About the film and author
The idea behind The Prince of Egypt – Brothers in Egypt arose from a conversation between three powerful Hollywood producers, Stephen Spielberg, Jeffrey Katzenberg and David Geffen. The three men were starting their own film production company called DreamWorks, and Katzenberg, a former Walt Disney producer, described to his two partners the kind of animated films that he wanted to make: “I explained to them that what I would like to do is to make a Spielberg or a David Lean movie in animation, and that’s when Stephen said, ‘Well, why don’t you do The Ten Commandments?’” (The Ten Commandments is a famous epic-style film that was made in 1956 by Cecil B. De Mille.)

From this early conversation grew the idea behind the animated film The Prince of Egypt. Scriptwriters Kelly Asbury and Lorna Cook were recruited for the project, and under the guiding hands of Spielberg, Katzenberg and Geffen, an extraordinarily realistic film was produced – a film that was unlike any animated film previously seen on the big screen. Unlike most animated films, it dealt with a serious subject matter in a serious way. Aimed at both adults and children, its goal was to retell – in a modern and realistic way – the story of Moses and the freeing of the Hebrews. The film was praised by critics and audiences alike, and it ended up being nominated for five Annie Awards.

David A. Adler, an experienced writer of children’s stories, including the Cam Jansen mystery series, wrote a novelisation of the film to introduce the story to a young audience in book form.

Summary
The story of Moses, as told in the Bible’s Old Testament, is one of the most famous stories of all time. This version of his life is based on the film The Prince of Egypt, which was released in 1999. The story takes place in Ancient Egypt, where its rulers, the Pharaohs, use Hebrew slaves to build their temples.

Chapters 1–3: The Prince of Egypt – Brothers in Egypt begins with Egyptian soldiers, acting under orders from the Pharaoh, killing every Hebrew baby boy that they find. A Hebrew woman hides her baby boy in a basket and gets her daughter to send the basket down the river. The baby boy is soon found by the Pharaoh’s wife, the Queen, who adopts the child as her own and names him Moses. The Queen raises Moses as a beloved brother to her own son, Rameses.

Moses and Rameses grow up together, becoming happy, irresponsible teenagers. They enjoy racing chariots, and one day, they have an accident and destroy a statue and a stone wall. The Pharaoh, Seti, is unhappy about the boys’ irresponsible behaviour. Moses tries to defend his brother’s actions, but Seti still focuses his anger solely on Rameses.

Chapters 4–6: Moses has a talk with Rameses and makes him feel better about the situation. Then the boys realise that they are late for dinner with their father, so they race to the dining room at the palace. They are surprised to discover that Seti has appointed Rameses Prince Regent, a title that makes him the head of all the building work. Moses gets two priests, Hotep and Huy, who always get the boys into trouble with Seti, to give a gift to the new Prince Regent. The priests give Rameses a young woman named Tzipporah, who has been stolen from the land of Midian. However, Rameses doesn’t like the woman’s attitude, so he gives her to his brother.

Later that night, Moses sees Tzipporah escaping from the palace. Moses follows her into the desert and comes across his brother, Aaron, and his sister, Miriam, who tell Moses that he is their brother. Moses tries to deny the truth, but in the end, he realises the secret of his birth.

Chapters 7–9: Moses is upset about his past. He asks the Pharaoh and the Queen if Miriam’s story is true, and they tell him that it is. Moses sees the Hebrew slaves around the palace differently, and when a guard starts to abuse one of them, he pushes the guard off the wall and accidentally
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kills him. He leaves the palace, goes into the desert, meets Tzipporah again, marries her and lives a quiet life as a shepherd.

**Chapters 10–12:** Then one day, years later, God speaks to Moses through a burning bush, commanding him to free the Hebrew people. Moses and Tzipporah return to the palace, and Moses reveals his identity to Rameses, who is now the Pharaoh of Egypt. He begs him to release the Hebrews from their slavery, but Rameses angrily refuses to grant Moses his wish. Moses warns Rameses that plagues will come to Egypt if he doesn’t free the Hebrews, but Rameses still doesn’t follow Moses’ advice.

In the end, ten terrible plagues come to Egypt, and with each plague, the Egyptian people suffer more and more hardship. Finally, after the tenth-plague, which claims the lives of every Egyptian family’s first-born son, including Rameses’ own child, the Pharaoh agrees to free the Hebrews.

However, Rameses soon changes his mind and sends his soldiers to recapture the fleeing Hebrews. At the Red Sea, with nowhere left to go, the Hebrews look to Moses for help, and Moses uses the staff that God gave him to part the water of the sea. When the Hebrews are safely on the other side of the sea, the water crashes back down and drowns all the Egyptian soldiers. Only Rameses is left alive. Moses and the Hebrew people are safe and free to live their lives.

**Background and themes**

**A universal theme:** Ancient stories of peoples or gods tend to have universal themes. The story of Moses is the story of an oppressed people and an inspired leader who takes them from slavery to freedom. Does it sound familiar? It is easy to think of historical parallels, some of which may even occur in today’s world. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that The Prince of Egypt – Brothers in Egypt has affected people so powerfully.

**Personalising an ancient story:** For Jews and Christians, the story of Moses has great meaning, as it depicts God’s omnipotent power and man’s unquestioning devotion to Him. As a modern version of the ancient Bible story, reading The Prince of Egypt – Brothers in Egypt is a valuable experience. In addition, the book succeeds in personalising the ancient story, telling it from the point of view of a young man who turns his back on his fabulously wealthy background in order to be true to himself, his people and his God. The first part of the book revolves round the loving relationship between Moses and Rameses, making the eventual confrontation between them all the more difficult. When Moses learns of his true origins, we see and understand his difficult but inevitable decision to leave the palace to go and live with his own people.

**Visually stunning:** When one thinks of animated films, one usually thinks of cute faces, voices and songs. However, the producers of The Prince of Egypt had a different focus. They wanted to make a film that was epic in scope, appealing to adults as well as children, using computer generated animation to give a look that hadn’t been seen before. The famous film magazine Empire commented that the visual style of the film was inspired by the biblical etchings of Gustave Doré, the Impressionist paintings of Claude Monet and the films of David Lean.

**Discussion activities**

**Chapters 1–3, pages 1–14**

**Before reading**

1 **Discuss:** Put students into small groups and then write the following question on the board: ‘What do you know about Moses from the Bible?’ Get them to make a list of things they know about Moses. Then, in front of the class, the groups present their list. Write their findings on the board and keep track of which group came up with the longest list.

2 **Discuss:** Photocopy the pictures on pages 6, 10, 14, 25, 37 and 43 from the book, but blank out the captions. Put students into small groups, give each group a set of photocopied pictures and ask them to write what they think is happening in each picture. When they have finished, the groups should stand at the front of the class and present their findings. Finally, write the captions to the pictures on the board and ask the class to match the captions with the pictures.

3 **Research:** Ask students to bring information about the story of Moses to class. Put a large piece of paper on the wall and get students to attach their information to the piece of paper to make a wall display.

**After reading**

4 **Pair work:** Put students into pairs and get them to write down as many facts as they can find about Egypt from reading the first three chapters of the book. When they have finished, they exchange their list of facts with another pair of students. You can make the exercise into a competition – the pair with the most facts written down wins.
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Chapters 4–6, pages 15–28

Before reading
5 Discuss: Ask students to think about why Chapter 6 is called A Surprise for Moses. What do you think the surprise will be? What do you think will happen as a result of the surprise? Do you like the title of the chapter? Why or why not? Does the title make you want to read the chapter? Why or why not?

After reading
6 Discuss: Put students into small groups and get them to discuss the following questions:
How do you think it feels to be a slave? Do you think people are still slaves nowadays? If so, where do you think they are? If not, why don’t you think people are still slaves nowadays? Why do you think people used to want to have slaves? Do you think they were right or wrong to feel this way? Why do you think this?

7 Role play: Put students into pairs. Student A is Moses and Student B is Miriam. Miriam tells Moses that he is her brother and explains how he came to live in the palace with the Pharaoh, the Queen and Rameses. Moses listens to Miriam’s story and asks her questions about it for further clarification. Miriam answers Moses’ questions as completely as possible. Moses also tells Miriam how he feels about the information that she is giving him. When they have finished, some of the pairs role play their conversation in front of the class.

Chapters 7–9, pages 29–40

Before reading
8 Discuss: Ask students to think about why Chapter 8 is called Rameses’ Plans. What do you think Rameses’ plans are in the chapter? Why? Do you think he will succeed in carrying out his plans? Why or why not? Do you think his plans are good or bad? Why? Do you like the title of the chapter? Does the title make you want to read the chapter? Why or why not?

9 Discuss: Would you like to be a pharaoh? Why or why not? Would you like to be a prince? Why or why not? Write these questions on the board and ask the students to discuss them in small groups. When they have finished, the groups can share their answers with the class.

After reading
10 Pair work: Put students into pairs and get them to write a letter from Moses to Rameses. In the letter, Moses should explain why he has chosen to leave the palace and live with a Hebrew family in the desert. He should also tell Rameses how he feels about him and what he plans to do in the future.

Chapters 10–12, pages 41–51

Before reading
11 Pair work: Put students into small groups and teach them the verb treat (to care for or deal with other people). Then get them to discuss the following questions in their groups:

a In what way(s) do the Egyptians treat the Hebrews badly in the book?

b Can you think of other countries where one group of people has treated another group of people badly? What happened in these countries?

c Why do you think people treat each other badly sometimes?

12 Discuss: Ask students to think about why Chapter 11 is called Together Again. Who do you think is together again in the chapter? Why? Do you think it is good or bad that the people are together again? Why? What do you think will happen as a result of the people being together again? Why? Do you like the title of the chapter? Does the title make you want to read the chapter? Why or why not?

After reading
13 Discuss: Put students into small groups and teach them the word deserve (to be worthy of something). Then get them to discuss the following questions in their groups:

a Do you think Rameses and the Egyptians deserve what happens to them? Why or why not?

b Do you think people in general get what they deserve in life? If so, why do you think they get what they deserve? If not, do you think they should get what they deserve? Why or why not?

c Can you think of any other groups of people in history who got what they deserved?

14 Write: Put students into small groups and get them to write a short story about Moses’ future. Note that this exercise can be done in class or as a homework assignment. When they have finished, each group, in front of the class, can read out their short story.

15 Write: How has Moses changed in the story? Get students to write sentences to answer this question.

16 Artwork: Put students into pairs and get them to draw a picture to describe a scene from Chapter 10, 11 or 12. When they have finished, the pairs can describe their picture to the rest of the class, and the class can guess which scene the picture illustrates.

Vocabulary activities
For the Word List and vocabulary activities, go to www.penguinreaders.com.