



Bear Market

Michele Martin Bossley

Reading Level: 3.8

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AR Quiz # 136644

Book Summary

While volunteering at the local zoo, Robyn, Nick and Trevor learn that grizzly bears are being poached and their gall bladders removed for use in alternative medicine. Always ready to solve a mystery, the kids set out to find the poachers. Bear is not only big game, they learn, but big money to poachers. The stakes are high and the suspects many, as the kids head into their most dangerous adventure yet.

Author Biography

Michele Martin Bossley is the popular author of many books for young people. A fan of the Trixie Beldon mysteries as a child, Michele enjoys writing about amateur sleuths Robyn, Nick and Trevor. This is her fifth mystery in the Orca Currents series. Michele lives in Calgary, Alberta.

Connecting to the Text

Character and Novel Study

Ask students to make notes on their first impressions of the characters Gran, Bo, Simon and Dude. Encourage them to include the descriptive words provided in the novel for each character. For example:

- In chapter 1, we are introduced to Gran: “Her gray hair was braided in a single rope down her back, almost to her waist. Glasses perched on her long nose, and she wore a T-shirt and outdated jeans.”
- In chapter 1, we are introduced to Bo, Simon and Dude: “A guy with a shaved head and a goatee thrust his tattooed arm up...his buddy [was] a skinny dude with stringy hair and a full beard...[the] third guy [had] a ripped T-shirt.”

Ask students if they, like Trevor, “judged a book by its cover” as they read through the novel, referring to their notes. Encourage students to explain the circumstances in the novel’s plot that changed Trevor’s mind about Gran, Bo, Simon and Dude. What did Trevor first think about these people, and what changed his mind?

Option: In a large group discussion, ask students to share times when they made a judgment about someone, based on what that person looked like, how they dressed, what kind of car they drove, etc.

Option: Ask students to reflect on what kind of first impression they’d like others to have of them. Do I make a positive or negative first impression? Encourage students to capture their reflections in journal or diary entries.

Plot and Point of View

The plot tells us the story. Each situation or event that occurs affects what happens next, until the conclusion.

- Ask students to brainstorm the succession of events in *Bear Market* and summarize them using a timeline. Invite students to draw pictures along the timeline. Ask each group to present their timeline to the class, and then discuss how each event affects what happens next.
- To engage students with the plot, various characters in the novel and their unique points of view, ask students to divide into groups, with each group representing one of the main characters (Trevor; Robyn; Gran/Kathy; Neil, the zookeeper; Bo, Simon and Dude; Phil, the hunter). Students should be given time to study the character they’re assigned, with instruction to try to see things “through their eyes.” As a group discussion, or in the style of a talk show, ask students to respond to the following questions using the point of view of their character. Note that some characters will have more to say about some topics than others.
 - ◆ How do you feel about zoos? Are they good or bad for animals? For people?
 - ◆ How do you feel about hunting? Are you for or against it?

- ◆ What can be done to protect endangered species?
- ◆ What is important to you? What do you stand up for?
- ◆ What is your experience with, or what do you know about, poaching?
- ◆ What mistakes have you made? (i.e., Trevor judged by first impressions, Gran helped the poachers)
- ◆ What did you learn through this experience?

Connecting to the Curriculum

Language Arts

Metaphors and similes connect ideas, giving us images that expand our understanding of situations and characters.

- Read the following examples from *Bear Market* aloud or write them on the board. After each, discuss the connection that is being made and how it lends meaning to the text (for example, music + pelican with sore throat = unpleasant sounds).

Option: Read the first few aloud, and then challenge students to find more.

- (ch. 1) *The underpass was an echoing concrete chamber, so any noise seemed loud.*
- (ch. 2) *He hammered at the strings...The screech sounded like a metal pipe being dragged over a bed of nails.*
- (ch. 4) *Blankets, towels and coolers made bright islands in the sweating crowd of people.*
According to Robyn, our guitar-playing still sounded like a pelican with a sore throat, so any help would be good.
- (ch. 7) *The basement walls of my house seemed to vibrate in silent applause.*
A seed of suspicion was forming in my mind.
- (ch. 8) *... the throb of drums pounded outside the nightclub. The sound wound to a crashing finish.*
- (ch. 9) *Robyn bristled with anger.*
- (ch. 10) *"Close?" I repeated, my heart still hammering in my chest.*
- (ch. 11) *Robyn and I froze... I felt fear tingling in my veins. Pine branches whipped my face. The undergrowth crackled under my feet with every step.*
- (ch.12) *... we stopped at the river. It boiled past...*

- Write the following sentences, which use the novel's context, on the board or read them aloud as a large group exercise. Ask students to complete the sentences using similes (encourage students to use humor and creativity in their responses).

Option: Challenge students to create their own samples, as below, and exchange them with each other. Encourage students to use the context of the novel in some of their samples.

- ◆ It was dark in the outback woods. The trees above us were like _____.
- ◆ The bear was huge and brown. It looked like _____.
- ◆ The rancid fish smelled terrible. It was like _____.
- ◆ Being onstage with the rock band was amazing! It was like _____.
- ◆ She said my guitar playing was terrible. It reminded her of _____.
- ◆ The drums were loud. It was like _____.

Art

Have students create an art project, such as drawing, painting or collage using an image or theme from the novel. Students may wish to include a quotation in their artwork. Once complete, encourage students to share their projects, explaining why they chose the image they did, and how it resonated for them.

- *Free the bears! Cages are no way for an animal to live! Let them live free!*
- *My fear faded to an intense sadness that this majestic animal of the Rockies would never rise again.*
- *Look at the buffalo. They were slaughtered for their skins until hardly any were left...*
- *What can we do? We're just kids...There's always something we can do. We just have to find a way.*
- *Blankets, towels and coolers made bright islands in the sweating crowd of people.*
- *Anyone want to rock with us on this next tune?... All right! Come on up, little dude!*
- *People need to realize that the earth belongs to more than just human beings. We are all responsible for keeping the environment clean and healthy.*

Writing

In chapter 13, Simon said, "You see this necklace? My grandfather gave it to me. It's made from a real bear's claw. A train killed this bear..My grandfather told me to wear the necklace as a reminder to respect the wild, to do what I can to help." Simon's necklace really means a lot to him, because it reminds him what's important, and it connects him to his grandfather.

- Can you think of something you have that connects you to someone you care about, or an idea or concept that's important to you? Write a journal entry, reflecting on Simon's or your experience. Include a drawing of Simon's necklace or the item you have that is important to you like Simon's necklace is to him.

Connecting to the Students—Ideas for Exploration

1. In chapter 1, Trevor says, “Nick had a point. We always seemed to be getting ourselves into sticky situations.” If students are interested in the adventures of Trevor, Robyn and Nick, encourage them to check out these other books by Michele Martin Bossley in the Orca Currents series: *Swiped*, *Cracked*, *Bio-pirate* and *Fraud Squad*.
2. Neil, the zookeeper, said that “some people don’t believe in keeping animals in captivity for any reason.”
 - ◆ Hold a large group discussion in which you debate the pros and cons of zoos. Are there good reasons to hold animals in captivity? Refer to examples from the novel during the discussion.

Prompt: Robyn defended zoos, arguing that scientists protect endangered species in zoos, zoos raise funds for conservation programs and offer programs which introduce species back into the wild. Zoos also offer opportunities for people who live in urban areas to experience animals first hand, which may increase appreciation for endangered animals.
 - ◆ Encourage students who have visited zoos to share their observations and feelings about the animals they saw in the zoo, as well as what they learned about the animals, birds or fish they had opportunity to see while at the zoo.
3. Robyn admired how the animal activists “stand up for what they believe in.” As a large group discussion topic, encourage students to share their thoughts on what they stand for—and what they won’t stand for. Following the discussion, encourage students to consider what influences their values (for example, their country of origin, how they were raised, their religion/faith, culture, etc.).
4. Trevor, Robyn and Nick learn that with increased urbanization, bear populations can become dependent on eating garbage, which isn’t optimal for the bear and can present a danger to the public. As an individual or small group project, ask students to research bear populations and urbanization. In what parts of the country is this a problem? How do cities protect their citizens from bears, and what role does public education play? Are there other species which present a similar challenge?
5. The issue of poaching is a prominent theme in *Bear Market*. In this novel, poaching occurs because “gall bladders are sometimes used in alternative medicines. Some people believe that bile, which comes from the gall bladder, can cure certain human illnesses. It commands quite a high price overseas.” With discretion to the unique culture and context of your student body, you may wish to ask students to consider topics such as laboratory testing on animals or poaching. Are there any times when testing on animals or removing parts of animals for medicine would be acceptable?

6. Personal and Career Planning—Robyn has the opportunity to volunteer at a local zoo. At first, she helps out by handing out pamphlets and picking up trash, and later she is able to update bear files and check emails. Robyn volunteers at the zoo because she cares about animals, and the animals benefit from her care. Robyn benefits too because she gains valuable experience.
- ♦ Ask students to consider something they really care about or enjoy (children, reading, movies, animals, plants, adventure, music, etc.), then brainstorm ways that they could volunteer to gain experience. Here are some ideas to read aloud, to get students thinking of ideas and planning next steps.
 - I really care about little kids, and I enjoy babysitting the kids in my neighborhood. Perhaps there is a daycare or children's ward in a hospital where I could volunteer. I could read to little kids, or play cards with kids who are in hospital. I will write a script for a call I'll make to the daycare or hospital, and I'll run it past our school's career counselor and see what s/he thinks...
 - I love all kinds of animals, especially cats and kittens. There's an animal shelter not far from my school. I bet they could use some cat food, blankets and kitty litter, since everything they have comes from donations. I'll check out their website and see what it says about helping them out. I can put up a sign in the cafeteria, asking other kids to help out by bringing in old blankets and tins of cat food.
 - I love reading! I wonder if the public library near the school allows students to volunteer. Even if I'm just greeting visitors or helping collect books off the tables, I'd learn about how a library works and how the thousands of books are organized. I'm going to make some notes about my ideas and run them past the librarian at my school. I bet s/he will have some thoughts about how I could put my idea into action!