

A BEAR NAMED TROUBLE

Louisiana Young Readers' Choice Award Nominee 2008 Grades 3-5

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A Bear Named Trouble by Marion Dane Bauer. Houghton Mifflin, 2005. 128 pages.

Summary

This story, based on a true event, is told in alternating chapters from the points of view of a bear and a boy. Jonathan, a ten-year-old boy, enjoys spending time with the animals at the Alaska Zoo in Anchorage where his father is the zookeeper. Jonathan is lonely because he and his father have recently moved to Anchorage and his mother and sister have not yet joined them. He spends all of his free time at the zoo and loves all of the animals, especially Mama Goose. Simultaneously, a young wild brown bear is also without his mother. He is also lonely—and hungry. In his search for food, he stumbles upon the zoo. Jonathan watches him and empathizes with his plight. But when the bear accidentally kills Mama Goose, Jonathan's sympathy turns to anger. He plans to make sure that the bear will meet his death just as his beloved goose did. As the story progresses, Jonathan's desire for revenge changes to a deeper understanding, and he decides to help his father save the bear. Trouble is finally captured, but instead of being killed, he is placed in the Lake Superior Zoo.

Author's Biography

Marion Dane Bauer was born on November 20, 1938 in Oglesby, Illinois. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Oklahoma in 1962 and became a teacher. Bauer began writing professionally when her daughter was three years old. Most of her books, which include picture books, early chapter books and novels, focus on young people who learn to cope with traumatic events in everyday life. She has won numerous awards, including two Newbery Honor awards for *On My Honor* and for *Runt*. She has written, edited or contributed to over 170 books in her career. She currently lives in Eden Prairie, Minnesota, and teaches Writing for Children and Young Adults in the Master of Fine Arts program at Vermont College.

<http://www.mariondanebauer.com/>

Other Titles by Marion Dane Bauer

Bear's Hiccups

Blue Ghost

Jason's Bear

My Mother is Mine

On My Honor

Rain of Fire

Runt

Related Titles

Fiction

The Biggest Bear by Lynd Ward.

Eye of the Great Bear by Bill Wallace.

Gentle Ben by Walt Morey.

The Hunted by Gloria Skurzynski.

Terror at the Zoo by Peg Kehret.

Non-Fiction

Bear Attacks by Patrick J. Fitzgerald.

Bear Rescue: Changing the Future of Endangered Wildlife by Keltie Thomas.

Classroom Connections

Classroom Guide for *A Bear Named Trouble*

http://www.mariondanebauer.com/pdf/tg_bntrev.pdf

This guide includes excellent discussion questions and classroom activities related to the book, to bears, and to zoo animals. It also includes a lesson about how to distinguish between fiction and nonfiction, plus a list of books about topics related to the book.

Bears

Have the students research different types of bears and present the information to the class.

Topics of student research may include:

- Characteristics of the bear, such as the bear's average size, habitat, and diet.
- A diagram labeling the external and internal parts of bear.
- How bears hunt and fish.
- Why bears hibernate.
- Definition of the word "omnivore." A list of the animals that are the bear's prey.

Bear Web Sites

<http://www.bears.org/animals> This site includes basic information about the brown bear and other bears.

<http://42explore.com/bears.htm> The 42 Explore Thematic Pathfinders for All Ages web site has plans and activities for teachers in grades 3 through 8 on all areas of the curriculum with links to additional sites. The page about bears includes a basic description of bears; information about the bear's environment, food, enemies, etc.; and links to additional sites. What a great website for teachers and students!

Zoo Animals

- <http://www.alaskazoo.org> The Alaska Zoo site includes descriptions of the arctic and sub-arctic animals in the Alaska Zoo in Anchorage where the story *A Bear Named Trouble* takes place.
- Discuss the different animals that live in the zoo. Have each student choose his/her favorite zoo animal. Using the Internet, have students find data and pictures of each animal. Have the students make a mural to display the pictures of their favorite zoo animals with accompanying information.
- Have students write an acrostic poem using their favorite zoo animals and the information found on the Internet.
- Have students use the Internet and informational books to obtain information about Alaska. Use this information to create a PowerPoint presentation.
- Using a map of the United States, locate the state of Alaska and the city of Anchorage. <http://www.enchantedlearning.com/usa/statesbw/alaska.shtml> This site includes information, maps, activities and printouts about Alaska.