Oliver and the Seawigs

By Phillip Reeve and Sarah McIntyre

A close up of a logo

Description automatically generated

Oliver Crisp was only ten years old, but they had been a busy and exciting ten years, because Oliver’s mother and father were explorers.

They had met on the top of Mount Everest.

They had been married in the Lost Temple of Amon Hotep and had spent their honeymoon searching for the elephants’ graveyard. And when young Oliver had been born, they simply bought themselves a back carrier and an off-road buggy and went right on exploring.

But at last there came a day when there was just nothing left to explore. They had trekked to the headwaters of all the great rivers, and stood on the summits of all the unconquered mountains. Thanks to them, the Lost City of Propacopaketl was lost no longer; the Mystery of the Mokele Mbembe Marshes had been solved. There were no more blank spaces left on the map.

So they packed their belongings aboard their explorermobile and drove home to the house which they owned but had hardly ever lived in, by Deepwater Bay, near the little seaside town of St Porrocks. “No more exploring for us,” they told each other sadly. “It’s time we settled down.”

Oliver wasn’t sad, though. He was excited. He was tired of living the explorer’s life. The house he was coming home to was one he’d only seen on holidays; brief two-week breaks before fresh expeditions. Ten years on the move! No time to make friends, or feel at home anywhere. No time to go to school. He’d never even had a proper bedroom of his own, just a bunk in the back of the explorermobile, and all his things were hidden away in trunks and storage boxes in the spaces under the explorermobile’s seats. He thought it would be exciting to have a whole house to live in, and wake to every day to the same view. At Deepwater Bay he would have his own bedroom and bathroom, and he would be starting next term at the school in St Porrocks. (That might not sound so good to you, but Oliver had never been to school, and he was excited about that, too.)

He perched between his parents as Mum steered the explorermobile carefully along the winding lanes. He was waiting for the moment when Deepwater Bay came in sight.

“It’s not a very pretty house,” his mother reminded him. “It’s really rather old and creaky, and the wind blows right through it. It needs lots of work doing, but we never found the time. Or the money. There’s not a lot of money in exploring.”

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**Words in context**

Find and highlight the following words in the text:

* expeditions
* unconquered
* headwaters
* summits

What do you think they mean?

What word or phrase could you replace them with?

**Retrieval Questions**

1. How old is Oliver?
2. Name three places Oliver’s parents had visited.
3. What town is their house close to?
4. How does Oliver feel about moving home? Do his parents feel the same?

**Inference Questions**

1. Do you think this story is about a real person called Oliver? How do you know?
2. What sort of vehicle is the explorermobile? Why do you think that?
3. Why do you think Oliver is excited to “wake up every day to the same view”?

**Choice Question**

Find one example of when the author speaks to the reader using *parenthesis*.

**Challenge**

If you were Oliver’s parents going on one last expedition, what 10 essential things would you pack and why?

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**Words in context**

* a journey to explore - adventures, excursions etc
* never before climbed – undiscovered, impossible etc.
* The start of the river – source, springs etc.
* The very top – peak, crest etc.

**Retrieval Questions**

1. 10
2. Mount Everest; Lost Temple of Amon Hotep; Lost City of Propacopaketl; Mokele Mbembe Marshes; Deepwater Bay (NOT elephants’ graveyard as there is no evidence they found it)
3. St Porrocks
4. Oliver was excited and his parents were sad.

**Inference Questions**

1. No, because the places they have visited don’t all exist.
2. Caravan (or similar) because it carries all their stuff and has beds.
3. He is used to being in a different place every day so some normality seems exciting.

**Choice Questions**

(That might not sound so good to you, but Oliver had never been to school, and he was excited about that, too.)

**Challenge**

This will be individual to each child, but they should be thinking as if they were Oliver’s parents, not themselves, and about practical things and consider how they would use them. (A good opportunity for a discussion)