

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Standing out in the Herd**

*An orphaned giraffe finds a new family among cattle*

By Cecil Dzwowa  
2016

*In this informational text, Cecil Dzwowa describes how a giraffe named Toro finds a surprising new family. As you read, take notes on how the cows treat Toro.*

- [1] For a cattle herder<sup>1</sup> in Africa, the hardest part of the job is searching for cows lost in the bush.<sup>2</sup> But for 21-year-old Andrew, a herder at a farm in Zimbabwe, the herd is easy to find. Once he spots Toro, he knows the rest of the herd is nearby.

That's because Toro ("tall one" in the Shona language) is not an ordinary member of the herd. He's a giraffe.

Toro's unusual situation came about after his mother was killed by lions in a nearby game park.<sup>3</sup> Toro survived the attack, but he was left with no one to protect him or give him milk. The young giraffe might have become a meal for lions or hyenas. He was also at risk of starving. But about two days later, some herders spotted and rescued him.

Andrew saw the giraffe shortly after the animal's rescue. "He looked very hungry and sick," Andrew said. "He really needed some help."

### **Toro's New Family**

- [5] Help was on its way. With the permission of the Department of Wildlife, the herders moved Toro to a farm close to his original territory. A new herd awaited him — a herd of cattle instead of giraffes.

As the only wild animal in the herd, Toro received special attention. He was fed milk from a bottle, and veterinarians gave him regular checkups. And who was watched most attentively by the herders? The tall one, of course.

Since giraffes and cattle are both plant-eating animals that live in groups, their behaviors are much the same. Toro was accepted into the herd and wandered among the cattle as they grazed.<sup>4</sup>



*"Toro the giraffe doesn't look like other members in his herd. But giraffes and cattle are both ruminants, mammals with chambered stomachs."* by Cecil Dzwowa is used with permission.

1. a person who cares for or drives herds of cattle
2. a stretch of land covered with wild vegetation or plant life
3. a large area of land where animals live safely or are hunted in a controlled way for sport
4. to eat grass in a field

## Peace-Loving Member

Toro didn't always behave like the other members of his new herd. Like many kinds of animals, cattle compete for dominance.<sup>5</sup> Standing more than 13 feet tall, Toro was more than three times taller than the biggest bull. But Toro never tried to be "the boss."

"He was mostly interested in their company," Andrew told me. "He sometimes leaves the grazing cows to browse on his own, but he is always quick to return to the herd."

- [10] Soon, Toro had adjusted to the cattle lifestyle. Instead of feeding only on leaves, as giraffes do in the wild, he added dry cornstalks to his diet. Like the cattle, he can now also respond to the herders' commands, such as "move" and "stop."

At night, Toro joins the rest of the cattle in the kraal, a wooden enclosure in which cattle are sheltered. When the herd enters the kraal, the cows and bulls push and shove. They sometimes get so aggressive that they even gore<sup>6</sup> one another for the right-of-way at the gate.

"But thanks to his height, Toro does not need to join the stampede," said Vengai, Andrew's assistant. "He just lifts his long front legs effortlessly over the wooden poles, and he will be in."

## Above the Crowd

Toro has benefited from living with the cattle, but his presence is good for them, too. In hot weather, cattle rest in the shade under his belly. And because of his height, Toro can spot lions, hyenas, and other predators long before they come close to the herd.

The herd is not always peaceful. Fights sometimes break out among the bulls. But the cattle usually leave Toro out of their disagreements.

- [15] Even if a bull did confront Toro, the giraffe would not be an easy target. Giraffes can deliver devastating<sup>7</sup> kicks and have been known to cause permanent injuries even to lions. In Andrew's herd, the cattle seem to know this.

I asked a game ranger named Munetsi if Toro would ever be returned to the wild. The answer was no. "In the wild, he would find it difficult to be accepted into another herd or defend himself from predators," Munetsi said. "He seems very much at home and respected among the cows."

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5. **Dominance (noun):** power and influence over others  
6. to pierce or stab with a horn or tusk  
7. **Devastating (adjective):** causing serious damage

## Text-Dependent Questions

**Directions:** For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which statement best expresses the main idea of the text?
  - A. Giraffes are generally gentle creatures that get along with all animals.
  - B. Toro became an important member of the herd, despite being a different species.
  - C. Giraffes and cows have more in common than most animals.
  - D. Toro would never have been strong enough to survive in the wild.
  
2. PART B: Which detail from the text best supports the answer to Part A?
  - A. "He was also at risk of starving. But about two days later, some herders spotted and rescued him." (Paragraph 3)
  - B. "Since giraffes and cattle are both plant-eating animals that live in groups, their behaviors are much the same." (Paragraph 7)
  - C. "Toro has benefited from living with the cattle, but his presence is good for them, too. In hot weather, cattle rest in the shade under his belly." (Paragraph 13)
  - D. "'In the wild, he would find it difficult to be accepted into another herd or defend himself from predators,' Munetsi said." (Paragraph 16)
  
3. PART A: Which sentence best describes the relationship between Toro and the herd?
  - A. Toro and the herd benefit from each other's presence.
  - B. Toro is considered the leader of the herd because of his size.
  - C. The herd ignores Toro because he is different from them.
  - D. Toro is constantly challenged for dominance by the herd.
  
4. PART B: Which TWO details from the text best support the answer to Part A?
  - A. "Toro was accepted into the herd and wandered among the cattle as they grazed." (Paragraph 7)
  - B. "Toro didn't always behave like the other members of his new herd. Like many kinds of animals, cattle compete for dominance." (Paragraph 8)
  - C. "'But thanks to his height, Toro does not need to join the stampede,' said Vengai, Andrew's assistant." (Paragraph 12)
  - D. "And because of his height, Toro can spot lions, hyenas, and other predators long before they come close to the herd." (Paragraph 13)
  - E. "The herd is not always peaceful. Fights sometimes break out among the bulls. But the cattle usually leave Toro out of their disagreements." (Paragraph 14)
  - F. "'In the wild, he would find it difficult to be accepted into another herd or defend himself from predators'" (Paragraph 16)

5. How does the section “Peace-Loving Member” (Paragraphs 8-12) contribute to the development of ideas in the text? Use evidence from the text to support your response.

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# Discussion Questions

**Directions:** Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.

1. In the text, Toro joins a herd of cows. Do you think the cows consider Toro to be part of their family? Why or why not? Is there someone you consider family who is not biologically related to you?
  2. Toro changed some of his behaviors to be more like the herd's behavior but also still does things that other giraffes do. Have you ever adopted behaviors from a group you are a part of or meshed some of your personal behaviors with a group's? How do both make you who you are?
  3. Toro will most likely never be reintroduced into the wild because he would not be able to survive without his herd. Who's in your herd? How does love from a herd have the power to change us?