



LESSON PLAN

The Man and the Wolf



RELATED PHOTO ESSAY

Shadow Within

BY CHRISTIAN HOUGE



The Man and the Wolf



Class: 60 minutes

Key Idea

Wolves have been widely misunderstood throughout time, causing a rapid decline in their population. In recent years, due to legal protection, the population of wolves has increased, but many species of wolves remain endangered.

Background

Wolves have suffered almost to the point of extinction. They are powerful creatures and symbols, predators associated with destruction. The “big bad wolf” has become an archetype of danger appearing in fables, fairy tales, and fiction. Some examples are *The Boy Who Cried Wolf* from Aesop’s Fables, and Little Red Riding Hood from Grimm’s Fairy Tales. Jack London’s *White Fang*, however, tells a story through the eyes of the wolf, exploring the view of the wolf’s world, the human world, and the violence that ensues from both sides. Popular wolf sayings include “never cry wolf,” “thrown to the wolves,” and “wolf it down,” among others.

In this photo essay, Norwegian photographer, Christian Houge, explores man’s relationship to the wolf. Houge also reflects that, due to the affects of modern technology and development, we can become disconnected from our primal instincts. Cultural beliefs have started to shift as we begin to understand the role of wolves in the larger ecosystem. Population numbers have risen due to conservation efforts, but the wolf remains endangered.

Connections to National Standards

Common Core English Language Arts. SL.9-10.1 and SL.11-12.1. Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and instructor-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 [or 11-12] topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards. D2.Geo.6.9-12. Evaluate the impact of human settlement activities on the environmental and cultural characteristics of specific places and regions.

SUBJECT AREAS

HIGH SCHOOL

- Biology
- English Language Arts
- Photography

COLLEGE

- Animal Biology
- Cultural Anthropology
- Sociology

THEMES

- Empathy toward nature
- Human relationships with animals
- Natural instincts

MATERIALS

- Access to the photo essay online (or printed copies of it)

PREPARATION

- (Optional) Make copies of the photo essay



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Next Generation Science Standards. HS-LS2-8. Evaluate the evidence for the role of group behavior on individual and species' chances to survive and reproduce.

Lesson

SETTING THE STAGE

Introduce the photo essay to the class by telling students they will be looking at images of wolves. Ask students: What is their first impression of wolves? Why do you think the wolf has played such a powerful role in stories and fables? What does the wolf represent to them?

Introduce the following facts about the wolf. Ask students if these statements are true or false:

- The gray wolf was listed as endangered due to predator-control programs, loss of habitat and loss of prey. (True)*
- Wolves need wilderness areas to survive. (False)* Wolves can also survive in urban areas where there is sufficient food and human tolerance.
- A wolf pair usually mates for life. (True)*
- A wolf can consume 20 pounds of meat in one sitting. (True)*

*U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, "[Gray Wolves in the Western Great Lakes States.](#)"

ENGAGING WITH THE STORY

Have students read the short text by photographer Christian Houge that accompanies the photo essay. This text explains Houge's point of view and his intention, which is to invite the viewer to explore his or her own relationship to the wolf and what the wolf can relate back to us—fear, social hierarchy, aggression, and loneliness. Direct students to view the photo essay in pairs. Ask them to write down their observations and impressions and invite them to pay attention to the position of the photographer in the photos.



Delving Deeper

1. Ask students to share what they noticed from the photo essay. What is their connection to animals? What kinds of thoughts and instincts do the images evoke?
2. With students in pairs, ask them to choose two photographs from the photo essay. One student will choose their favorite photograph and the other student will choose their least favorite photograph from the photo essay. On what basis did they make their decisions?
3. When asked about photographing the wolves, Houge said that he was forced to search within himself to explore his own instinctual nature. His wish with this project was to invite the viewer “to feel his own instincts.” Describe the natural instincts that these photos evoke in you.
4. Lead a discussion asking such questions as:
 - Houge says that wolves “can reflect back to us the parts of ourselves we are afraid to see: fear, social hierarchy, aggression, and loneliness.” Which of these do you identify with the most?
 - What would happen if there were no wolves?
 - Why do you think the photographer chose to capture wolves in an intimate way?
 - If you could rename the photo essay, what name would you give it?

Reflecting and Projecting

Give students one of the following reflective writing prompts to demonstrate their understanding of the story. (Note for teachers: Just as quotes from a book or text are used to prove an analytical thought, students use the photo essay to justify their reasoning.)



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1. Photographer Christian Houge said in an interview with the *The New York Times* Lens Blog: “They say you don’t start living until you step out of your comfort zone.” What decision did Houge make to step out of his comfort zone? Why do you think he chose to do this? Describe a time you stepped outside of your comfort zone. What happened? What did you learn? (CCSS.ELA.SL.9-10.1 and SL.11-12.1)
2. Can taking photographs of wolves save them? (C3.D2.Geo.6.9-12)
3. Humans have a big influence on the survival of wolf populations. We have devised population caps as well as hunting and trapping seasons. Do you think Houge has influenced wolves? Do you think he has the right to take these photographs? Why do you think he is or is not justified in taking these photos? (NGSS.HS-LS2-8)
4. Has your thinking about the value of wolves changed? If so, in what ways? (CCSS.ELA.SL.9-10.1 and SL.11-12.1)

Resources

(Video) [“Exploring Man’s Condition Through Photography: Christian Houge at TEDx Trondheim.”](#) TEDxTalks.

(Article) [“The Wolf That Changed America – Wolf Wars: America’s Campaign to Eradicate the Wolf.”](#) PBS, September 14, 2008.

David Gonzalez, [“In the Shadows of Wolves and Man.”](#) *The New York Times*, January 16, 2013.