

Taming the Fear Monster

A nonfiction article and an Ethiopian folktale explore overcoming fear

About the Story

Lexile: 830L (combined)

For qualitative complexity factors, go to Scope Online.

Learning Objective:

to integrate ideas about fear from a nonfiction article and a folktale and to write an essay analyzing a famous saying about fear

Key Skills:

key ideas and supporting details, plot, character, integrating ideas, interpreting text, symbolism, synthesis, theme

Essential Questions:

- How can we deal with anxiety and fear?
- When is fear helpful and when is it harmful?
- Why is it important to face our fears?

Standards:

The articles and lesson support these Common Core anchor standards: **R.1, R.2, R.3, R.4, R.5, R.7, R.9, W.2, SL.1, SL.2, L.4, L.5, L.6.** For more standards information—including TEKS—go to Scope Online.



Fear is a natural human emotion.
But what happens when it takes over your life?

By Matthew Hutson

Ask Your Student: Think about how fears can be overcome.



Your Teaching Support Package

Find your full suite of materials at
scope.scholastic.com.

Audio:

- The article and the folktale
- Vocabulary Slideshow

Literature Connections: ideas for connecting to curricular texts

Recommended pairings from the

Scope Archives:

Poem: “Song of Bravery”

Fiction: “Bearing Up,” “The Perfects,” “Aftershocks”

Skill Builders to print or project:

- Preparing to Write: Conquering Fear
- Close Reading and Critical Thinking
- **Core Skills Workout:** Text Evidence*
- Quiz*
- Contest Entry Form

* Available on two levels

Step-by-Step Lesson Plan

Close Reading, Critical Thinking, Skill Building

1 Preparing to Read

Do-Now: Quick Write

(3 minutes)

Write the following on the board for students to respond to as they enter the classroom:
Have you ever imagined that something was going to be really scary and then been surprised when it turned out to not be so scary after all? Has fear ever kept you from doing something? Write about one of those times. Have students write their responses on paper or in a journal. (Students can write “personal” at the top of their journal entries if they want to keep their writing private.)

Preview vocabulary.

(10 minutes, activity sheet online)

Project the **Vocabulary Slideshow**. Review the definitions and complete the activity as a class. Highlighted words: *cowered, dissipated, elders, hovered, irrational, orb, sneered, trepidation*

2 Reading and Discussing

“Taming the Fear Monster”

(45 minutes, activity sheets online)

- Read aloud the As You Read box on page 17.
- Read the article as a class. Optionally, play the audio from Scope Online.
- Discuss the following questions as a class.

Close-Reading Questions

Before his exposure therapy, how did fear affect Kyle Hargreaves? (key ideas and supporting details) *Fear was taking over Kyle’s life. It not only affected him physically, with symptoms like extreme sweating and trouble breathing, it also affected his ability to fully enjoy his life. His terror caused him to avoid going places and doing things that*

would be otherwise fulfilling, such as attending sporting events, going to amusement parks and restaurants, and other places where he might encounter a costumed character.

What is the difference between fear and a phobia? (key ideas and supporting details)

Author Matthew Hutson explains that fear is a reaction in the brain, a natural survival tool that helps us react quickly when we face potential danger (18). A phobia is “an extreme, irrational, and lasting fear of something” (17)—fear that has escalated to unfounded feelings of terror that can take over a person’s life.

“Conquering Fear”

Read the folktale as a class. Then discuss the following questions, some of which refer to both the article and the folktale.

Close-Reading Questions

What causes Miobe to decide that he must overcome his fear? (plot) *Miobe seems to be motivated by the teasing he gets from his friends and family. He sets off on his quest after they tell him that they call him Miobe because it means “frightened one” and laugh at him for being afraid.*

What does Miobe encounter on his quest that requires him to be brave? What boosts his confidence? (character) *The darkness of night, howling wolves, and the idea of meeting strangers who might be unkind to him frighten Miobe. Each time he feels fear, he walks toward it and speaks aloud to himself, self-coaching with positive affirmations about conquering that fear. Arriving at the village and meeting other people who are afraid of the world around them also seem to help him find some bravery.*

In “Taming the Fear Monster,” the author explains that not interacting with the thing that scares you can make your fear even more exaggerated (19). How is this same idea expressed in the folktale? (integrating ideas) *The villagers have been hiding from the monster—not going to school, not farming, not even leaving the house. When they point to the monster on the mountain, Miobe sees nothing. It’s only after they describe the monster in detail—its crocodile head, its gigantic hippopotamus body, the smoke and fire shooting out of its dragon-like snout—that Miobe is able to see the monster. The fear the villagers and Miobe feel isn’t caused by anything truly dangerous, but rather by exaggerated fantasies.*

In the final line of the folktale, an elder says, “Miobe has brought us the monster. Its name is fear.” What does he mean? (interpreting text) *The elder understands that the villagers and Miobe built something up to be much bigger and scarier than it actually was. The true monster, then, is fear itself.*

When you get closer to something, it looks bigger. Why does the monster look smaller the closer Miobe gets to it? (symbolism) *From the bottom of the mountain, Miobe thinks*

the monster looks “bigger and more fiery than any dragon” because he is afraid of what lies ahead. The monster becoming smaller as Miobe gets closer to it represents his shrinking fear. The bravery it takes for him to go up the mountain leads him to see that there is nothing to be afraid of after all.

What ideas do both the article and the folktale express about facing our fears? (synthesis, theme) *Students will likely offer ideas similar to: Avoiding our fears can make them worse; we can overcome our fears by facing them; fear can cause us to imagine things as much scarier than they actually are; most of the time, fear isn’t caused by anything truly dangerous.*

Critical-Thinking Question

In the folktale, an elder says to Miobe, “Fool! No one can find bravery where it does not exist.” Do you agree? Is bravery a quality that can be developed? *Answers will vary.*

3 Skill Building and Writing

(15 minutes, activity sheet online)

Have students complete **Preparing to Write: Conquering Fear**. This synthesizing activity will prepare students for the prompt on page 21. *For alternate culminating tasks, see below.*

Differentiate and Customize

For Struggling Readers

In a well-organized paragraph, explain what Kyle Hargreaves and Miobe can teach us about facing our fears.

For Advanced Readers

Read one of the recommended pairings from the *Scope* archives: “Song of Bravery,” “Bearing Up,” “The Perfects,” or “Aftershocks.” Write an essay about the speaker or protagonist’s fear, how it affects them, and how they overcome it.

For Poets

Write a poem about something that frightens you. Choose your own title, or choose a title from the following list: “The Monster,” “Conquering Fear,” or “What I Am Afraid Of.”

For Storytellers

Create a story around the theme that conquering fear requires facing it head-on. Your story can be in the form of a written story, a video, or a graphic novel.