

The Bear Attacks That Changed America

How one tragic night changed the way we care for wild places

About the Story

Lexile: 970L

For qualitative complexity factors, go to Scope Online.

Learning Objectives:

to learn about how the relationship between grizzly bears and humans has changed over time

Key Skills:

author's craft, text structure, cause and effect, tone, key ideas

Essential Questions:

- How can we protect wild places?
- When it comes to conservation, what lessons can we learn from the past?
- What should the future of our national parks be?

Standards:

This article and lesson support these Common Core anchor standards:

R.1, R.2, R.3, R.4, R.5, R.7, W.2, SL.1, L.4, L.5, L.6

For more standards information—including TEKS—go to Scope Online.



Your Teaching Support Package

Find your full suite of materials at [scope.scholastic.com](https://www.scope.scholastic.com).

Video: Behind the Scenes: “The Bear Attacks That Changed America”

Audio:

- The article
- Vocabulary

Differentiated articles:

- Lower-Lexile version (printable)
- Spanish version (printable)

Literature Connections: ideas for connecting to curricular texts

Skill Builders to print or project:

- Video Discussion Questions
- Vocabulary
- Close Reading and Critical Thinking
- Preparing to Write: Changing Attitudes
- **Core Skills Workout:** Summarizing*, Text Features, Text Structure, Central Ideas and Details*, Tone, Mood, Nonfiction Elements*
- 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: Make a list.

(5 minutes)

Write this on the board: *Study the photograph of the grizzly bear on pages 4-5. List words and phrases to describe the bear.* Give students two minutes, then invite them to share their lists. After reading the article, ask if anyone would add or remove anything from their lists.

Watch the video.

(15 minutes)

Project the **Video Discussion Questions** and preview as a class. Then watch the **Behind the Scenes video** and discuss the questions.

Preview vocabulary.

(8 minutes, activity sheet online)

Project or distribute the **Vocabulary Words and Definitions**. (Optionally, assign the practice activity for homework.) Highlighted words: *fearsome, formidable, mettle, prohibited, rustic, salvage, stark, transformation*

2 Reading and Discussing

Read and discuss the article.

(45 minutes, activity sheets online)

- Have a volunteer read aloud the As You Read box on page 6.
- Play the audio of the article as students follow along in their printed magazines.
- Have students work in groups to discuss the following close-reading questions.

Close-Reading Questions

How does author Lauren Tarshis use the introduction to pull readers into the article? (author's craft) *First, Tarshis uses imagery to pull readers in, describing "glittering lakes" and "majestic forests and rugged peaks."*

Vivid verbs like peering, perched, and slinking help readers imagine Glacier's creatures. This description, along with the details that the boys were cooking over a campfire, sleeping under the stars, and marveling at bears, create a mood of peace and awe that shifts to one of suspense when Tarshis writes, "That was about to change," "Unimaginable terror was just ahead," and "Two horrific grizzly attacks would soon shatter the peaceful beauty of Glacier National Park." These indications that dramatic events will soon occur make readers want to continue reading.

What is the main purpose of the sections "Powerful and Sacred" and "Truly Safe"?

(text structure) *The main purpose of these sections is to show how grizzly bears went from being cherished and deeply respected creatures for thousands of years to being seen as nightmarish killers to be feared and destroyed.*

What effect did garbage have on grizzly bears in Glacier National Park? (cause and effect)

The abundance of garbage in the park caused the bears to become dependent on garbage as a food source. This dependence, in turn, caused the bears to lose their natural fear of humans and venture into more-crowded parts of the park. The garbage was unhealthy for the bears' diets and caused injuries as well; the glass found in the paw and mouth of the euthanized bears was surely from glass bottles or jars people left in the park.

Tarshis refers to the Granite Park bear feedings as a "circus-like spectacle." What attitude is she expressing? (tone)

Tarshis is expressing disapproval of the bear feedings. She is implying that it was wrong for people to lure the bears and treat them as entertainment.

▶ On page 9, Tarshis writes, “Neither grizzly had been surprised or threatened; the bears attacked the women as they slept in their tents.” Why is this sentence important? (text structure) *This sentence reminds readers of information Tarshis shared earlier: Grizzly bears avoid humans unless surprised or threatened. By telling readers that these bears attacked humans without being surprised or threatened, Tarshis is pointing out that the bears were not acting normally—that some other force was at play in their behavior.*

- Reconvene as a class to discuss the following critical-thinking questions.

Critical-Thinking Questions

▶ Why should people care about grizzlies? *Answers will vary. Some students may point out that grizzlies are important because they play a critical role in their forest ecosystems. Other students may say that grizzlies are not monsters but are extraordinary creatures with remarkable skills, such as their ability to hibernate through winter. Others may argue for the intrinsic value of all creatures.*

▶ After reading the article, has your view of grizzlies changed at all? Why or why not? *Answers will vary.*

▶ How do the changes Glacier National Park made after the bear attacks, such as closing a trail if a grizzly is nearby, bringing in bear-proof garbage cans, and renovating campgrounds, demonstrate a shift in the park’s point of view about grizzly bears? *Changes like these demonstrate the park’s changed view that humans are visitors in the animals’ homes, not the other way around, and that grizzlies need protection from humans just as much as humans need protection from grizzlies.*

3 Skill Building and Writing

Featured Skill: Key Ideas

(15 minutes, activity sheet online)

Have students complete **Preparing to Write: Changing Attitudes**. This activity will prepare students to respond to the writing prompt on page 10. For alternate culminating tasks, see the box below.

Differentiate and Customize

For Struggling Readers

In a well-organized paragraph, explain how people’s attitudes toward grizzly bears have changed over time. Support your ideas with text evidence from the article.

For Advanced Readers

Research the debate over whether grizzly bears should be removed from the endangered species list. Form an opinion and write an argument essay, supporting your point of view with ideas from the article and at least two other resources.

For Conservationists

Research some of the challenges that grizzly bears face today and how those challenges are—or are not—being addressed. Present your findings in the form of a slideshow, video, essay, or podcast.

For Future Park Rangers

Conduct research about national parks in the United States. Create a short video that gives a brief overview of our national park system and offers tips on how to be a good visitor in any national park.