

# Mountain Gorillas

“Girls!” Rose heard her father calling.

She raced to her big sister’s room. “Gina, Dad’s calling us.”

The girls ran downstairs. “What is it, Dad?” said Rose.

Dad put his arm around Mom. “We’re going on a safari to the Virunga Mountains of Africa. There are three national parks there that we’ll visit.”

Rose and Gina looked at each other. “What?” they said in unison.

“We’re going on a safari,” said Mom. “Isn’t it exciting!”

At 12 years old, Rose would prefer going to an amusement park or a beach. She didn’t want to go on a safari, and she thought it important to let her parents know. “I don’t want to go on a safari. Who goes on safaris? Let’s go to the beach for a week or two.”

“Well,” said Dad, “I have to go for an assignment for the paper. We’re covering the mountain gorillas. They’re critically endangered. So, I thought it’d be a great place to take a vacation. It’ll be very educational for you girls.”

Rose watched Gina shake her head and go back up to her room. “But--” said Rose.

Mom interrupted her, “There are no ‘buts.’ We’re going. It’s set for next week.”

“Great.” said Rose. “Some summer vacation.”

“Gina!” yelled Dad. “Come down here.”

Gina lumbered down the stairs. “Yeah.”

“Sit down, both of you.” Dad had on his stern look. “It’s important for you to know about the world around you. This is a wonderful chance for you to experience an amazing place. Do you know anything about the mountain gorillas?”

The sisters shook their heads.

“Well,” said Dad, “get your laptop, Rose. I want you to look them up right now.”

Rose searched for mountain gorillas. “Aw, look how cute they are. The newborn gorilla only weighs around

4 pounds at birth. They're a lot like human babies; they're weak and uncoordinated."

"Scroll down, Rose," said Gina. "Wow. The males can weight up to 400 pounds. And . . . you're right, Dad, they're critically endangered."

Rose took over the reading. "It's that their habitat is being disturbed by civil wars and conflicts. Mountain gorillas are also killed or captured by poachers."

Gina pulled the laptop toward her. "Thieves steal them to sell illegally. It says that baby gorillas are sold as pets, to private zoos, or as research animals. How horrible!"

"That's right," said Dad. Did you know that they're social animals and much more passive than aggressive? They truly are a magnificent animal. It's important for us to see for ourselves and help spread the word about what we can do to help save them."

Rose and Gina looked at each other again.

"So, a safari," said Gina.

"Yeah," said Rose. "I'm going to take a mega amount of pictures. Can't wait!"

**Questions**

1. What does *passive* mean here: “Did you know that they’re social animals and much more passive than aggressive”?
2. What is one reason that mountain gorillas are endangered?
3. Why do you think Rose and Gina changed their minds about their vacation?
4. Which vacation would you rather have: a safari or the beach? Why?

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**Vocabulary List**

Each of the vocabulary words below are used in the reading passage. As you read the passage, pay attention to context clues that suggest the word's meaning.

1. safari
2. endangered.
3. lumbered
4. poachers
5. passive

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**Context Clues**

Using context clues from the sentences in the passage, underline the correct meaning of the word in boldface.

1. "We're going on a **safari** to the Virunga Mountains of Africa."

- a. cruise; water voyage    b. steam train    c. rock climbing challenge    d. trip to view wildlife

2. "They're critically **endangered**."

- a. sick or unhealthy    b. approved or liked    c. threatened; at risk of dying out    d. crazy; mad

3. "Gina **lumbered** down the stairs."

- a. ran; galloped    b. trudged or plodded    c. slid or glided    d. bounced; bounded

4. "Mountain gorillas are also killed or captured by **poachers**."

- a. meat eaters; carnivores    b. illegal hunters    c. zookeepers    d. steel traps

5. "they're social animals and much more **passive** than aggressive"

- a. quiet or nonviolent    b. happy or funny    c. intelligent; smart    d. friendly; loving