



THE STORY OF
GREEN RIVER

HOLLY WEBB

Illustrated by ZANNA GOLDHAWK

School Resources for KS2/ KS3 Teachers & Librarians

THE STORY OF GREENRIVER

Contents

Theme 1: Character Development

Objectives & Activities: explore the character of Silken as she's portrayed in chapter 1; identify Silken's strengths; write a positive character analysis

Theme 2: The Natural World

Objectives & Activities: identify key adjectives used to describe the river; discuss flooding and the impact it has on animals; complete the river song

Theme 3: Predators in the Wild

Objectives & Activities: explore the idea of the night wolf and how it is portrayed in the story; describe the wolf based on an illustration; imagine you are Sedge and describe your encounter with the wolf; design a warning sign for the animals about the dangers of the wolf

Theme 4: River Wildlife: Otters and Beavers

Objectives & Activities: identify the differences between otters and beavers; draw an otter or a beaver; complete a critical thinking task based on 'would you rather...?'

Theme 5: Family and Home

Objectives & Activities: reflect on character feelings; design a wreath to welcome Silken home; speech writing

Extra Activities

- 1) Write a letter from Silken to her adoptive father
- 2) Complete a research-based task on the issue of flooding and design a poster

Explores themes of:

- ✓ Family and siblings
- ✓ Animal habitats
- ✓ Natural disasters
- ✓ Wildlife
- ✓ Song
- ✓ Home

Subject checklist:

- ✓ Literacy
- ✓ Geography
- ✓ PSHE
- ✓ Art



Theme 1: Character Development

Activity 1: Explore the character of Silken

The story begins with the introduction of Silken, a young beaver who feels different from those around her. Take a look at the quotes from Chapter 1 below, and then consider the questions at the bottom of the page.

'She had been working hard enough that she deserved a little rest, she thought, though she peeped sideways to see if any of the other young beavers had noticed her slacking off.'

'It was all very well being as fast as a fish, but that wasn't worth much when it meant her teeth were as weak as a fish's too.'

'She was good at other things'

'She was the useless one.'

'Maybe tomorrow I'll be bigger. Maybe tomorrow I'll be like the others. Maybe tomorrow he'll be proud of me.'

Discussion Questions

- 1) Based on the information in the first chapter of the book, what are three words you'd use to describe Silken?
- 2) Why does Silken think she is different?
- 3) How does thinking she is different make Silken feel?
- 4) Is it ok to be different? Discuss the importance of recognising that we all have our own strengths and weaknesses, and how we can see difference in a positive way



THE STORY OF
GREEN RIVER



Activity 2: Identifying character strengths

We all have different characteristics and skills that make us who we are. Write a list of Silken's strengths, referring to Chapter 1. You may want to come back and add to this list as you work through the story.

Activity 3: How would you describe Silken if you were telling a friend about her?

Use positive language to describe Silken's skills and characteristics that would make your friend want to meet her too.



Theme 2: The Natural World

Activity 1: Identify and define descriptive language

'But the river was twitchy, temperamental, treacherous, even more than she ever had been. And so very powerful.' (Chapter 3)

What do the following words mean?

- Twitchy: _____
- Temperamental: _____
- Treacherous: _____
- Powerful: _____

What other words could you use to describe a river? You may want to think of synonyms of the above words to get you started.



Activity 2: Understand the cause and impact of floods

The Dark Spring wasn't often mentioned around the otter pups. If a knot of older otters were talking together but they hushed as soon as the young ones came close, those were the two words left settling in the silence.

A holt was comfortable, cosy even, especially on a winter's night. But it could never be entirely safe. Otters lived half in, half out of the water. That was their way and they couldn't do anything else. It left them vulnerable when the river turned – because the Greenriver loved her otters, until she didn't.

Stories of floods went far back in the history of the holt, times when the river changed, surging up in a cruel flash that broke and battered the holt and the riverbank. Floods had always happened – but usually only once in a generation. Lately though, the waters had come creeping close to the holt every spring.

As the lady of the holt, Sedge's mother spent half her days watching the water, looking for the signs written up in the old books. The holt's lady – or lord, as it might be – was the messenger between the otters and the river. However much love and ceremony the otters poured out on the water, the river was always hard to predict, and, sometimes, she could be cruel.

Chapter 3

Discussion Questions

- 1) What is a flood?
- 2) What are the main causes of a flood?
- 3) What impacts can a flood have on the surrounding area?
- 4) How can floods be prevented?



THE STORY OF
GREEN RIVER



Activity 3: Complete the river song

The otters sing a song to the river, to ask the river to be gentle. Work in a pair or small group and think about what you would say to the river, if you were an otter.

Can you add your own lines to the song?

River. We beg you. The waters are rising,
It's the springtime again,
And my people are frightened.
They see your waters seeping into our home,
Your fingers reaching into our storerooms.
We hear the claws of our enemies sharpened on your stones.
Please, oh River...
Be gentle.
Draw your waters back,
And show your loving otters some mercy.



Theme 3: Predators in the Wild

Activity 1: Explore the character of the night wolf

A wolf. The hugest animal that Sedge had ever seen. She was old, with thin, patchy grey fur stretched over her bones, but her paws were still the size of Sedge's skull. She lifted her head, weaving as she snuffed the air, and yellow teeth showed at the edge of her mouth like knives.

Something deep inside Sedge, some ancient instinct, was telling him to go, go now and race away down the bank, but he resisted. She hadn't seen him, but she would, as soon as he moved.

Instead, he crouched shivering among the bracken stems, trying not to breathe as the wolf passed by, hoping that the bracken was masking his scent. The yellow-green stems shivered as her heavy paws thudded by his hiding place – and then she stopped, close enough that Sedge could see the pale cast over her eye. She had to have seen him. But then she shambled on, heading downstream along the bank. Sedge watched her, peering through the bracken, and realised that her pale eye was blind. If he had chosen the clump of bracken on the other side of her path . . .

It took a long time for him to breathe properly again.

He had heard so many stories, but he had never expected to see the night wolf for himself. It had been hard to believe that she really existed. No creature could be that big, that dangerous. No creature could have lived that long! She was a story, an old legend and that was all. But now the legend was real. And he had to follow her down the river.

Even after the wolf had gone, the riverbank stayed still and silent.

Chapter 9

Discussion Questions

- 1) How is the night wolf presented in the book?
- 2) Why do you think the author included a character like the night wolf in the story?
- 3) Is there anything that surprises you from the above extract?
- 4) How do you think Sedge felt when he saw the night wolf?



THE STORY OF
GREEN RIVER



Activity 2: Identify characteristics from an image

Look at the below picture of the wolf from the book. What things do you notice about the wolf? Write these down in the boxes.



Activity 3: Describe an encounter

Imagine you are Sedge and you meet another character after your encounter with the night wolf. Describe your experience. How did you feel during? How do you feel after?



Activity 4: Design a warning sign

The night wolf is dangerous to the other animals on the river for a few different reasons.
Can you write a warning sign for all the otters listing the dangers of the night wolf?

Warning!
Night Wolf



Theme 4: River Wildlife: Otters and Beavers

Activity 1: Identify differences between otters and beavers

Consider all the differences mentioned in the book between otters and beavers. How many can you find mentioned in the book? Use the internet to find out more information about the differences between the two. Consider their appearance, habitats, skills and what they eat.

Find in the grid below with what you find.

Otters	Beavers



Activity 2: Draw an otter or a beaver

Now it's time to draw your own otter or beaver! Pick which one you would like to draw and use the space below. Add labels to call out notable things about their appearance.



THE STORY OF
GREEN RIVER



Activity 3: Would you rather be an otter or a beaver?

Use the space below to answer the question above. Justify your reasons for your choice, making references to the information you have learned about the two. You may want to consider what sort of things you like doing to help you make your choice e.g.: swimming or building a den



Theme 5: Home and Family

Activity 1: Reflect on character feelings

The little group moved slowly through the trees to the water's edge, where the holt had begun to gather. The flood was glowing silver now in the light of the great full moon – which hung so low that Silken felt she could touch it if she only reached a little higher. Their wreaths of white flowers drew the light, so that next to her Sedge seemed to be wearing a glowing crown. She tightened her paw in his, and he nodded seriously at her. Together, they padded through the shallow skin of water, and the otters around them shuffled and splashed as they made an arc facing out towards the river, the broken holt at their backs.

Silken shivered as the water lapped around their paws and tails. Surely it hadn't been this cold earlier on?

The otters began to whisper and chant together, and the eerie coldness wove up Silken's spine and held her. She knew these words – they were ones the holt had been singing to the river for many otter lifetimes. How could she have forgotten?

The words sang inside her, and Silken sang with the holt, lifting her paws out to the water and reaching for Lady River. Beside her she felt Sedge do the same. Silken met his eyes, and saw that they were glittering with fear and excitement.

She could see that he was asking, *Do you feel it too?* and she widened her eyes in answer. Silken glanced round at Thorn, standing next to them with Teasel on her other side, both with eyes closed and paws outstretched.

Silken had been shocked when she first saw her mother. In that strange rush of memory that had returned after she'd rescued Sedge, Thorn had been tall and strong, bright-eyed and gleeful. Silken remembered her leaping around in the shallow water as she and Teasel taught them to swim. She had been busy, sometimes even weighed down by the cares of the holt, but she had been full of life. When they met in the floodwater, her mother had seemed frail and old. When had she aged so? When Silken disappeared, or when Sedge did?

Chapter 14

Discussion Questions

- 1) How does Silken feel in this scene?
- 2) How does Sedge feel in this scene?
- 3) How do you imagine their mother feels?
- 4) How does Silken describe the differences between her memory of her mother and how she is now?

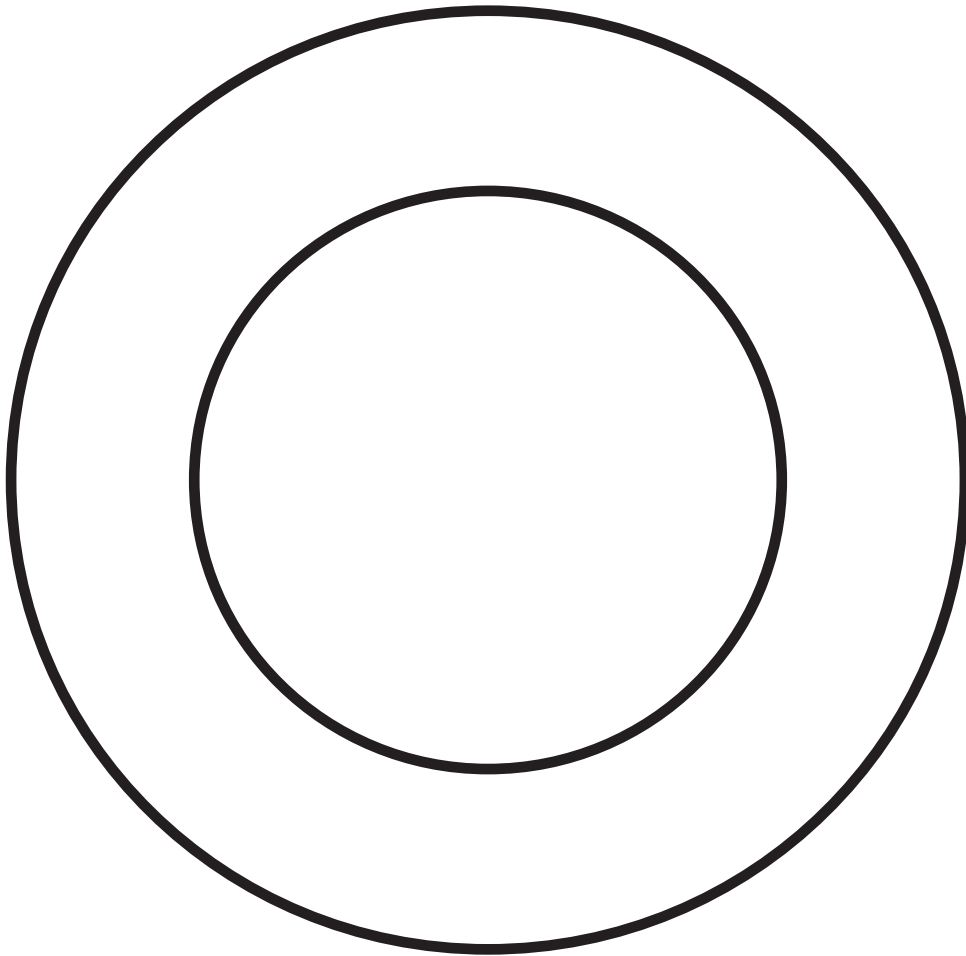


THE STORY OF
GREEN RIVER



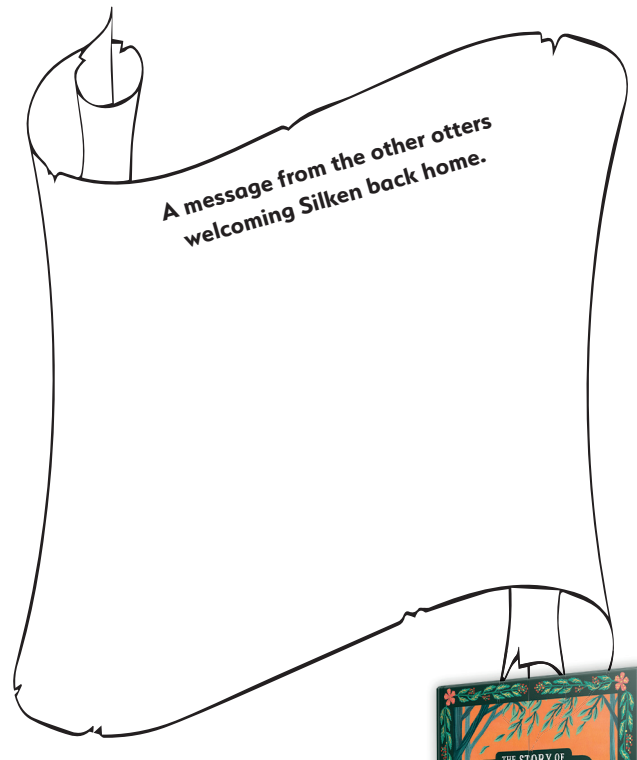
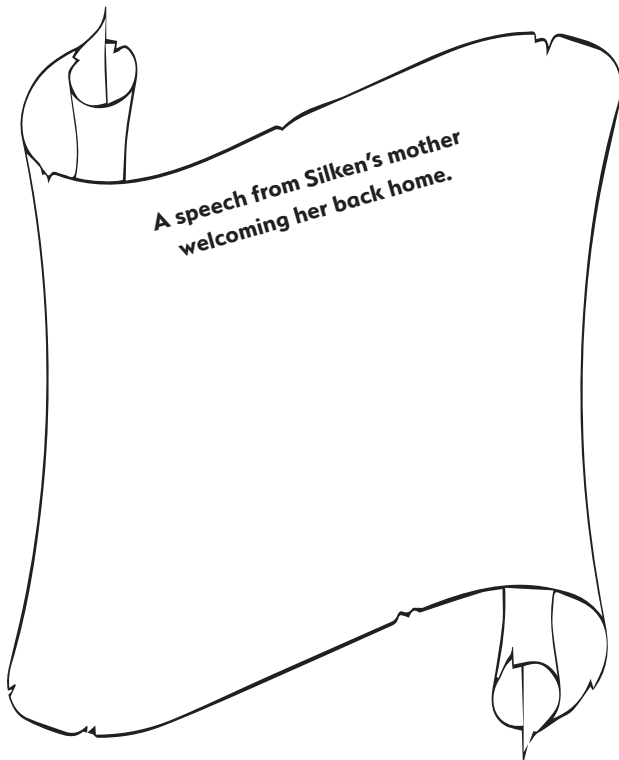
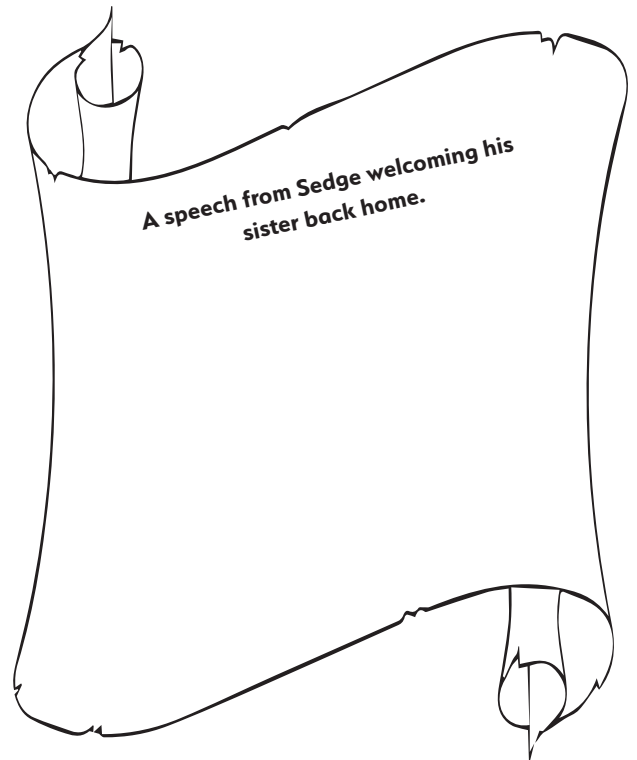
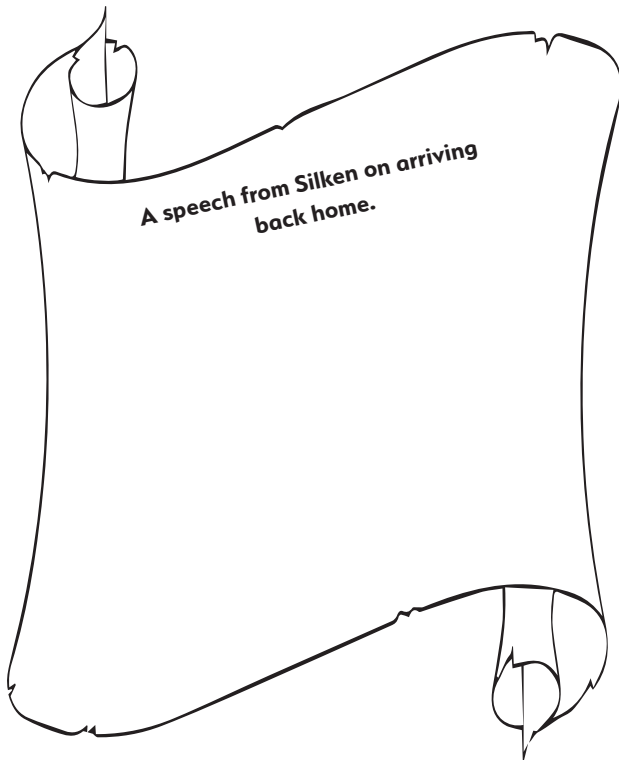
Activity 2: Design a wreath

The otters of Greenriver wear decorative wreaths during special ceremonies.
Can you design a wreath for Silken to wear when she returns home?



Activity 3: Speech writing

Can you write a short speech to welcome Silken home? Choose one or more of the below options and write your speech in the space below.



Extra Activities

Activity 1: Write a letter from Silken

Read through the letters below from Silken's mother, Lady of Green River Holt, and Silken's adopted father, Master Grey of the Stronghold.

Letters, Carried Up and Down the River

Honoured Master Grey,

The swan Vane has agreed to carry this message to you. We thank you for the care of our child Elderberry, known to you, and now to us, as Silken. She has told us much about her life among your people. We would wish to know more about the Stronghold and its ways, and we hope that you would be glad to hear news of your adopted child.

We are all creatures of the River, however differently we spend our days around her waters.

Our good wishes for your lodge, and your safe rebuilding.

Thorn, Lady of Greenriver Holt

Dear Lady Thorn,

Thank you, for your message, and for the gift of your child.

We did not understand how much she was to us until we lost her.

When our lodge is safe and whole once more, messengers from the Stronghold will come upriver. We long to see our daughter again.

Grey, Master Builder of the Stronghold



THE STORY OF
GREEN RIVER



