

# The Snake That's Eating Florida

The gripping story of how Burmese pythons are taking over the Everglades

## About the Article

### Levels

Lexile Level: 690L

Guided Reading Level: O

DRA Level: 34

### Learning Objective

Students will read a nonfiction story about invasive species in the Florida Everglades. The story will build knowledge and domain-specific vocabulary, and have a special emphasis on cause and effect.

### Content-Area Connections

**Social studies:** geography

**Science:** animals, environment

### Key Skills

Cause and effect, vocabulary, close reading, key details, text features, text evidence, drawing conclusions, explanatory writing

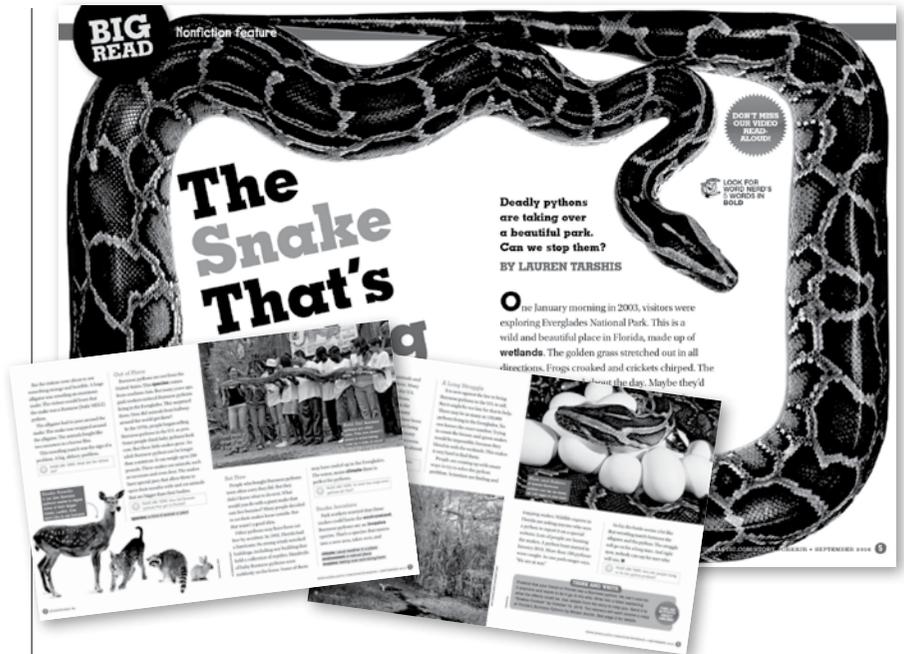
### Standards Correlations

This article and lesson support the following standards:

**Common Core anchor standards:** R.1, R.3, R.4, R.5, W.2, SL.1, SL.2, L.4, L.6

**TEKS:** 3.2, 3.4, 3.13, 3.20, 3.29, 3.30

For more standards information, check our website.



## Your Teaching Support Package

Here's your full suite of materials, all of which you'll find at [scholastic.com/StoryworksJr](http://scholastic.com/StoryworksJr):

### Activities to print or project

- Pause and Think Questions
- Vocabulary
- Close-Reading and Critical-Thinking Questions
- Quiz
- Nonfiction Reading Kit: This will help build key reading skills, including our featured skill, cause and effect; text features; and text evidence

**Video Read-Aloud** In this video, your students will hear author Lauren Tarshis narrate the article, and watch authentic images and footage!

### Audio (both read by the author)

- On-level version
- Lower-Lexile version

### Differentiated articles

- Starter level: a straightforward presentation of the basic facts
- Lower-Lexile version
- Higher-level version: originally appeared in *Storyworks*

# Step-by-Step Lesson Plan

## Close Reading, Critical Thinking, and Skill Building

### 1. Preparing to Read

#### Watch a Video/Preview Text Features

(25 minutes)

- This story is accompanied by a brand-new **Video Read-Aloud**, in which author Lauren Tarshis narrates the article as authentic photos and footage help students visualize what’s happening. Consider showing the video as a “first read.”
- Have students open their magazines to pages 4-5 and look at the headline, subhead, and labels (“Big Read,” “Nonfiction feature”). Ask: What do the labels tell you? How does the subhead help explain what the headline means?
- Point out the **Pause and Think** boxes starting on page 6, which are designed to check basic comprehension. Explain that these questions will help the students better understand the story. (Students will delve into higher-level questions with the close-reading questions, available in this guide and online.)
- Direct students to the photo on page 6. Discuss the kinds of animals pythons will eat. Use this opportunity to point out that humans are *not* pythons’ natural prey.
  - Ask students to look at the map and photo on page 8. Using the information in the caption, discuss where Everglades National Park is, its size and the species it contains, and what it looks like.

#### Introduce Domain-Specific Vocabulary

(15 minutes, activity sheet online)

- We have highlighted in bold the words that may be challenging and defined them at the bottom of the column in which they appear. Preview these words by projecting or distributing our **vocabulary activity** and completing it together as a class.
- Highlighted words: *wetlands, species, climate, environment, invasive*

#### Set a Purpose for Reading (5 minutes)

- Every story in the magazine has a **Think and Read** box at the beginning. These boxes give students a

question or an idea to focus on as they read. Call on a volunteer to read the Think and Read box on page 4 for the class.

### 2. Close Reading

#### Reading and Unpacking the Text

- **First read:** Read the story as a class. At the end of each section, use the Pause and Think questions to quickly check comprehension.
- **Second read:** Distribute some or all of the **close-reading questions** and preview them together. After the class answers the questions, discuss the answers together. Then discuss the **critical-thinking question**.

#### Close-Reading Questions

(30 minutes, activity sheet online)

- **Read the section “Out of Place.” How are the pythons’ jaws able to help them eat?** (key detail) *Their jaws allow them to open their mouths wide and eat animals that are much larger than the snakes themselves are.*
- **According to the section “Set Free,” what happened when pythons grew too big for their owners to care for them?** (cause and effect) *People no longer wanted the pythons, so they let them loose.*
- **Read the section “Snake Invaders.” What is an invasive species? Why are they a problem?** (cause and effect) *An invasive species is an animal or a plant that damages the animals and plants living in a new environment where it’s introduced. They’re a problem because they can make those native species disappear forever.*
- **According to the section “A Long Struggle,” what is one reason it’s hard to know how many pythons are living in the Everglades?** (key details) *Their coloring makes them blend in with the wetlands. This makes it impossible to count them.*
- **What can you infer about the problem in the**

Turn the page for  
differentiation and more! 

**Everglades from the photo on page 9?** (inference)

*One reason there are so many pythons in the Everglades is that a female Burmese python can lay as many as 100 eggs at once.*

### Critical-Thinking Question

(10 minutes, activity sheet online)

• **What lessons can you learn about having animals like pythons as pets?** (cause and effect) *Answers may include that it's not wise to have a pet that can grow as large as a python can grow, because you may not be able to care for it.*

### 3. Skill Building

- Call on a volunteer to read aloud the **Think and Write** box at the bottom of page 9.
- Have students work in pairs to underline details that they would include in their letters. Regroup as a class to discuss which ones are most important.
- Brainstorm opening sentences for the letter.
- Have students write their letters in class or as homework.



## Customize Your Class

### For Independent Readers

Have students read the article and highlight all the facts that surprise them the most. As homework, they can compile a list of at least five surprising facts.

### For Small Groups

Divide students into groups to do a second read and answer some or all of the close-reading questions. Encourage them to also discuss the text features, including photos, captions, and the map.

## Differentiate Your Teaching

### For Struggling Readers

Instead of using the close-reading and critical-thinking questions, print out the **Pause and Think** questions and have students answer those. These basic comprehension questions help ensure students can follow the story's events.

### For Advanced Readers

Have students work in small groups to create a poster with an image of a Burmese python and at least three reasons why they do not make good pets. Students should also explain why pythons shouldn't be set free either.

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