

Reading Guide

BRUCE SMITH

LEGEND KEEPERS

THE CHOSEN ONE



Dear Educators,

Welcome to the roof of the world, that land above the trees where mountain goats are the largest mammal to roam. They live a peaceful, orderly life as they have for thousands of years in the Rocky, Cascade, and Coast ranges of North America. Most people have never seen one in the wild because of the remote, rugged places they call home. Nothing should bother them except the occasional avalanche or predator. But all is not as idyllic as it seems.

“Things have been changing up here,” Spirit, the Goat Mountain band’s matriarch, confides in her daughter, Oreo. But she is not the first to notice. Thousands of years before, a Great Warming also threatened her ancestors.

How the goats survived is the stuff of legend — The Legend of Shining Mountain. Now it’s up to an orphaned kid goat, who possesses the most courage and vision of all, to save the band.

This classroom guide is intended to support the book. The discussion questions, exercises, and recommended reading are designed to enhance students’ understanding of the story’s significance. **Yes, this story is fictional, but our planet’s changing environment is not.** The future of Earth’s life is uncertain.

I know your students will be captivated by *Legend Keepers’* characters. My hope is that they entertain and touch your students’ hearts. And maybe, just maybe, show them what is possible when hope and perseverance are on your side.

Bruce Smith

Bruce L. Smith, PhD
Author | Biologist | Science Writer

BEFORE & AFTER DISCOVERY

The main themes: Hope, overcoming loss, perseverance, finding one's purpose, climate change, natural history

Before students read this book:

1. Have them look at the cover of *Legend Keepers: The Chosen One*. What do they think this book is about?
2. Lead students to learn about mountain goats and the habitat here they live.

Suggested book list:

- *Life on the Rocks: A Portrait of the Mountain Goat* by Bruce Smith
- *Mountain Goats (American Animals)* by Meryl Magby
- *Mountains: Explore Earth's Majestic Mountain Habitats* by Charlotte Guillain
- *Mountains* by Seymour Simon

Suggest websites:

- <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/mammals/facts/mountain-goat>
- https://animaldiversity.org/accounts/Oreamnos_americanus/
- <https://www.nationalforests.org/blog/eight-facts-about-mountain-goats>



After reading this book, learn more about climate change:

Suggested book list:

- *A Kid's Guide to Global Warming* by Glenn Murphy
- *How We Know What We Know About Our Changing Climate: Scientists and Kids Explore Global Warming* by Lynne Cherry
- *Kid's Guide to Helping the Planet* by Kai Brown

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Where do you think this story took place? Could it have happened in many places?
2. What were the most important features of their environment to the goat band?
3. How many turning points in the plot can you name?
4. Can you list times when Buddy might have given up?
5. Which three turning points were most consequential for Buddy? Would you make the same choices Buddy made?
6. Think of ways in which the story may have turned out differently at some of the plot's turning points.
7. What personal traits were Buddy's strongest?
8. What fears, handicaps, or obstacles did she struggle to overcome?
9. Who (or what) were the antagonists she faced?
10. Could you have overcome the adversity that Buddy faced? How?
11. What did you learn about the natural history of the animals in the story?
12. How do you think the author came up with the characters' names? Hint: all did not come about in the same way.
13. What traits of humans did Buddy and the other mountain goats portray? How about Roark, Maurice, Ursidarr, Whodare, and TS?
14. What did you learn about climate change?
15. In what ways did Spirit, Oreo, and then Buddy know that warmer summers were bad for their band?
16. What did you think about The Legend of Shining Mountain? Can you explain it? How did Buddy use the Legend story to help her band?
17. Is it possible that animals have legends and traditions in their lives? Why or why not?
18. Could this story have had human rather than animal characters? If so, would its message have been different?
19. How does Buddy's relationship with Roark change over the course of the story?
20. Why did Elbuort act the way he did toward Buddy?
21. Why was Battenmouw treat Buddy the way he did?
22. Buddy and Tenanmouw, the goat-Keeper of Shining Mountain, were at opposite ends of mountain goat society's social ranking. Why did Tenanmouw befriend Buddy and help her when Battenmouw would not?
23. How would you describe the overall mood of this story?
24. In this story we met matriarchs from the Goat Mountain band, Spirit, and from the Shining Mountain band, Mystic. Each was the leader of her band. What other kinds of animals live in matriarchal societies?
25. Throughout the story, Buddy never gives up hope she may find her mother. What about her mother's disappearance becomes a burden for her? Do you think this drives Buddy toward her goal or need? Can you define that need? How does she achieve it?
26. Why was Buddy reluctant to call Oreo her mom until the very end? How did this make you feel?

Author's Purpose

Legend Keepers: The Chosen One is entertaining, includes factual information, and will make you think about animals and their lives in new ways. Why do you think Bruce Smith wrote the book? Did he have one purpose in writing it? Are there several messages in the story? Ask students to keep track of their ideas about the author's purpose as they read. Revisit this once students' have finished the book and hold a class discussion.

Curriculum Connections

1. Vocabulary: Ask students to find unfamiliar words and try to define them from the context of the story. Such words may include: pantaloons (p. 8), acrobatics (p. 12), lanolin (p. 13), serviceberry (p. 15), mountaineer (p. 18), lament (p. 21), outcropping (p. 23), hibernation (p. 30), stamina (p. 38), matriarch (p. 58), dominant (p. 58), mesmerized (p. 97), impudence (p. 99), uninhabitable (p. 101), unsociable (p. 106), misfortune (p. 112), destiny (p. 114), and agitation (p. 140).

Standard: Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards – Language: Vocabulary Acquisition & Use L. 5-7.4

2. Writing: Ask students to write a paragraph on how the book's Epigraph by Rachel Carson applies to the story of Legend Keepers.

Standard: Correlates with Common Core State Standards in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 4-7.1; Language: Convention of Standard English L. 4-7.1, 4-7.2; Knowledge of Language L. 4-7.3

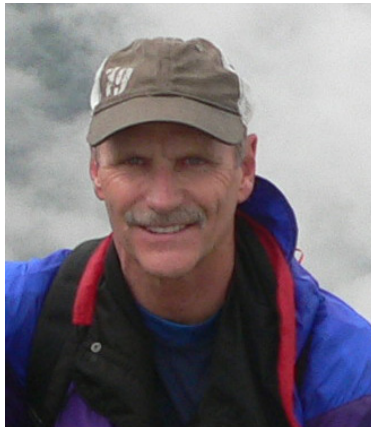
3. Application: When Buddy tells Mystic, the Shining Mountain band's matriarch, that she came to see if Shining Mountain might be a better place for her band than Goat Mountain, Mystic replies, "What happens to one goat or band, happens to all." (p. 165) Ask students to write a page about what this means. Do they think Mystic's message has application beyond mountain goats? Why?

Standard: Correlates with Common Core State Standards in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 4-7.1; Language: Convention of Standard English L. 4-7.1, 4-7.2; Knowledge of Language L. 4-7.3

CONNECT

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: BRUCE SMITH

AUTHOR



Bruce Smith is a wildlife biologist who holds a PhD in Zoology. During his career with the federal government, he studied and managed most large mammal species that roam the western United States.

He's authored five nonfiction books of natural history, conservation, and outdoor adventure.

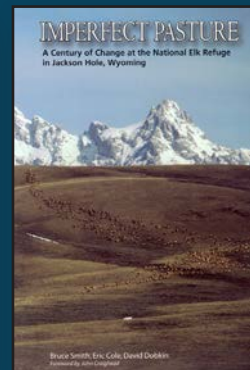
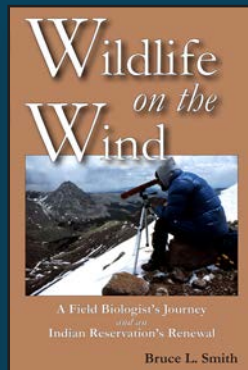
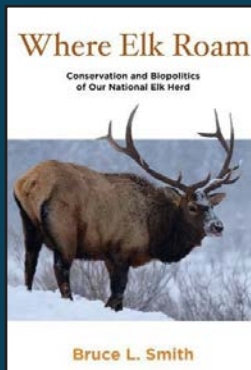
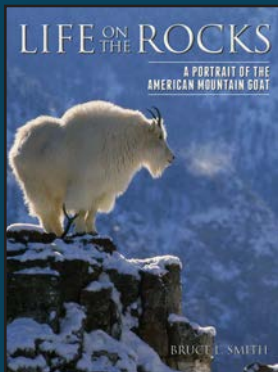
He spent three years studying mountain goats in Montana's Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area — and many days afield with binoculars and camera since — which provided an enduring affection for the subject of

Life on the Rocks: A Portrait of the Mountain Goat, winner of the National Outdoor Book Award.

In *Legend Keepers*, his first novel, he draws upon his experiences and fascination with wild animals to stir the imaginations of young readers and immerse them in the natural world.

Bruce and his wife, Diana, live in southwest Montana not far from mountain goats.

Other books by Bruce Smith:



Learn more about Bruce Smith at www.brucesmithwildlife.com