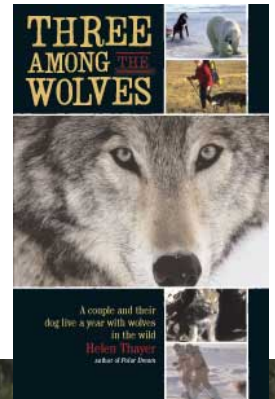




Helen Thayer's *Three Among the Wolves* Classroom Guide



The suggested study material is suitable for grades 3 through 12 with the option of selecting appropriate sections to suit various age groups.

Lifestyle Choices

1. Classroom discussion of the goals Helen Thayer set for herself as she set out on this challenging year-long journey to study wolves:

- (a) why are goals so important in our lives?
- (b) what is your next goal?

2. The plan: A classroom project of planning for such an adventure.

- (a) how would you plan to ensure success?
- (b) remember a goal is useless without a well thought out plan.

3. Focus on your goal and know you can reach it.

- (a) How would you face problems as you set out on the journey toward your goal?
- (b) would you be determined to solve problems or would you quit at the first problem?

4. Always be the very best you can be. Set goals, plan for success and persevere.

- (a) Is this the way you want to run your life?
- (b) Are you determined to persevere and do your very best to reach your goals?

5. Choices: There are times throughout our lives when we must make choices.

- (a) Our choices always have to be responsible and respectful of others.
- (b) What good choices have you made this week?



Three wolves from the summer pack

Three Among the Wolves is a remarkable story by Helen Thayer, who with her husband Bill and their Inuit dog Charlie (of *Polar Dream* fame), spent six months above the Arctic Circle in the Canadian Yukon observing and interacting with wolves in the wild. The trio established camp approximately one hundred feet from a wolf den in order to understand the daily lives of the pack. They returned later in winter to interact with two more wolf families and polar bears on the frozen sea and the vast Mackenzie Delta of northern Canada. The book documents what they saw and photographed over the months they spent among the wolves.

“Charlie rose at four the next morning, eager to go outside. His breakfast normally took top priority, but a scent out there preoccupied him today. He raised his sensitive nose in the brisk breeze. After catching just the right whiff, he let loose with a long, wild howl that spiraled down the scale to resonate off the mountainsides all around us. Immediately, an answering far-off cry drifted back to us, followed by additional voices with different pitches. We were ecstatic.

Because a pack's hunting territory ranges over many square miles, we were certain that the howls were those of our target family. Charlie was already in conversation with them. To allow the wolves' time to accept our approach to their den, we would change tactics and begin a slow non-threatening advance to gain their trust.” (from the book)



Close Encounters of the Canis Kind

A wild wolf and Charlie in a face-to-face encounter. Without Charlie, the months of observation would have been impossible. Charlie acted as a guide and diplomat in behalf of the Thayers.



The Territory where the Thayers Lived with with the Wolves.

The general area where the Thayers spent time in close contact with the wild wolves is shown on this map.

Winter Wolves

Two wolves with winter fur coats enjoy playing in the new snow.

Wolf Facts

What the Thayers learned first hand when they lived for a year with wild wolves.

1. Wolves teach their offspring survival habits they are not born with, such as watching the sky for aircraft carrying aerial hunters.
2. The alpha male does not always lead hunts, but can relinquish leadership to a subordinate with superior hunting abilities.
3. Wolves take special care of an injured family member: The Thayers' watched as one wolf was assigned to lick the injury, while two wolves remained at the victims side. Other wolves returned with food they affectionately placed before their companion.
4. Ravens and wolves are both sociable creatures, and seem to enjoy each other's company. The ravens liked to tease the wolves and sometimes initiate play by nipping the wolves' tails and ears.
5. When howling, each wolf sings his or her key and changes keys at will. Doing this can make a few wolves sound like a large pack.
6. Wolf pups have an endless supply of energy and stamina, and game-time often consists of play-fighting. One day the pups battled each other so vigorously they rolled into the stream. Although play builds quick, strong bodies, it also prepares them for traveling long distances to find prey.
7. Wolves are remarkable eating machines. They gobble their food at tremendous speed and crack even large moose bones easily. Scientists estimate that an adult wolf's stomach can hold as much as twenty pounds of meat at one time. When prey is available, they gorge themselves then sleep for hours.
8. Playful by nature, wolves apparently planned for games by carrying back various toys such as sticks, stones, animal hides, and bones. Toys not used immediately were carefully placed close by, ready for use later.



A young wolf stands at alert. Notice how his color helps him blend into the surroundings.



It is very unusual for a wolf pack in the wild to tolerate humans at close range.



The wolves and the polar bears are not enemies. In fact, they may actually share food and cooperate in hunting, all the while displaying mutual respect.

Topics for Study

The key to the Thayers being accepted and tolerated by the wolf families was Charlie, who was raised with Arctic wolves. Following Charlie's lead, the Thayers discovered the relationship of wolves to other wild species such as grizzlies, polar bears, foxes, and ravens. They also were able to observe the complexities of wolf family structure, including the alpha male and female, care of the pups, hunting and survival skills and the affection wolves display for family members. The book is both a natural history of wolves and an adventure tale. Far from being the viscous killers of popular imagining, the Thayers found that wolves form loving family bonds in a world that offers them neither safety nor understanding.

Websites for more about wolves

- www.defenders.org
- www.midwest.fws.gov/wolf/fnl-rule/status-map.htm
- www.nps.gov/yell/nature/animals/wolf/wolfup_prelim-03.htm
- www.wolf.org/wolves/learn/basic/populations/uspop.asp
- www.wolfsource.org/
- www.seaborg.nmu.edu/WOLF/2Regional_wolf_status.html



Creative Writing

1. write a word picture of how you would describe:
(a) a wolf
(b) a raven
(c) a polar bear
(d) any other wild animals you like
2. What does tundra look like, how does it feel?
3. Imagine you are following wolves on a hunt. How would you keep up with them?. What are you thinking and doing?
4. How would you feel watching a family of wolves from close quarters for a year.



It's early winter, and a lone wolf comes close to investigate the strange yellow tent that has appeared in his territory on the Mackenzie Delta.

Questions:

- 1) Which is the most common species of wolf found in the United States.
- 2) What is its scientific name
- 3) What is another American wolf
- 4) What is its scientific name
- 5) What is the status of the wolf in America
- 6) How do wolves benefit the ecosystem
- 7) Why is the arctic wolf colored white
- 8) Do wolves hibernate
- 9) What is the difference between a den and a rendezvous site
- 10) What does it mean when wolves are described as carnivores
- 11) What is the name of the United States National Park where wolves are being successfully reintroduced
- 12) What was the purpose of the Thayers' study
- 13) What is being done to protect the wolf
- 14) What do you think the future holds for the wolf
- 15) Discuss the Endangered Species Act
- 16) Which animals did the Thayers watch share food with wolves
- 17) What is meant by the Alpha wolf
- 18) Understand the social order in a wolf family
- 19) In what way is a wolf different to a dog
- 20) What are some of the problems that can arise in the offspring when a wolf is bred to a dog
- 21) Name the animals the Thayers saw interacting and sharing food with wolves
- 22) How long did the Thayers live close to and study wolves



A grizzly bear is an awesome sight. One of the most powerful animals in North America, they will cooperate and share food with the wolves.

Answers:

- 1) Gray wolf
- 2) Canis lupus
- 3) Timber wolf
- 4) Canis lupus lycaon
- 5) Gray Wolf (canis lupus) STATUS: Within the continental U.S., the species formerly ranged from coast to coast and from Canada to Mexico. They began declining in the American West around 1870, the subject of intensive eradication campaigns. By the late 1920's, wolves and their natural prey had been virtually eliminated from the Rocky Mountain area. With the exception of a population in Minnesota, this wolf species eventually disappeared from the lower 48 states. The gray wolf is listed under the Endangered Species Act as a threatened species in Minnesota, and as an endangered species elsewhere in the lower 48 states. Timber Wolf (canis lupus lycaon) STATUS: Endangered under Endangered Species Act. Today the eastern timber wolf survives in only three percent of its original home range in the U.S. The largest population exists in northern Minnesota. There are smaller populations in Michigan and Wisconsin. In the northeast U.S. (New York and New England), wolves have been extinct for 100 years.
- 6) they help regulate their prey species numbers, therefore preventing overpopulation compared to the species food supply
- 7) Camouflage against a snowy background
- 8) No, they hunt all year long
- 9) The den is where the pups are born. A few weeks later the pups are moved to a larger site called a rendezvous site where they can move around and learn to hunt as they grow
- 10) They are meat eaters
- 11) Yellowstone National Park
- 12) To document the affectionate lifestyle of a wolf family and discover the ways other species share food with wolves
- 13) Many organizations send petitions to law makers requesting unfair hunting practices to cease. Organizations encourage the reintroduction of wolves to the lower 48 United States.
- 14) Wolves are on the increase in the USA and students and adults are much more aware of the need to reintroduce the wolf to its natural habitat
- 15) Laws that forbid hunting of rare species or species in danger of extinction. Protection of these species habitat
- 16) Grizzly bears, polar bears, ravens, arctic foxes
- 17) The lead male of the family
- 18) Alpha male and female, the beta wolf or wolves, the omega wolf. The teenagers and new pups.
- 19) Wolves are wild by nature and must roam and hunt. Dogs are domesticated and humans provide their food. There are various physical characteristics that differ.
- 20) The conflict between wild and domesticated often lead to emotion instability. The wolf side often longs to be wild making the animal more difficult to handle as it matures.
- 21) Grizzly bears, polar bears, ravens, arctic foxes
- 22) One year