

# The Gorilla Family – An Endangered Species

Developed by D. Abraham and K. Vrielink

## **Unit Overview:**

This unit is intended for general proficiency intermediate ESL learners between grades six and nine although the creators believe that it could be fairly easily adapted for younger or older students. The unit is designed for the following:

- to develop and increase vocabulary, particularly for science and social studies
- to promote strategies for expanding vocabulary in context
- to strengthen reading strategies, reading comprehension, and using a topic of interest
- to notice, practice and internalize various grammar structures patterned within the text and within various assignments
- to work with conditionals
- to introduce the use of idioms and clichés into reading and writing
- to help develop better interpersonal communication skills through oral practice and representation with classmates
- to develop research skills such as hunting and gathering, displaying data, and making comparisons related to the cultural universality of family life

This unit incorporates teacher-written materials and authentic text as well as providing opportunities for student-created products. The teacher-written text has been produced at a level that should be accessible at an independent level (GE6), while concurrently introducing and supporting the learning of new vocabulary. This vocabulary will be recycled by way of cloze exercises, word searches, scaffolded writing assignments, synonym work, and various other activities. Through viewing and listening to the movie provided, response expectations become slightly more rigorous as students are provided with opportunities to extend their language competence, background knowledge and understanding. The film, Gorillas in the Mist, and a class trip to the zoo, provide anchors for this unit as well as establishing student motivation and interest.

## **Learning Tasks:**

1. Introduce students to this unit of study by having them create a collage of their family to present to the class. Track the vocabulary they use to describe the family network. Are there any similarities? Differences?
2. Present the unit with the first written piece of text, titled “*Kakinga’s Family*’. Introduce the (Kakinga) Gorilla Family Tree visuals. Discuss the differences and similarities between the animal kingdom and the human world. Do we use the same language? Why? Complete the tasks on Kakinga’s family and have the students create their own family tree. Display their trees and their paragraphs.

3. Frayer model. Teaching for concept understanding. This model can be used to manipulate, expand and extend the key concepts. We have used this graphic organizer as a partner assignment so that students can have time to discuss relationships and use the vocabulary in a meaningful manner.
4. Read the article '*The Gorilla Family and the Zoo*' and keep track of the points that describe habitat, care of young, habits, family interactions etc. on chart paper. This will provide the students with a scaffold for further writing and research that will occur later on in this unit.
5. Cloze activity. This activity checks for student understanding of the text. It is based on the article, *The Gorilla Family and the Zoo*, and has much of the vocabulary and sentence structure embedded within it.
6. Work the text. Questions that have been developed reflect the three levels of questioning: 'right there' (literal), 'think and search' (synthesis), and 'on my own' (inference).
7. Also included at this time are some introductory vocabulary exercises to help students become more familiar with new terms and recycle words that students should be at least somewhat familiar with from previous experiences.
8. Word search. This word search recycles the vocabulary found in the original story. Students can also create their own word searches or crossword puzzles.
9. Vocabulary Development: Contextual guessing and practice with familiar grammatical forms. This worksheet is designed to build familiarity with the vocabulary as well as support and enhance the language development they are already familiar with. In this worksheet students are asked to complete sentences with the correct form of the word - noun, verb, adjective or adverb.
10. '*It's a Girl!*' (Lesson #4) uses adapted material that supports, recycles, and scaffolds by moving the students through text based on a newspaper article. They will have developed background concepts and vocabulary for this. '*It's a Girl!*' is followed up by comprehension questions and a modified cloze activity.
11. Adaptations. Lesson #4 also serves as a transition to introduce specific aspects of the science curriculum for grades 5 and 7. Vocabulary development is promoted through personal choice and, building on Lesson Three's QAR approach, students explore the development of their own different levels of questioning.

12. Vocabulary Development: synonyms. This is a handy method of teaching new vocabulary needed for the movie that is following this task! It keeps students away from the dictionary and is a great way to expand and extend the students vocabulary.
13. Realia: Students experience the written story of Dian Fossey and Digit through a National Geographic book using a photobiography approach.
14. Research Skills; Students explore a variety of research resources and begin to look at the concept of outlining.
15. Gorillas in the Mist. Get the popcorn ready! This movie really builds on the previous learning. Students will be engaged in a variety of tasks related to this movie:
  - a. They will create a story using the Language Experience Approach
  - b. They will complete a cloze assignment to check for understanding of text
  - c. They will problem solve various situations using the second conditional – ‘If...would’
  - d. They will be engaged in communication activities
  - e. They will create poetry that will placed in their portfolios  
That will become a part of the broad-based assessment
16. ‘*Fossey’s Family Flourishes*’: Students are introduced to the use of idioms and clichés in English reading and writing. They also practice reading fluency through a re-reading exercise.
17. Field Trip! This activity has several outcomes:  
(An activity such as this could be easily developed as a culminating activity **and** as a lead-in to the students finding their own research subject.)
  - a. Students will read maps.
  - b. Students will use the adverbials ‘before, when and after’ with a clause to create a plan of action.
  - c. Students will engage in a contact assignment to seek specific information.
  - d. Students will choose one endangered animal to research.
18. Endangered Species. Students will follow the outline that has been developed in class to research an endangered animal. This task ties in directly with the grade 6 Social Studies unit on China where students are involved in debate and discussion of the various government initiatives set up to save the pandas. This project also ties in with the grade five wetland unit and the Ecosystems unit in grade 7 science.