

## NEWS BREAK

Article: **Alaska village seeks to revive its polar bear tourism industry**

Section: **MAIN, A6**

Sunday's News Break selects an article from **Sunday, April 26, 2026**, of The Seattle Times print replica for an in-depth reading of the news. Read the selected article and answer the attached study questions.

Feel free to adapt this lesson for your students. For instance, some educators may assign this as a homework task, while others might facilitate the reading and discussion of questions within small groups or larger class discussions.

***\*Please take a moment to review all NIE content before classroom use to ensure it is suitable for your students.\****

### Standards:

#### **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.1**

- Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

#### **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.2**

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

### Learning Objectives:

After reading the article, students will understand how polar bear tourism impacts Kaktovik's economy, culture, and environment. They will analyze the challenges of balancing economic benefits with wildlife protection and community well-being. Students will also explore how climate change and "last chance tourism" influence both conservation efforts and tourism practices.

### Pre-Reading Discussion:



- What do you think the article will be about, using this picture?
- Are there any clues? What can you infer?

### **Vocabulary Building:**

Read this sentence, what do you think the highlighted words mean using *context clues*? A **context clue** is a word or words that are hints and refers to the sources of information outside of words that readers may use to predict the meaning of the word.

“But Kaktovik leaders are now hoping to **revive** it, saying it could be worth millions to the local economy and give residents another source of income — provided the village can set guidelines that protect its way of life and the bears themselves.”

### **Revive Guess:**

### **Revive Definition:**

### **Comprehension Questions:**

1. Late every summer, hulking \_\_\_\_\_ gather outside a tiny Alaska Native village on the edge of the continent, far above the Arctic Circle, to feast on whale carcasses left behind by hunters near the village of Kaktovik in Alaska.
2. Roughly 1,000 or more tourists would visit \_\_\_\_\_ annually to see the bears before tours were shut down.
3. It’s a spectacle that once brought 1,000 or more tourists each year to Kaktovik, the only settlement in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, in a phenomenon sometimes called “last chance tourism” — what does this term mean?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What two things largely ended Kaktovik’s polar bear tourism amid concerns that the tiny village was being overrun by outsiders?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Tourism in Kaktovik soared in the years after federal officials declared polar bears a threatened species in \_\_\_\_\_.
6. The rapid warming of the \_\_\_\_\_ is melting the sea ice that the bears use to hunt seals, and scientists have said that most polar bears could be wiped out by the end of the century.
7. As visitation boomed, the federal government imposed regulations requiring tour operators to have permits and insurance, and that began to squeeze \_\_\_\_\_ out of the industry, Lampe said.

8. Larger \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ operators moved in, and before long, crowds of tourists were coming to Kaktovik — a village of about 250 people — during the six-week viewing season.
9. The town’s two hotels and restaurants lost out on some business when large operators began \_\_\_\_\_ tourists in from Fairbanks or Anchorage for day trips.
10. Locals complained that tourists did what?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. When the \_\_\_\_\_ struck, Kaktovik paused visitation.
12. Among the changes Kaktovik leaders want to see is a limit on what?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
13. When a crew lands a whale, it’s usually butchered on a nearby beach. While the community encourages visitors to watch or even help, some were recording or taking pictures without permission, which is considered \_\_\_\_\_, Lampe said.
14. Native communities that are ready for tourists “want them to come and be \_\_\_\_\_ and walk away with a greater understanding of our people and our way of life and our culture,” she said.

### **Class Discussion Questions:**

- What surprised (or stood out to) you in the article?
- At first, I thought \_\_\_\_\_, but now I think \_\_\_\_\_?

### **Deeper-Dive “Connect & Explain” comprehension questions for small groups, entire classes or journal entries and/ or essay prompts for extended enrichment:**

- How does tourism both help and harm the village of Kaktovik? Explain using specific examples from the article.
- Why do Kaktovik leaders want to *revive* tourism, even after experiencing its negative effects? What does this reveal about economic needs in small communities?
- How did outside tour companies change the original tourism model in Kaktovik? Explain the impact on local residents.
- In what ways did tourism affect the behavior of polar bears? Why is this dangerous for both humans and animals?
- Connect the idea of “last chance tourism” to climate change. Why are people drawn to places like Kaktovik?
- How did the increase in tourists affect daily life for residents (transportation, privacy, resources)? Explain why these impacts matter.
- Why is cultural respect an important part of tourism in Indigenous communities? Use examples from the article.

- How can tourism be redesigned to better support both the environment and the local community? Provide at least two specific ideas.
- Compare Kaktovik's situation to another place where tourism affects the environment (you may use prior knowledge). What similarities or differences do you see?
- What responsibility do tourists have when visiting remote or Indigenous communities? Explain your reasoning.
- Why do you think some visitors ignored cultural boundaries (like taking photos without permission)? What does this suggest about tourism behavior?
- If you were a leader in Kaktovik, what rules would you create to safely bring tourism back? Explain your plan.

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