

# *Lovely* BEASTS

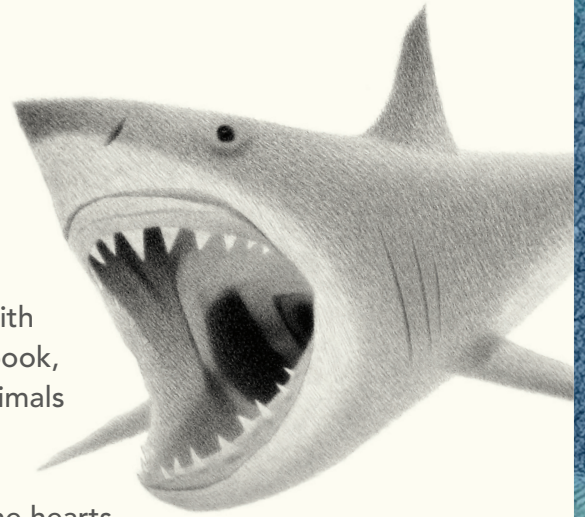
By KATE GARDNER Illustrated by HEIDI SMITH

Grades: Preschool–3

## About the Book

*There is always more than meets the eye when it comes to creatures of all kinds...*

So reads the opening line of *Lovely Beasts* by Kate Gardner, with illustrations by Heidi Smith. In this gorgeous and informative book, readers discover that traditionally feared or misunderstood animals are more complex than most people know. It's no secret that gorillas can be fierce, but they are also gentle and protective fathers. Spiders, bats, wolves, and sharks may inspire fear in the hearts and minds of humans, but they are also resourceful and crucial players in earth's ecosystems. In *Lovely Beasts*, young readers will learn the "surprising truth" that with all creatures great and small, looking beyond first impressions can be an eye-opening and awe-inspiring experience.

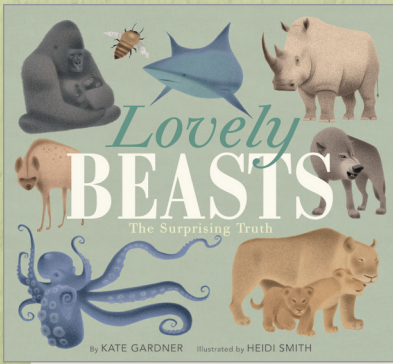


## Discussion Prompts

1. Discuss the title, *Lovely Beasts*. Ask readers to offer definitions or synonyms for the word *lovely* and for the word *beast*. Discuss how these two words can be seen as opposites. Ask students: *How can a beast be lovely?* Next discuss the subtitle: *The Surprising Truth*. How can the truth be surprising? Ask readers to predict what the book is about based on the title and subtitle.
2. Study the pairs of illustrations for each animal or animal group. How do the illustrations help to describe the text? For example, how does the gorilla's facial expression paired with the word *fierce* change compared to his expression with the word *papa*?
3. Readers learn that rhinoceroses are "tough but vulnerable." What does it mean to be *vulnerable*? Think about animals in your own community. How are they vulnerable? What can people do to protect the animals in their environment? If you could write a letter to the last rhinos, what would you tell them?
4. For centuries, wolves have been portrayed in fairy tales and myths as scary, dangerous, evil creatures. Discuss the information in the text that describes wolves as "highly social animals who live, play, and hunt in tight-knit packs or families of up to fifteen members." How is this information contrary to what most people think about wolf behavior? If people knew these facts about wolves, do you think the animals would still be feared? Why or why not?

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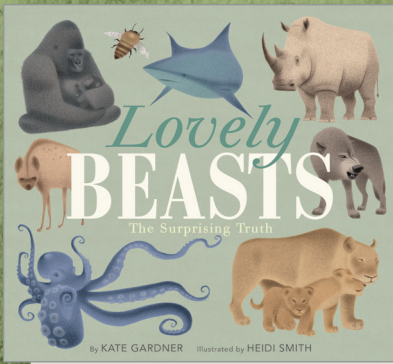
## Discussion Prompts

5. The author writes that sharks are “almost universally feared.” What do you think is the meaning of this phrase? What other animals in the book could be described this way? After reading about these “scary” animals, what phrase could you invent that would be the opposite of *universally feared*?
6. Alliteration is the repetition of a sound at the beginning of two or more neighboring words. Examples of alliteration appear throughout *Lovely Beasts*, such as “creepy crafter,” “fanged friend,” and “buzzing busy workers.” What other ways can you use alliteration to describe the animals in the book?
7. The author describes female hyenas, lions, and elephants as leaders. Discuss examples of women who are strong leaders. Examples may include mothers, CEOs, doctors, and classroom teachers. What qualities do these women have that make them excellent leaders?
8. The first animal featured in *Lovely Beasts* is a male gorilla. Gorillas are primates, part of an animal group that includes apes, monkeys, and human beings. The author describes the gorilla as both a fierce but gentle papa. How are human beings also both fierce and gentle?
9. Choose a pair of illustrations that you like the most. Share your choice with the class and explain why it appeals to you. How did the illustrator help you better understand these animals?
10. The subtitle of this book is *The Surprising Truth*. Now that you have read about these fascinating animals, what most surprised you? What is the meaning of the phrase, “There is always more than meets the eye”? How could you use this phrase to describe what you discovered about the animals in the book?



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## Extension Activities

**Animally Adjectives.** Throughout the story, the author uses adjectives to enliven the text. From *lovely* to *fierce*, from *creepy* to *vulnerable*, these words provide imagery and elegance in the descriptions of each animal. Conduct a short lesson either introducing or reviewing this part of speech. Have students choose a favorite animal and create a word bank of adjectives to describe it. Extend this activity by having students use their words in simple poems, such as haiku.

**What's on Your Mind?** The illustrations of the animals in *Lovely Beasts* are powerfully expressive. Challenge students to choose an animal and study the facial expressions of each illustration. Give students time to write a thought bubble describing what the animal is thinking or feeling and to share their ideas with the class.

**More Lovely Beasts.** Illustrator Heidi Smith used a combination of charcoal pencil and Adobe Photoshop to create the realistic and beautiful pictures in *Lovely Beasts*. Collaborate with the school's art teacher on an animal illustration study. Give students time in class to research images and information about a chosen animal. With the art teacher's help, students can experiment with charcoal and/or computer software drawing programs to create an original animal illustration. As a literacy extension, have students write short, informational paragraphs about their chosen animal.

**The Last White Rhino.** In the text, readers learn that, "Sadly, there are no known northern white rhinos left in the wild at all..." Present students with a selection of endangered species. Have the class vote to choose an animal to be the subject of a public-service campaign. Have students do research to uncover the "surprising truth" about the animal's behavior, habitat, and role in its ecosystem and why it is threatened. Have students create short videos, posters, flyers, and other items that can be shown and distributed throughout the school community to raise awareness about this animal's plight.

## About the Author

KATE GARDNER is a children's book editor. A longtime animal lover, she has always lived with a dog and/or cat and often visits a local farm, where there are cows, hens, and sheep. Kate lives in Somerville, Massachusetts, and says hello to every animal she meets, regardless of its reputation.

## About the Illustrator

HEIDI SMITH is a freelance character designer and visual development artist who graduated from the character animation program at the California Institute of the Arts in 2008. She was the character designer and conceptual designer for *ParaNorman*, and she won an Annie Award for her designs in 2013. She has also worked as a character designer for Henry Selick at Cinderbiter, the Jim Henson Company, and Warner Brothers. Heidi lives in Arizona.

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