

RESOURCE LIBRARY
ACTIVITY : 1 HR

Perspectives of Lion Conservation

Students watch the National Geographic video, “Lions of Gir,” from multiple perspectives to explore strategies and challenges involved in conserving the Asiatic lion population of India’s Gir Forest.

GRADES

6 - 8

SUBJECTS

Biology, English Language Arts, Geography, Human Geography, Physical Geography

CONTENTS

1 PDF, 1 Video, 1 Link

OVERVIEW

Students watch the National Geographic video, “Lions of Gir,” from multiple perspectives to explore strategies and challenges involved in conserving the Asiatic lion population of India’s Gir Forest.

For the complete activity with media resources, visit:

<http://www.nationalgeographic.org/activity/perspectives-of-lion-conservation/>

Program

DIRECTIONS

1. Pre-teach the vocabulary that students will hear in the content video.

Pre-teach the following terms that are mentioned in the video: *abode*, *conservation*, *cultivation*, *endangered species*, *exploit*, *extinction*, *genetic diversity*, *mammal*, *national park*, *predator*, *pride*, *retaliate*, *retribution*, *sanctuary*, *savanna*, *symbol*, *tenuous*, and *tolerance*. Answer any questions students may have, as needed.

2. Activate students' prior knowledge about lions and what lions symbolize.

Discuss with students what they know about lions. Ask: *Where do lions live? What role do they play in nature? Are there different types of lions?* Elicit from students that lions are large mammals and top predators that live in groups called prides. Most lions live in the savanna of sub-Saharan Africa. They are called African lions. Another small population of lions lives in the Gir Forest of India. These are called Asiatic lions. Tell students that the video they are going to watch will describe other differences between African and Asiatic lions. Ask: *What is a symbol? What do you think a lion symbolizes?* Elicit from students that a symbol is something that represents something else and that lions can symbolize different things to different people or cultures. Student responses might include power, strength, fear, king (of the jungle), speed, or fierceness. Explain that the video explains how the lion symbolizes power in the Hindu culture.

3. Introduce the National Geographic video, "Lions of Gir."

Explain that students will view the video to learn about Asiatic lions and explore strategies and challenges involved in conserving the population living in India's Gir Forest. To better understand the video, they will use a notetaking strategy that gives them specific themes to focus on while they watch. Distribute copies of the Four-Column Chart worksheet to each student. Write the following words on the board and have students copy them on their worksheets as heads for each column: *culture*, *lions*, *humans*, and *conservation*. Tell students to jot notes under each theme as the words come up in the video that they are about to watch. Make sure that students understand what each of the words means. Explain that *conservation* is "the management of natural resources to prevent exploitation, destruction, or neglect."

4. Have students view the "Lions of Gir" video and take notes on specific themes.

After students view the video, divide them into pairs. Have partners compare their notes for four theme words: *culture*, *lions*, *humans*, and *conservation*. If they observed similar things about one of the video's themes, have them draw a circle around those notes on their papers.

If they observed different things, have them underline those notes on their papers. Then discuss students' notes as a class. Ask a student volunteer from each pair to share similarities and differences in their notes for each theme. Explain that when people observe videos, they often notice different parts or themes.

5. Have students view the “Lions of Gir” video again, with a different purpose.

Tell students that they are going to view the video again, but this time they will watch it from a certain character's perspective. Ask: *What is meant by the word senses?* Explain that you want students to think about what the characters in the video are sensing, feeling, and experiencing. After the video, students will write an “I Am From” poem based on the perspective of one of the characters. Explain that an “I Am From” poem can be used to express what someone or something may be feeling or experiencing. Assign students one of the following four characters to observe: *Asiatic lion, Conservationist, Local Government, or Maldhari herdsman*. In addition to the name of their character, have students write the activity's guiding question on their papers: *What strategies and challenges are involved in conserving lion populations like those in the Gir Forest of India?* Tell students that their characters' “I Am From” poems should relate to this question.

6. Have students write and share “I Am From” poems.

Lead a brief discussion about students' observations based on the perspectives of their characters. Answer any questions and then explain the requirements for writing their “I Am From” poems. Require students to write at least five sentences and to use as many descriptive or key words as possible. Key words could include conservation, endangered, exploit, extinction, national park, sanctuary, symbol, and tolerance. After writing their poems, have students take turns reading them aloud to the class. Discuss how students describe the perspective of their characters and the feelings and experiences of those characters. Point out similarities and differences in how students represented their characters, especially those students who wrote about the same character.

7. Have students apply and discuss what they learned from the “Lions of Gir” video.

Have students think about the activity's guiding question. Ask: *What strategies and challenges are involved in conserving lion populations like those in the Gir Forest of India?* Elicit from students that in 1907 the ruler of Junagadh, India, made the Asiatic lion a protected species. People were no longer allowed to hunt the lions for sport. Today, the Asiatic lion

population in Gir has increased to more than 400. However, the lions are still endangered due to lack of genetic diversity, lack of natural prey, and habitat decline. Even though the Gir Forest is a national park and sanctuary for the lions, they still face threats that include poisoning, road and railroad construction, and tourism. More and more lions and humans are competing for space and food. Read aloud the video's closing statement: "The lions are a symbol of power but they are virtually powerless against the humans that both exploit and protect them." Ask students to reflect on this statement and discuss how humans both exploit and protect the lions of Gir. Students should realize that their opinion about whether or not the lions are exploited or protected depends on the perspective (or character) from which they consider the statement.

8. Explain how students can find out more about the Lions of Gir and other endangered big cats.

At the end of the discussion, encourage students to access National Geographic's Big Cats Initiative website. Explain that the site includes videos, images, and articles that will teach them more about the strategies and challenges involved in conserving big cat populations throughout the world.

Tip

In Step 5, use the NG Education video "I Am From: Poem" from the video gallery "[Experiencing Film](#)" to give students more background on the format of an "I Am From" poem and a model of a completed poem.

Informal Assessment

Review students' notes and "I Am From" poems to assess their comprehension of the video and Asiatic lion conservation.

Extending the Learning

Have students use the National Geographic Big Cats Initiative website to research and present information about other endangered big cats.

OBJECTIVES

Subjects & Disciplines

Biology

- English Language Arts

Geography

- Human Geography
- Physical Geography

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- distinguish between African lions and Asiatic lions
- state how the themes of culture, lions, humans, and conservation relate to the Asiatic Lions living in India's Gir Forest
- describe the perspective of one or more "characters" from the video both orally and in writing
- list strategies used to conserve the Asiatic lions living in India's Gir Forest
- list challenges involved in conserving the Asiatic lions living in India's Gir Forest

Teaching Approach

- Learning-for-use

Teaching Methods

- Discussions
- Information organization
- Writing

Skills Summary

This activity targets the following skills:

- 21st Century Themes
 - Global Awareness
- Critical Thinking Skills

- Analyzing
- Creating
- Understanding
- Geographic Skills
- Acquiring Geographic Information

National Standards, Principles, and Practices

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHY STANDARDS

- **Standard 14:**

How human actions modify the physical environment

- **Standard 3:**

How to analyze the spatial organization of people, places, and environments on Earth's surface

Preparation

What You'll Need

MATERIALS YOU PROVIDE

- Pencils
- Writing paper

REQUIRED TECHNOLOGY

- Internet Access: Required
- Tech Setup: 1 computer per classroom, Projector, Speakers
- Plug-Ins: Flash

PHYSICAL SPACE

- Classroom

GROUPING

- Large-group instruction

BACKGROUND & VOCABULARY

Background Information

Big cat populations throughout the world are in decline, mostly due to human threats. One of the first official acts of lion conservation came in 1907 when the ruler of Junagadh, India, made the Asiatic lion a protected species. Today, the Asiatic lion population in India's Gir Forest has increased to more than 400. Even though the Gir Forest is a national park and sanctuary for the lions, the lions are still endangered due to lack of genetic diversity, lack of natural prey, and habitat decline.

Prior Knowledge

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Recommended Prior Activities

- None

Vocabulary

Term	Part of Speech	Definition
Big Cats Initiative	<i>noun</i>	National Geographic Society program that supports on-the-ground conservation projects, education, economic incentive efforts, and a global public-awareness campaign to protect big cats and their habitats.
conservation	<i>noun</i>	management of a natural resource to prevent exploitation, destruction, or neglect.
endangered species	<i>noun</i>	organism threatened with extinction.
exploit	<i>verb</i>	to use or take advantage of for profit.
extinction	<i>noun</i>	process of complete disappearance of a species from Earth.
national park	<i>noun</i>	geographic area protected by the national government of a country.
predator	<i>noun</i>	animal that hunts other animals for food.
sanctuary	<i>noun</i>	protected area where wildlife can live and breed without threat from hunting.

For Further Exploration

Websites

- [National Geographic Education: Experiencing Film—An Active Approach](#)



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