fit, make small adjustments to the slits until it does.
- 5) Fold the front edges down in a V-shape to make a narrow edge around the neck. Stitch or glue in place.
- 6) Pin a seam on both side of the length about 8 inches from each outside edge. Stop the seam 18 inches from the top edge. Try on the dashiki. Adjust the seams to allow the garment to fit. Finish sewing or gluing.

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### **Science: Magnets**

*"...the boys galloped toward the lake as if by a magnet they were pulled."* What is a magnet? A magnet is a piece of iron (or other material) that attracts other iron or metals. Every magnet has two poles: a north pole and a south pole. These poles are at opposite ends of a magnet. (It helps to pictures the horseshoe-shaped magnets as a bar magnet that has been stretched and bent.) It is these poles that

attract (pulls toward) or repel (pushes away) another object. Like magnetic poles repel each other and unlike poles attract each other. For example, if you bring the north poles of two magnets together, they will repel each other. And if you bring the north pole of one magnet close to the south pole of another magnet, they will attract each other. This behavior is called the Law of Magnetic Poles.

Library List:

*What Makes a Magnet?* by Franklyn Branley

*Magnets* by Janice Van Cleave

*Usborne's Book of Science Activities Volume 1*

### **Science: Quicksand**

Quicksand is a soupy mix of sand and water that can no longer support any weight. Basically sand floating on water. Quicksand will not suck you down in, but if you panic and struggle the movements will cause you to go deeper. If you do not struggle, and you lay on your back, you will float. ([Source](#))

Quicksand is created when water floods or saturates an area of loose sand and the sand begins to move around. Think of quicksand as a soupy mixture of sand and water that is constantly being stirred. When the water in the sandy soil cannot escape, it creates a liquid-like soil that can no longer support any weight. If an excessive amount of water flows through the sand, it forces the sand particles apart. This separation of particles causes the ground to loosen, and any weight on the sand will begin to sink through it.

The quicksand phenomenon can be caused by an uprising of water from something like flowing underground water or even an earthquake where the sand is agitated. You are likely to find quicksand around riverbanks, lake shorelines, marshes, beaches, near underground springs or any place where an uprising of water over saturates and agitates the sand.

The next time you are standing barefoot on the beach, think about the properties of quicksand. Normally, the grains of wet sand are compressed together tightly and this firm ground easily supports your weight. The friction between grains of wet sand is strong enough to make it easy to build sand castles. However, when the sand on the beach is flooded with an excess amount of water, the agitated sand particles begin to move, separate and quickly wash away right from under your feet!

### Additional Information:

Escaping from quicksand according to *The Worst-Case Scenario Survival Handbook*: escaping from quicksand is easier than you might think. Stepping into quicksand is like stepping in a pond of goo. Your weight causes you to sink. A person's natural instinct is to thrash around in an attempt to get out. In fact, this is the worst thing you could do because you only succeed in forcing yourself down farther in the quicksand pit. The best thing to do is to move slowly to bring yourself to the surface, lie back, and try to float on your back. According to the experts, you'll be able to use your arms to slowly paddle to safety.

### **Science: Snakes**

Snakes are cold-blooded reptiles. Cold-blooded means that their bodies do not make their own heat, their bodies are whatever the temperature is around them. From the author's note, we are told that the snake in our story might be anaconda (also known as a water boa).

[Note: Anacondas are in South America, not Africa. I couldn't seem to find any African snakes that fit the author's description. This lends to the idea that this snake only exists in legends. If the snake were an anaconda, it would not have been fooled by the boys throwing the daziki in the water. The anaconda would have still sought the heat of the boys, not the shirt. But we'll discuss anacondas since that is the snake mentioned by the author.]

Anacondas are the heaviest and most powerful snake in the world. They use their tongue to taste and to smell. Their nostrils are positioned on top of their nose so that they can breathe as they swim. An anaconda's sight is not like ours. They see the heat that is put off by various things. For example, the vegetation around them may be dark blue/purple even on a sunny day, but an animal that gives off body heat will show up orange. This makes it pretty hard for the anaconda to miss its prey. Anacondas squeeze their prey until the prey can't breathe. Then they swallow their prey whole. Their jaws open very wide to allow them to swallow things much larger than they are.

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## Bible: Memory Verses

*Friendship:* Proverbs 18:24 A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.

*Forgiveness:* Mark 11:26 But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.

*Obeying Parents:* Col 3:20 Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.

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## Just for Fun: Make West African Benne Cakes

1 cup packed brown sugar  
1/4 cup softened butter  
1 egg, beaten  
1/2 teaspoon vanilla  
1 tsp. lemon juice  
1/2 cup flour  
1/2 tsp. baking powder  
1/4 tsp. salt  
1 cup toasted sesame seeds

Preheat oven to 325. Mix together the sugar and butter until creamy. Stir in the other wet ingredients. Add flour, baking powder, salt, and sesame seeds. Drop by rounded teaspoons (2 inches apart) onto a greased cookie sheet. Bake 15 minutes. Remove promptly from cookie sheet.

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