

Travels with Gannon & Wyatt: BOTSWANA *An Educator's Resource*

In the tradition of the historic journals kept by explorers such as Lewis and Clark, Dr. David Livingstone, and Captain James Cook, comes the fictional adventure book series Travels with Gannon and Wyatt. From Africa to the South Pacific, from Greenland to Egypt, these twin brothers have traveled to the far reaches of the globe. The journals, photographs and video compiled on their real-life expeditions provide the foundation for this action-packed series.

The twin heroes each journal about their adventures through the lens of their own interests and experiences. They interact with the indigenous peoples, explore the natural beauty, experience the challenges of each place's living conditions, witness wildlife in its native habitat and learn about kindness, courage, and sacrifice

Inside this guide

- About the Series
- About Botswana
- A Note on First Nations
- Cast of Characters
- Discussion Questions
- Activities
- The Youth Exploration Society
- Author Bios
- Interview with the Authors
- Further Reading
- Common Core State Standards correlations



Travels With Gannon & Wyatt: BOTSWANA

About the Series and Book:

When twins Gannon and Wyatt and their parents arrive in Botswana for an African safari, they find themselves tangled up in much more than a family vacation. Their mother views this as an extension of their schooling and gives each boy a journal to chronicle his experiences. Gannon wants to be a filmmaker while his brother Wyatt has a scientific perspective. Both revel in the chance to see new cultures, witness animals in the wild, and understand more about our fragile world.

After receiving word that a poacher has shot and wounded a lioness, they set off into the wild with their expedition leader and an accomplished guide to try to save the mother and her cubs before the poacher finishes the job. While on this amazing journey, they encounter Africa's Big Five - elephants, rhinos, cape buffalos, leopards, and lions--only to discover that the most dangerous predator in the African bush is not the king of beasts, but man himself.



About Botswana

The Republic of Botswana is located in south central Africa, just north of South Africa. Botswana lies on a huge plateau and has an average altitude of about 3,300 feet above sea level. The Kalahari Desert occupies almost all the central and southwest areas of the country. Bushes and grass grow in most of the Kalahari, but the southwest has sand dunes and little plant life. The Okavango River rises in Angola and flows into northwestern Botswana. There, the river divides into streams and forms the Okavango Swamps, a vast marshland.

A former British protectorate, Botswana gained independence in 1966. English is the official language but most of the people speak Setswana. The major industries are diamond mining, cattle ranching, and tourism.

The Kalahari Desert, one of Africa's last wildlife paradises, extends into Botswana, Namibia, and South Africa. Animals living in the region include white rhino, brown hyenas, lions, cheetahs, meerkats, several species of antelope, and many types of birds and reptiles. Vegetation in the Kalahari consists of dry grassland and scrubby acacias. Grasses thrive in the Kalahari during the summer rainy season.

Travels With Gannon & Wyatt: BOTSWANA

African people called the San, or Bushmen, were the first known human inhabitants of the Kalahari. Their survival skills and adaptation to the harsh Kalahari wilderness have become legendary. Their language largely consists of clicks. Today, only a small number of the San follow their traditional way of life in the Kalahari.



The Okavango river system is affected by extreme seasonal variations, from extensive floods to severe drought. The valley is only sparsely populated and it supports a rich and varied wildlife, including water birds, lions, leopards, wildebeests, zebras, crocodiles and hippopotamuses.

Travels With Gannon & Wyatt: BOTSWANA

A Note on First Nations

A recurring element of the Gannon & Wyatt books is interaction with indigenous people and cultures. Gannon's and Wyatt's insights can help students imagine the life of a Bushman boy in Africa or a Gitga'tt girl in the Great Bear Rainforest. The boys' respect of the First Nation cultures can be used as a springboard to discuss other indigenous people around the world including Amerindians in the Americas and Aborigines in Australia. They prefer their own name for themselves, "The First People."



Visiting the village

Cast of Main Characters

Gannon: Wyatt's twin brother who wants to be a filmmaker when he grows up

Wyatt: Gannon's twin brother who is fascinated by all things scientific

Mom: Gannon and Wyatt's flight attendant mother

Dad: Gannon and Wyatt's artist father

Chocs: Expedition guide with a degree in environmental science

Jubjub: Chocs' daughter whose name means "Savior"

Tcori: Bushman guide and tracker



Chocs and Tcori

A Taste of Setswana

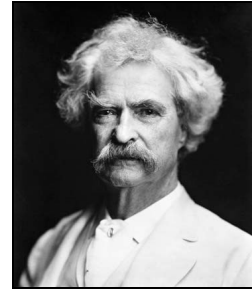
Gannon's efforts to learn some of the language is appreciated by those he meets. The book contains some simple phrases translated into Setswana.

One step further:

Go a little deeper and actually hear Setswana spoken at this website: http://www.setswana.info/wiki/index.php?title=Simple_phrases

Discussion Questions

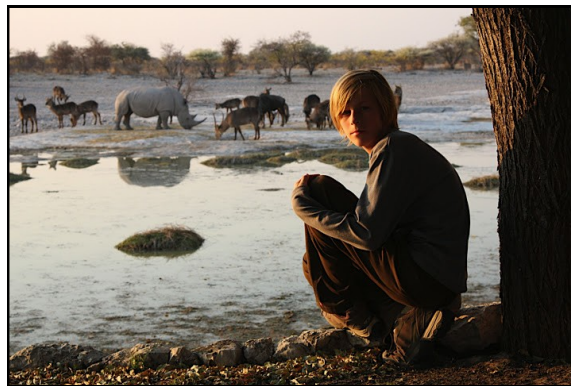
1) *Travels with Gannon & Wyatt: Botswana* begins with two quotes: **"Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness,"** -- Mark Twain (1835-1910), author of *Tom Sawyer*, and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Would it surprise you to know that he was one of the most well-traveled figures of his day? Define "prejudice," "bigotry," and "narrow-mindedness." How do you think the act of travel would be fatal to these?



"Do not follow where the path may lead. Go instead where there is no path and leave a trail." --Ralph Waldo Emerson. Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) was an essayist, poet, critic and popular philosopher. What does he mean by encouraging people to go where there is no path? How do Gannon & Wyatt follow this advice in the book and how do their choices impact others?
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.4, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.4,

2) The Kalahari Desert and the Okavango Delta are ecosystems. What is an ecosystem? Wyatt describes the lion as the "apex predator" in these ecosystems. What clues do you find in the books about the food chain? Where do people fit in? Think about the different kinds of people who interact with the environment in these fragile ecosystems. How do the poachers exploit the ecosystem? What is the impact of tourism? How do the bushmen survive? How is their culture endangered? (pages 30-34) CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.1, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.1, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.1, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.8

3) Describe the hunt for water on the Kalahari Desert. What do they look for? How do they harvest it? What does it taste like? How do each of the boys react? Does this make you think differently about water's accessibility and abundance? (pages 36-37).
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.3, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.3, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.6, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.3, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.6



Discussion Questions *continued*

5) Why is it so important for the injured lioness to be found and saved? What are the consequences if the poachers find her first? There were 100,000 lions in the early 90s and only around 30,000 lions today. What is the rate of decline and when will lions become extinct if nothing is done to change it? (page 43) CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.2, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.2, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.1, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.2, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.8

6) Elephants are endangered because poachers want their tusks and think about the animals that grace the Delta as objects rather than as living, feeling creatures. The twins come across a dying elephant and her mate. Describe the bull elephant's actions. What do the boys learn from this experience? (Page 75) CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.2, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.2, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.1, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.2

7) How does Wyatt's quick thinking save the day when the poachers capture them? How was this foreshadowed? (Wyatt, the science geek, surreptitiously sends an SOS message by radio to Jubjub, whose name means "Savior"). (Page 122) CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.3, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.2, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.3

8) *Travels With Gannon & Wyatt: Botswana* has maps and pictures throughout the book. The pictures were taken on an actual safari with two boys named Gannon and Wyatt as explained in the back matter. How did the pictures contribute to the overall book? How does the fact that the book is based on two real boys affect your overall impression of the book itself? Can you discern what is true fact and what was added for narrative impact? CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.7, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.8



Activities

1) A book safari! Challenge the students to find as many animals as they can in the text of *Botswana*. Establish the rules--the animals must be actually seen by a character in the book in order to count. They must list the animal and the page number where it is found.

Page 20: Wildebeests also kudu and waterbuck, white rhino

Page 24: Family of white rhinos

Page 56: Bull elephant

Page 59: Elephants, zebras, wildebeests, giraffes, warthogs, impala, hippos, and Cape buffalos

Page 62: Warthog

Page 63: Vulture

Page 67: Crocodile

Page 74: Bull and female elephants

Page 84: Family of elephants

Page 86: Baboon

Page 88: Cape buffalo

Page 92: Black mamba snake

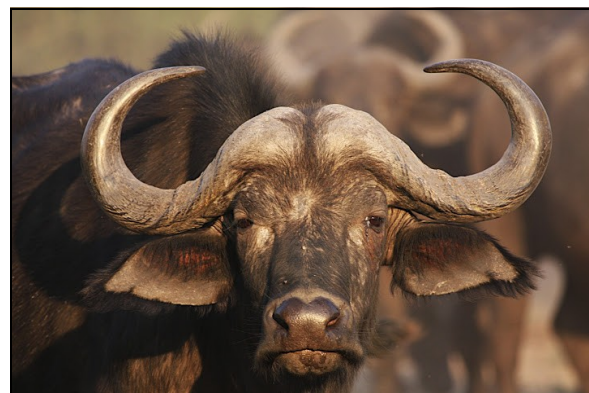
Page 97: Leopard

Page 100: Lion

Page 114: Lioness

Page 115: Cobra

These pictures were taken on the safari, many actually by Gannon and Wyatt themselves.



Activities continued

2) When Gannon and Wyatt are in the Okavango Delta, they are disconnected from the modern world. What do the boys discover about themselves when all technology is stripped away? Now try to have a technology-free day yourself and journal it. What did you miss most? What did you discover? Now try it again with at least one other person. How does adding another person change the experience? (Page 59) .

Take it one step further: Giving up something is easier when it is replaced by something else. What are some activities that do not rely on technology? (playing sports, running, volunteering, etc.). Commit to spending a certain amount of time on these for a month and evaluate the difference in your life at the end.

3) Print off maps of the world, Africa, and Botswana. Trace the twins' journey from Colorado to Botswana and then from Maun in Botswana to the Kalahari Desert and the Okavango Delta. Approximately how many miles did the twins travel? Imagine you have a bank with the same miles. Where would you go? How would you get there? Why would you choose this place? What would you most want to do and see there?

Take it one step further: Do this as a class and connect with a class in that country and become virtual or pen pals as technology permits.

4) Gannon is a gifted communicator. Not only does he research the language ahead of time but he has learned that the most accessible way to communicate is by smiling. Pick a place you have always wanted to visit where another language is spoken (you may use the place from the question above). Create your own simple phrasebook based on the phrases in "Travels with Gannon & Wyatt." Research how the words are pronounced.

Take it one step further: Have each student write the language and country on an index card. Randomly tape the index cards at the front of the room. Randomly ask each student to say "hello" or another common phrase in the language in turn and have the rest of the students try to guess the language.

5) The books were inspired by the great journals of explorers such as Dr. Livingstone, Lewis & Clark and Ernest Shackleton. Share these with your students and invite them to journal a family vacation or outing in the same way.

Take it one step further: Ask them to journal for a set amount of time as if they were visitors from another part of the world or another planet so they can really get into the explorer experience.



The Youth Exploration Society



Y.E.S. promotes literacy among elementary and middle school students, inspiring them to read and write with confidence and creativity. We subscribe to the belief that a child who develops a love for reading and writing early on will enjoy it for life. To accomplish our mission, Y.E.S. intends to implement a variety of programs that will draw on a child's love of adventure, a genre that peaks the interest of even the most reluctant students. Y.E.S. programs include book donations, author readings, multi-media presentations at schools and libraries, social media efforts, an informative website, the "Y.E.S. Blog" and other educational efforts.

With a slogan of "The world is our classroom," The Youth Exploration Society aims to inspire young people to doing their part to improve the well-being of our planet. Visit youthexplorationsociety.org to learn more about everything from malaria in sub-Saharan Africa to the lingering effects of the earthquake in Haiti, from the impact of rising sea levels on the Maldives Islands in the Indian Ocean to the decimated sturgeon populations in the Caspian Sea in Asia.

Y.E.S. looks at pressing issues concerning the people, the environment and the animals around the world and provide a way for young people to learn and take action. Classes can post their causes to the YES map and become a visual part of the global effort.

www.youthexplorationsociety.org

About the Authors



Patti Wheeler grew up in Picketville, Florida. The daughter of loving parents, this small-town girl buried her nose in books and escaped into the sweeping sagas created by James Michener and other popular writers of the day.

Her love of books sparked a desire to travel and see the world. At age 20, she became a flight attendant and moved to Puerto Rico. Patti feels her greatest accomplishment is being the mother to twins Gannon and Wyatt. Her priority has been to educate and nurture and to help the boys develop the important qualities of generosity, leadership and compassion. This effort led to the creation of the Youth Exploration Society, which Patti cofounded with Keith Hemstreet and her sons. For years, it has been Patti's goal to create a children's book series that instills the spirit of exploration in young people. Travels with Gannon & Wyatt is the realization of her dream. (Future books include adventures in the Great Bear Rainforest, Egypt, Greenland, Iceland, Tanzania, Ireland and the American West.)

In addition to the book series, Patti is the founder of Claim Stake Productions, executive producer and director of the TV pilot Travels with Gannon & Wyatt Off the Beaten Path and co-wrote, with Keith Hemstreet, the screenplay Botswana, which was an official selection of the 2010 Beverly Hills Film Festival. Patti lives in Aspen, Colorado, with her husband and sons.



Keith Hemstreet is an award-winning writer, producer and a cofounder of the Youth Exploration Society. He earned a Bachelor's degree in multinational business and marketing at Florida State University and an MBA from Appalachian State University. Keith lives in Aspen, Colorado, with his wife and three daughters.

An interview with Patti Wheeler and Keith Hemstreet, authors of *Travels With Gannon & Wyatt*

Q. Patti, you are not only the co-author, but the literal and figurative mother of Gannon and Wyatt. How did the Gannon & Wyatt book series come about?

Patti: My priority has been to educate, nurture and to help my boys develop the important qualities of generosity, leadership and compassion. When you travel you learn so many amazing things about the world. We thought it would be wonderful to pass on this information to children. That's how the book series came about. It's a real passion project, a labor of love.



Q. The research for these books not only involves scholarly work but also actual trips with the real Gannon and Wyatt. How did the books make the leap from family vacation to effective narrative?

Patti: Once we began the book project, our travel evolved from family vacations to research missions. During these research missions there are always those unique experiences that you know right away will be in the book. It's also pretty obvious what should be left out. Fiction gives us the flexibility to make it all work.

Keith: Our primary goal with each book is to entertain. If a reader is entertained, they will be engaged and get the most out of the series. Once we have an exciting storyline, we work to weave lots of interesting factual information into the narrative. At the end of the day, in addition to enjoying the adventure, we want readers to come away with a real good understanding of these special places--the people, culture, and environment.

Q: Tell us how you collaborate as co-authors.

Patti: It's a collaborative effort between Keith and I. We start with a map, make a list of potential destinations, then browse the internet for more information. We look for destinations with unique histories, cultures, wildlife. Places that might also deal with different challenges. Basically, we're asking ourselves, will this destination be a good setting for a Travels with Gannon & Wyatt novel? Once we settle on a location, we discuss what's most fascinating about this part of the world and make a list of the must-see destinations. Keith then goes to work and does lots of research so we know a lot about the region before we get there. He will have already mapped out an itinerary and gathered lots of interesting facts before we arrive.

Patti Wheeler and Keith Hemstreet *continued*

Keith: Patti handles the travel arrangements and sets us up with excellent guides. This is critical, as a knowledgeable guide adds tremendous value to the book.

Patti: It's usually a two to three week trip. We all journal, take photographs and video along the way. At the end of the trip, we bring everything back and review it. Keith and I talk about what we did and the people we met and develop the narrative. We go through hours of what ifs, Keith makes tons of notes and off he goes to write the first draft. In the meantime, we are still plugging away at covers, and working with the artist. We typically go through about three drafts before we feel the manuscript is ready to go to our editor, Catherine Frank.

Q. How did you come up with the idea of the journaling format?

Patti: I started journaling at twelve and kept a diary. It's so important because it inspires you to write and create and take time to reflect. It was especially helpful and cathartic when I started flying to record what I was doing and where I had been.

Keith. When we first discussed this project, a big part of what shaped it were the journals of the famous explorers--Dr. Livingstone, Captain James Cook, Ernest Shackleton, Lewis & Clark--they all took incredibly detailed journals of their adventures. I was always a fan. These are classic tales of adventure, and we thought it would be great to bring that back--so that's what we were going for, in terms of format. With this series, we want to inspire children not only to read and write, but to gain a better understanding of the world and the issues that they are going to face as they grow older. If they become aware of these issues at an early age, they are more likely to contribute to making the world a better place in the future.

Q. How did you come up with the idea for the Youth Exploration Society (Y.E.S.)?

Patti: This is an idea based on the Royal Geographical Society in the UK, an organization that has sent explorers to the far ends of the earth in the name of learning. These explorers would come home after their adventure, publish their journals and give lectures around the world. That was the inspiration for the Youth Exploration Society. The Y.E.S. mission is rooted in literacy, but it's more than that. Through our literacy effort we want to inspire children to learn more about the world. And we're kicking it off in a big way. For every book that is sold we are donating a book to literacy groups--educators, school and library programs, and a number of charities.

Further Reading

Fiction

Akimbo and the Lions. Smith, Alexander McCall. 9781582346878 (Grades 2-4)

Journey to Jo'Burg. Naidoo, Jenny. 9780064402378 (Grades 4-8)

Laugh With the Moon, Burg, Shana. 9780385734714 (Grades 6-9)

Long Walk to Water, A. Park, Linda Sue. 9780547577319. Grades (4-8)

Now Is the Time for Running. Smith, Michael. 9780316077880 (Grades 6-12)

Parched by Crowder, Melanie. 9780547976518. (Grades 4-8)

Nonfiction

Botswana (Evolution of Africa's Major Nations). Wittman, Kelly. 9781422221938 (Grades 4-7)

Bushmen of Southern Africa. Watson,, Galadriel Findlay. 9781619130944 (Grades 4-8)

The Kalahari Desert. Aloian, Molly. 9780778707127 (Grades 2-4)

Film

The Gods Must Be Crazy (1980). This South African film set in largely in the Kalahari Desert provides a visual and aural portrait of the Bushmen people. Please note it is a fictional comedy.

The Last Lions (2011) Dereck and Beverly Joubert are award-winning filmmakers from Botswana who have been National Geographic explorers-in-residence for over four years. Their mission is the conservation and understanding of the large predators and key African wildlife species that determine the course of all conservation in Africa.

Reflections of Elephants (2010) Renowned wildlife filmmakers Dereck and Beverly Joubert capture the drama of Africa's largest free-roaming elephant herds on their journey across the bush country of northern Botswana. Two years in the making, this documentary reveals extraordinary elephant behavior never before filmed including the rare adoption of an abandoned infant, the organized rescue of a calf in danger or drowning, and the haunting way bull elephants mourn the death of an aged companion.

Available Now:



Travels With Gannon & Wyatt: The Great Bear Rainforest
(9781608325887)

Coming soon:

Travels With Gannon & Wyatt: Egypt
(9781608325610)

Common Core State Standards used in this Guide:

English Language Arts

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.1 Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.2 Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text; summarize the text.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.3 Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.6 Compare and contrast the point of view from which different stories are narrated, including the difference between first- and third-person narrations.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.1 Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.2 Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text, including how characters in a story or drama respond to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic; summarize the text.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.3 Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative language such as metaphors and similes.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.5 Explain how a series of chapters, scenes, or stanzas fits together to provide the overall structure of a particular story, drama, or poem.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.6 Describe how a narrator's or speaker's point of view influences how events are described.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.7 Analyze how visual and multimedia elements contribute to the meaning, tone, or beauty of a text (e.g., graphic novel, multimedia presentation of fiction, folktale, myth, poem).
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.1 Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.3 Describe how a particular story’s or drama’s plot unfolds in a series of episodes as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.6 Analyze how an author develops and contrasts the points of view of different characters or narrators in a text.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.9 Compare and contrast a fictional portrayal of a time, place, or character and a historical account of the same period as a means of understanding how authors of fiction use or alter history.

History/Social Studies

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.7 Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.8 Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.



About the author of this guide: Ellen Everett Myrick studied history and literature at the University of Tennessee and the University of Manchester in the UK. She has written several guides including those for Newbery winners *Crispin: The Cross of Lead* and *Good Masters! Sweet Ladies!*

Awards and Recognitions

Nautilus Silver Medal Award:
Middle Grade and Teen Fiction



Moonbeam Children's Book Awards —
Silver Medalist (Best First Book)



Colorado Book Awards —
Finalist in Juvenile Literature



Independent Publisher.com—
Highlighted Title



www.travelswithgannonandwyatt.com
www.youthexplorationsociety.org

Order from your favorite wholesaler or visit us online.

