

Big Cats

Synopsis Seymour Simon presents a comprehensive, organized description of the seven types of big cats that make different parts of the globe their home. Not only does he provide important information, but each description is accompanied by breathtaking and dramatic color photographs of the beautiful big cats of the world.

Introduction: Explore Informational Text

Explain that *Big Cats* is an informational book. Say, *As you know, in informational text, the emphasis is on facts about a particular subject. Another purpose of some nonfiction is to argue a side of an issue, or to persuade the reader to a particular point of view.*

In Big Cats, Seymour Simon describes the seven types of big cats found throughout the world. The author provides important information about each cat's location and its hunting and eating habits. Simon's main goal is to inform readers about these big cats; however, at the end of the book, he also writes to persuade readers to take action to help protect the future of these cats.

Vocabulary

Tier Two: environment, extended, retracted, solitary, stalk, temperate

Tier Three: carnivore, cheetah, jaguar, leopard, lion, prey, prides, puma, snow leopard, tiger

Word Work

L.4.5c Demonstrate understanding of words by relating them to their opposites (antonyms) and to words with similar but not identical meanings (synonyms).

Introduce vocabulary in context as it appears within the book before or during reading. Introduce or review the terms *antonym* and *synonym*. Then use antonyms and synonyms to help students understand new vocabulary. Write the **Tier Two** vocabulary words in a column where all can see. Ask volunteers to pronounce each word. Write the word *surroundings* next to *environment*. Ask students whether the two words are synonyms or antonyms. Establish that they are synonyms. Continue in the same manner using the following words and establishing the relationship. (*extended/shortened (A)*, *retracted/withdrawn (S)*, *solitary/alone (S)*, *stalk/hunt (S)*, *temperate/mild (S)*)



Author: Seymour Simon

Genre: Informational Text

Text Structure: Description

Guided Reading Level: Q

Standards: L.4.5c, RF.4.3a,
RI.4.2, RI.4.5, RI.4.8

English Language Support

Offer realia, gestures, or photos to support the introduction of the new vocabulary. Prior to reading *Big Cats*, guide students on a picture walk through the book, focusing on the photographs, as well as displaying and pronouncing the names of the seven cats. Additionally, read any place names aloud, using a globe or world map to point out the areas of the world in which these cats can be found.

Understanding the Text

Literal: *How large can a male Siberian tiger become?* (weighing more than 600 pounds and growing longer than 12 feet long)

Interpretive: *Why do you think the lion is frequently referred to as the “King of Beasts”?* Use information from the book to support your answer. (noble head and mane, powerful jaw and sharp teeth, dignified manner, loud roar)

Applied: *Compare the behaviors and characteristics of an average house cat to those of the big cats.*

Phonics and Word Recognition

RF.4.3a Use combined knowledge of all letter-sound correspondences, syllabication patterns, and morphology (e.g., roots and affixes) to read accurately unfamiliar multisyllabic words in context and out of context.

Review with students that suffixes are letters added to the ends of root words. Generally suffixes simply change the part of speech of the words to which they are added. Use the example of *teach* (verb) and *teacher* (noun) to clarify this concept. Then explain that sometimes the word meaning is changed when a suffix is added, as in the example of *hope* and *hopeless*. Throughout the book *Big Cats*, the suffix *-ly* is found at the ends of many words. Discuss with students that the suffix *-ly* usually means “resembling or like.” For most words, the addition of *-ly* changes a word from an adjective to an an adverb, as in *slow/slowly*. Remind students that adjectives modify nouns and adverbs modify adjectives and verbs. Display the following words from *Big Cats* that end in *-ly* and ask students to identify the root word: *silently*, *rapidly*, *elegantly*, *regularly*. Then write *heavily* and identify the root word *heavy* and discuss the spelling change when the suffix *-ly* is added.

Text Features

RI.4.5 Describe the overall structure (e.g., chronology, comparison, cause/effect, problem/solution) of events, ideas, concepts, or information in a text or part of a text.

Explain that nonfiction books usually have different text features or structures than those found in fictional books. In *Big Cats*, there is a very organized structure used to present each cat description. Have students

leaf through the book and elicit from them the basic structure that Seymour Simon has chosen for his book. Establish that there is an introductory section and then one text page and one photo page for each cat that is described, and last, a conclusion section. Point out to students that due to this very organized structure, typical nonfiction text features, such as headings, subheadings, and labels are not necessary to clarify the content for the reader.

Reading Informational Text

RI.4.2 Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text.

Review with students that the main idea of a text is what the text is largely about. Discuss that the main idea statement is often found at the beginning of a section or paragraph. Specific details that support the main idea are usually found following the main idea sentence. To provide an example of these concepts, read and discuss the second paragraph of the third introductory text page of *Big Cats*. Point out the main idea statement: “*Cats also have razor-sharp claws that are perfect for cutting and holding.*” Then ask students to take turns reading the supporting detail sentences that follow the main idea. For further reinforcement of main idea and supporting details, ask students to look through the book and analyze another paragraph for its main idea and supporting details. Allow volunteers to share their findings with the class.

Writing

RI.4.8 Explain how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text.

Ask students to reread the last text page of *Big Cats*. Remind them that Seymour Simon devotes this page to persuade readers to help protect the big cats of the world. Discuss with students the details that the author provides to support the idea that humans have negatively impacted the existence of big cats. Ask students to pinpoint his specific recommendations of what can be done to remedy this situation. Finally, have students write their own editorial about the uncertain future of the big cats or other endangered animals of the world, citing specific ways people can act to positively affect this problem.