

# Synopsis of Nanugiurutiga · (My First Polar Bear) DVD

by Jayson Kunnuk

- Polar bears are very strong swimmers
- Elders share stories, especially stories of the old days and how one became a hunter when he was young
- Men work together to fix the skidoos
- Strong family bond
- Grandfather passing on his knowledge to his grandson
- Planning the hunt, must know the behaviour of the bear
- Dogs help by distracting and annoying the bear
- Special techniques for portioning and skinning the animal
- Handling and preparing the skin for drying

Notes:

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# Nanugiurutiga · (My First Polar Bear)

(nah-noo-gee-yoo-roo-tee-gah) · Documentary · 48 minutes

## Content Areas

Social Studies, Language Arts, Science

## Objective

Prior to watching *Nanugiurutiga (My First Polar Bear)*, students will review the significance of hunting in the Inuit culture. Students will also complete a KWL Chart about polar bears, filling in teacher provided facts about this Arctic animal. Students will discuss the two threats to the survival of the polar bear: hunting and global warming. After viewing *Nanugiurutiga (My First Polar Bear)*, students will work in pairs to answer questions associated with the film.

## Materials

- *Nanugiurutiga (My First Polar Bear)* DVD
- Follow-up Questions – *Nanugiurutiga (My First Polar Bear)*
  - 1 per student
- KWL Chart – 1 per student
- KWL on chart paper or overhead transparency

## Activity

- 1 Ask students what animal they think is considered the mightiest animal of the Arctic. List student predictions on the board.
- 2 Explain that of all the animals the Inuit traditionally hunt, “nanuk,” the polar bear, is the most prized. Native hunters have always considered the polar bear to be wise and powerful, and hunters used to pay respect to nanuk’s soul by hanging the polar bear skin in an honoured place in their igloo for several days. The abundance of meat provides plenty of sustenance and the fur from the average polar bear yields three pairs of trousers and one kamik (Inuit skin boots). As with all other animals hunted by the Inuit, very little of the polar bear is wasted, and nanuk is never hunted for sport. The only part of the bear not used is the liver, which is not even fed to the sled dogs as it can make them quite ill.

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- 3 Distribute KWL Charts to each student and display a class chart. Students will be familiar with the chart as they used one at the beginning of the unit. Beside Topic, have students write Polar Bears.
- 4 Break students into small groups. Allow time for groups to fill in the first two columns, What I Think I Know and What I Want to Know. When sufficient time has passed, have groups share their brainstormed lists and fill in class chart.
- 5 Explain that as information on polar bears is shared, students should work together to fill in last column of KWL Chart. List facts on class chart as well.
- 6 Polar bears are the largest bears in the world and live in the Arctic. Males are larger than females, and the polar bear's coat can be white to yellowish in color.
- 7 The favourite food of the polar bear is the ringed seal, and they eat the skin, fat and internal organs but not the meat. Polar bears wait by the seal's breathing hole in the ice and when it pokes its head out of the hole, the bear quickly snatches the seal.



- 8 While the polar bear eats mostly meat, in summer when the sea ice is not frozen, bears come ashore and eat plants and berries. They travel along the coastline looking for dead whales and dead walruses, aided by their very good sense of smell. Polar bears also eat lemmings, Arctic foxes and birds.

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- 9** Ask students how they think polar bears are able to survive in temperatures of -30 degrees C, the average temperature in the high Arctic in January and February. Explain that polar bears have a thick layer of blubber, up to 11 centimetres providing excellent insulation. They have two layers of thick oily fur, and when they come out of the icy Arctic Ocean, they shake the water off their coats. Even the ears and tail of a polar bear help prevent heat loss because of their compact size.
- 10** Explain to students that because of their size and strength, there are not many threats to the polar bear. What is one of the major threats to the polar bear's existence? (Hunting)
- 11** Unregulated hunting of polar bears ended more than 30 years ago. Today, in all polar bear nations, there are limits on the number that can be killed. Hunting is still an important cultural activity and source of income for the Inuit, and many elders do not understand or support the restrictions placed on hunting polar bears. They have never hunted for sport, only when necessary for survival, so the quotas seem unnatural to many Inuit.
- 12** Explain to students that there is a second threat to the existence of the polar bear. Polar bears rely on winter hunting for survival, replenishing their reserves of fat by feeding on seals and seal pups, which live on the ice. Global warming, which is the increase in the average temperature of the earth's atmosphere and oceans, is causing longer ice-free periods during the Arctic summer and leaving polar bears stranded onshore. Unable to hunt, polar bears are losing fat reserves. This affects reproduction and the ability of pregnant females to produce enough milk for their cubs, causing a significant drop in birth rates and threatening the survival of the polar bear.
- 13** Explain that most scientists agree that global warming is caused by the burning of fossil fuels (oil, natural gas and coal), which increase the level of greenhouse gases in our atmosphere. While some greenhouse gases occur naturally, certain human activities add to the levels.

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- 14 Ask students if they think there is anything they can do to help reduce global warming pollution. Explain that by recycling, walking or taking public transportation instead of driving, and planting trees, students can help reduce the pollutants that cause global warming and help the polar bears' survival in the Arctic.
- 15 Write *Nanugiurutiga (My First Polar Bear)* on the board. Explain that unlike *Qimuksik (Dog Team)* and *Aiviasq (Walrus Hunt)*, *Nanugiurutiga (My First Polar Bear)* is a contemporary film, showing life in Nunavut today. It is about a young boy, the 11-year-old son of Zacharias Kunuk, being taught by his grandfather to capture his first bear. An Igloodik elder, Abraham Ulayuruluk, also remembers hunting polar bears in the old days.
- 16 Remind students once again about the importance of hunting to the survival of the Inuit. Every part of the polar bear will be put to good use. Have students take particular notice of the participation of the sled dogs in the capturing of the polar bear.
- 17 Remind students that the film is in Inuktitut, with English subtitles. Because of the amount of dialogue and speaking in this episode, it is recommended that the teacher read the subtitles. (Note: Approximately 15 minutes into the episode, one of the hunters uses an inappropriate word that is written in the subtitles. Also, the actual shooting of the bear occurs approximately 24 minutes into the episode.)
- 18 Students watch *Nanugiurutiga (My First Polar Bear)*.

### Evaluation

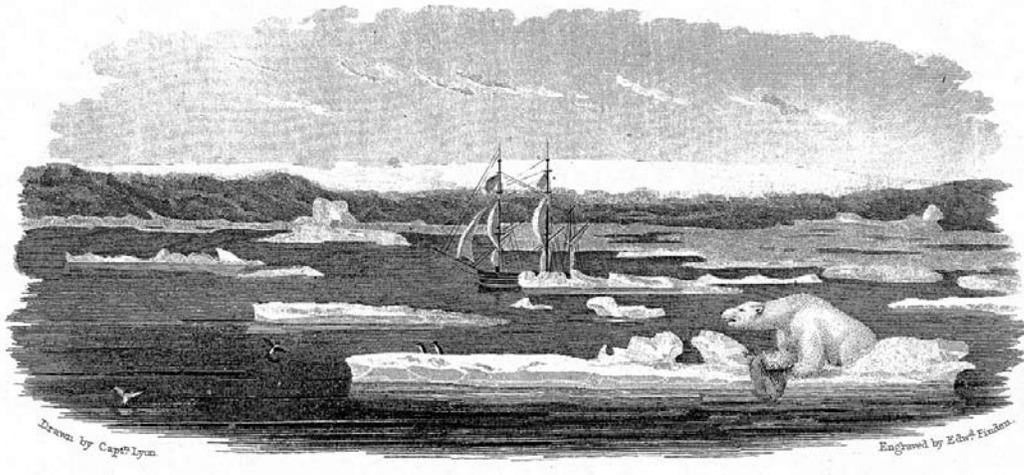
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- 1 Following episode, have students work in pairs and answer questions. Students may have to finish independently for homework. When completed, review questions and discuss as a class.



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# Follow-up Questions



- 2 Visualize the scenes from the film when the polar bear is in its habitat. List as many adjectives as you can describing the landscape – how do you think it looks, feels, sounds and tastes?

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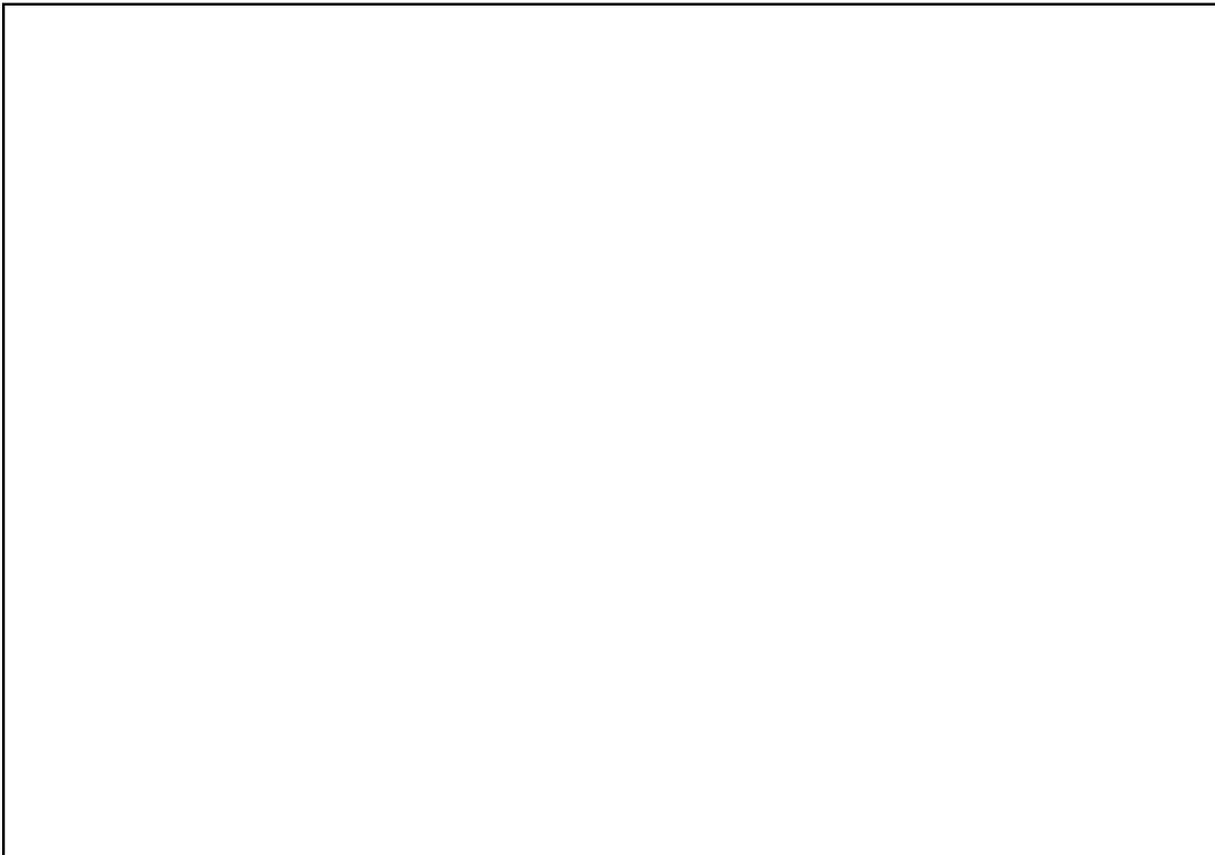


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## Follow-up Questions

- 4 | Imagine you are accompanying the young boy in the film on his first polar bear hunt, and you are sending a postcard home to a friend describing the experience. On the front, draw a picture of something from the film you would want your friend to see. On the back, write a message describing your afternoon on the tundra.

### Front



# Follow-up Questions

## Back

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# KWL Chart

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

What I think I know	What I want to know	What I've learned

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Notes: