



QUICK LOOK

**Introduce
This New Series
to Your Class.**

- Discussion Questions
- Common Core
 - Activities
- Making of the Series

SECRETS OF BEARHAVEN

Quick summary: 200 words or less

This page-turning adventure fantasy follows the exploits of an 11-year-old boy on a quest to find his missing parents—animal-rights activists with a strange and powerful secret to protect. Spencer Plain is used to waking up without his parents at home. He knows they are scientists committed to protecting both wild and abused bears, and they often have to be away, leaving their assistant, Evarita, in charge. But what Spencer doesn't know, until the fateful day his uncle whisks him out of school, is just how undercover his parents' work really is.

Led to a hidden refuge of talking bears, Spencer discovers that his father has been kidnapped and a new bear family is in danger. Spencer will have to summon hidden talents and overcome old fears to save his parents and protect these animals he, too, is coming to love. This captivating story offers a variety of compelling themes about *families*, *animal rights*, and *teamwork* for class discussion. It holds great appeal for reluctant readers as well.

SERIES SPECS: *SECRETS OF BEARHAVEN* (Book One)

A multi-book series written with the support of a team of subject-matter experts

Written by: K. E. Rocha

Illustrated by: Ross Dearsley

Read Aloud by: Louisa J. Gummer

Language Creator: Dr. Sheri Wells-Jenson

Bear Biologist: Dr. Thomas Spady

Publication date: January 2016

Hardcover, e-book, audio book

256 pages with black-and-white illustrations

Classification: Action and Adventure

Genres: Animals; Bears; Family

Grades: 3–7

Ages: 8–12

Accessible vocabulary; well-suited for all types of readers

COMMON CORE TEACHING THEMES

Five Curriculum Topics with References from the Book

1. Determine the central message, lesson, or moral, and explain how it is conveyed through key details in the text.

This is a classic coming-of-age story in which the young hero, Spencer Plain, discovers the world is bigger than he ever imagined—and he must find the courage and abilities within himself to make a difference in the face of adversity. His parents, Jane and Shane, and uncle, Mark, put their lives in danger for the cause they believe in, and now 11-year-old Spencer is willing to speak up, show up, and prove he is a vital asset when it comes to protecting the bears. The theme of this book is **courage**.

Spencer resents his parents' absence in the beginning of the story. He worries that they prefer bears to him. (page 8) He is even mistrustful of the bears when he first meets them, worrying that they may attack or hurt him. (page 42) But as he discovers how the bears have been abused by circuses and as mascots, he comes to share his parents' passion for protecting them. Even more important, Spencer overcomes his own fears to do so. At the beginning of the story he is frightened of the rope climb in gym, but by the end of the story he is shimmying up an elevator shaft to save the lives of Ro Ro and her cubs. (page 225)

2. Determine the meaning of words as they are used in the text.

Language enrichment is available in every chapter of this action-packed story.

Spencer knew about bears. When he was little, his parents had told him **ursine** facts instead of bedtime stories, and sometimes he'd still recite those facts to himself when he couldn't fall asleep. (page 2)

Ursine means **having to do with bears**.

Professor Weaver laughed. "Not alone, but yes, I developed the BEAR-COM, and even the lab's security, which apparently we need to adjust." The bear cocked his head and shot Spencer a playfully **reprimanding** look before continuing. (page 112)

Reprimanding means **scolding or disapproving of someone's actions**.

B.D. and Marguerite stepped into the elevator. Marguerite motioned for Spencer to move aside. On the platform, Spencer watched Evarita roll a low, bear-sized **gurney** up to the elevator door just as Marguerite and B.D. were backing out with Ro Ro in their broad arms. They laid the injured bear on the gurney, then swung it around and headed onto the train. (page 235)

A **gurney** is a **wheeled stretcher used in hospitals**.

3. Compare and contrast the points of view from which different stories are narrated, including the difference between first- and third-person narrations.

This story is told with a third-person narration. What would happen to the passage below if it were written from Spencer's perspective? From Kate the bear's?

Original Third-Person Narrative on Page 108

Spencer tensed his abs and lifted his leg off the ground, trying to think about all of the muscles in his body working at once and lifting upward. He set his foot down. *Chh*. He did it again. *Chh*. "I'm doing it!" *Chh, chh, chh*. *Crunch*. Slowly, they continued forward until the quiet *chh* sound of their feet was all they could hear, and even that got quieter as they went.

First-Person from Spencer

I tensed my abs and lifted my leg off the ground, trying to think about all of the muscles in my body working at once and lifting upward. I set my foot down. *Chh*. I did it again. *Chh*. "I'm doing it!" *Chh, chh, chh*. *Crunch*. Slowly, Kate and I continued forward until the quiet *chh* sound of our feet was all we could hear, and even that got quieter as we went.

First-Person from Kate

Spencer tensed his abs and lifted his leg off the ground. He set his foot down. *Chh*. He did it again. *Chh*. "I'm doing it!" he said. *Chh, chh, chh*. *Crunch*. Slowly, we continued forward until the quiet *chh* sound of our feet was all we could hear, and even that got quieter as we went. Spencer was doing so great!

4. Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in the story, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).

On Spencer's first night in Bearhaven he finds out that his mother created a bedroom for him at the Weavers' house that is identical to his bedroom at home. His mom wanted him to have a place where he would feel at home, even though he couldn't actually be in his real bedroom. Spencer is shocked that his mom went through all the trouble of replicating his room and notices that she got all of the details right, down to the books on the bookshelf. Spencer feels bad that he ever accused his mom of caring more about bears than about him. He feels closer to his missing parents as he looks around the room. (pages 52–54)

Original Passage from the Book on Page 53

“Spencer stepped into a room that was identical to his bedroom at home. The same blue-and-silver comforters were on the bunk bed, and a Cougars baseball pennant hung above the top bunk, just like his had for years.

He should never have said that Mom cared more about bears than about him. Even when she was here, surrounded by bears, she’d been thinking about him.”

5. Discuss the treatment of similar themes and topics (e.g., opposition of good and evil) in stories, myths, and traditional literature from different cultures.

The story of the young hero, learning secrets about his origins and his parents and having to embrace his powers for some great mission or quest, is a common one in mythology and literature. Both Percy Jackson and Harry Potter are boys who do not feel particularly skilled or successful in their ordinary lives but discover their talents in a fantastical world where they belong. Theseus from Greek mythology, Moses from the Bible, and Superman from comic books all must overcome personal fears to become leaders. Spencer, too, must go on a quest, overcome his fears, and discover the strength of his innate talents by being in Bearhaven.



CURRICULUM CONNECTION

Ten Questions Based on the Book

1. What is Spencer most worried about when he wakes up? What actually happens that day?

Spencer is worried about having to climb the ropes in gym because he has a fear of heights. (pages 9–10) Then his uncle, Mark, signs him out of school and reveals that Spencer’s parents are in danger and he and Spencer are, in fact, being followed. Spencer has to jump out of the car while it’s moving and head into the forest by himself, before being met by a bear and taken to Bearhaven. (page 17)

2. Who is B.D.? What does he want? What does Spencer think of B.D.?

B.D. is a giant black bear chasing Spencer through the woods. B.D. wants to guide Spencer to Bearhaven, but Spencer is terrified that the bear is going to eat him. (pages 25–27)

3. Why has Uncle Mark brought Spencer to Bearhaven?

Spencer’s parents have gone missing from a dangerous bear rescue mission. To ensure that whoever may have kidnapped them doesn’t get their hands on Spencer too, Uncle Mark must take Spencer to the safest, most hidden place his family knows: Bearhaven. (pages 57–60)

4. What kind of place is Bearhaven? What impresses Spencer the most about this secret place?

Bearhaven is a safe place where rescued bears are taken to live and recover from time in captivity. The bears can talk through high-tech translating devices called BEAR-COMs and have their own society and lifestyle, complete with a bear council, a Bear Guard, and a rehab center for newly rescued bears. (pages 67–73) What impresses Spencer most about Bearhaven is the technological innovations. He appreciates how complex the communication and surveillance devices are that the bears have developed. (pages 77–78)

5. Describe Kate and Spencer’s friendship. How do they get along?

Kate is enthusiastic about Spencer’s arrival, but it takes Spencer a little while to get used to her...because she’s a bear! But after she leads him to the council meeting, Spencer trusts her with his plan to find his parents. Kate turns out to be an invaluable friend, helping Spencer train like the Bear Guard, encouraging him, showing him the way, and keeping up his spirits. (pages 99–108)

6. List all of the skills Spencer must learn to be on the Bear Guard. How does he call upon each of these skills during the rescue of Ro Ro and her cubs?

- He must learn Bear Stealth (page 103), and this helps him sneak into the the underground tunnel to follow Ro Ro and her cubs. (page 194)
- He rolls boulders (pages 122–124), and this helps him open the cage in the bear prison. (page 212)
- He climbs trees (page 127), and this helps when he must climb out of the elevator shaft. (page 227)
- He learns Ragayo, the special bear language (pages 132–133), so he can communicate with the bears during the rescue. (page 214)

7. What finally convinces Uncle Mark and B.D. to include Spencer on the mission?

Spencer sneaks onto the rescue train, the TUBE, but his uncle and B.D. are ready to throw him off. Only when Spencer shows his courage by standing up for himself and fighting for what he believes in does Uncle Mark change his mind. Maybe Spencer has what it takes to rescue bears after all. (page 152)

8. Did Spencer make the right decision when he revealed himself to his mother? Support your answer with details from the text.

When Spencer steps out of his hiding place in Margo Lalicki's office, he puts both himself and his mother, who is in disguise, at risk. He also jeopardizes the rescue mission that is currently underway at Grady's Grandstand. However, because he is discovered and captured, he gains access to the hidden bear prison where Ro Ro and her cubs are being held. So what at first seems to be the wrong decision in fact leads to Spencer successfully rescuing Ro Ro and her cubs. (pages 201–203)

9. How do Spencer's feelings about bears change throughout the book?

In the beginning of the book, Spencer resents the bears taking his parents away from him so often. Even with all he knows about bears, he is still fearful of them when he meets them in the wild. But by the end of the book, he has become committed to his parents' cause. He, too, is a bear rescuer. When he is with Ro Ro's cubs, he no longer feels like a cub himself. He feels like he has grown up. (page 238)

10. Many issues are unresolved at the end of the book. What do you anticipate happening in the next book in the series?

Spencer's father is still missing. Could the evil Pam be holding him? What has his mother found out while undercover at Pam's? Does it have something to do with the microchipped bears still in captivity at Grady's Grandstand? Finally, will Spencer be able to access the long-lost memory that has led to his fear of heights? Does it have something to do with the mysterious bear named Yude?

TEAM BEARHAVEN



K. E. Rocha
kerocha.com

AUTHOR

A note from Kristin:

“*Secrets of Bearhaven* was a huge labor of love! It was an amazing process and it was so worth it! All of the work that went into creating a rich, full world to serve as the backdrop for the story made it possible for the community of talking bears to feel real to Spencer and to the reader. And to me.

I hope *Secrets of Bearhaven* is the kind of book that helps all types of readers fall in love with reading. The vocabulary is meant to be accessible to less confident readers. At the same time, I hope avid readers will be drawn to the excitement of the adventure and the sophisticated themes of family, home, animal rights, and communication.

I have totally fallen in love with Spencer, Kate, Aldo, and many more of *Secrets of Bearhaven*'s characters throughout the writing process, but that doesn't mean they didn't grow and change from the first draft of *Secrets of Bearhaven* to the final book! In fact, I wrote more than ten drafts of *Secrets of Bearhaven* before my editors decided it was done. Check out the first page of Bearhaven on the next page to get a glimpse into what just one draft looks like!”

K. E. Rocha lives in Queens, NY, with her husband and their dog but escapes to her family's home in Vermont as often as possible to write, recharge, and find new inspiration.

When she isn't busy writing Spencer Plain's adventures, Kristin works as a story developer for Egg in the Hole Productions, helping to create other series for all types of readers. She holds a bachelor's degree from Trinity College and an MFA from New York University.



I love to connect with readers and will do whatever it takes to make my school visits fun and bring Bearhaven characters to life for readers!

SPENCER PLAIN: SECRETS OF BEARHAVEN

Chapter 1

Rooooaaaaaarr!

Spencer Plain raced through the forest, his heart pounding. He dodged trees and skidded across patches of slick moss trying desperately not to fall. Now was *not* the time to fall.

There was a bear behind him.

Spencer had taken one look at the bear, heard that ferocious roar, and set off running as fast as he could, but the huge animal was gaining on him. The ground was shaking and the thundering growls were getting closer.

With his eyes locked on an opening in the trees ahead, Spencer stumbled on a gnarled root, nearly losing his balance. *Keep running*, he told himself fiercely.

He had a feeling that if his Uncle Mark were there he'd be yelling at Spencer to stop running. But Uncle Mark couldn't tell Spencer to stop running, because Uncle Mark had left Spencer to the bears. Literally.

Crack!

A sharp sound echoed through the forest. A branch? A boulder? A whole tree? He didn't dare look back to see what the beast had pulverized in its pursuit.

Spencer had never run so fast in his life, but he wasn't superhuman. He wasn't even a starter on the baseball team! His legs couldn't keep this up forever.

E B 8/1/14 9:27 AM

Deleted: definitely

E B 8/7/14 5:33 PM

Comment: Or something along these lines - we need to signal to readers what roared on the first line, and why it's not a good time to fall, and the next line takes a little time to get from the bear to the roar to the running. Does that make sense?

E B 8/7/14 5:33 PM

Comment: I feel like these first few chapters were pretty adverb-heavy, which can get distracting.

E B 8/1/14 9:31 AM

Deleted: quickly

E B 8/1/14 9:31 AM

Deleted:

E B 8/7/14 5:33 PM

Comment: To cut back a little on the alliteration in this sentence ☺

E B 8/1/14 9:31 AM

Deleted: grunts

E B 8/1/14 9:31 AM

Deleted: and

E B 8/7/14 5:33 PM

Comment: ☺ Love this introduction of Uncle Mark, as the voice of reason if only he were there.

E B 8/7/14 5:33 PM

Comment: Or something like this - Spencer must wonder what made the noise, even if he doesn't look to find out.

E B 8/7/14 5:33 PM

Comment: I don't think this comes up again (unless the Cougars are his school team).

E B 8/7/14 5:33 PM

Comment: Since we just said this a few lines ago.

E B 8/1/14 9:38 AM

Deleted: and

E B 8/1/14 9:38 AM

Deleted: the bear was definitely closing in on him

As you can see from my editor's comments on the right-hand side of the draft page, her notes were made in August 2014. It took several more drafts and 18 months for Secrets of Bearhaven to actually get published!

All of my editor's comments, from the things she wants me to delete to the emotions or characters she doesn't think are being described well enough, come back to me as little notes running down the whole right side of my manuscript. They are called "track changes." Usually, after the first draft, there are so many notes they are like a full column, as on the page above. As I work through rewriting, draft after draft, eventually my editor has less to say, and finally, I'll get a manuscript back with clean pages.

TEAM BEARHAVEN

ILLUSTRATOR

A note from Ross:



Ross Dearsley
Illustrator

“From my first introduction to Bearhaven I knew the main challenge would be to depict both human and bear characters together in dramatic situations. So, to begin with I spent quite a while just drawing ideas for the main character, Spencer Plain, and also sketching lots of black bears in different positions and angles to familiarize myself with their body shape and proportions.

From domed grass-covered houses to underground train stations, one of the most enjoyable things about this project was the opportunity to design and visualize the actual world of Bearhaven.

I’ve really enjoyed my time discovering and designing the look of Bearhaven and can’t wait to visit again!”



Spencer and Uncle Mark’s departure from the city turns into a high-speed car chase! (page 11)



Kate trains Spencer in the art of Bear Stealth. (page 106)

Art © 2016 by Ross Dearsley

Ross Dearsley graduated from Kingston University and worked at Richard Williams Studio before moving into freelance illustration and video games concept design. He now runs his own studio and enjoys working in a variety of entertainment media industries including print, video games, film, and TV. He lives in Surrey, UK, with his wife, daughter, and a feisty miniature pinscher.

TEAM BEARHAVEN

BEARHAVEN LANGUAGE CREATOR

A note from Sheri:

“To make Ragayo, first I had to learn about the inside of a bear’s mouth. What kind of noises can a bear make? Can a bear touch the tip of its tongue to the top of its mouth and hold it there to make an [s] sound? Can he close his lips to make a [b] sound? Park rangers and zookeepers thought these were very strange questions....Then, I had to look at things from a bear’s perspective and ask myself what kinds of things a bear would want to talk about. It was all great fun!”

Ragayo is an original language created for *Secrets of Bearhaven*. It’s based on the grunts, growls, snorts, huffs, and other animal sounds of real wild-bear communication and was developed by linguist Dr. Sheri Wells-Jensen.



Dr. Sheri Wells-Jensen
*Linguist, Bowling Green
State University
Bowling Green, Ohio*

Ragayo Words:

Anbranda = Friend	Galuk = Hurry
Shala = Safe	Hachuk = Attack
Grauk = Go	Hruk = Come
Ko = Now	Graflai = Let's eat
Nagauio = Good morning or good evening	Wanmahai = Teamwork
	Raga = Bear

CREATE YOUR OWN WORDS IN RAGAYO!

Based on what you have read about Ragayo, what words would you create to add to the bears’ language?

Mother: _____ Dinner: _____

Father: _____ Dessert: _____

Sister: _____ School: _____

Brother: _____ Homework: _____

TEAM BEARHAVEN



Dr. Thomas Spady
*Bear Biologist,
California State
University, San Marcos*

BEAR BIOLOGIST

The character traits of Bearhaven’s fictional bears are based on real black bear behavior, thanks to the consultation of bear biologist Dr. Thomas Spady in *Secrets of Bearhaven’s* development.

Here are some real bear facts that influenced scenes in *Secrets of Bearhaven*:

A bear’s sense of smell is 100 times stronger than a human’s! Bears have been known to detect human scent more than 14 hours after a person passed along a trail.

- On page 35, Kate tells Spencer that she smelled him an hour before his arrival, which she really could have done due to bears’ incredibly keen sense of smell!
- “‘I’m Kate, and I smelled you an hour ago!’ she exclaimed.”

When bear cubs suckle, they make a distinct humming, whirring sound that resembles the sound of a helicopter.

- On page 206, Spencer sees two cubs who have just been through a scary ordeal displaying this authentic bear behavior.
- “The cubs huddled next to her, sucking on each other’s paws and making a loud humming noise that drifted over the top of their cage. Their collars and chains had been removed, too, but they were still trying to comfort themselves.”

In the wild, black bears eat berries, fish, insects, leaves, grasses, nuts, and carrion.

- On page 115, during Spencer’s first meal with the Weaver family, Aldo and Kate point out each of the dishes they’ll be eating. They include honey-covered salmon, spring greens with nuts and smashed raspberry dressing, and dandelion mash.
- “Aldo leaned a shoulder into Spencer...and then pointed to a platter on the table. ‘That’s not monster larvae, it’s honey-covered salmon.’ Pointing to another, he said, ‘That’s not poison ivy, it’s mixed spring greens. And so is that one, and that one, and that one.’”

How to Be Safe in Real Black Bear Territory:

In the creation of *Secrets of Bearhaven*, Dr. Spady was clear that real bears do not wear BEAR-COMs and cannot understand human intentions. In the event you ever encounter a real black bear outside the pages of Bearhaven, this is Dr. Spady's best advice for how to react.

The best way to stay safe in bear country is to avoid them altogether! Travel in groups, and make lots of noise by talking or singing. Any bear you do see is probably just as frightened as you are!

If you see a black bear, stay calm and prepare your pepper spray (or other deterrent). Stay together if you are in a group, and don't run! If the bear is in the distance, give it as much room as possible. If the bear feels threatened it might try to scare *you* away! It may swat the ground while blowing and snorting or "bluff charge" toward you, but often does not stare directly at you. It may stand on its hind legs, usually to get a better view or smell of you. Remain still and calm. Speak in an easy voice and back away. Leave the area immediately. Do NOT stop for photos!

On the rare chance that the bear approaches you, it may just be curious. Very rarely, it may see you as prey. A predatory bear will be silent (no blowing or snorting noises) and stare at you while it approaches you directly. In this case, use a firm voice. Stand your ground and prepare your bear spray. Look it straight in the eyes and shout! Make yourself as big as possible, stomp your feet, and threaten the bear with whatever you have, like a walking stick, but don't run! If a black bear sees that you are willing to fight, it will usually give up.



© Scenic Shutterbug/Shutterstock Inc.

You may not think bears are fast by looking at them, but they can run more than 30 miles an hour, more than twice as fast as humans.

BEARHAVEN WORDFIND ACTIVITY

C	S	C	N	M	G	V	O	E	D
F	U	G	E	T	A	K	A	V	R
B	V	U	V	Z	H	D	U	A	A
K	E	X	A	M	N	R	R	R	U
W	O	A	H	A	A	S	S	I	G
L	T	K	R	G	I	W	I	T	R
A	T	B	A	C	Y	T	N	A	A
P	N	Y	E	P	O	G	E	C	E
A	O	W	B	Q	E	M	K	W	B
J	S	P	E	N	C	E	R	A	N

Once you've found the words in the wordfind, fill in the definitions.

Anbranda _____

Kate _____

BEAR-COM _____

Ragayo _____

Bearhaven _____

Spencer _____

Evarita _____

Ursine _____

Bear Guard _____

scholastic.com/Bearhaven

Learn more about the world of Bearhaven through fun videos, activities, and more!

REVIEWS

Fans of Erin Hunter's Seekers series (HarperCollins) and *Hoot* by Carl Hiaasen (Knopf, 2002) looking for a new series will enjoy this animal adventure novel.

[*Secrets of Bearhaven's*] short chapters and fast-paced plot will have readers breathlessly turning pages. Although talking animal books are far from unusual, Rocha adds a unique spin on the genre in the creation of the fantastical Bearhaven. The ending sets up for a sequel.

VERDICT A solid purchase for fans of animal adventure stories and eco-mysteries, this work will also appeal to reluctant readers.

—*School Library Journal*,

Patrick Tierney, Dr. Martin Luther King Elementary School, Providence, RI

A plot like this will fire a reader's imagination. This is the kind of book which will encourage reluctant readers to get involved in an exciting adventure. Certainly, this is an easy book for those in the targeted age group to read and understand....I sure do recommend this for animal loving kids as an exciting and imaginative adventure which looks as if it will be the first of a series. Get it for your youngster. P.S., you just might enjoy reading it yourself if you're an animal lover.

—*Amazon Vine Voice, 5 Stars Review*

This was a story unlike anything I had read before. This book was exciting, unique, and filled with emotion. I loved it!

—*Bella, 6th grade, Illinois*

Bearhaven had action, bears and technology. Overall, *Bearhaven* is great!

—*Alex, 4th grade, Ohio*

[scholastic.com/Bearhaven](https://www.scholastic.com/Bearhaven)

Learn more about the world of Bearhaven
through fun videos, activities, and more!

