

The Bison and the Butterfly

a teacher's guide



Kent
Wildlife Trust

kentwildlifetrust.org.uk

Introduction

The Bison and The Butterfly is inspired by the Wilder Blean project at West Blean and Thornden Woods, an area of ancient woodland just outside of Canterbury in Kent. In 2022, Kent Wildlife Trust and Wildwood Trust introduced a small herd of European bison into the woodland as a form of natural habitat management.

This enchanting story, written by best selling author Alice Hemming demonstrates how bison – a keystone species – help and support a range of wildlife in the woodland. Natural bison behaviours – such as grazing, dust bathing, eating bark and felling trees – enable other species to thrive. Bison are seen as ecosystem engineers who can help to restore the natural biodiversity of a landscape.

The presence of bison at the Blean, alongside Exmoor ponies and Iron-Age pigs, will transform the woods into a lush, thriving, biodiverse environment, helping in the fight against the climate and nature crisis.

The Bison and the Butterfly was written not only to entertain, with its enchanting story and delightful characters, but also to educate children on the important role that bison (and other keystone species) can have on our ecosystems. This activity pack has been created to help teachers and educators engage their learners through a range of different lesson activities. All lessons are linked to the Key Stage 1 curriculum and have been designed to help you meet your classroom objectives.

To learn more about the Wilder Blean project, and to find further information and resources, visit: kwtg.uk/bisonandbutterflyUK



Contents

Speaking and listening activities:

Activity 1: Guided reading discussion prompts - **page 4**

Activity 2: Hot seating - **page 6**

Activity 3: Puppet Show - **page 7**

Reading Activities:

Activity 4: Story sequencing - **page 10**

Activity 5: Matching activity - **page 13**

Activity 6: Comprehension board game - **page 15**

Writing Activities:

Activity 7: Character description - **page 19**

Activity 8: Diary writing - **page 22**

Activity 9: The missing character - **page 23**

Activity 10: Book review - **page 24**



Activity 1

Guided reading discussion prompts

Learning objective:

By the end of this lesson, children will be able to participate in a guided reading discussion by answering and asking questions about the text, demonstrating comprehension and critical thinking.

This set of reading comprehension cards, designed for Key Stage 1 readers, encourages your learners to think about and review the story they're reading while giving you a chance to assess their understanding. Use the following reading prompt cards before, during and after the story to encourage discussion about the book.



Before reading

Can you find the front cover?
Back cover?

What can you see on the front cover?

Can you find/
point to the book title?

What might happen in the story?

What type of story might this be?

Is this fiction or non-fiction?

What might this story be about?

What is the name of the author?
Can you point to this on the cover?

Do you think you will enjoy this story? Why/why not?

During reading:

Can you describe what is happening in the first picture of the book?

What is happening on this page?

What might happen next?

What might happen at the end of the story?

Where is this story set?

Can you describe this setting?

How do you think the characters feel?

What are your thoughts about this character?

Do you have any questions?

After reading:

Who was your favourite character and why?

What was your favourite part of the story? Why?

Who was your favourite character?

Can you think of a different title for this story?

Can you share what happened in this story?

List three new words you learned in the book.

How did the story make you feel at the end?

Can you think of a different ending to the story?

Is this story like any other books that you have read?

Activity 2

Hot seating



Learning objective:

By the end of this lesson, children will be able to answer questions in character, demonstrating their understanding of the character's thoughts, feelings, and motivations.

Choose a character from the story and invite a child to assume the role of this character. They are then invited to come and sit in the "hot seat". Whilst in the hot seat, that child must answer questions in role as that character. This activity will help to deepen their understanding and empathy for the character as well as develop pupils' speaking, listening and critical thinking skills as they engage with the character's thoughts and motivations.

Children inexperienced in hot-seating may benefit from a teacher or another adult taking on the hot seating role first.

Why did you feel sad at the start of the story?

How did you feel at the end of the story?

How did you feel when the woodpecker said you should find a friend?

What made you feel most happy in the story?



Activity 3

Puppet show



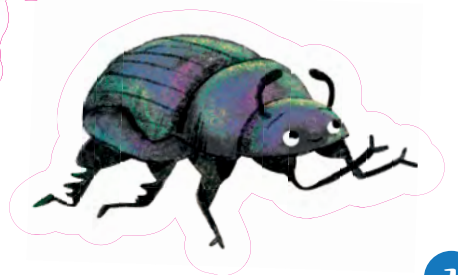
Learning objective:

By the end of this lesson, children will be able to create and perform a short puppet show, using expressive voices and movements to portray characters and convey a simple story or message.

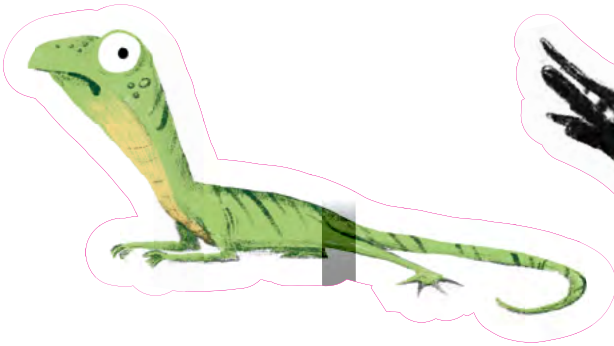
In this activity, students will work together to create and perform a short puppet show, either acting out scenes from the story or creating their own. Using the puppets, children will bring characters to life by practicing expressive voices and movements. This activity encourages creativity, teamwork and communication skills, while also allowing students to explore different ways to express emotions and ideas through drama.

Some scenes the children could act out include:

- Bison meeting woodpecker for the first time.
- Bison meeting dung beetle
- Bison dust bathing and meeting lizard
- Bison following butterfly through the forest



Cut-out the characters here and on the next page and attach them to the end of lolly-pop sticks.



More role play ideas:

Readers Theatre:

With the children in different groups, assign each group one section of the story. Give groups time to rehearse their section then time for each group to watch the others.

Body moving:

Become a character from the story using your whole body. How will you move? How does your voice change?

Charades:

Soundlessly, act out a character or event from the story. Can everyone else guess correctly?



Activity 4

Story sequencing



Learning objective:

By the end of this lesson, children will be able to sequence events in the correct order, using illustrations or text cues to demonstrate their understanding of the story.

This activity will help your pupils reinforce comprehension skills by sequencing the events within the story. Having read the story together as a class or a group, cut out the story cards and give them a shuffle. Ask your pupils to sort them into the correct story order.

Next, pupils can also sort and order the sentences and/or match the sentences to the correct images.

For a further challenge, why not ask the children to write their own sentences to match the story cards? Would the story still make sense if some of the cards were presented in a different order?

Example



Bison is standing with her herd. She feels unhappy but doesn't know why.



Bison meets dung beetle. Dung beetle is thankful, as Bison's dung is great for eating and tunnelling in.

Story images:



Story images:

Bison is standing with her herd. She feels unhappy but doesn't know why.

Bison meets woodpecker. Woodpecker is thankful, as Bison helped her to find her breakfast.

Bison meets dung beetle. Dung beetle is thankful, as Bison's dung is great for eating and tunnelling in.

Bison meets lizard. Lizard is thankful, as the dust baths Bison made create spaces that are perfect for sunbathing.

Bison meets butterfly, who needs a friend. Together, they trample and fly through the forest.

Bison returns to the clearing and finds her herd. All of her new friends are there to say "Thank you!"

Activity 5

Matching cards



Learning objective:

By the end of this lesson, children will be able to match images to corresponding events, demonstrating an understanding of key moments within the story.

This resource will help your pupils reinforce comprehension skills by recalling the events of the story and matching the actions to the characters. Having read the story together as a class or a group, cut out the cards and ask children to find the matching pairs.

For an additional challenge, reveal only one of the pairs and ask children to write or draw their own matching pair without revealing the other card.

Example



Bison strips bark from the trees. This creates dead wood which attracts insects.

Which character does this help?



Bison leaves behind some dung. The dung is full of fibre and great for tunnelling in. Maybe even good for laying eggs in.

Which character does this help?

Reading activities



Bison strips bark from the trees.
This creates dead wood which
attracts insects.

Which character does this help?



Bison leaves behind some dung.
The dung is full of fibre and
great for tunnelling in. Maybe
even good for laying eggs in.

Which character does this help?



Bison loves to roll around in the
dust. The big patches of bare
earth are great for sunbathing.

Which character does this help?



Bison loves to trample through
the woods. By trampling through
the woods and rubbing against
trees, this creates space to fly
and helps light spill onto the
forest floor.

Which character does this help?

Activity 6

Reading Comprehension board game

Learning objective:

By the end of this lesson, children will be able to answer questions about the story, using their responses to demonstrate comprehension and recall of key details and events.

The below board game is a fun and interactive way of getting your pupils to answer a range of reading comprehension questions on *The Bison and the Butterfly*.

Game set up:

- This game is for 2-5 players.
- You will need 1 six-sided die dice.
- Print the game board – enlarge to A3 if possible for a better experience.
- Carefully cut out the player counters and the question cards.
- Shuffle the question cards and place them in a pile upside down next to the game board.

Playing the game:

- Place the player counters at the start of the game.
- Take it in turns to roll the dice and move along the board.
- When you land on a square, ask someone else in the group to read the question to you. If you get the answer right, you get to move on one space. If you get the question wrong, you stay where you are.
- The dice is then passed clockwise for the next player. The game continues until the first player reaches the end of the game.

Player counters

Cut these out!



Reading activities

What season did the story take place?
Spring, Summer, Autumn or Winter?

Answer: spring

What is the setting for Bison and the Butterfly?

Answer: in woodland (ancient woodland)

How did Bison feel at the start of the story?

Answer: unhappy

Who did bison meet first?

Answer: woodpecker

What did woodpecker suggest Bison needed to feel happy?

Answer: a friend

How did Bison help woodpecker?

Answer: Bison helped find woodpecker's breakfast

Where did Woodpecker say they were happiest?

Answer: in the treetops

Why did Bison say sorry to the dung beetle when they first met?

Answer: Bison made a dung pile in front of her

Why does Dung Beetle love Bison's dung?

Answer: She eats it and tunnels in it. She may also lay her eggs in it.

What did Bison do when she was itchy and hot?

Answer: she found a nice dry patch and rolled in the dust

What scaly green creature with stripes did Bison meet?

Answer: a lizard

What does lizard like to do in the patches of bare earth?

Answer: sunbathe

Reading activities

Why is lizard scared to go trampling with Bison?

Answer: they are scared of the predators out there.

Which creature did Bison hear crying in the tree?

Answer: the butterfly

Who flew through the forest with Bison?

Answer: the butterfly and the woodpecker

Name 3 characters in the story.

Answer: bison, woodpecker, dung beetle, lizard and butterfly.

Can you find a noun in the story?

Answer: bison, tree, bark, and many more.

Can you find an adjective in the story?

Answer: ancient, shaggy, blue, fluffy and many more.

Can you find a verb in the story?

Answer: chewed, trampled, floated and many more.

Can you find any conjunctions in the story?

Answer: and, so, but and many more.

What is the title of this story?

Answer: The Bison and the Butterfly

Who is the author?

Answer: Alice Hemming

Who is the illustrator?

Answer: Nancy Leschnikoff

Is this a fiction or non-fiction text?

Answer: fiction

The Bison and the Butterfly

START
HERE

FINISH



Activity 7

Character description

Learning objective:

By the end of this lesson, children will be able to describe a character using descriptive adjectives to convey appearance, actions, and personality.

A good character description helps to bring a story and a character to life. Throughout the story of *The Bison and the Butterfly*, the author uses many descriptive words to help build a picture of Bison. You could begin this activity by reading through the book as a class and creating a word bank of the descriptive words used in the book to describe the character of Bison.

Next, encourage the children to come up with descriptive words and phrases of their own. They might want to annotate the illustration of the bison on the following page to support. When searching for adjectives and descriptive phrases, try using all your senses: sight, smell, sound, touch and emotions.

When composing their sentences, encourage children to:

- Use well-chosen adjectives and similes.
- Reflect on the characters' personalities.
- Use interesting vocabulary.
- Decide how the character might feel in different situations.

Here is an example character description:

Bison is a *big and strong* animal with a *thick, shaggy coat of auburn brown fur* that keeps her warm in cold weather. She has a *large, round body* and stands on *four sturdy legs*. She has a *short, tufty tail* which swings behind her as she runs through the woods. Bison's *head is enormous* with two *sharp horns* that are *curved like a crescent moon*. Her eyes are *small but sharp* and have a *wonderful friendly twinkle*. Bison has a *broad, flat nose* and a *small, furry beard* under her chin. Bison is a *gentle giant* that loves to *roam through ancient woodlands* with her family and friends. When bison runs through the forest, her *hooves sound like thunder* and her laughter is *as warm as the sun* and *as gentle as the breeze*. Everyone in the forest wants to be Bison's friend.

Character description



Character description



Activity 8

Diary Writing - day in the life

Learning objective:

By the end of this lesson, children will be able to write a diary entry that expresses thoughts and feelings about an event, using the first-person perspective and time-related words.

In this activity, children will explore the art of writing diary entries by stepping into the shoes of the character. This exercise will encourage them to express personal thoughts and emotions while practicing the use of the first-person perspective. Children will convey events in a chronological order, using time-related words and descriptive language to create an engaging recount of the story.

What a day I have had! I have learnt lots and I have met so many new friends. It all started when...

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Activity 9

The missing character



Learning objective:

By the end of this lesson, children will be able to write a section of a story in the style of the author, following the form and structure of Alice Hemming's writing.

Throughout this story, Bison helps many different animals: she helps Woodpecker by stripping bark and attracting grubs; she helps Dung Beetle by giving them something to tunnel through and eat; she helps Lizard by rolling in the dirt and making great places for sunbathing; and she helps Butterfly by helping light reach the forest floor.

However, the actions of bison in the ancient woodland in Blean help many other animals, beyond the four mentioned in the story. For example, bison also help nesting songbirds (such as robins), who have been shown to use bison fur to line their nests. Bison fur is so warm and thick that these nests are often more successful in rearing healthy chicks!

For this activity, children will be writing their own section of the story for the character of **Robin**, in the style of the author Alice Hemming. To do this, they will need to follow the structure of the story, as set out below. The ideas within are suggestions only and children are encouraged to use their own creativity.

Once finished, children can illustrate their story section, using the wonderful illustrations of Nancy Leschnikoff as inspiration.

Beginning

This is the part of the story where Bison meets Robin.

Perhaps she hears her singing, or sees her rushing to her nest with a caterpillar for her chicks, or hears the baby chicks chirping in the nest. Bison then introduces herself and perhaps apologises for interrupting.

Middle

This is the part where Robin explains to Bison how she helps her.

Robin explains there is no need to apologise and that she is very grateful for bison. Robin, or perhaps the chicks, explain how bison's fur helps to make their nest warm and comfortable and they are very thankful.

End

This is the part where Bison says goodbye to Robin and continues on her journey.

"Would you like to trample through the woods with me?" Perhaps Bison asks Robin to join her but Robin is too busy looking after her chicks to join Bison trampling through the woods.

Activity 10

Book review



Learning objective:

By the end of this lesson, children will be able to write a simple book review, sharing their favourite parts of the story and giving their opinion about the book.

Use the template on the next page to write a review of *The Bison and the Butterfly*, or create your own.

Book review

Book review by:

Book title:

Book star rating
out of five



What is this book about?

What did you like about this book?

Who are the main characters?
Tell us about the characters and
who your favourite was.

Draw your favourite character

Win a prize!

Send your finished book review to Kent Wildlife Trust on **education@kentwildlife.org.uk** for your chance to win your own Adopt a Bison pack with Bison cuddly toy!



Book review

Book review by:

.....

Book title:

.....

Book star rating
out of five



What is this book about?

What did you like about this book?

Who are the main characters?
Tell us about the characters and who
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School resources



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Bonus activities

Looking for fun activities to entertain your class during free time and wet play? Then download our The Bison and the Butterfly Activity Pack. Inside you will find a range of fun activities for your children, including wordsearches, crosswords, colouring pages, dot-to-dots and much more!

Download now

kwtg.uk/bb-activities



School visits and outreach

At Kent Wildlife Trust, we believe passionately that engaging young people with nature in fun and interesting ways will foster greater respect and understanding of wildlife. Experiencing the outdoors will establish a passion and love for nature that will last a lifetime. To this end, we have created a wide range of curriculum linked workshops and activities, including minibeast sessions, pond dipping and owl pellet dissection. So join us this year at one of our education centres in Kent and discover how exciting learning outdoors can be. Can't come to us? Then we can come to you and deliver many of the same activities within your school grounds!

Find out more

kwtg.uk/bb-visits



Wilder Kent Awards

Is your school taking action for nature? Do you have a gardening club or eco club doing positive things for wildlife and the climate in your school? Then sign up for the Wilder Kent Awards and get recognition for your hard work.

The Wilder Kent Awards is a scheme set up to recognise and reward the work schools, businesses and community groups are doing in helping us create a #WilderKent. By taking positive action to restore nature, you are helping to create a more climate-resilient county and provide a home for wildlife. Your action benefits us locally and helps tackle the global environmental threats we all face.

In 2024, 87 groups took part in the awards and in total over 15,000 individuals were recorded as having taken positive action for wildlife. Join a growing community today in working to save our wildlife in a time of climate and nature crises by signing up for the Wilder Kent Awards 2025.

Find out more

kwtg.uk/bb-WKA