A Bear Named Trouble

Marion Dane Bauer ◆ Classroom Guide

Teachers, librarians, and parents, feel free to choose from the questions below, all of which prepare the readers for the ideas brought forth in the book.

Pre-Reading Questions

1. Have you ever seen a bear? Did you see that bear in a zoo or in the woods?
2. Do you know anything about brown bears? Any other kind of bear? What can you tell me about bears?
3. Who has been to a zoo? Which one? Describe the surroundings of the animals and birds and fish.

Characters in the Book

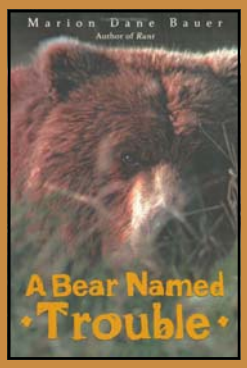
Jonathan, the main character
Rhonda, Jonathan's little sister
Mom
Dad, a zookeeper
Marigold, yellow Lab
Blue Boy, beta fish
Mama Goose, popular attraction at the Anchorage Zoo
Trouble, grizzly bear

While Reading the Book

1. [the middle of page 50]: Why do you think Trouble is trying to break into the zoo?

After Reading the Book

1. What do you think Jonathan means by "going inside a bird or animal"?
2. Jonathan feels sorry for Trouble and he feeds him, just like you might feed a dog or a cat. Do you think this is a good idea? Do you think that Trouble is grateful for Jonathan's handout?
3. Why do you think Jonathan was so attached to Mama Goose?
4. When Trouble carelessly kills Mama Goose, Jonathan's attitude about the bear changes. Discuss why you think Jonathan is so angry.
5. When do you think Jonathan's anger changes? What is he thinking about?
6. Why is Jonathan's father angry with Jonathan for trying to help Trouble?



Holiday House Reader
Level 2
ISBN 0-8234-1339-X

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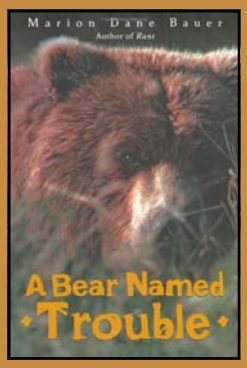
This classroom guide was prepared by Winding Oak. www.windingoak.com



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Where do a writer's ideas come from?

The author, Marion Dane Bauer, writes about her inspiration:

One morning I was reading the newspaper, and there it was, a small—probably two inches—article about an adolescent bear named Trouble. He'd been caught breaking *into* the Alaska Zoo in Anchorage. And I thought, *How wonderful! A wild bear who wants to live in a zoo! The article said that, after* finally being captured during one of his break-ins—and being given the name Trouble—the bear had been sent to the Lake Superior Zoo in Duluth, Minnesota. I live in Minnesota, so that gave me an instant connection to the story.

The first thing I did was to drive to Duluth to meet the man in charge of the Lake Superior Zoo and the keepers in charge of taking care of Trouble and, of course, Trouble. Next I flew to Anchorage to talk to the zoo personnel there who had been involved in Trouble's capture. I found that the real story of the bear's capture was more dramatic than I would have felt free to imagine. The article told how Trouble had killed a white goose, a favorite of the children, during one of his early forays into the zoo. But it hadn't said that, while the zoo personnel were trying to dart the bear with a tranquilizer, the Fish and Game people were waiting outside to kill him as a nuisance bear if he emerged from the zoo! After learning that part of the story and spending a lot of time walking around and feeling the Alaska Zoo where much of my story would be set, I came home and read about bears, lots and lots about bears. Once I knew what Trouble's early life would have been like and could imagine what must have happened to him to bring him into the zoo, I did the last thing. I sat down to write the story.

I had to create Jonathan. No child was involved in the real Trouble's capture. But the boy who likes to imagine himself into animals wasn't difficult to find. He seemed to be waiting there in my imagination for me . . . and, of course,

The Difference Between Fiction and Nonfiction

Teachers, you might consider having the children read the newspaper article from the Anchorage Daily News about the real bear named Trouble before you read Marion Dane Bauer's book out loud. *Anchorage Daily News, June 23, 2000,* http://www.adn.com/adn/intern/westfallbear.html

You may see a photo of the real bear named Trouble by clicking here: http://www.lszoo.org/tour/northern/trouble.htm

Talk to the students about the difference between fiction and nonfiction. There is a real story. We have very few facts, but we know something about what happened to Trouble. Marion Dane Bauer used fiction to tell the story of Trou-

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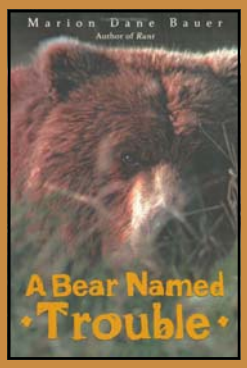

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The Difference Between Fiction and Nonfiction (cont'd)

(Continued from page 2)

ble, imagining what may have happened "around" the short newspaper article she read.

By using the websites listed in this Classroom Guide, you can help your students explore the differences between fiction and nonfiction. You can also show them how the author may have gathered some of her background knowledge to write this book, a work of fiction based on a true story.

Background Information About Fiction and Nonfiction

Encarta describes fiction as "novels and stories that describe imaginary people and events." Nonfiction is "writings that convey factual information and are not primarily works of the creative imagination."

According to the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary, fiction is* derived from the Latin word *fictio, the* act of fashioning, from *fingere to shape, fashion, feign. Nonfiction is described as "literature that is* not fictional."

In the *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, fiction is defined as a* "literary work whose content is produced by the imagination and is not necessarily based on fact." Nonfiction it defines as "prose works other than fiction."

You'll find a list of "companion books" at the end of this Classroom Guide to use for comparing fiction and nonfiction.

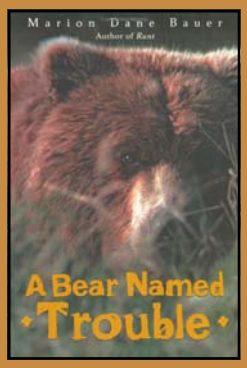
Zoo-Related Activities

Compare and contrast: What kinds of animals do you find in zoos? What kind of animals don't you find in zoos?

If you could be any bird or animal, which one would you choose? Would you have feathers, fur, claws, a tail? Have the students write a paragraph describing their "hands," "feet," "face," "body," and "tail" as their chosen bird or animal.

What would it feel like to live in the zoo if you were "inside" the animal you've chosen?

If enough of the students are familiar with a zoo, you might have them write about what their surroundings would look like if their chosen bird or animal lived in a zoo.



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Teacher References

For more about spina bifida

Rhonda, Jonathan's little sister, has *spina bifida. For more information about spina bifida, here is a fact sheet* from the National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities: http://www.nichcy.org/pubs/factshe/fs12txt.htm

More about zoos

The American Zoo and Aquarium Association http://www.aza.org/

What does a zookeeper do? *Zookeeper: This is What I Want to Be, by Heather Miller.* Heinemann, 2003. ISBN 1403405956

For a zookeeper's job description, http://www.aza.org/ForEveryone/Careers/

Visit the Alaska Zoo at http://www.alaskazoo.org/

Trouble now lives at the Lake Superior Zoo, Duluth, Minnesota http://www.lszoo.org/

Here's a website from Rocky Mountain Public Broadcasting that describes what it's like to be a zookeeper in "Keepers of the Wild." http://www.krma.org/learn/frontier/explore/zoo/explore.html

The San Diego Zoo has an adopt-an-animal program. Check it out! http://www.sandiegozoo.org/society/adoption.html

And here's a program at the Dallas Zoo. Does a zoo in your area have this kind of program? http://www.dallas-zoo.org/support/adopt.asp?page=ai

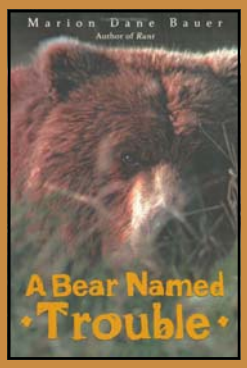
About brown bears:

You may learn more about polar bears, black bears, and brown bears at the Alaska Zoo's website. Ahpun and Oreo, bears in *A Bear Named Trouble, really live at the Alaska Zoo.* You can read all about them here: http://www.alaskazoo.org/native_species.htm

More information about brown bears (including video and audio) can be found at the National Geographic site: http://www.nationalgeographic.com/kids/creature_feature/0010/brownbears.html

The International Association for Bear Research and Management has a resource page with information about many different types of bears, including the brown bear: http://www.bearbiology.com/specdesc.html

The Alaska Department of Fish & Game has more information about bears: http://www.adfg.state.ak.us/pubs/notebook/biggame/brnbear.php



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About Marion Dane Bauer

Marion Dane Bauer writes books for children and teens, from picture books to long novels. Among her newest books are *The Blue Ghost* and *A Bear Named Trouble, as well as board books celebrating the* holidays. Her beginning readers feature nature themes, among them animals and weather and geography. *On My Honor, a* book about making decisions and doing what you believe is right, won a Newbery Honor Award from the American Library Association. Ms. Bauer has written more than 50 books and teaches writing in the MFA program at Vermont College. She lives in Minnesota, where she is close to nature, animals, her children, and her grandchildren.

Companion Books

Books that tell fictional and real accounts about the same event or the same person:

Ryan, Pam Munoz. *Amelia and Eleanor go for a ride.* Brian Selznick, illus. Scholastic, 1999. ISBN 0-5909-6075-X. (fiction)

paired with

Cooney, Barbara. *Eleanor. Viking, 1996. ISBN* 0670861596. (nonfiction)

Lorbiecki, Marybeth. *Jackie's bat. Brian Pinkney, illus. Simon* & Schuster, 2006. ISBN 0-6898-4102-7. (fiction)

paired with

Uhlberg, Myron. *Dad, Jackie and me.* Colin Bootman, illus. Peachtree, 2005. ISBN 1-5614-5329-3. (nonfiction)

Corey, Shana. *Players in pigtails. Rebecca Gibbon, illus. Scholastic, 2003.* ISBN 0-4391-8305-7. (fiction)

paired with

Rappaport, Doreen and Lyndall Callan. *Dirt on their skirts: the story of the young women who won the world championship. E.B. Lewis, illus. Dial Books, 2000.* ISBN 0-8037-2042-4. (nonfiction)

and

Patrick, Jean. *Girl Who Struck Out Babe Ruth. Jeni Reeves, illus. Carolrhoda, 2000. ISBN* 1-5750-5455-8. (nonfiction)

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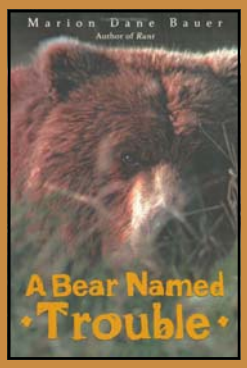

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Companion Books (cont'd)

Wales, Dirk. *Lucky dog: Owney, U.S. Rail Mail mascot.* Diane Kenna, illus. Great Plains, 2003. ISBN 0-9632-4590-2.

paired with

Kelly, Irene. *Small dog's big life: around the world with Owney.* Holiday House, 2005. ISBN 0-8234-1863-4. (fiction)

Books about bears:

Hodge, Deborah. *Bears: polar bears, black bears and grizzly bears.* Pat Stephens, illus. Kids Can Press, 1999. ISBN 1-55074-355-4

David E. Kenny. *Klondike & Snow: the Denver Zoo's remarkable story of raising two polar bear cubs.* Roberts Rinehart Publishers, 1995.

Gabriel, Andrea. *My favorite bear.* Charlesbridge Publishing, 2004.

Dagmar Fertl, Michelle Reddy, and Erik D. Stoops. *Bears.* Sterling, 2000. ISBN 0-8069-6541-X.

Tracqui ,Valerie. *Brown bear: giant of the mountains. Charlesbridge Publishing, 2002. ISBN 0-8810-6439-4.*

Books about zoos and zookeeping:

Miller, Heather. Zookeeper: this is what I want to be. Heinemann, 2003. ISBN 1-4034-0595-6.

Smith, Roland and Marie Smith. *Z is for zookeeper: a zoo alphabet. Henry Cole,* illus. Sleeping Bear Press, 2005.