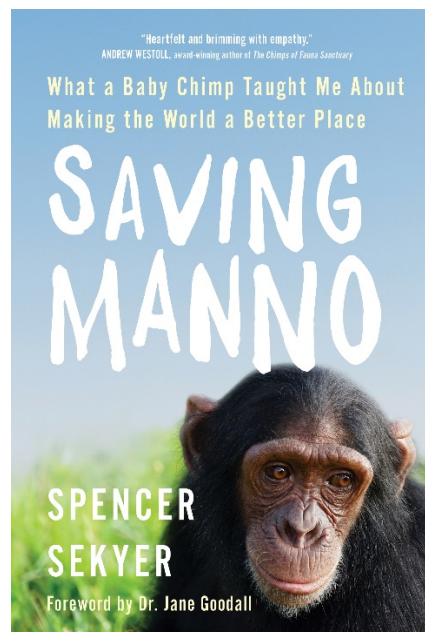


Saving Manno

By

Spencer Sekyer



Educational
Study Guide

Spencer Sekyer

The journey of Spencer Sekyer is described in *Saving Manno*, an inspiring memoir about one teacher's travels around the world and his relentless efforts to rescue a chimp in danger. Spencer has taught in Sierra Leone, the Dheisheh refugee camp, the West Bank, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, and Haiti. He lives in Edmonton where he got his first taste of teaching which then led to travel and voluntourism. His project has been a work in progress for a number of years and has become more and more of a passion for him.

Synopsis:

Spencer Sekyer has seen many things on his journeys, but he was unprepared for what he found at the Duhok Zoo in Iraqi Kurdistan. There, he met Manno, a baby chimpanzee who had been kidnapped from his family in central Africa and sold into captivity—a casualty of the shadowy, perilous world of international animal trafficking.

When Manno first crawled into Spencer's arms, both of their lives changed. Manno was just an innocent baby, but Spencer knew that when the chimp was fully grown, he would become a danger to himself and others. There was an even more pressing threat: the Duhok Zoo sat mere kilometers from the front lines of the war against ISIS.

The thought of Manno being forced to live out his adult life in a cramped cell in the middle of a war zone plagued Spencer. So, he set in motion a plan to rescue his friend. Spencer wasn't an animal rights expert or a zoologist, but he learned to navigate the tricky politics and bureaucracies of international organizations and he assembled a team of activists to help him move Manno to a sanctuary in Kenya more than 6,000 kilometers away.

As the ISIS invasion crept closer, and with Manno's fate in their hands, the team raced against the clock to give Manno what he truly deserved: a chance for a new life.

Saving Manno is the story of one man and one chimp and their incredible relationship. Sekyer learned on the fly how to navigate volatile political situations, circumvent the trafficking of exotic animals, and persuade key people to help with the ultimate goal of providing an appropriate living situation for Manno, who becomes a symbol for all mistreated animals.

Objectives of Studying *Saving Manno*

At the end of this study, the students will

1. be aware of the ongoing treatment of animals in various parts of our world;
2. understand that because the international trafficking of exotic animals is a worldwide problem, individuals have a responsibility to protect and preserve a significant part of our world: animals;
3. explore and clarify their own thinking, ideas, feelings, and experiences regarding their interactions with animals;
4. comprehend and respond personally, critically, and creatively to texts in oral, print, visual, and multimedia forms;
5. learn to manage and articulate their ideas and information about their responsibility to the situation of animals in the larger world;
6. be able to create oral, print, visual, and multimedia texts where required to enhance the clarity and artistry of communication.

The Study of Non-Fiction

Non-fiction is the type of writing where the author assumes the responsibility of truth and accuracy. It is different from fiction where the reader is aware that, though the topic may be realistic, the characters and events are imaginary. Non-fiction writing is generally assumed to be an accurate portrayal of real events and situations involving real people. This type of writing is often biographical or autobiographical in nature.

Saving Manno is a non-fiction book. As such, *Saving Manno* is Spencer Sekyer's account of how he met Manno, how Manno won his affection, and how Spencer became engrossed in saving Manno, many times putting himself in jeopardy to preserve the life of his new friend. It does not stop there. Spencer Sekyer wants readers to be aware of and get passionate about the growing problem of animal trafficking in our world.

Reading *Saving Manno*

As you approach the task of reading *Saving Manno*, let me interest you in a process called active reading. Active reading is a reading strategy where the reader becomes actively involved in the reading of a text in order to gain a better understanding of it. This can take a number of different forms. The reader may use a highlighter to highlight the important aspects of the text. This could start with the title as often the title is an important clue to the main idea of the text.

Active reading can also be done by using coloured sticky notes to track different topics within a text. The benefit of using active reading strategies is that reading a text in this way helps the reader to set a purpose in reading and to connect personally with a text. Another advantage of being an active reader is that the reader is encouraged to ask questions about the text and predict what may or may not happen within the text.

As you read *Saving Manno*, identify sections that demonstrate the development of the elements listed below by colour coding them with small sticky notes.

Use colour-coded tabs in the following way:

- red for cultural differences that you encounter in the text
- blue for the benefits of travel
- green for Manno's progress towards freedom
- yellow for the treatment, including mistreatment, of animals

Note:

These colours are arbitrary and you may choose whatever colours you wish for whichever categories you like. The main point is to separate ideas that you encounter in the text and keep them in your memory. The key is to use the same colour of sticky note for the same element throughout the entire text. By flagging information in this way, you can scan the text easily for important information relevant to your topic. You can find information quickly for cultural differences, travel, Manno, and animal treatment. Being able to scan your text quickly saves you a lot of time completing later assignments.

What are the key concepts that you have learned?

- What is the message?
- What is the purpose of the author's message?

- What are two points or techniques the author uses to enhance his message?
- Who is the audience?
- How could the reader benefit from reading this text?
- How effective is the text? Rate it on a scale of 1–10, with 10 being very effective. Provide a rationale for your rating. Explain two different techniques (not already mentioned) that the author used to enhance his message.

What can one person do?

The impact that one person's life can have is immense. There are many times in our lives that we are confronted with the idea that someone should do something about an issue. Often, we think in terms of crime, rudeness and other negative aspects of our life and we think that someone or a group of people should do something about the issue and fix it. We get frustrated when nothing seems to get done. Spencer Sekyer models the fact that when an individual needs to step up and help, he or she is willing to do so. By modeling this behaviour, Spencer is signalling to the reader that we, too, need to get involved. As long as we expect someone else to do it, nothing will get done.

Saving Manno is the story of an ordinary man, a teacher from Edmonton, Alberta, who decided, almost by accident, that he needed to get involved in a project that consumed him. He has made a tremendous impact in drawing attention to the need for caring for the animals of our world through his interaction with a chimp who won his heart.

One very ordinary man can do many things and this study shows how everyone can do something. We do not have to sit back and rely on others to do something. It doesn't have to be something earth shattering like changing the course of history, solving world hunger, or eradicating hurricanes. It can be something as simple as saving the lives of animals and ensuring that animals are treated with the respect that all creatures on our earth deserve.

Focus Questions Related to *Saving Manno*

The following focus questions will guide you in the study and understanding of *Saving Manno*:

1. Spencer Sekyer states on page 4 of his book *Saving Manno*: “I felt a renewed sense of purpose. I had a responsibility to love. My wife. My family and friends. Animals. Soon, our baby would add more love to our lives. To be of this world is to live for this world, and the highest expression of that is to give love”(4). How did Spencer implement this idea in his life?
2. When Spencer was teaching, he took the opportunity to speak with his students, including some from other parts of the world. He asked what had impressed them about Canada after moving to their new home. One student stated that what struck him the most was “How good we have it here” (13). How would you respond to this student in answer to that question about how good we have it here (in Canada)?
3. What does Spencer mean when he says the following about travel: “All travel is good. Anything that expands your world, even if it’s by a few hundred miles, is great. And the earlier you can start, the better” (16)?
4. The first section of the text *Saving Manno* is titled “Lessons from Canada.” What are three lessons that Spencer Sekyer says he has learned from Canada? Briefly explain these lessons.
5. Spencer has some discussions with his class about his travels and shows the class a picture he took in Sierra Leone. He states: “I went there to teach at a summer school five years ago. Back then, it was considered the second least livable place on Earth.” His students subsequently asked him why he would want to go there. His response was: “Because it was considered the second least livable place on Earth” (15). He wanted more perspective on our world and our place in it. What do you think he meant by that statement and what do we learn about him as a person from that comment?
6. Spencer first encountered Manno, the chimp who was to impact his life in many ways, at the end of chapter 3. Describe the circumstances of this initial meeting between Manno and Spencer?
7. In chapter 4, Spencer discusses at length the connections that humans and apes have. Explain some of the connections identified by Spencer that convince him that Manno needed to be put into a habitat conducive to his growth.
8. The middle section of *Saving Manno* is titled “Lessons from Abroad.” Explore briefly three lessons that Spencer learned abroad.

9. What are three of the lessons Spencer learned from Manno that are described in the third section of the text, titled “Lessons from Manno”?
10. What are three cultural situations that Sekyer encountered while on his project of *Saving Manno*?
11. Spencer Sekyer encountered many challenges in his project to save his chimp friend, Manno. What were some of these challenges and what were some of the victories?
12. “How was I going to make a difference?” (47). This is a question Spencer asks himself early on in his project to save Manno. Reflecting on the text, how has he made a difference and how has this process changed him as an individual?
13. Spencer did not do everything on his own. He had a great deal of help on the road to completing his project, and he learned to respect many people who were willing to get involved in his project. Identify three people that he met who you thought were significant in helping Spencer and briefly describe the contribution they made to the project.
14. Identify three aspects of our responsibility to the animal world that you have learned through the process of reading and thinking about *Saving Manno*, that you didn’t know before.
15. There are a few sections in the text that were quite emotional. During the course of this project, Spencer’s pet dogs, Mac, Emma, and Chloe had to be put down. What was the impact on Spencer and why do you think he included these sections in his book? How did he deal with the loss of Mac, Emma, and Chloe? How does that fit into the theme of caring for animals in our world? Saying good-bye is never easy, and Christie says, “It’s not fair to Mac to let him suffer, even another minute, just to give us more time with him. He’s feeling good right now, so. . .” (108).
16. Each chapter in *Saving Manno* begins with a quotation. Select two of these quotations that were particularly meaningful for you and explain briefly how you thought they were appropriate for the situation.
17. Spencer concludes his book, *Saving Manno*, by saying: “Your life is an empty page waiting to be written, an untouched canvas, so go paint your masterpiece with a palette of kindness” (204). In a brief response, explain what you think he means by that statement? What does he want readers to do?

Assignments related to *Saving Manno*

Assignment One: Summary Charts

Summary Charts

Whenever we study a text, whether it is a non-fiction text, a visual text, an essay, a novel, or any other type of text, there are a number of factors that need to be considered.

First, what is it about? We want to know what the details of the text are, the techniques that the author has used to explore an idea, the effects that are created, and the main idea that the author is trying to convey to the reader.

Second, we need to determine how this main idea affects us, the readers. Our initial response to reading the text may very well be, So what? The author is making many statements and is passionate about what he is saying, but **What has that got to do with me?** We need to determine what our personal connection to this idea is and how this text compares to other texts that we know about. What do other people say about this idea?

Third, we must look at the larger context. We have read the text, we have noted some of our personal responses and connections, and now we look at the broader relevance. How does this idea impact the world in which we live? Does this idea address some of the larger world issues including who is affected by them? By answering these questions we can determine possible theme statements that relate to the text.

Summary Chart

<p>What is the story about?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details • Techniques • Effects • Main idea 	<p>Consider the text:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First, understand what you are reading. • What is its impact on you—on your ideas and mood? • What thoughts come to your mind about the treatment of animals in our world? • What techniques has Sekyer used that help you to understand his main idea? • What seems to be the main idea communicated in the text?
<p>So what? How does this apply to me?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Connection • Other texts • Other people 	<p>Explore the relevance of the text to you and others:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you relate personally to ideas in this text, or how has this text affected you? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>How do you feel about the issue(s) it raises?</i> ○ <i>What memories or experiences does this text make you think of?</i> ○ <i>What connection can you make between this text and other people you know (or know of)?</i> ○ <i>What connection can you make with other texts?</i>
<p>Now what?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • World issues • Who is affected • Theme statement 	<p>Explore the relevance of the text to society or to the world:</p> <p>How would you state the theme (or underlying message) of this text in one sentence?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are the author’s ideas relevant in the world today? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>How are these ideas unfolding in the world around us?</i> ○ <i>Where are these ideas occurring? When? Why?</i> • Are the issues important to all people? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>If so, in what way are they important?</i> ○ <i>Who might be affected by these issues?</i>

Using *Saving Manno*, complete the following chart by responding to the points in the template on the previous page. Use point form; sentences are not required.

<p>What is the story about?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Details• Techniques• Effects• Main idea	<p>Consider the text:</p>
<p>So what? How does this apply to me?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Personal Connection• Other texts• Other people	<p>Explore the relevance of the text to you and others:</p>
<p>Now what?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• World issues• Who is affected• Theme statement	<p>Explore the relevance of the text to society or to the world:</p> <p>How can you state the theme (or underlying message) in one sentence?</p>

Assignment Two: Personal Response to the text

Choose one of the following topics to discuss in your personal response to *Saving Manno*:

- A. What does this text suggest about the impact an individual's choices and actions have on the direction of his or her life?
- B. What does this text suggest about the importance of being responsible to others and the animal world on a personal, local, global, and digital level?
- C. What does this text suggest about what it means to be successful and the role failure plays in the accomplishment of our goals?
- D. What does this text suggest about how an individual's perspective of, and response to, a crisis defines him or her?

In your writing, you must

- Use a **prose** form (not poetry), which means you need to write in paragraphs that adhere to conventional rules of writing. For example, essay, script, newspaper article, short story, journal, or diary formats are acceptable. Choose the format that best suits you and your topic.
- **Connect** the text to the topic and to the ideas, experiences, and impressions that you have gained while reading the text.

Tips

- Read the topic and the instructions carefully. Decide on which type of response you will write. Then make a plan to keep yourself organized as you write.
- If you are writing an essay—plan the thesis and topic sentences.

Assessment

You will be assessed on your ability to connect personally with the topic, as well as your reflections on the topic, so it is very important that you incorporate stories from your life or really show your personality through your "voice"—word choice, details, creativity.

You are allowed to use the first person (I/me/my) in a personal response.

You will also be marked on the following:

- organization of ideas
- depth of thoughtful/insightful exploration of the topic
- use of voice and other stylistic effects such as figurative language and detail
- basic proofreading, grammar

Assignment Three: Research Project

After reading *Saving Manno*, you will find it valuable to do some additional research on some of the topics that Spencer Sekyer has alluded to in his text. You will have the choice of three topics to research:

1. Explore the nature of chimpanzees: how they grow, dietary needs, community practices, natural habitat, and their unique characteristics.
2. Explore the topic of trafficking exotic animals: what are some of the main animals that are captured and sold, what are the main countries of origin, and how severe is this problem?
3. Explore the topic of another species that may be on the pathway to extinction. What are the possible reasons for this potential extinction and how can it be slowed down or halted?

Assessment

- There should be a minimum of three sources consulted.
- Be sure to cite each source in your bibliography. When researching online, be sure to copy and paste the URL into your bibliography, including any visuals you might wish to use.
- You will be assessed on your:
 - organization of ideas
 - depth of thoughtful/insightful exploration of the topic
 - use of voice and other stylistic effects such as figurative language and detail
 - basic proofreading, grammar

Your final draft should be polished before submitted.

Assignment Four: Twitter Feed

The final sentence in the text states: “*Your life is an empty page waiting to be written, an untouched canvas, so go paint your masterpiece with the palette of kindness.*” After reading *Saving Manno*, construct a series of tweets outlining some possible actions that could be taken to resolve one of the problems encountered in the text. You should have a series of at least three tweets. Provide a response to each tweet. You will have three tweets and three responses.

At the beginning of every chapter, Spencer Sekyer includes a quotation from a variety of people and situations. You may choose to select one or more of these quotations as the basis of some of your tweets and explain how each quotation relates to Sekyer’s journey as he worked to gain freedom for Manno.

Assessment

- You will provide a minimum of three pairs of tweets (tweets and responses).
- Each tweet can be a maximum of only 144 characters, including spaces.
- Each tweet should address a significant topic Sekyer has raised in the text.

Interesting Quotations from *Saving Manno* for Further Reflection

“The world is a book, and those who do not travel read only one page” (1). Augustine of Hippo

“What is it that you that you learned by coming here from far away?” (13).

“How good we have it here” (13).

“All travel is good. Anything that expands your world, even if it’s by a few hundred miles is great. And the earlier you can start the better” (16).

“My entire sense of self was invested in being an athlete, and now it was crumbling” (22).

“I realized there was something beautiful about having hundreds of thousands of different people around me, challenging my views in ways that weight rooms and hitting drills never would” (22-23).

“What style of teacher would I be? I was leaving behind the version of me who had identified so closely with being an athlete, and another version of me was beginning to sprout. It was exciting and heartbreaking at once” (23).

“Every bit of the conversation helped feed their curiosity, which I could only hope would lead them to see the world outside of a screen. ‘Any chance you get to travel,’ I said, ‘if you can afford it, I hope you’ll buy the ticket’ ” (23).

“Life is either a daring adventure or nothing at all” (27). Helen Keller, *The Open Door*

“Until one has loved an animal, a part of one’s soul remains unawakened” (41) Anatole France

“I was an outsider looking in – how was I going to make a difference” (47)?

“I’d never before thought it possible to form intense bonds with another species, but Chloe and Mac slipped themselves into every part of my life with those beautiful golden eyes. At times, I even wondered if it was possible to share this honesty and vulnerability I felt with other humans” (48).

“It is never too late to be what you might have been” (57) George Eliot

“To say that I fell in love with Manno is the truth. Even in those very first moments, I never saw him as just an animal. I saw a sentient being; I saw a little soul” (58).

“The human-ape relationship is a complex one, Well-adjusted bonobos who were properly rehabilitated could show tenderness to nonthreatening people. But if rehabilitation didn’t work, it usually meant the animal was spoiled, unable to learn social cues about hierarchy and dominance, and they were often savagely beaten by other bonobos until they learned to submit” (60-61).

Summary of *Saving Manno*—Educational Study Guide

This package is a huge asset in getting copies of *Saving Manno* into English Language Arts curricula not only in Alberta but throughout North America.

Vic Mensch is a former English Department Head for Alberta Distance Learning Centre and has both a bachelor's and master's degree from the University of Lethbridge as well as a Bachelor of Arts in English from the University of Winnipeg.

Vic's involvement is extremely exciting as he brings over thirty years of extensive teaching and curricular development expertise in English Language Arts. Vic currently assesses Alberta English Language Arts provincial diplomas exams and the package will be completed at the end of March.

Spencer Sekyer