



# Know Your Bears!

## LESSON

**GRADE LEVEL** K–7

**CATEGORY** Plants, Animals  
and Habitats

**TOPIC** Bears

### TIME

Part 1: 30 minutes  
Part 2: 40 minutes

### MATERIALS

- Black bear and grizzly bear profiles and tracks
- Black bear and grizzly bear masks
- Student activity worksheets (see copy pages)
- Elastic or string
- Tag or construction paper

### SETTING

Any

### GROUP SIZE

Any size

### SUBJECT AREAS

Art, Drama, Science

## Overview

In this activity, students learn about the two bear species found in British Columbia. Through discussion, the examination of pictures, and role play, students learn to distinguish between black and grizzly bears.

## Objectives

- Recognize that there are two species of bears in British Columbia
- Describe the features of the black bear and the grizzly bear
- Compare the two species of bears
- Express ideas using non-verbal communication

## Making Connections

As students learn about the two bear species of British Columbia, they will make connections to their personal experiences with these species.

## Background

Please see the section in the primer titled “The Bears of British Columbia” for background on the bear species found in B.C.

## Part 1

### Warm Up

1. Display the outlines of the black and grizzly bears and pictures of their tracks. Lead a discussion about how to distinguish between black and grizzly bears. First, ask students if they know what kind of bears are found in British Columbia. Confirm that there are two, the black bear and the grizzly bear. Students may ask about the Kodiak and Kermode (Spirit) bears. If they do, explain that they are subspecies of the grizzly and black bear respectively.
2. Ask students how they would know which species of bear they were looking at if they met one while out hiking. One hint you can give is that the three most important distinguishing features can be seen in the profiles (hump, snout shape, ears).
3. Record answers in two columns labeled “Shared Features” and “Distinguishing Features.”

### **Shared Features: not good for distinguishing between the two species**

- **Colour** - varies in both species
- **Size** - young grizzly bears are smaller than black bears
- **Habitat** - the habitats of both bears overlap
- **Climbing trees** - grizzly bears can climb trees

### **Distinguishing features: good for distinguishing between the two species.**

- nose profile
- claws
- body shape
- ear size and location

## Part 2

Hand out the worksheets and have students record the distinguishing and shared features of the two species of bears. On the other side of their worksheet students use the web to record what they know about grizzlies and black bears. A minimum of six points should be recorded for each bear.

When students have completed their worksheets have them share in pairs or small groups adding any new information to their web.

1. Using copies of the black and grizzly bear masks from Activity 1, have half the class become black bears and the other half become grizzly bears.
2. Students glue their masks to tag or construction paper and then cut them out. Use a popsicle stick to make a handle or an elastic to make a strap for the mask. Allow students to colour their masks if time permits. Remind them of the range of colours that black and grizzly bears can be.
3. Students put on their bear masks and go through some of the actions of being a bear:
  - Scratching claws on tree trunks
  - Digging for insects
  - Eating grass
  - Curling up for hibernation
  - Catching a salmon
  - "Raking" for berries with their claws
  - Walking on all fours

4. When students are familiar with bear behaviour, divide them into groups of four and explain that they will be creating tableaux in their bear characters. A tableau is like a photograph. The groups will have three minutes to decide how their photograph will look and to get into position (be flexible with the time period according to student need). When students have created their photograph, they must remember exactly how their bodies are positioned, as they will have to break their pose to see the poses of the other groups and then go back to it. Explain that students may wish to pretend that one of their black bears is a grizzly or vice versa to suit their tableau. They should develop a short storyline to go with their tableau (eg. mother showing cubs how to fish).
5. When students are ready, select one group to be the first to show their tableau. The other students look at their poses and try to tell the story being shown. When the tableau has been held for about one minute, allow students in that group to tell the story they were creating. Select another group to show their tableau.

#### **Tableau ideas might include:**

- Mother with cubs
- Bears fighting over a salmon stream
- A grizzly chasing a black bear up a tree
- Bears catching salmon
- Bears tearing apart a log
- Coming out of hibernation

#### **6. Wrap Up**

Allow students to provide group feedback. Allow students to discuss what behaviours or actions enabled them to identify the species and the stories being shown through the tableaux.

#### **Assessment**

Collect student worksheets and assess for:

- Six correct points on each of the webs
- Full record of distinguishing features for the two bears. Assess student participation in the tableaux:
- Willingness to participate in dramatic play
- Cooperation within their group
- Listening skills
- Expression of thoughts and ideas

## Extensions

- Provide students with a Venn diagram in which to record distinguishing and shared features of black and grizzly bears.
- Have students write a comparative paragraph summarizing their knowledge of the differences between the black and grizzly bears.
- Copy the bear profiles and have students label the parts and distinguishing features.
- Have students create an illustration of one of their tableaux and write a description explaining what is occurring in the scene.
- Use a digital camera to record each tableau. Students create an annotated slideshow that includes each tableau the students participated in.
- Have students create their own bear masks or costumes rather than using the templates provided. Review the distinguishing characteristics of the black bear and grizzly bear – nose profile, claw length, body shape, ear size and position
- Provide students with the following website addresses. At these sites students will find a variety of quizzes designed to test the viewers' ability to correctly identify black and grizzly bears.
- Montana's Fish, Wildlife and Parks' Bear Identification Program. This is a great site designed to teach hunters how to distinguish between the black and grizzly bear as it is illegal to hunt grizzlies in Montana. The site provides online training in identifying the black from the grizzly. There is also a test to check skill level for distinguishing bears sitting and standing in various positions and under various light conditions. **[www.fwp.state.mt.us/bearid](http://www.fwp.state.mt.us/bearid)**
- The Be Bear Aware page of the Center for Wildlife Information has eight bear pictures that can be used to test ability to distinguish black from grizzly bears. **[www.centerforwildlifeinformation.org/BeBearAware/bebearaware.htm](http://www.centerforwildlifeinformation.org/BeBearAware/bebearaware.htm)**.
- Ministry of Environment. This site provides a digital version of the brochure "Who's Who: Know Your Bears". **[wapwww.gov.bc.ca/wld/documents/bearsmart/whoswhobears.pdf](http://wapwww.gov.bc.ca/wld/documents/bearsmart/whoswhobears.pdf)**
- Students choose one photograph each of the black and the grizzly bear. Using these images, students create a one-page poster describing the distinguishing features of each bear.
- Videos are available through the public library that provide information regarding identifying bears in the wild, traveling through bear country and learning to be bear aware. Some of them provide a quiz that can be given at the end of the film to assess knowledge learned. If no quiz is available, pre-watch the film and develop a short quiz to test learning. Provide the quiz prior to watching the film and divide students into groups, each responsible for a set of questions from one section of the film.
- Bear Aware [Video]. BC Ministry of Forests. 1995.