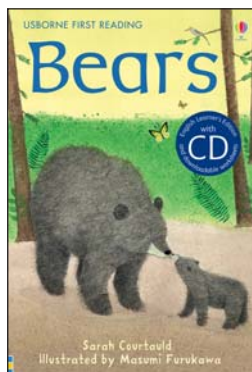


Bears • Teacher's notes



Author: Sarah Courtauld

Reader level: Elementary

Word count: 267

Lexile level: 390L

Text type: Non-fiction (science – natural history)

About the book

Bears are some of the most iconic and familiar wild animals in the world. Even in countries where there are no native bear species, young children easily recognize brown bears, polar bears and panda bears. This book looks at brown bears in particular: where they live, what they eat and how they raise families. The style and language are simple and approachable, an ideal introduction to natural history topics such as life cycles and habitats. After the main text, there is a map showing where different species of bear live, and picture-based puzzles to check comprehension.

About the author

Sarah Courtauld grew up in London. As a seven-year-old, she planned to run away to the Amazon rainforest. When this didn't quite work out, she went to school instead, which was less fun, but had more pencils and regular cooked meals. These days she spends her time reading books, drawing pictures and writing.



Key words

Your students might not be familiar with some of these words, which are important in the story.

p4 claws	p10 icy
p5 berries	p11 hairy
p6 furry	p12 partner
paws	p13 female
p9 tough	den
bamboo	p14 snug
	cubs
	p16 cuddle
	feeds
	curled up
	lick
	p24 ocean
	p25 deserts
	grasslands



Key phrases

p5	to sniff out
p11	to keep [something] warm
p14	to give birth
p18	At last
p22	to keep [something] safe
p24	all over the world

Bear species: it's not essential for students to know the meaning of "spectacled" and "sloth" on pp24-25, but they may be interested. Spectacled bears are so called because of their ringed eyes (they appear to be wearing spectacles or glasses), and sloth bears for their similarity to the South American animal, the sloth – which in turn is an old-fashioned word for laziness, since the sloth is extremely slow-moving and sleeps for much of the day.

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Before reading

Before the class, search for some pictures of bears in the wild, preferably showing some detail of their habitats – brown bears, polar bears, panda bears (note that koalas, sometimes called “koala bears”, are not actually bears).

You could start with a teddy bear, either a toy or a picture. Ask students: what is this? Is it a real animal?

Then show them some of the pictures you have collected. Find out what they know about bears: where do they live? (See the map on pp24-25 of the book; there are also brown bears in Eastern Europe and Russia, and a very few in northern Spain.) What do they eat? (Mostly fish, berries and insects.) How many different kinds of bears do you think there are? (Surprisingly, only eight.) You could ask students to guess a number, write up the guesses and find the answer in your reading – it is given on p24 and on the back cover.

Reading or listening

You can listen to the story on CD or read it aloud to the students, take turns to read or read together silently. Each double page spread in the book is one track on the CD, so that you can pause between tracks or repeat tracks if your students need it. The first reading is in a British English accent, and it is followed by an American English reading. The words are exactly the same. After the story, there is a short selection of key phrases that can be used for pronunciation practice.

During reading: you might like to ask some of these questions.

- | | | | |
|-----|--|-----|--|
| p6 | Why do you think bears have thick, hairy coats? [They mostly live in cold countries or cold places such as mountains.] | p17 | What is the animal standing above the den? [A wolf.] Why do the bears stay inside? [To keep warm and stay safe while the cubs are small and vulnerable.] |
| p7 | You could start making a list of things that “Bears can do” and “We can do”, e.g. climb trees, catch fish, dig dens. | p21 | Do you lick noses to show you are friends? What do you do? |
| p11 | There are no trees or plants here – what might polar bears eat? [Seals, fish, seaweed] | p22 | Who keeps you safe? [Answers may include parents, teachers, carers, neighbours...] |
| p15 | Can human babies see and hear when they are born? [Yes, although they can't see very clearly at first.] | p24 | The key shows different types of countryside. Which type has no bears living in it? Do any bears live in Africa? Why not, do you think? |

Puzzles (pages 26-29)

You might like students to work on these in pairs or small groups. If so, ask the “After reading” questions before doing the puzzles.

After reading

What did you learn about bears from the book? Which kind of bear lives nearest to you?

You could use this book as a lead into natural history topics, as mentioned on the previous page. Panda bears and polar bears also raise important questions about protecting endangered species and safeguarding habitats.

Did you know: the reason we have teddy bears as toys? In 1902, US President Theodore (“Teddy”) Roosevelt was invited to go bear hunting. The hunt was unsuccessful, and his hosts later captured a bear for the president to shoot. Roosevelt was horrified, and refused to shoot it. Later that year, a New York toy store sold the first “Teddy bears”, and they were an immediate and lasting success.

