

**8**

## *Through a Window:* My Thirty Years with the Chimpanzees of Gombe

—Jane Goodall

### Synopsis

In 1960, Jane Goodall was sent to Tanzania to study chimpanzees. It was hoped that her observations would provide humans with a better understanding of their closest relatives. What evolved from that mission was a 30-year study of a chimpanzee community in Gombe.

In an effort to share her experiences with the layperson, Jane Goodall wrote two nonfiction texts about the years she spent with the chimpanzees at Gombe. The first text, *In the Shadow of Man*, tells the story of the author's first 10 years at Gombe. Its sequel, *Through a Window: My Thirty Years with the Chimpanzees of Gombe*, explores Goodall's last 20 years of research. The text chronicles the life of a community of chimpanzees. It describes the social interactions of its members, their search for power and love, and the relationships between parents and offspring. The text provides the reader with a firsthand glimpse of animal behavior. It is the author's hope that this insight will facilitate a deeper understanding of human behavior among her readers.

### Student Focus

You should pay close attention to the methods of scientific inquiry employed by the author and her researchers. It should be noted that Jane Goodall took great care in preserving the authenticity of the natural domain of the chimpanzees' habitat. She continually tried to make sure that the chimpanzee community was unaffected by the presence of humans. Goodall wanted to observe the animals' behavior as they would behave if they were completely alone, without human influence. You should think about this idea by considering both sides of the issue. Is it possible to conduct field research and leave the observed natural domain unaltered? Under what conditions might it be possible to be present in an animal's environment and not alter its behavior?

### Correlation to Subject Matter

Evolution, Genetics, Animal Behavior, Endangered Species, and Environmental Education

## Analyzing the Book

### Identifying Facts

1. What is the setting of the book?

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2. For what purpose did the author go to that location?

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3. What is an alpha? Give an example of one.

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4. How did Goodall's mother contribute to the success of the program?

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5. Why are chimpanzees used as substitutes for humans in medical research?

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6. What did Goodall's observations of the female chimpanzee named Flo illustrate about the relationship between mother and child?

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7. What milestone usually occurs during a chimpanzee's fourth year?

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8. Describe a male chimpanzee's "charging display," and identify its purpose.

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9. What aspects of community life are primarily the male's responsibility?

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10. Name three traits of Goblin that ensured his eventual high status in the chimpanzee society.

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11. Identify three similarities in chimpanzee and human behavior.

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12. According to the author, what is the most significant characteristic that separates humans and chimpanzees?

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**Through a Window**

**13.** Identify three chimpanzee behaviors that maintain social harmony and promote cohesion among community members.

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**Interpreting Meanings**

**14.** How do most scientists explain the sharing of food among chimpanzees?

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**15.** Why was the author thrilled to watch the chimpanzee called David Grey-beard trim a blade of grass and then use it to poke at a termite hole?

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**16.** How did Project Washoe support Jane Goodall's suggestion that chimpanzees were capable of reasoning and insight?

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17. Goodall states, "It is easier to study intellectual prowess in the lab, but more meaningful to study the subject in the wild." What does the author mean by this statement?

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18. What did the author's observations about power struggles among male chimpanzees indicate about the importance of coalitions?

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19. What did the author's observations indicate about the effect mother-child bonding has on child development?

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20. According to the author, what is the main difference between patterns of aggression demonstrated by chimpanzees and those demonstrated by humans?

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21. Suppose Goodall designed a new study to be conducted at Gombe. What would she likely include in her design?

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22. What does Goodall believe to be humanity's greatest sin against nature? Do you agree? Explain why.

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**Applying Meanings**

23. In the title, as well as throughout the book, Goodall refers to "looking through a window." What is that window? What does she see as she glances through it?

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## **Writing About the Book**

On a separate sheet of paper, write the answer to each of the following.

### **Extending the Book**

1. Imagine that you are Jane Goodall. Prepare a detailed outline for your next investigation of the chimpanzee community at Gombe. Specify the focus of your study, and describe how you would collect your information. Be sure your investigation attempts to preserve the natural conditions of the environment.

### **Thinking about Assumptions**

2. Prior to Goodall's study, it was assumed that the human was the only tool-making animal. How did the author disprove this assumption? What does the initial assumption indicate about humanity's concept of other organisms?

### **Responding to a Review**

3. A reviewer stated, "Jane Goodall's work with chimpanzees represents one of the Western world's greatest scientific achievements." Do you agree with this statement? Explain why.

### **Evaluating a Character**

4. When Goodall first went to Gombe in 1960, she was a young secretarial school graduate sent to observe a community of chimpanzees in their natural surroundings. During her thirty years of research, she became an expert in her field. What personal traits helped Jane Goodall make this transformation?

### **Writing a Journal Entry**

5. Imagine that you are working at the Gombe Stream Research Center. Write an entry in your field book describing the social behavior you observed among your subjects.

### **Analyzing Animal Issues**

6. Pretend you are Jane Goodall. Write a letter to the editor of a local newspaper describing your feelings about public zoos.

## Testing On the Book

On a separate sheet of paper, write the answer to each of the following.

### Critical Thinking and Writing

1. Goodall states that learning about chimpanzee behavior and their place in nature helps humans understand some aspects of their own behavior. What did this book teach you about human behavior?
2. Louis Leakey believed that behavior common to modern humans and modern chimpanzees was probably present in our common ancestor, and therefore, in early man himself. If Leakey was correct, what behaviors were likely present in early humans?
3. Goodall states that her studies at Gombe serve to "humble" humanity. What does she mean by this statement?
4. Is the author against the total use of animals in laboratory testing? Explain your answer.
5. Which of the chimpanzees described in the text did you find most intriguing? Explain why.