

Teaching News Is Elementary August 28, 2015

Each week, this lesson will share some classroom activity ideas that use the newspaper or other NIE resources. You are encouraged to modify this lesson to fit the needs of your students. For example, some classrooms may be able to use this as a worksheet and others might need to ask and answer the questions in a class discussion.

Please be sure to preview all NIE content before using it in your classroom to ensure it is appropriate for all of your students.

Materials you will need for this lesson: The Seattle Times e-Edition

Article: “Smaller of newborn twin pandas dies at zoo”

Page: Main A2

Date: Thursday, August 27, 2015

Pre- Reading Discussion Questions:

Look at the title and images on page A2. What do you already know of this news story? What is happening in the photograph? Have you seen a panda at a zoo or in a movie?

Vocabulary:

Read the following quotes and determine the meaning of the word based on how it's used in the sentence:

“One of two pandas whose weekend births captured world attention died Wednesday, a reminder that the bears who grow into giant puffy **icons** enter the world as fragile creatures, hairless and weighing about as much as a bar of soap.”

(widely known symbols)

“Only four American zoos have pandas and they have become a symbol of **preservation** and a star attraction.”

(the act of keeping something safe from harm or loss)

“The cub had been at risk from the beginning, owing to its small **stature** and the difficulty panda mothers have in **manipulating** two babies at once.”

(stature: the level of respect that people have for a successful person, organization, etc.)

(manipulating: moving or controlling (something) with your hands or by using a machine).

Journal Writing Prompts:

“But the plan depended on Mei Xiang’s willingness to trade babies with veterinarians and other caregivers, something Mei Xiang resisted at times because she is, according to Neiffer, ‘a fiercely good mother.’”

What does it mean to be a “fiercely good mother?” What does Mei Xiang do that makes her a fiercely good mother? Who in your family has been a kind caregiver to you? What about him or her makes him or her special to you? What other examples have you seen of an animal being a good mother in a zoo or on TV?

Discussion Questions:

Review the excerpt and discuss the following questions:

“... the bears who grow into giant puffy icons enter the world as fragile creatures, hairless and weighing about as much as a bar of soap.

The birth of the twins at the Smithsonian’s National Zoo on Saturday night created a frenzy of excitement, crashing the zoo’s ‘panda cam.’ Only four American zoos have pandas and they have become a symbol of preservation and a star attraction.”

What about pandas makes them “puffy icons?” Why do you think these panda twins created a “frenzy of excitement?” Why have pandas become “symbols of preservation” and stars? What other animals are symbols of preservation or have a kind of star quality? Why do you think that is?

Small group discussion and activity:

“The cub had been at risk from the beginning, owing to its small stature and the difficulty panda mothers have in manipulating two babies at once.

‘These cubs are very fragile,’ said Don Neiffer, chief veterinarian, Smithsonian’s National Zoo. ‘Pandas don’t have a great track record at trying to raise twins.’”

Why do panda moms have difficulty manipulating two babies at once? Why are the cubs so fragile? What did you learn in the article about the size of a baby panda compared to the size of its mother? Why do you think pandas don’t have a great track record of trying to raise twins?