

Standards-Aligned Educator's Guide

# A VOICE FOR THE SPIRIT BEARS: HOW ONE BOY INSPIRED MILLIONS TO SAVE A RARE ANIMAL

**ISBN-13:** 978-1771389792

**ISBN-10:** 1771389796

**Publisher:** Kids Can Press

**Age Range:** 6 - 9 years

**Grade Level:** 1 - 4

## About the book:

*As a child, Simon Jackson found navigating the world of the school playground difficult. He felt most at home in the woodlands, learning about and photographing wildlife. As a teenager, he became fascinated with spirit bears, a rare subspecies of black bear with creamy white fur. These elusive creatures were losing their habitat to deforestation, and Simon knew he had to do something to protect them. He decided he would become the voice for the spirit bears. But first, he would have to find his own.*

## About the author—Carmen Oliver:

**Carmen Oliver** is the author of picture books *A Voice for the Spirit Bears: How One Boy Inspired Millions to Save a Rare Animal*, a Junior Library Guild spring 2019 pick and *Bears Make the Best Reading Buddies*. She's also the author of the forthcoming picture books *Bears Make the Best Math Buddies* (July 1, 2019), *Bears Make the Best Writing Buddies* (Spring 2020), *Bears Make the Best Science Buddies* (Fall 2020) and *The Favio Chavez Story* (Eerdmans Books for Young Readers). Carmen's work has been shortlisted for the Rainforest of Reading Award, The Writers' League of Texas Awards and the CLEL Bell Picture Book Awards for Early Literacy. In 2014, she founded the Booking Biz, a boutique style agency that brings award-winning children's authors and illustrators to schools, libraries, and special events. She also teaches writing at the Writing Barn and The Highlights Foundation and loves speaking at schools, conferences and festivals.



## About the illustrator—Katy Dockrill:

Canadian illustrator **Katy Dockrill**, is an honours graduate from OCAD. Using brush and ink and Photoshop, she creates art that is both playful and reflective. Some of her clients include NJ Monthly Magazine, Chudleigh's Apple Farms, the Victoria Symphony Orchestra, New Trail Magazine, CBC, Ivy Publishing and This Old House Magazine. She's a nerdy, wordy, cat-loving aquaphile who's inspired by her city within a city (Leslieville), her friends, and her family. When she isn't drawing (or reading, let's be honest), she loves to find and fix things, drink coffee and take walks in the neighbourhood (which usually leads to finding things to fix.)



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## Pre-reading Discussion:

**Illustrations are pictures that tell stories. Consider the story being told on the front cover.**

- Describe the action taking place in the illustration. What is the boy doing?
- Identify the objects on the ground near him. What do these objects suggest about the type of person the boy might be?
- Determine what shape being formed by the shadow. Predict why the shape is so much larger than the boy. What does the shadow size suggest about the importance of the animal?
- The title of the book is *A Voice for the Spirit Bears: How One Boy Inspired Millions to Save a Rare Animal*. Consider how the illustration makes a connection with the title. How do the two go together?
- The word *inspire* means to encourage, affect, and cause. Predict how the boy in the illustration might inspire millions of people to care about a special animal. Find objects in the illustration that might be used to support his inspiration.
- The word *rare* means precious, exceptional, and excellent. Is it possible for a young person to save something as rare as a special bear? Explain your answer.
- Predict what this story is going to be about.

## Post-reading Discussion:

### ***Seven-year-old Simon wished that he was as powerful as a bear.***

- To be *powerful* means to be strong, capable, and mighty. Explain why Simon wished that he could be powerful. List reasons why he feels that he is not powerful.
- List the sorts of things that powerful people are capable of. Discuss Simon's limitations.
- Being in nature is very important to Simon. Tell why this is so.
- How about you? Identify your strengths. Discover ways that your strengths might benefit the natural world.

### ***One day, there was a story about a forest, above Canada's border in Alaska, that needed protection.***

- Simon heard the story about the forest being cut down on the radio. Explain why the story inspired him to respond by hosting a lemonade stand and sending letters to world leaders. What do these actions reveal about Simon's character?
- A *habitat* is defined as the natural environment of someone or something. The forest is a habitat for bears and other forms of wildlife. Explain how and why cutting down a trees destroys an animal's habitat.
- Explore reasons why Simon cares, so deeply, about protecting the natural world. How does his concern for nature make him different than other students? Do you consider his concern to be a strength or weakness? How so?

### ***Be powerful, like the grizzly from Yellowstone, he told himself. TRY. The spirit bears had no voice, so he had to find his.***

- List reasons why communication skills were challenging for Simon. Identify the struggles he had to overcome just to be able to present his request to his classmates.
- To *try* means to make an effort to do something difficult or troublesome. Tell what motivated Simon to try. How did he become powerful enough to represent the voice of the spirit bear in this way?
- Through planning and persuasion, Simon had to convince his classmates to write letters. He had to think through his message carefully and then communicate it clearly. Explore issues and topics that he might have covered.
- State issues and topics that you would have addressed, if you were to represent the voice of the spirit bear.

### ***His idea was that students from around the world – kids who cared about the bears the way he did – could share information in school and online.***

- The word *vision* means to make a difference by thinking about the future with imagination or wisdom. Explain how the establishment of the Spirit Bear Youth Coalition required vision. Explain your answer.
- Examine the impact Simon's passion to protect the spirit bear had on students, law-makers, celebrities, and, remarkably, even Jane Goodall. Explore the power of one boy's determined dream to save the powerful spirit bear. Also, consider how being driven with a focused purpose served to empower Simon, as well.

## Take Action:

Write a letter describing your reaction to A VOICE FOR THE SPIRIT BEAR: HOW ONE BOY INSPIRED MILLIONS TO SAVE A RARE ANIMAL. Tell how Simon Jackson's story has encouraged you to make a difference in the world some way. Mail your letter to:

The Jane Goodall Institute  
1595 Spring Hill Rd., Suite 550  
Vienna, VA 22182



*Remember, many big changes begin with one voice speaking out.*

*~Author Carmen Oliver*



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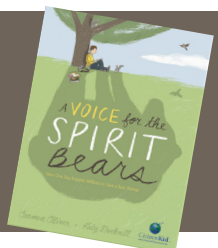
COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS: Reading -R.1, R.2, R.3, R.4, R.6, R.10. Writing-W.2, W.4, W.5, W.7.

Speaking & Listening -SL.1, SL.2, SL.5, SL.6.

NEXT GENERATION SCIENCE STANDARDS: 3-LS4-3, 4-ESSE-1

TEKS ELA: 110.3.b.1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 10, 12. 110.4.b.1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 10, 12. 110.5.b.1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 10, 12. 110.6.b.1, 2, 3, 6, 10,

TEKS SCIENCE: 112.12.b.9, 10 112.13.b.9, 10 112.14.b.9, 10 112.15.b.9, 10



## LAYERS OF THE SPIRIT BEAR'S HABITAT

The forest is the spirit bear's home, also called its *habitat*. Forests are divided into three different layers: the forest floor, the shrub layer, and the canopy. The *forest floor* is made of soil, small plants, dead plants, animals, fish, grasses, and wildflowers. The *shrub layer* consists of small trees or bushes. The *canopy layer* is made up of high branches and leaves that dominate the forest. The connectivity of the layers of the forest habitat is critical to maintaining a place where all forms of life can flourish. Each forest layer depends upon the other to survive. If any layer is destroyed – such as cutting down all of the trees – the habitat is altered, forever.

Using the graphic below, illustrate specific layers of the forest in the labeled spaces provided. Consider how critical every aspect of each layer is to the overall vitality of the forest habitat. Examine the connectivity of each layer, how each one depends upon the other. Explore the effect that occurs if one forest layer is destroyed, such as the canopy layer. Predict what will happen to the spirit bear's habitat when all of the large trees are cut down.

Write a short essay describing your predictions. Make a connection between your observations and the inspiration for Simon Jackson's passion to save the spirit bear. Share your essay with your class.

