

## Ways *The Last Panther* & Author Visits Connect to Academic Standards

(Using the updated 2017 CO Academic Standards for 4th and 5th grade that can be found on the Colorado Department of Education website.)

### Content Area: Reading, Writing and Communicating

#### Standard 1: Oral Expression and Listening

—Schools that have me out for an author visit can ask students the following Inquiry Questions from the CDE standards page regarding my presentations:

- 1) How do presenters make themselves clear when presenting ideas to others?
- 2) How do presenters make a good impression when speaking with others?
- 3) When presenters want to persuade audience members, what is important for them to remember?

—To practice oral presentations, teachers can have students discuss questions from **The Last Panther Book Discussion Guide** (available at [www.ToddMitchellBooks.com](http://www.ToddMitchellBooks.com)). Working individually or in small groups, students can present responses on assigned questions.

—Consider having students present a personal response to one of the seven "Questions for making connections beyond the book" questions given at the end of the Discussion Guide.

#### Standard 2: Reading for All Purposes

—Students can work on the skill of "understanding and interpreting a text" by reading *The Last Panther* and taking a reading comprehension quiz or AR test on the book.

—Although *The Last Panther* is an accessible, age-appropriate story for many young readers (ages 9 & up), its high Lexile measure (0750) means it has high vocabulary and complex sentence structure, making it ideal for meeting the concepts and skills of "knowledge of morphology and word relationships" when reading.

—*The Last Panther* can be paired with informational texts on ecology, species extinction, saving endangered species, climate change, and climate refugees (from countries such as Kiribati). Having students research real-world connections to the book is an effective way to address the concepts and skills listed under Standard 2 of the Academic Standards guide of finding ideas in "a variety of informational texts" that can be "compared and understood" while enhancing interest in the story, and in current issues.



### **Standard 3: Writing and Composition**

—After reading *The Last Panther*, consider having students write a story response. For instance, ask students to write a story on how they have tried to "be a protector" or how a fictional character might "be a protector." This is a great way to practice the recursive writing process, using personal experiences as well as story elements like character, plot, and setting to create a compelling piece of persuasive writing.

—Consider adding a research component to the above assignment by having students research an endangered animal, then tell a story about what they can do to help save that animal. This gives students a way to address the concepts and skills of creating "stronger informational and persuasive texts for a variety of audiences and purposes."

—Consider having students address a real world audience and purpose by having them find an animal they're concerned about, research it, then identify an audience they want to persuade to achieve a specific purpose (for instance, writing a letter to a representative to get them to take a specific action to protect a specific species).

—Schools that have Todd perform an Author Visit can request a "Story Writing Workshop" in which Todd will lead students in an exploration of how writers use narrative elements like character, setting, and plot to write stories and books.

**Note: In addition to meeting several Academic Standards for Reading, Writing and Communicating, *The Last Panther* is an effective text for making cross-curriculum connections. For instance:**

#### **Content Area: Science**

—*The Last Panther* presents several connections to the **Life Science Standards** and the **Earth System Science Standards**. One of the main characters (Kiri's father) is a biologist, and the book deals directly with changing ecosystems and ecology.

#### **Content Area: Social Sciences**

—*The Last Panther* offers several ways to illustrate and discuss **Geography Standards** and **Economics Standards**. The setting of coastal Florida is of central importance to the story, and the way geography influences societies can be seen in the story. In addition, economic inequality, and different economies are illustrated in the story, and are a fundamental source of conflict in the story.

**See below for activities that will help students make connections between themselves and *The Last Panther*, while addressing Academic Standards.**

## ACTIVITIES FOR READING AND ENGAGING *THE LAST PANTHER*:

### Pre-reading:

—Read students the first chapter, then ask them to fill out an Anticipation Guide. You might ask:

- 1) Where do you think this story is taking place? Why?
- 2) When do you think this story is taking place? What clues do you see for that?
- 3) What do you think the netters are pulling to shore at the end of the chapter?
- 4) What do you think this book is going to be about?
- 5) The author starts the book with the question "What is a species worth?" What do you think the value of a species is? How far would you go to save a species? Why?

### During reading:

See ***The Last Panther Book Discussion Guide*** (available at [www.ToddMitchellBooks.com](http://www.ToddMitchellBooks.com)) for questions you might have students discuss in groups while reading the book (questions are grouped by which part of the book they're in).

Consider doing a **Deep Time** activity, **Spaceship Earth** activity, **Is This Our Future** persuasive debate activity, or **What If and Ask the Next Question** creative writing activity to get students to use their imaginations and critical thinking skills to engage the text, and make connections to their lives. For descriptions of these activities, download the "Four Activities for Engaging Dystopian and Apocalyptic Texts" from [www.ToddMitchellBooks.com](http://www.ToddMitchellBooks.com)).

### After reading:

See ***The Last Panther Book Discussion Guide*** for questions to help students make connections between the book and their lives.

Have students research a species that's endangered, and find one they want to save. Then have them research actions they could take.

Have students take an action by writing a letter or persuasive article, for a specific audience and a specific purpose.

Have students write a story response about a character who is a "protector." Why does this character want to protect the species or environment they do? What challenges does this character face? How does this character work to overcome these challenges?

Get crafty: After reading the book, consider having students create their own sea turtles! Here are some examples of how this can be done:

Egg carton turtle: <https://www.nwf.org/kids/family-fun/crafts/egg-carton-turtle.aspx>

Sea turtle version: <http://www.emmaowl.com/egg-carton-turtle-recycled-kids-craft/>