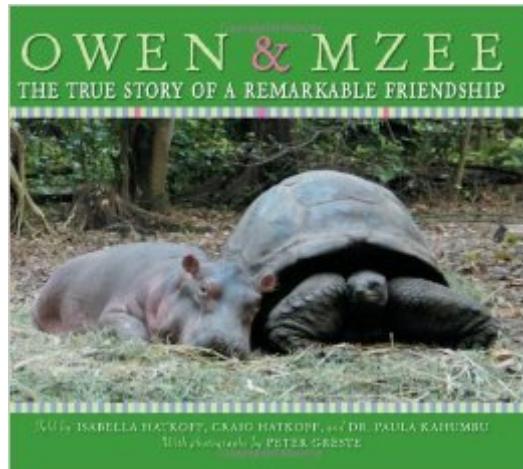


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# Owen & Mzee: The True Story Of A Remarkable Friendship



## **Synopsis**

The amazing true story of the orphaned baby hippo and 130-year-old giant turtle whose remarkable friendship touched millions around the world. The inspiring true story of two great friends, a baby hippo named Owen and a 130-yr-old giant tortoise named Mzee (Mm-ZAY). When Owen was stranded after the Dec 2004 tsunami, villagers in Kenya worked tirelessly to rescue him. Then, to everyone's amazement, the orphan hippo and the elderly tortoise adopted each other. Now they are inseparable, swimming, eating, and playing together. Adorable photos e-mailed from friend to friend quickly made them worldwide celebrities. Here is a joyous reminder that in times of trouble, friendship is stronger than the differences that too often pull us apart.

## **Book Information**

Lexile Measure: 920L (What's this?)

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Shipping Weight: 1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 starsÂ  See all reviewsÂ  (143 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #16,792 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #14 inÂ  Books > Children's Books > Science, Nature & How It Works > Mystery & Wonders #15 inÂ  Books > Children's Books > Animals > Reptiles & Amphibians #36 inÂ  Books > Children's Books > Animals > Mammals

Age Range: 4 - 8 years

Grade Level: Preschool - 3

## **Customer Reviews**

When I heard that a book had been written about the friendship between Owen, an orphaned hippopotamus, and Mzee, the old tortoise, I knew I had to get it. This is a lovely story that will warm the hearts of children and adults and can be used to illustrate resiliency, the strength of friendship, and how creatures that don't look alike can get along. This book is worth buying for the pictures alone.

I have to admit I was drawn into this story when I saw it on CNN. This captivating book - aimed toward children but also quite amenable toward any animal lover - describes the true story of a baby hippo named Owen, an inadvertent victim of the devastating 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami who was left stranded on a coral reef forever separated from his mother. Taken to a nature reserve to live, Owen meets Mzee, a 130-year old Aldabra tortoise. After some initial resistance from Mzee, the two start to bond, and Mzee becomes the young hippo's protector. This simple friendship story is told by Manhattan-based children's book author Craig Hatkoff and his six-year old daughter Isabella (who drew the adorable pictures at the end of the book), both so entranced by the photo of the two animals lying peacefully next to each other, that they contacted Dr. Paula Kahumbu, the general manager of the reserve, and Kenya-based photojournalist Peter Greste, who had been meticulously chronicling Owen's rescue and resettlement. The subsequent collaboration among the four has produced an intoxicating chronicle of the unlikely friendship that developed between animals with nothing in common but their dependence on each other. The text is not at all cloying but straightforward and factual. Having had the good fortune to see the giant tortoises in the Galapagos Islands and the hippopotamuses along the Masai River in Kenya, I can tell you that such bonding is extraordinary to see in Greste's wonderful photographs. The authors obviously provide life lessons in strength and resilience and ignoring surface differences toward a greater good. Luckily, sentimentality is kept to a minimum, and the result is a charmer. For those interested in keeping up with Owen and Mzee, caretaker Stephen Tuei keeps an online journal of their daily activities on the Lafarge Eco Systems Web site.

I am simply blown away by everything about this book and story. I have shared this heartwarming story with everyone who will listen. I congratulate Isabella (6 yo) who had the vision and her father who had the know-how to make this book happen. Regardless of age or gender, you will be astounded by this book; the relationship between the main characters normally just does not happen in nature. But the photos made me a believer. Life is mysterious!

because Owen, a baby hippo, and Mzee, a 130 year old Aldabra tortoise, who formed a remarkably close bond with each other, have been forever separated by their caretakers at Haller Park outside Mombasa. This was announced on the LaForge Ecosystems website which was following their progress. The reason for this is that they were moved into quarters with another hippo and another Aldabra turtle. The second hippo got aggressive with the second turtle. Instead of removing her, Owen was taken away from his precious Mzee. I am sure the Park will have far less visitors now. I

myself was planning to travel there just to see our two heroes. Now I will no longer visit the caretaker's website. Although I loved the book, the ultimate result has made me very sad. I even cried when I learned about it. The book itself is a joy to read if you can forget the final outcome. Photographs are astonishing and beautiful (taken by BBC photo-journalist Peter Greste). The text by Craig Hatkoff and Dr. Paula Kahumbu is perfect, and several precious drawings are included by six year old Isabella Hatkoff on the endpapers. Even a sweet, brief testimony about the wonder of this book by Caroline Kennedy is included on the back book jacket cover, underneath a photograph of Owen and Mzee dining on leaves. None of us knew how short a time they had left together.

This is a wonderful book full of beautiful, adorable photos of Owen the hippo, Mzee the tortoise and the loving people who have helped them. It's ostensibly a children's book, though I myself, age 27, saw it and practically started crying in the bookstore. A truly beautiful story of love and success in the face of dire adversity (the 2004 tsunami) and a pairing you thought you could only find in a Disney movie. This is a great story to read to your kids, students or even just give a glance yourself.

Owen and Mzee is a story about a giant tortoise and a baby hippopotamus who found each other after the 2004 tsunami in Southeast Asia. The book tells about how Owen lived before the tsunami, then mentions the devastating waves -- but not in a way that would be frightening to small children. It goes on to mention how Owen found Mzee and attached to him as if the tortoise was his own mother. Older children will appreciate the deeper meaning of the tale: that even though they are very different, Owen and Mzee became friends. Younger children will be fascinated with the photographs of the tortoise and baby hippo as well as their rescuers. One picture, taken from directly in front of both animals, shows them as if they are smiling! It is a truly sweet -- but not sappy -- story that people of all ages will enjoy. My five year old son loves it and I'm sure we will keep this book to pass down to his children someday.

This story of unconditional love is the perfect book to have in your house or read to a class. Children are always more open to learning lessons of humanity when it is presented by less intimidating characters such as, a tortoise and a hippo. The book is engaging and chock full of facts, making it fun and educational. If your child loves tortoises, I also recommend *A Boy And A Turtle*. The colorful and adorable characters in this book will introduce your child to relaxation. What a concept, children being exposed to compassion, unconditional love for self and others and relaxation.

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