



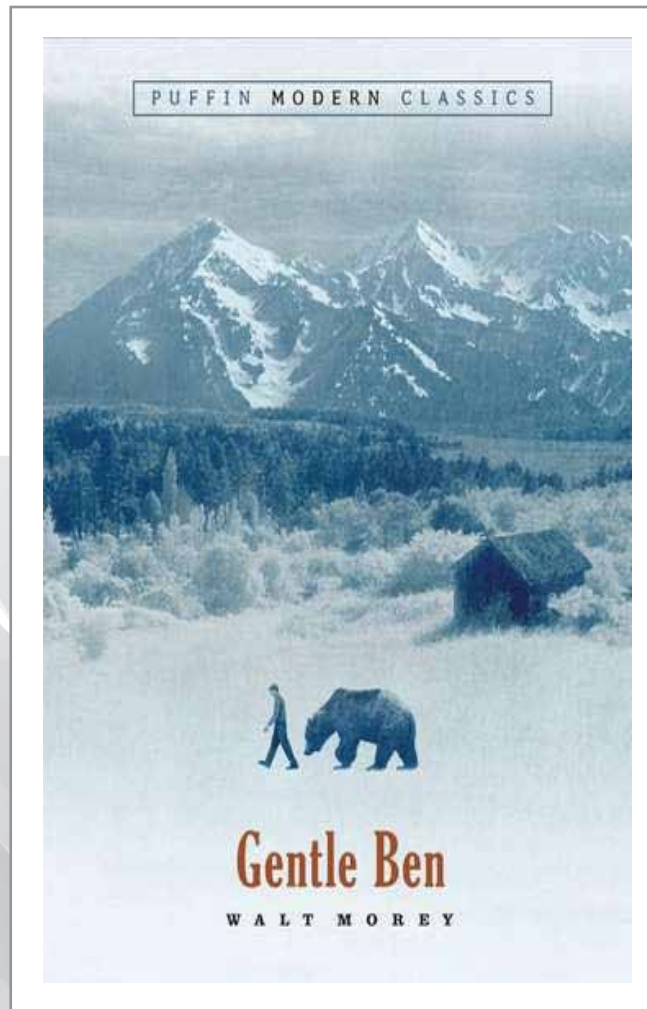
TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 3-5

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

Gentle Ben

Walt Morey



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

Gentle Ben

Walt Morey

TEACHER GUIDE

NOTE:

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

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3901 Union Blvd., Suite 155

St. Louis, MO 63115

sales@novelunits.com

novelunits.com

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Skills and Strategies

Thinking

Brainstorming, research,
visualization

Comprehension

Predicting, inference,
comparison/contrast

Writing

Description, poetry, letters,
news article

Vocabulary

Antonyms/synonyms, word
mapping

Listening/Speaking

Dramatization, role play

Literary Elements

Story elements, characteriza-
tion

Summary

Gentle Ben is about the friendship between a 13-year-old boy and an Alaskan brown bear. Although Ben and Mark Andersen would seem to be an unusual pair, their friendship weathers hostile townspeople, fearful parents, an enthusiastic hunter, and a big-game guide.

About the Author

Walt(er) Morey was born February 3, 1907 in Hoquiam, Washington. He died after a heart attack, January 12, 1992, in Wilsonville, Oregon. He was a farmer, shipbuilder, and author. He was best known for his beloved children's novel, *Gentle Ben*. Morey began his writing career in the late 1920s. At first he submitted short stories to pulp magazines; later he collaborated with Virgil Burford on a nonfiction book for adults, *North to Danger*. In the 1960s he shifted his audience to children and wrote animal stories within the setting of the Alaskan wilderness. *Gentle Ben*, Morey's first book for children, was published in 1965, and became so popular that it was later made into both a motion picture and a television series. His other children's books include *Home is the North*, *Kavik the Wolf Dog*, *Year of the Black Pony*, and *Death Walk*. In addition to writing, Morey operated a filbert farm, and for several years he worked as a shipbuilder in Vancouver, Washington.

Introductory Information and Activities

Note:

Please be selective, and use discretion when choosing the activities that you will do with the unit. It is not intended that everything be done, but that discretionary choices made are most appropriate for your use and group of children. A wide range has been provided, so that individuals as well as groups may benefit from these selections.

Initiating Activities:

1. Fishing Industry: Plan ahead, and gather pertinent current information regarding the status of the fishing industry in the northern Pacific Ocean. (Resource Information/Source, NWF, 1993)

Pacific Salmon Commission
1155 Robson Street, Suite 600
Vancouver, BC, Canada V6E 1B5

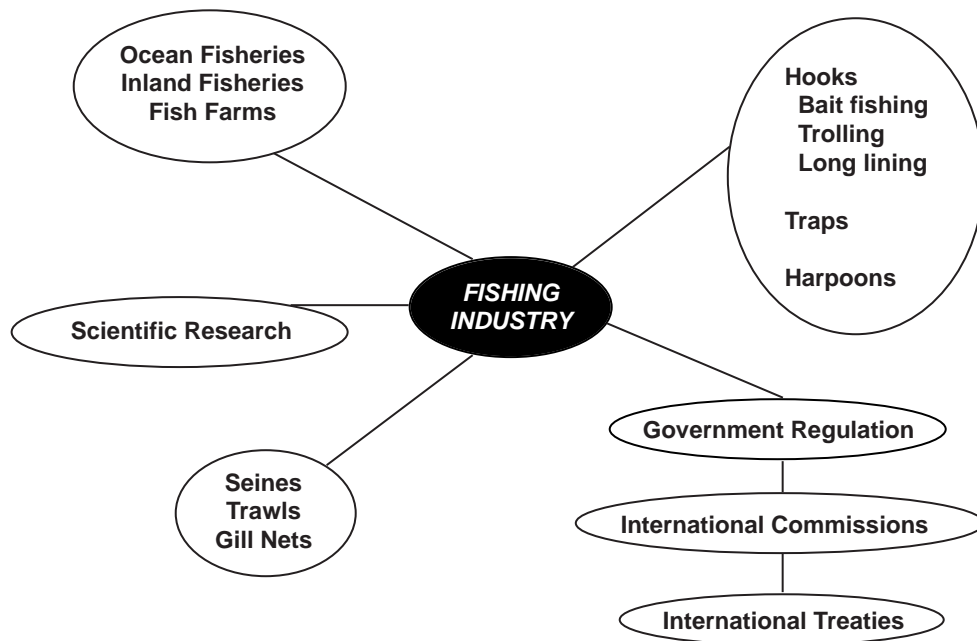
International North Pacific Fisheries Commission
6640 NW Marine Drive
Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada V6T 1X2

Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission
2501 SW 1st Avenue, Suite 200
Portland, OR 97201-4752

Alaska Sea Grant College Program
University of Alaska
302 Eielson Building
Fairbanks, Alaska 99775-5040

Environmental concerns, as well as treaties with other countries need to be considered in this activity, as both have an impact on the fishing industry. Chapters 7 and 8 of *Gentle Ben* give a vivid description of one facet of the industry. Seining comes alive mid-page 84, when Clearwater drags the seine into the sea.

When ready to start the activity, play a record or a tape of actual ocean sounds. Have a brainstorming circle ready for use, with *Fishing Industry* in the circle. Categorize the responses. For example:



Allow children to choose a topic of interest, and to work individually, in pairs, or in cooperative groups, to gather and share information as the story is being read. Give out the materials from the sources listed, and any others, to the interest groups. Relate the findings to the story in progress. Make comparisons and conclusions.

- Alaska: When ready to start the activity, read a poem that has a reference to Alaska, such as "The Gnomes of Nome." (Kennedy, X.J. *Ghastlies, Goops & Pincushions*. NY: McElderry Books, 1989.)

Place Alaska in the center of a circle, and start to web from there. Ask the children what they would like to study/know about Alaska. Categorize the responses in the web. For example:

-
2. Role play and demonstrate the making of a deal for the purchase of bread. With a partner, think of other things that Ben needs that could be bargained for, and make “deals” with one another, taking turns at the roles assumed.

Chapter 8—Pages 95-104

Vocabulary:

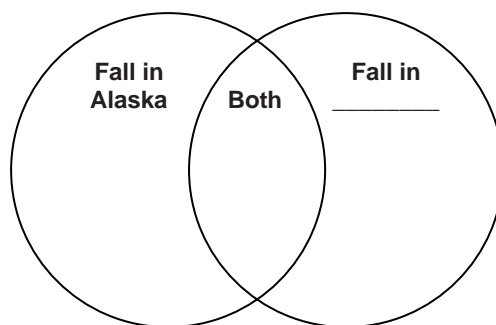
spiller 100 ponderous 103 threshed 103 conglomerate 103

Vocabulary Activity:

The word *conglomerate* is used by the author on page 103 in relationship to ducks. What do you think that the word means in this context? (*Conglomerate: To collect into an adhering or rounded mass; clustered.*) Have you heard of, or seen, the word *conglomerate* used in a different context? What do you think that the word means when used in referring to a business? (*Conglomerate: A business corporation made up of a number of different companies that operate in widely diversified fields.*) Have you read or heard about any conglomerate recently? Read the business section of the paper for current news.

Discussion Questions and Activities:

1. Mark’s father insists that Mark wear an orange life jacket at all times when he is aboard the *Far North*. Why does this bother Mark? (Page 96, Mark feels that the jacket is a “badge telling everyone on the Sound he couldn’t swim.”) (See Postreading Activities #1 and #2.)
2. The author tells the reader more about Mike Kelly in this chapter. Read, or read aloud, this section, starting mid-page on page 97, with the paragraph starting, “Mike Kelly had taken...” and continuing on to page 98, ending about three-fourths of the page down, where there is a wide space between paragraphs. Is your opinion of Mike Kelly changing as you learn more about him? Do people sometimes judge others too quickly? Discuss.
3. Who is the pirate? (Page 99, Fog Benson is the pirate. He is seen by Mr. Andersen, Clearwater, and Mark.) From whom have the fish probably been stolen? (Page 99, Mr. Andersen and Clearwater think that the fish have probably been stolen from Six-Fathom Johnson’s Windy Point pile trap. That is the nearest trap to their present location.) Why couldn’t Fog Benson be arrested for stealing? (page 100, no proof available)
4. On page 103 the author describes fall as “rushing upon the North.” Read aloud the paragraph starting, “School started.” Compare fall in Alaska to your location. Use a Venn Diagram for the comparison. (See next page for graphic.) (See Postreading Activity #3.)
5. What happened to make Mark fully aware that winter had begun? (Page 104, Ben started his winter sleep.)



Postreading Activities:

1. Mark feels that wearing the life jacket is like wearing a badge, to tell everyone that he cannot swim. Make up a definition for the word "badge" used in this context. What other "badges," have you seen, read, or heard about? Make a list. (For example: eye-glasses, special shoes, cane, suspenders, wedding ring, special hat, etc.) On page 96, Clearwater compares this badge to the wearing of a billboard. What is a billboard? (*Billboard: A structure for the display of advertisements in public places or alongside highways.*) Create a billboard for one of the "badges." Make a display of the badge billboards.

2. Make up a limerick to go with a "badge." (*Limerick: A light humorous or nonsensical verse of five anapestic lines usually with the rhyme scheme aabba.*)

For example:

There once was a boy, name of Mark,
Who wore a life jacket that glowed in the dark.
He did not do it on a whim,
For he just could not swim,
So on his back the jacket did park.

3. In the paragraph about fall, on page 103, the author mentions that some of the animals "were turning white to blend into the white landscape soon to come." Do some research. Find out more about one of the Alaskan animal's preparation for winter. (*For example: With regard to the snowshoe hare, cold temperatures and ground color have nothing to do with the pelt's color change. It depends on light. As days get short, a hare's eyes receive light for shorter and shorter periods. This stimulates the pituitary gland. During molt, the pituitary shuts off pigment production in the new fur, which grows in white. In spring, lengthening days trigger the reverse of this process.*)

Chapter 9—Pages 105-118

Vocabulary:

congregated 107 commotion 113 billowing 117

Vocabulary Activity:

Use all three of the vocabulary words in one sentence. Illustrate the sentence.