



MEET THE REAL WOLF

DURATION: 3 mins | **DIRECTOR:** Thomas Winston

Throughout history, myths about the “big bad wolf” generated scary stereotypes of the animal that crept out of fairy tales and into human consciousness. By the 1950s, wolves were pushed to the brink of extinction in the lower 48. In this short film, predator becomes protagonist as we learn what happens when the wolf is no longer antagonized, but recognized as the missing link in a healthy ecosystem.



STANDARDS

Common Core Anchor Standards for Reading addressed in this lesson:

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1 (Key Ideas and Details)

Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

Common Core Anchor Standards for Writing addressed in this lesson:

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.1 (Text Types and Purposes)

Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.4 (Production and Distribution of Writing)

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Common Core Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening addressed in this lesson:

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.5 (Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas)

Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.

TAGS: Conservation, wolves, Rocky Mountain Gray Wolf

VOCABULARY: Wolf, endangered, species, conservation

INTERVIEW: MIKE PHILLIPS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, TESF



WHY DID YOU BECOME INVOLVED WITH CONSERVATION AND TESF?

Since I was about 12 years old I have been fascinated by the natural world. As I watched it become more impoverished as a college student, I became enamored with the idea of restoring imperiled species. That is why I co-founded the Turner Endangered Species Fund (TESF) and Turner Biodiversity Divisions (TBD) with Ted Turner and his family in 1997. Since then TESF and TBD have served as the most significant private effort in the world to redress the extinction crisis by developing reintroduction projects for imperiled plants, birds, fish, mammals and reptiles.

WHEN YOU COMMISSIONED MEET THE REAL WOLF, DID YOU KNOW YOU WANTED THE FILM TO BE ANIMATED? WHY?

Yes, I knew from the very beginning that *Meet the Real Wolf* needed to be animated. This need related to my belief that our longstanding and misguided relationship with the wolf was best told in the simplest terms possible.

IS THERE AN ACTION YOU HOPE PEOPLE ARE INSPIRED TO TAKE AFTER SEEING THIS FILM?

I hope people are inspired to support the wolf's return to the great public wildlands of western Colorado based on the knowledge that gray wolves are relatively easy to live with because they do not represent an actionable threat to human safety or to ranchers and their livestock.



WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING FOR PEOPLE TO UNDERSTAND ABOUT WOLVES IN THE ECOSYSTEM?

That they are an essential part of the balance of nature, the circle of life.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES YOU'VE ENCOUNTERED WHEN COMMUNICATING TO THE PUBLIC ABOUT WOLVES?

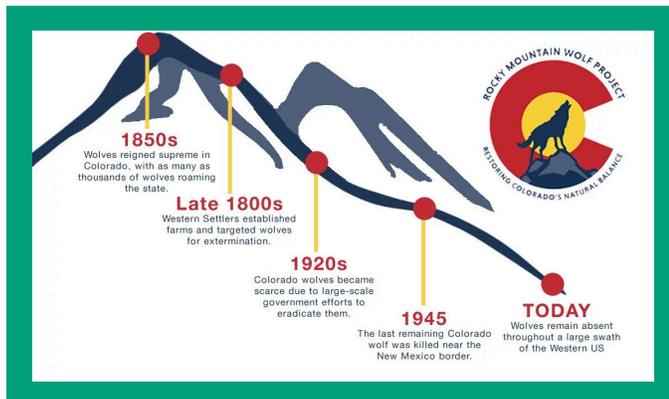
The biggest challenge is dispelling the myth of the wolf. The myth would have you believe that wolves are marauding beasts that cause havoc wherever they occur. The real wolf is, however, not even a shadow of the mythical wolf. For the real wolf, life is a daily struggle to survive. Unfortunately, the myth of the wolf is as wrong as it is strong.

WHAT IS ONE PIECE OF ADVICE YOU CAN GIVE STUDENTS THAT YOU WISH SOMEONE HAD SHARED WITH YOU?

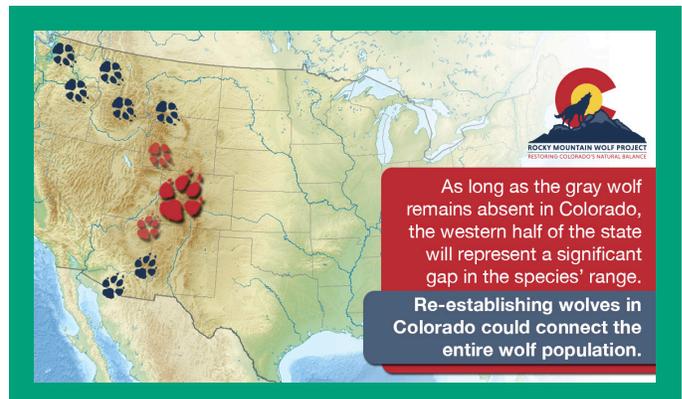
Pursue things that interest you. Life is too short to waste your time on other things. And when all is said and done, the most important thing that life gives each of us is the choice as to how we spend our time. Remember, you are what you do.

PRE-SCREENING ACTIVITIES

Prior to starting the movie, have students view infographics to better understand concepts within the film at: <http://bit.ly/rockymountainwolfproject>



"Decline of the Gray Wolf" infographic



"The Missing Link" infographic

Depending on the age group you are working with and the amount of time you have available, you could have your students do one or all of the following activities:

DECLINE OF THE GRAY WOLF

Look over the "Decline of the Gray Wolf" infographic and discuss as a class:

- Why do you think wolves were targeted for eradication from the late 1800s on?
- What do you think the purpose of *Meet the Real Wolf* will be?

THE MISSING LINK

Look at the "The Missing Link" infographic as a class, but cover up the right side of the infographic (leave only the paw prints showing). Knowing the short film will be about wolves, ask your students, what they think the infographic means. What can they tell about wolves from the infographic? As a group, lead a discussion about what you know about wolves prior to watching the film.

After the film, circle back to the predictions made and evaluate whether or not they were correct.

HOWL LIKE A WOLF

Follow the directions on the “How to Howl Like a Wolf” infographic from Rocky Mountain Wolf Project prior to watching the short film and discuss as a class why wolves howl and what they are trying to communicate with each other.

If you are feeling ambitious, you could have your students pretend to be wolves going to school. They are only allowed to communicate by howling.

Set ground rules like no fighting like wolves and maybe set a time limit on it how long you want your students to pretend to be wolves.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/CATEGORIES

These discussion questions can be either held as a whole group class discussion, can be responded to as individual writing prompts, or can be addressed in pairs. As the teacher, you decide what will work/not work with the time constraints and your class' interest in the topic.

GENERAL/OPEN PROMPTS

1. Do you feel like your perspective of the wolf has changed since watching *Meet the Real Wolf*? How has it changed?

EXPLORING SELF

1. Could you think of a way to rewrite the story, “The Three Little Pigs,” without the wolf being the “bad guy?”

EXPLORING WORLD

1. Do you think wolves are considered dangerous around the world?
2. Do you think there are cultures or places that respect and look up to the wolf?

EXPLORING FILMMAKING

1. Do you think it was effective to tell the story of *Meet the Real Wolf* through animation?

EXPLORING SOCIAL ISSUES

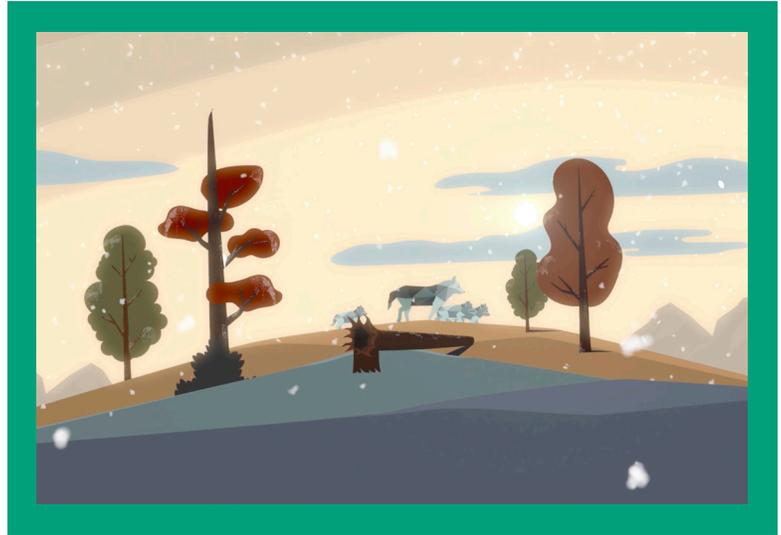
1. Can you think of other endangered species?
2. Why do you think other species are more popularized as opposed to the wolf? Why do more people know about African Giraffes being endangered than the Rocky Mountain Gray Wolf?

SENSE OF WONDER

1. How could you help to promote the message of *Meet the Real Wolf* to other family members?
2. We all grew up with the legend of the “Big Bad Wolf.” How would you help family to understand that wolves are not in fact “bad?”

ACTIVITY

Help promote the truth of the Rocky Mountain Gray Wolf by creating a postcard to mail to a family member or friend.



TIME NEEDED:

Approximately 30–40 minutes (10-minute instructions, 10-minute coloring, 10-minute writing/postcard completion, 5-minute wrap-up/addressing postcard). As a teacher, you know your classroom best, please modify this activity to meet your students' needs!

MATERIALS NEEDED:

8.5 x 11 paper (cut in half), markers/pens/pencils, etc. (student-driven decision), glue and computer for research (if needed)

DIRECTIONS:

For this activity, you are going to be combining an art project with some writing to inspire activism. You are going to have your students create a postcard to mail to a friend or family member to help break the myth surrounding wolves.

1. Download the coloring pages from the Rocky Mountain Wolf Project at: <http://bit.ly/wolfcoloringpages>
Print scaled at around 45%, so that they are “postcard” sized.
2. Have students color, cut and glue their coloring to the front of a half sheet of paper. On the back, have the students divide the paper in half. (Half for their message, half for the address, which is always a great lesson for students!).
3. On the back students will write one thing they learned about wolves in the form of a question. For students who need more support, feel free to write the sentence stem on the board or on their paper.

“Dear _____,

Did you know that Rocky Mountain Gray Wolves _____?

Sincerely,
_____,

- The letter/message can be as complex or short as you decide to (You know your students best!)
- The goal of the postcard is to deepen understanding regarding facts about the Rocky Mountain Gray Wolf.
- If your students are struggling with facts to write, direct them to: defenders.org/gray-wolf/basic-facts which lists several (albeit, more complex) facts about Rocky Mountain Gray Wolves.

EXIT TICKET

RECOMMENDED EXTENSIONS:

1. **Quick Lessons.** Rocky Mountain Wolf Project has collected and designed several lessons for all age groups. If you are looking for a quick extension/lesson that doesn't involve a lot of prep, just head to their website's Educator's tab: www.rockymountainwolfproject.org/for-educators. The word lists/worksheets are suited best ages K-2.
2. **More Activities!** Under the Kid's tab on Rocky Mountain Wolf Project's website: www.rockymountainwolfproject.org/kids-corner, there are a lot of really fun activities! (Gray Wolf origami, how cool!)
3. **Join a Conservation Project.** The Turner Endangered Species Fund, which funded the production of *Meet the Real Wolf*, administers a number of conservation projects including the Mexican Wolf Recovery Program. Learn more about it at: tesf.org/project/mexican-wolf-recovery/

REFERENCES:

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