



## What Bear Goes Where? Teacher Plan

### Nuts and Bolts

Objective: Students will [1] identify three species of bears and their habitats, and [2] generalize that animals have adapted in order to live where they do.

Grade level: K - 4

Time: about 30 minutes

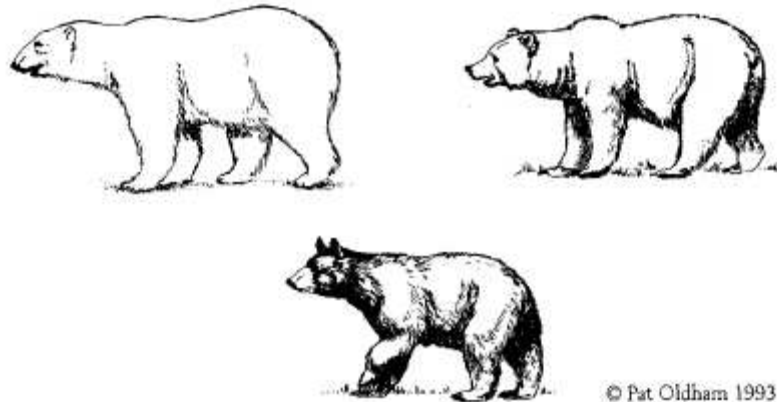
Group size: Three groups of three to six students each.

Setting: Indoors

The major purpose of this activity is for students to recognize that animals can adapt to living in different environments, as shown in the example of three different kinds of bears.

### Materials

Pictures of the three North American bear species, three large sheets of paper with the outline of one bear species on each and labeled, construction paper, pencils, scissors, glue.



### Background Information

Polar bears have long necks, slender heads, and are white in appearance. They live along the Arctic coasts, mostly on the polar ice. The carnivorous polar bears feed mainly on fish and seals. Their thick fur keeps them warm, and the webbing between their toes makes them good swimmers. Unlike other bears, they have fur on the soles of their feet.

Grizzly bears can dig up most of their food and can catch fish with their long claws. They also have a distinctive hump between their shoulders. They eat roots, tubers, gophers, marmots, and smaller rodents as well as carrion (rotten meat). They



occasionally kill a larger animal for food. Grizzlies tend to live in the edges of forests but feed mostly in mountain meadows. They have wide heads and a "dished" face.

Black bears are quiet, shy animals that live in a variety of habitats from forests to brush or chaparral. In Michigan bears can be found in large, heavily forested areas. They eat mostly nuts, berries, and fruit. They also eat rodents and insects, and they occasionally kill larger animals for food. In Michigan, most black bears have black or extremely dark brown fur. Other color variations including brown, cinnamon or blonde are found in mostly western North America.

Black bears are smaller than grizzlies or polar bears and have heads that are more pointed. Average adult black bears stand less than three feet tall at the shoulder when on all fours and are approximately three to five feet in length. Males are typically larger than females. Adult female black bears weigh approximately 90 to 300 pounds, and adult males weigh about 130 to 500 pounds.

### Introduction (5 minutes)

Show the students pictures of the three different species of bears found in North America. Name the three bears. Ask students to discuss the similarities and differences between bears.

### Body (20 minutes)

Ask the students to imagine the place where each bear lives. Talk about the similarities and differences of these regions. Ask the students to think about how each bear looks and whether its features help it to live where it lives. Talk about the different adaptations of each of the bear species.

Distribute three large sheets of paper. Draw an outline of one of the bear species in the center of each sheet, and label it accordingly. (A photo of each bear will serve just as well.)

NOTE: The outline of each bear can be projected onto a chalkboard or a large piece of paper taped to a wall. Adjust the projected image until the bear's shoulder height is life size. The bear's outline then can be drawn by tracing the projected image.

Divide the students into three groups. Give each group one of the sheets of paper with the outline of a bear species and a supply of construction paper, pencils and scissors.

Have students in each group draw and cut out elements of the habitat of their bear (trees, grassy meadows, and rocks for the grizzly; blocks of ice, snow, fish and seals for the polar bear; forest trees, bushes, nuts, fruits and berries for the black bear. (Make sure that the examples of all major habitat needs are included: food, water, shelter, and space in which to live.)



Conclusion (5 minutes)

Display the finished posters, and ask the students what they have learned about bears and where bears live. Discuss how each environment has characteristic life forms that have adapted to its climate, kinds of available food, and other factors. Emphasize that all animals are adapted to survive in their environment.

Evaluation

Describe the three species of bears, what they eat, where they live, and what each species looks like.

If someone took polar bears to Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming and took grizzly bears to the Arctic coast, do you think the bears would be able to survive in their new homes? Why or Why not?