

69: surfing the Zambezi

suggested answers

1) Words (from the story) that best describe the power of the river include: “one of the world’s gnarliest rivers ... currents collude and collide ... Wave after wave rushes to meet you ... we were spat out into the current ... [rapids named] the Terminator, the Washing Machine [and] Oblivion, a rapid probably responsible for more carnage than any other rapid in the world ... an explosion of broken water ... I looked up and saw a sheer four-metre wall of smooth water above me ... I gaped in awe as millions of gallons of water ... swept under me.”

2) This is an open question that may have a number of differing but valid answers. Here are a couple of examples:

a. Many people are intelligent in some ways and not so intelligent in other ways. Therefore, an otherwise intelligent person can still make bad judgement calls and engage in high-risk, potentially fatal adventures.

b. Most males (especially) appear to have a deep psychological need to take risks, to test themselves in stressful situations, to show off. There might be an evolutionary psychological reason for this in that – during our pre-history – only the bravest men were able to survive/attract partners.

3) Rather than sitting up above the water and looking down, you “eyeball” the water in a way that enables you to see how the surface bends and flexes.

teachers’ notes

1) This worksheet is meant to give students a sense of power of wild rivers so that they respect this power and take seriously their responsibility to be safe.

2) *Death of a river guide* by Richard Flanagan is a great Australian novel that most teachers and the more literate students would enjoy.



Yep, this is Oblivion rapid on the Zambezi. All of the other punters are already under water. That is the author refusing to let go.