

The Gorilla Book: Born to Be Wild

By Dr Carla Litchfield

Genre

Written and visual
information

Readership

Grade Two Plus

Teachers note: the 'Further Resources' section has fantastic activities for students: sound and visual clips, games and accessible information!

Did you know that gorillas are the most emotionally sensitive and usually the most peaceful of all the great apes? Did you know that they can communicate using sounds and signs? That baby gorillas cry and whimper if they want their mum's attention? That they chuckle and laugh?

Did you know that gorillas are endangered? 2009 is the International Year of the Gorilla. Now is the time to learn about the world's biggest primate and get involved in projects to help these remarkably intelligent vegetarians.

About the book

The Gorilla Book: Born to be Wild is an excellent resource that will engage students in discussion about gorilla conservation.

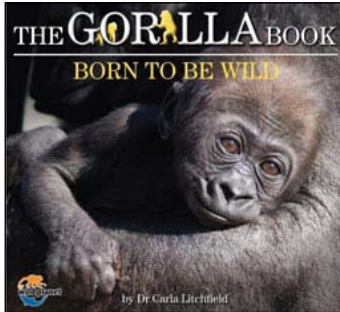
Spectacular photographs of gorillas living in remote areas and zoos provide an opportunity for students to hone visual literacy skills. The photographs convey information about behaviour, habitat and physical features. More importantly, they are extremely engaging and will draw students in to the topic.

Written information is made accessible through sidebars, maps and fact-boxes. Information is provided about physical features, population, habitat, food and behaviour.

Specific information is provided about Dian Fossey, the Karisoke Research Centre and the impact of poachers in this area. The text also outlines how war and Coltan mining pose threats to Grauer's Gorillas at Kahuzi-Biega National Park. Other threats explored in the text are disease, farming and loss of habitat.

The text is a great starting point for other studies related to Africa. For example: population, landforms, conflicts and crops.

The text is an excellent way to introduce the International Year of the Gorilla. Learning activities can have a practical focus, with students learning that local actions can have global consequences.



Learning Activities

Learning activities suggested in one KLA (Key Learning Area) may also be applicable to another KLA.

Topics include:

- Species/subspecies
- Behaviour (communication, tool use)
- Historical views/treatment of gorillas
- Habitat/food

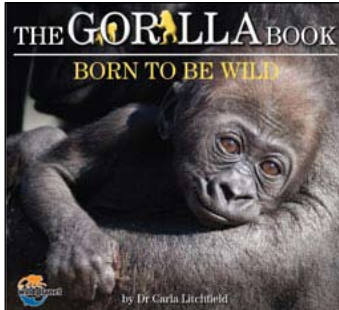
Features

- Threats (poachers, war, Coltan mining, farming, disease)
- Endangered species
- Dr Dian Fossey (Karisoke Research Centre)
- Scientific research
- Zoos
- Conservation
- Wildlife tourism
- African landforms/crops

INTRODUCING THE BOOK

Visual Literacy

Study the cover of *The Gorilla Book: Born to be Wild*. What messages/ideas do you think that the cover designer wants to convey about gorillas? Is this an effective cover? Why or why not?



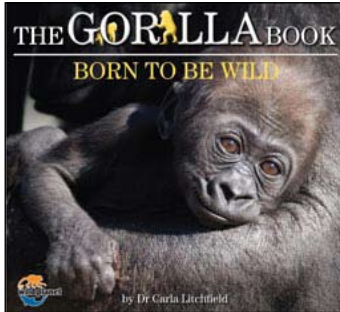
- Before reading the information in the book, study the photographs and list three things that you learn from them about gorillas.
- 2009 is the Year of the Gorilla. As a class, brainstorm some reasons why gorillas might need our attention and protection. As you read the text, add to your list of reasons.

Book Features and Format

The Gorilla Book: Born to be Wild has many features that are important in factual texts:

- Table of contents (note the engaging headings and factual subheadings)
- Photographs, maps and diagrams
- Fact-boxes (information inside a box)
- Sidebars
- Glossary and index
- Further resources
- Page numbers

1. Locate each of the above features in the book.
2. In most books, headings are placed at the top of the page. How is the heading placement different in this book? Is the placement effective?
3. What sort of information is included in the fact-boxes?
4. Why use boxes to highlight this information?
5. In what ways are the sidebars helpful?
6. List some features of this book's glossary and index that make it clear and well organised.
7. In many books, page numbers are placed at the bottom of the page. Do you think it is effective to have them at the top of the page as this book does? Why or why not?



SOSE/HSIE

- Draw a map of Africa. Mark in the countries and capital cities as we know them today. Mark in the Congo River and the seas and oceans that surround the continent. Remember to include a border, title, north arrow, key and scale on your map.
- Use symbols to represent on your map the locations and approximate numbers of the Cross River Gorillas, Western Lowland Gorillas, Mountain Gorillas, Grauer's Gorillas and Cross River Gorillas.
- Dr Dian Fossey started a long-term study of Mountain Gorillas after a visit to Africa in 1963. Research Dian Fossey's life and create a timeline to highlight her major achievements.
- On page 14 we learn that Dian Fossey named the Karisoke Research Centre by combining the names of the volcanoes Mt Karisimbi and Mt Visoke. Research some other landforms in Africa and use symbols to represent them on your map.

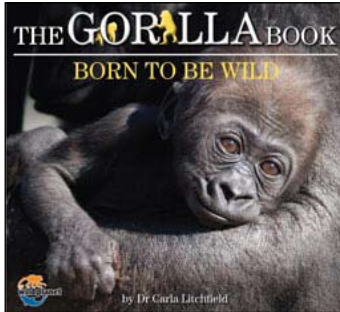
SCIENCE

Communication

Go to www.gorillafund.org/gorilla_fun/gorilla_sounds.php or

www.berggorilla.org/english/faq/dvers/hoeren.html to see and hear gorillas in the wild. Choose a video or sound clip and then tell the rest of the class:

1. What clip you watched
2. What you learnt about gorilla behaviour
3. Three things that surprised you about what you saw or heard

**Habitat/food**

Complete the table below using the text and at least one other resource.

Gorilla	Habitat	Diet	Interesting fact/feature
Mountain Gorillas			
Western Lowland Gorillas			
Cross River Gorillas			
Grauer's Gorillas			

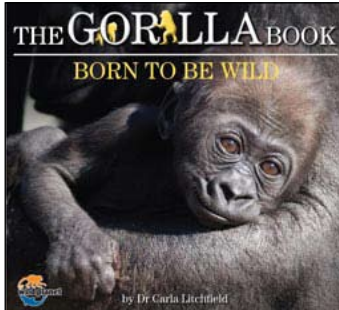
Features

Choose one of the subspecies of gorilla listed in the table above and create your own 'Gorilla Bits' page. (Hint: you will find information on appearance at www.yog2009.org under the link 'Species and Threats'.)

Destruction of environment

Throughout the book the author records some of the dangers that face wild gorillas.

- In groups, make a list of these dangers.
- Write a local action list where you note five things that can be done in homes or communities in Australia to help protect gorillas.
- Look at some of the websites listed in the back of the book on conservation and add to your action list.
- Write an action list for people living close to wild gorillas.



On page 17 we read about Coltan.

- What is it?
- How is it obtained?
- What is it used for?
- How does it threaten gorilla habitats?
- What can people do to reduce the impact of Coltan on gorillas?

ENGLISH

Reading and writing

- Write and illustrate a comic book about a day in the life of a gorilla living in the wild.
- Write a magazine article that aims to raise awareness of the dangers that gorillas face.
- Write a letter to the editor calling for a reduction in Coltan mining.

Speaking and listening

Script and perform an interview between a scientist working to protect gorillas and a person who is acting in a way that might harm gorillas. Allow both people time to discuss their different viewpoints. For example, you might script an interview between Jane Goodall and a poacher. You might script an interview between a person working for a mining company and a gorilla!

CREATIVE ARTS

Drama

- Write and perform a television advertisement for the International Year of the Gorilla. Your aim is to convince an Australian audience that it is essential to save gorillas.
- Perform a play that shows how alike humans and gorillas really are!

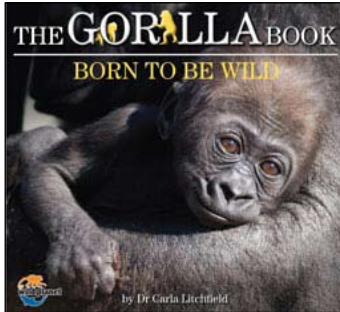


black dog books

15 Gertrude Street Fitzroy Victoria 3065
03 9419 9406 dog@bdb.com.au

Teacher Notes

www.bdb.com.au/teachers



Art

- Design a poster to highlight the dangers that gorillas living in the wild face. Include some ways that people can help these animals.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr Carla Litchfield is a scientist at Adelaide Zoo, who has studied Great Apes in both Africa and Australia. She is a lecturer at the University of South Australia, and in 2000 was awarded the 'Unsung Hero of Australian Science' by the Australian Science Communicators. She is the author of *The Chimpanzee Book: Apes Like Us*.