

How to Skin a Bear **Adult Guidance**

'How to Skin a Bear' is a brilliant Stone Age story written for Key Stage 2. It is perfect to use alongside a Stone Age history topic and can be used as a whole class reading text or as part of a guided or reciprocal reading scheme. This story helps the reader to understand more about life in the Stone Age and will help children to draw comparisons between life then and now.



Story Overview

This story is written in first person and is told from the perspective of Bee, a young girl. She is part of a Stone Age tribe and feels totally undervalued – the only job that she is ever given is plucking feathers! Thankfully, her faithful companion, Dog, keeps her company.

One evening, while Bee is plucking the feathers from a dead duck, a red sun appears in the sky. The tribe believe it to be an omen. That night, a storm rages and causes the tribe's tent to collapse. While they scramble and try to find safety, Bee searches for Dog. Bee's father, Achoo, tries to get Bee to leave with the others but, determined to find Dog, Bee runs into the darkness. The rest of the story finds Bee reunited with Dog and the pair must try to make their way back to the safety of the tribe. On the way, the pair find their own food, make weapons and see a tribe of settlers. On their way to the Pig Lick River, Bee and Dog come face to face with a furious bear. Amazingly, Bee manages to outsmart the bear and uses its fur and meat to help her survive. Eventually, when the pair reunite with the tribe, nobody can believe how brave Bee was and she is welcomed back home as courageous Bee, the slayer of bears!

Themes

The story focuses on detailing life during the Stone Age. Children will learn about the diet of hunter-gatherers and will be able to find out more about the types of weapons, clothes and homes that people would have had in the Stone Age. Another key theme of this story is adventure, as Bee and Dog bravely journey to reunite with their tribe.

Additional Resources

A range of additional resources is available to download which support teaching of the text, including guided presentations, display resources, SPaG materials and much more.

A full set of reading materials is available to use alongside this story, including a reading comprehension activity sheet and inference PowerPoint.

In addition to this, there a number of other resources are available to support teaching on the Stone Age topic and the book. For instance, the fantastic discussion cards can help to engage children with the text while fuelling a healthy debate.

Sensitive Issues

Teachers may wish to be aware in advance of some of the following background information:

- At the start and end of the story, the tribe is involved in a ritual. In the ritual, tribe members sing, dance, play instruments and wear their best furs and skull masks.
- At the start of the story, Bee runs away from her tribe in the storm. There is therefore the emotional issue of separation and loss throughout the story as she tries to find her family.
- While looking for Dog, Bee is knocked unconscious when she slips and falls down a hole. She wakes up shortly afterwards.
- Bee and Dog forage for food and eat what they can find in the wild: dandelions and ants.
- Bee crafts her own hand axe which she later uses to defend herself from the bear and to cut off its fur and meat. Other weapons are mentioned throughout the story.
- Bee makes her own fire and the process of making a fire from scratch is described.
- Bee and Dog swim and play in the Pig Lick River, unsupervised.
- When Bee and Dog trick the bear, the bear falls over the edge of a waterfall and lands on the rocks at the bottom. The story then describes how Bee retrieves the bear and skins it. The skinning and tanning process is described to help children to understand how Stone Age people would have made their clothes, but some may find this a little gruesome.
- Throughout the story, there is reference to using animal products to make clothes, weapons and instruments. For example, 'rubbing in the gloopy brain' is sung by Bee's dad while he tans deerskin.
- Different furs and skins are mentioned throughout the story to help children to understand which types of materials were available to people in the Stone Age.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 1: The Dance of the Drippity Drops

The story opens with Bee plucking feathers from a duck and her father tanning deerskins. While Bee is complaining about how unfair it is that she must always pluck feathers, Breath of the Vulture rushes over and tells Bee's father about a terrifying red sun in the sky. The rest of the tribe gather to look at the sun. They think that it is an omen from the Sky Spirits so they decide to dress in their furs and masks and perform the Ritual. While the elders dance and chant to the sky, Bee must watch from the sidelines; she is not allowed to join in the Ritual because she is not old enough.

Chapter 2: Goat Guts and Ox Intestines

After the Ritual, the tribe gather in their tent to sleep. Bee settles down to sleep with the rest of the tribe but, after having a bad dream about the red sun, she and the rest of the tribe are woken by the groans of the tent posts. The tent is about to collapse! Racing outside, the tribe members frantically rush around, trying to gather what they can and find safety. Bee calls for Dog but sees him disappear into the darkness. She follows him, leaving the rest of the tribe behind.

Chapter 3: I Have Done a Few Things Wrong

After searching for Dog through the night, Bee realises that she is lost. She realises how dangerous her situation is, but continues on in the hope of finding Dog. As she walks, she slips and tumbles down a hole. She is knocked unconscious by the fall. When she wakes up, she can hear something snuffling nearby. Terrified, she begins to run away. When the creature finally finds her, she realises that it is Dog!

Chapter 4: A Scrumptious, Crunchy Feast

Bee and Dog wake up after sleeping in their little nook in the rock. When they get up, they go in search of food. The pair feast on dandelions and ants! Dog encourages Bee to climb up a hill where the pair can see a clearing in the forest. This is where a tribe have decided to settle. Nearby, the pair also spot the Pig Lick River, which Bee believes will help them find their way to the Rock of the Long Sun and reunite with the tribe. Bee and Dog then find another cave to shelter in that night before they set out to find the tribe.

Chapter 5: Solid Tents and Rolling Cows

Inside their cave, Bee tries to keep herself and Dog warm by starting a fire. She tells the story of Snapping Stick, the first human to start a fire. Bee is unsuccessful and the pair have to spend the night sleeping in the cold cave. The next day, Bee gets a closer look at the settled tribe and gets to see how their life differs from her own.

Chapter 6: Whack, Hack, Bone Broth

Bee and Dog reach the Pig Lick River, which they intend to follow to the Rock of the Long Sun. The pair play in the river and Bee decides to make a hand axe. Once she has made her axe, the pair set off in search of a tasty pig. They follow a shuffling sound in the bushes but soon realise that it is not a pig – it is a bear!

Chapter 7: I Have a Cunning Plan

Bee and Dog are chased through the forest by the bear. When they make it back to the Pig Lick River, Bee and Dog find themselves cornered on a rocky cliff edge. Bee thinks of a cunning plan: she will lure the bear to the edge and when it jumps to grab her, she will dive out of the way. Her plan is a success and the bear plummets to the bottom. Bee and Dog feast on some of the bear's meat before falling asleep.

Chapter 8: Sing a Song to Skin a Bear

Bee heaves the bear from the rocks and decides to use the fur and meat. She skins some fur from the bear and tans it herself. She then smokes the pelt and uses the bear's skull to make a mask to wear when she reaches the Rock of the Long Sun.

Chapter 9: Bee, Slayer of Bears

Wearing her bear furs and mask, Bee reaches the Rock of the Long Sun and waits for the tribe to appear. After waiting for days, she sees the tribe looking deflated and sad. Bee leaps out from behind the trees and when the tribe see her, they cannot believe their eyes. Then, Bee tells the tribe about how she killed and skinned the bear. The tribe are so impressed that they ask her to join in the Midsummer Ritual wearing her bear skull mask and furs.