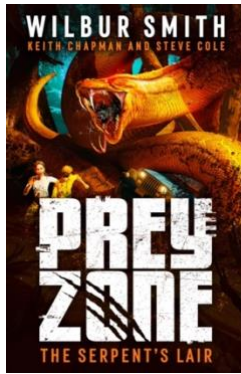
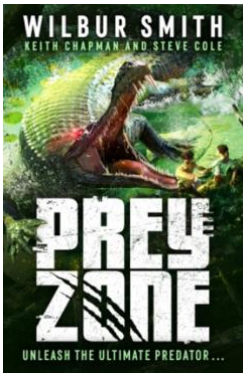


# PREY ZONE

by Wilbur Smith, Keith Chapman and Steve Cole

## TEACHING RESOURCES



## SYNOPSIS

*A thrilling new Wilbur Smith series for the next generation with high action and high stakes - starring teen protagonists Ralph and Robyn Ballantyne.*

Ralph and Robyn live at Crocodile Lodge, their family ranch in South Africa, where they help with the animals, aid the conservation effort and learn the land. That is, until a mysterious predator starts terrorising the reserve.

On the trail for answers, the siblings discover the fearsome culprit: the largest crocodile they've ever seen, uncannily similar to the long-extinct Sarchosuchus Ralph recognises from his favourite game, Predasaur. And when a nearby village is ravaged by a deadly disease, seemingly stemming from a millennia-old animal, the stakes are higher than ever.

As Ralph and Robyn follow the clues, all roads lead them to Crocodile Lodge's infamous neighbour: billionaire tech giant and hunting enthusiast Josef Gerhard. Could it really be that Gerhard is bringing the beastly creatures of Predasaur to life - and at what cost?

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Wilbur Smith** was born in Central Africa in 1933. He became a full-time writer in 1964 following the success of *When the Lion Feeds*, and has since published over fifty global bestsellers, including the Courtney Series, the Ballantyne Series, the Egyptian Series, the Hector Cross Series and many successful standalone novels, all meticulously researched on his numerous expeditions worldwide. An international phenomenon, his readership built up over fifty-five years of writing, establishing him as one of the most successful and impressive brand authors in the world.

The establishment of the Wilbur & Niso Smith Foundation in 2015 cemented Wilbur's passion for empowering writers, promoting literacy and advancing adventure writing as a genre. The foundation's flagship programme is the Wilbur Smith Adventure Writing Prize.

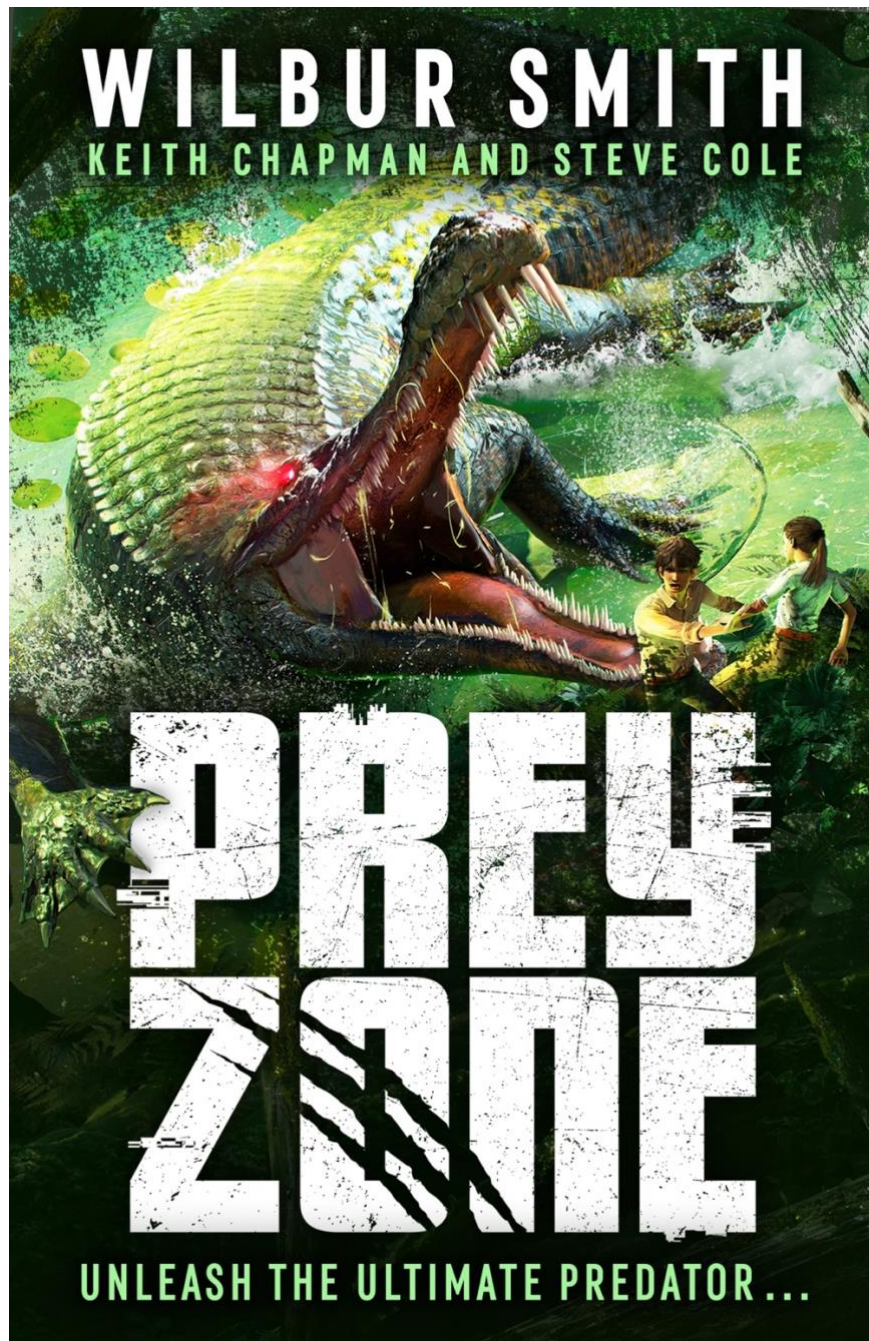
Wilbur Smith passed away peacefully at home in 2021 with his wife, Niso, by his side, leaving behind him a rich treasure trove of novels and stories that will delight readers for years to come. For all the latest information on Wilbur Smith's writing visit [www.wilbursmithbooks.com](http://www.wilbursmithbooks.com) or [facebook.com/WilburSmith](https://facebook.com/WilburSmith)

**Keith Chapman** is a television writer and producer, best known as the creator of children's television programmes *Bob the Builder* and *PAW Patrol*. Keith originates from Norfolk, East Anglia and currently resides in Monaco.

**Steve Cole** is the best-selling author of over 150 books of which sales exceed three million copies. His works include the hugely successful *Astrosaurus* series, original fiction titles for *Doctor Who*, the *Young Bond* series and *Swarm Rising* co-authored with astronaut Tim Peake. Steve lives and works in Buckinghamshire.

## TASK: COVER ANALYSIS

Looking at the front cover of PREY ZONE, can you answer the following questions?



1. Who is this book intended for?
2. What genre of book would you expect PREY ZONE to be?
3. What does the title and strapline of the book tell you about the story?
4. What does the illustration on the cover tell you about the story?
5. What themes do you expect to be important and why?
6. Is there anything specific about this cover that makes you want to pick this book up?

## TASK: TROPHY HUNTING AND CONSERVATION

Read the extract below and then discuss the questions in pairs or a group.

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*Extract from PREY ZONE, pp16-19*

*“You think Gerhard sent them?” Xai looked unconvinced.*

*‘Why would he be fool enough to risk sending an armed patrol into our territory?’*

*‘More intimidation tactics,’ Roland suggested. ‘He’s been quiet lately. Probably preparing.’*

*Robyn’s brow creased. ‘Do you think he’s lobbying to bring back trophy hunting again?’*

*Ralph sighed. Josef Gerhard was a billionaire tech giant and hunting enthusiast from the USA who had controversially been granted the right to buy half the Kruger National Park from the South African government two years ago – land adjacent to Crocodile Lodge and just across the river.*

*He’d promised to revitalise animal numbers and boost the tourism industry. Unfortunately, his plan to do that involved bringing back trophy hunting – the practice of killing the biggest, most impressive wild animals purely for pleasure and bragging rights. While supporters of trophy hunting touted it as a way to protect animals, claiming that hunters’ fees for slaughtering the biggest game were ploughed back into conservation efforts, the Ballantynes stood squarely on the opposite side of the debate.*

*Roland argued that trophy hunts killed animals with the rarest traits – prime specimens with the darkest manes or the largest tusks – and so led to a weaker, more vulnerable wild population. And he had played a key role in finally getting the practice banned some years back.*

*Unwilling to let that good work go to hell on the whim of a greedy businessman who wasn’t even a local, he’d led public protests, petitions and legal challenges against Gerhard’s efforts to revive trophy hunting, and had blocked all Gerhard’s attempts to overturn the law. Of course, in the process, he had made a powerful enemy who lived on his doorstep.”*

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1. How does the conflict between the Ballantynes and Josef Gerhard impact their shared goal of wildlife conservation? Can conflicts like these be resolved for the greater good of conservation efforts?
2. What are the arguments for and against trophy hunting as presented in the extract? Do you think trophy hunting can ever be justified as a conservation tool?
3. Discuss the role of private individuals, like Josef Gerhard, in conservation. Should billionaires have the power to make decisions about wildlife conservation on public lands?
4. How do you think the characters should approach resolving conflicts with the intruders, like the armed patrol in the extract? What strategies could be used to peacefully protect the park and its wildlife?

### *Extended Research Task: Billionaire Conservationists*

Investigate the role of wealthy individuals like Josef Gerhard in wildlife conservation. Research examples of billionaires who have invested in conservation projects. Compare their approaches and motivations. Create a short presentation or write a short essay on the influence of those private individuals on conservation efforts.

## TASK: GAMING AND HUNTING

Read the extract below and then discuss the questions in pairs or a group.

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*Extract from PREY ZONE, pp57-59*

*“The bushveld was rimmed with gold as the sun slowly sank towards its sleep. Oblivious to what was happening to his sister, Ralph stood in the gardens of the Lodge, target shooting with his Mauser M98 Magnum.*

*He looked through the scope at the tin can on top of the wall from a hundred metres away, his finger gently cradling the trigger. His leg still ached, but not enough to break his concentration. For Ralph, shooting wasn't just the perfect antidote to long, dull hours of online schooling; it was the best way he knew to clear his head of clutter, to push worries from his mind. He got a real buzz from his increasing mastery of target shooting – plus, it helped him to play Predasaur in Expert Mode – the aiming systems were so sensitive, the skills required so precise. He'd been playing with Luke van*

*Rok that afternoon and crushed him with a top-ranking kill-death ratio. Luke couldn't get past the Eurasian cave lion guarding the end of Battlespace Three, whereas Ralph was already free-roaming the land beyond. He only wished all hunting was virtual, unfeeling animations the only victims.”*

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1. Discuss the appeal of virtual gaming for Ralph as a means of relaxation and escape. How does gaming provide a sense of achievement and stress relief for many players?
  2. Do you game? If so, what do you enjoy about it?
  3. Ralph mentions his wish for all hunting to be virtual. How does this reflect a desire for a more ethical or controlled form of hunting in gaming? Can virtual hunting games have a positive or negative impact on players' perceptions of real-world hunting?
  4. Consider the role of technology in gaming, both in the virtual game Ralph plays and the use of real firearms in target shooting. How does technology blur the lines between the virtual and real worlds for gamers like Ralph?
  5. Discuss the potential consequences of spending extensive time in virtual gaming worlds. How might this impact a gamer's social life, physical well-being, and real-world skills?
  6. Reflect on the idea of "mastery" in gaming. What does it mean to become a master or expert in a particular game or game mode? How might this skill development impact a gamer's self-esteem and sense of accomplishment?

### *Extended Research Task: Game Development Careers*

Research career opportunities in the gaming industry, including game development, game design, quality assurance, and esports management. Compile information about educational pathways and job prospects in these fields.

### *Extended Research Task: Virtual Reality (VR) Gaming*

Explore the world of VR gaming, including popular VR platforms and experiences. Discuss the potential applications of VR beyond gaming, such as in education and healthcare.

## TASK: GENETIC ENGINEERING AND EXTINCT ANIMALS

Read the extract below and then discuss the questions in pairs or a group.

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*“A herd of rhinos was grazing in the savannah. But these weren’t ordinary rhinos. They had two horns: a large one that jutted forward and a smaller one between their dark red eyes. They had a layer of coarse hair on their backs and shorter hair on their bodies and legs. They had stocky legs and a large hump on their shoulders. The rhinos lurched about as they pulled at the grasses around them.*

*‘Woolly rhinos,’ Ralph said wonderingly. ‘They’re, like, from the Ice Age. How are they here?’ His only response was from one of the woolly rhinos. It toppled onto its side and gave a keening cry of agony, beating its head against the ground as its legs twitched. It was having some kind of seizure. Robyn’s heart went out to it.*

*‘What’s wrong with it?’ said Luke.*

*‘Well, for a start, it’s been extinct for fifteen thousand years,’ Ralph said. He paused. ‘It went extinct about the same time as the cave lion. This is like a live-action version of Predasaur.’*

*‘Are you doing some kind of promotion deal here with the video game?’ Luke asked uneasily. ‘Could be a real money-spinner. If Mr Gerhard needs investors, my dad owns VanRok Security. I bet he’d chip in. I only came here to show Mr Gerhard what our software can do – see if he wants to invest, you know?’*

*Subtle, Luke, thought Robyn.*

*Abi didn’t react or say a word. She steered away from the savannah and the woolly rhinos were soon lost from sight. Robyn’s mind was racing. No wonder Gerhard kept the place so private; he’d opened his own wild window on the ancient past. But why? She supposed that a ‘Predasaur Park’ would be an amazing tourist attraction. President Mbato would surely back that if it brought visitors from all over the world to spend money here – and that could explain his namecheck in Stefan’s note. What else had it said?*

*Genetic engineering . . . trophy hunting . . . Predasaur killing . . .*

*Robyn thought of the cave lion and the sick woolly rhino, both with bloodied eyes, and knew in her gut that something way darker was going on here. Before the laws on trophy hunting had changed, so many safari parks used to promise hunters the ultimate goal: a chance to bring down the Big Five game animals – lion, leopard, rhino, elephant and buffalo. Maybe Gerhard had used genetic engineering to create an Even Bigger Five here. Designer animals bred for one thing – to be killed and posed with. If it had no impact on numbers in the wild, the scheme was technically . . .*

*Fair game, Robyn thought with a shudder.”*

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1. Explore the concept of extinction and the idea that these woolly rhinos have been extinct for thousands of years. How do the characters react to their presence, and why is it significant?
2. Analyse the characters' discussion of the woolly rhinos in relation to the video game Predasaur. How does the real-world encounter with extinct animals relate to the virtual gaming experience?
3. If you could bring back an extinct animal, what would it be and why?
4. Do you think it’s a good or bad idea to use genetic engineering to bring back extinct animals?
5. Consider the role of tourism in wildlife conservation. How might a place like "Predasaur Park" attract tourists and potentially benefit conservation efforts? What are the ethical considerations in such endeavours?

6. Discuss the potential environmental impact of introducing genetically engineered animals into ecosystems. How might these animals affect local wildlife and ecosystems, and what steps can be taken to mitigate negative consequences?
7. Connect the theme of ethics and moral choices in the extract to the world of gaming. How can video games like Predasaur influence players' perceptions of ethical dilemmas, especially when they involve virtual hunting and wildlife?
8. Reflect on the future of wildlife conservation in a world where genetic engineering and advanced technologies play a significant role. How might conservation strategies evolve in response to these changes?

*Extended Research Task: Genetic Engineering in Conservation*

Research the use of genetic engineering in conservation efforts, including the de-extinction of species. Examine the ethical debates surrounding this technology and its potential benefits and risks.

## **Task: Creative Writing**

Choose one of the creative writing tasks below:

*Letter to a Wildlife Conservation Organization:* Imagine you are one of the characters from the extract who is deeply concerned about trophy hunting. Write a heartfelt letter to a wildlife conservation organisation expressing your thoughts, emotions, and questions regarding the situation.

*A News Report:* Create a news report that covers the discovery of the woolly rhinos at Predasaur Park and the reactions of the characters. Include interviews, eyewitness accounts, and expert opinions. Consider how the news report reflects the tone and atmosphere of the situation.

*Dialogue Between Characters:* Write a dialogue between two characters, such as Robyn and Ralph, discussing their observations and concerns about Predasaur Park. Explore their differing viewpoints on what they've witnessed and the implications it may have.

*Travel Brochure for Predasaur Park:* Imagine that Predasaur Park is a real tourist attraction. Create a travel brochure promoting the park and its unique features. Use persuasive language and enticing visuals to attract visitors.

*Scientific Journal Entry:* Write a journal entry in the form of a scientific report. Pretend to be a biologist who has encountered the woolly rhinos and is documenting their behaviour, physical characteristics, and potential implications for conservation science.

*Protest Speech:* Assume the role of a passionate activist who strongly opposes Predasaur Park. Write a speech that you would deliver at a protest rally, addressing the ethical concerns and urging others to join your cause.

*Interview with Mr. Gerhard:* Imagine you are a journalist interviewing Mr. Gerhard, the owner of Predasaur Park. Develop a set of interview questions that delve into his motivations, intentions, and ethical considerations regarding the park and its inhabitants.