

The Cry of the Wolf

OBJECTIVE

To understand how the reputation of the wolf has evolved over many centuries and how the treatment of this species has almost driven it to extinction. To recognize and understand the reasons for eradication, the movement toward restoration of the wolf, and how it's possible to peacefully coexist with it.

ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

Students will research the history of the wolf and find out how it has gained its reputation. They'll divide into two groups, one which will represent the campaign to eradicate wolves and one which will represent wolf restoration in this country. Each group will research their topic, write an essay, and choose a representative to present their information to the rest of the class.

MATERIALS

🐾 Books

A Society of Wolves, by Rick McIntyre

The Return of the Wolf, by Steve Grooms

Wild Dogs, by Erwin A. Bauer

Wolves, A Portrait of the Animal World, by Leonard Lee Rue III

Wolves, by Nancy Gibson

ACTIVITY

Preliminary Discussion

- 🐾 What are your perceptions of wolves? What has influenced your understanding of them?
- 🐾 How and why did the negative reputation of the wolf evolve? What are the stereotypes, the facts, and the myths that have affected the perception and existence of wolves in this country?

Procedure

Students will divide into two groups. One group will study the campaign to eradicate wolves in this country and one will study the campaign for restoration. The following points should be considered, as they are doing their research:

- 🐾 Explore the history of fairy tales, the fears of early American settlers, and the perceived threat of a predatory animal. Compare these fears to those that our society has about sharks. How has the media influenced our beliefs?
- 🐾 In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there was a strong campaign to eradicate the wolf. What was the attitude among ranchers, farmers, and others who favored "wolf control?" What were the circumstances that led to several federal agencies declaring a war on wolves, during this time? What methods were used to eradicate wolves? How badly were the populations affected and in what areas of the country?
- 🐾 What implications did the loss of this species have on the ecosystems of which it was a part?
- 🐾 How has the Endangered Species Act of 1973 helped to protect and restore wolf populations?
- 🐾 How does wolf restoration work? What is the controversy regarding wolf restoration? How are live-stock owners and conservation groups working together to find solutions and compromises?

Each group should research their respective topics and decide why each campaign was begun, who the key players were, what were their goals, and how their actions have affected wolf populations. When each group has completed their research, they should write their findings in essay form

and choose a representative to present it to the class.

Post-Discussion

- ❖ When an animal like the wolf becomes endangered, what does that say about our society?
- ❖ What lessons can we learn from the period of wolf eradication and how can we apply it to our lives?
- ❖ Why is it important to find a peaceful way to co-exist with wolves and all animals? Why is it imperative that wolves, and all animals, be protected?
- ❖ Although you may never have contact with a wolf, what can you do to help protect this species? Why should this be important to you?
- ❖ What other kinds of animals are endangered, and how did these situations occur?

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

Invite a speaker to your classroom who has been involved in advocacy for endangered and threatened species.