Gabon's lonely gorilla Jojo may get a friend

LEVEL B1


Photo: Kelly Sikkema / Unsplash

I. WARM-UP

1. What do you know about gorillas and their families?
2. Have you ever visited a zoo or sanctuary? What did you see?
3. How can animals show they feel lonely or stressed?

II. KEY VOCABULARY

sanctuary
a safe place where animals are protected and cared for

companion
a friend or partner who stays with you

poacher
a person who illegally hunts or takes wild animals

captivity
a state where an animal is kept and cannot live freely

trauma
deep emotional harm caused by a shocking or painful event

rehabilitate
to help someone or an animal recover normal health or behaviour

enclosure
an area with fences or walls where an animal lives

release
to let someone or something go free

III. READING

Jojo is a male gorilla in Gabon who was taken from the wild as an infant. His family was killed by poachers, and he grew up in captivity in a tiny cage at a private zoo. In 2015, when he was 11, he took his first steps on grass. Since then, he has lived at the Lekedi Foundation sanctuary, but he has remained alone.

His carers want to find him a companion, possibly a rescued or zoo-bred gorilla, but it is not simple. Prof Gillian Forrester of the University of Sussex says Jojo's isolation is extreme. With a thermal camera, her team has recorded a persistently cold nose, a sign of chronic stress and trauma in great apes.

Head keeper Maxe Anaclet Makaba says Jojo often seeks contact and calls from his enclosure. Éric Willaume, who runs the site, agrees he seems lonely. Dr Katie Fawcett from the Grace Center says social bonds are essential for any release into the wild.

More than 6,000 African primates were traded from 2000 to 2023, says the Pan African Sanctuary Alliance, so centres work to rehabilitate rescued animals in groups.

Reading text adapted from reporting by **BBC News***: "Jojo the gorilla has spent his life alone. Can...". Original article linked at theenglishwire.com.*

IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Where did Jojo grow up after being taken from the wild?
2. What important change happened to Jojo in 2015?
3. What kind of companion might Jojo get?
4. What sign of stress did researchers record on Jojo's face?
5. What does Dr Katie Fawcett say is essential for any release into the wild?

V. DISCUSSION

1. Should rescued animals live with humans or with their own species? Why?
2. How can keepers introduce a new companion to reduce stress?
3. Is it right to release mature animals after years in captivity? Why?
4. What could help reduce primate poaching in countries like Gabon?

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Present perfect vs past simple

Use present perfect (have/has + past participle) for actions/states up to now, often with SINCE/FOR or SO FAR. Use past simple (lived, took; passive: was/were + past participle) for finished past time, with dates or past points (in 2015, when he was 11).

> *"Since then, he* **has lived** *at the Lekedi Foundation sanctuary."*
> *"His family* **was killed** *by poachers."*

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete the sentences: use present perfect or past simple.

1. His carers (not/find) ___ him a companion so far. _____
2. So far, researchers (record) ___ a cold nose with the camera. _____
3. In 2015, Jojo (take) ___ his first steps on grass. _____
4. As an infant, he (be) ___ taken from the wild. _____
5. For years, centres (rehabilitate) ___ rescued primates. _____

Teacher's Notes

TEACHERS ONLY

These notes are designed to help you get the most out of this lesson. Please do not share this page with students.


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I. LESSON GUIDE

- Timing: 8–10 minutes warm-up, 10 minutes vocabulary, 12–15 minutes reading and comprehension, 8–10 minutes grammar, 12–15 minutes discussion.
- Pre-teach names and places (Gabon, Lekedi Foundation, University of Sussex, Grace Center) and check pronunciation of Forrester, Willaume, and Fawcett.
- Do a first reading for gist (Jojo's past and present), then scan for details (dates, signs of stress, organisations). The story involves animal killing and trauma; open discussion in pairs first and allow students to speak about the news rather than about personal experiences.
- Differentiation: stronger students summarise each paragraph in one sentence; others underline phrases that show stress, loneliness, and the search for a companion.

II. DISCUSSION FACILITATION TIPS

1. Start with a quick show of hands, then pair students from different camps to share reasons.
2. Elicit two or three practical steps from the text (slow, careful, social bonds), then brainstorm others.
3. Set up a brief for/against line: students step to a side and defend one clear point each.
4. Have groups list one cause and one action; push for realistic steps local people or agencies can take.

III. EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Debate: In two teams, write and deliver 90-second arguments for or against releasing Jojo once he has a companion.

Writing: In pairs, draft a 70-word plan for how the sanctuary should introduce a new companion to Jojo.

IV. ANSWER KEY OVERVIEW

Comprehension questions: short factual answers from the text.

Grammar exercise: Present perfect vs past simple

Discussion: open-ended. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

Answer Key

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IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Where did Jojo grow up after being taken from the wild?
   In a tiny cage at a private zoo in Gabon.
2. What important change happened to Jojo in 2015?
   He took his first steps on grass, and he has lived at the sanctuary since then.
3. What kind of companion might Jojo get?
   Possibly a rescued or zoo-bred gorilla.
4. What sign of stress did researchers record on Jojo's face?
   A persistently cold nose seen with a thermal camera.
5. What does Dr Katie Fawcett say is essential for any release into the wild?
   Social bonds.

V. DISCUSSION

Open answers. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete the sentences: use present perfect or past simple.

1. His carers ___ him a companion so far. **haven't found / have not found**
2. So far, researchers ___ a cold nose with the camera. **have recorded / have been recording**
3. In 2015, Jojo ___ his first steps on grass. **took**
4. As an infant, he ___ taken from the wild. **was**
5. For years, centres ___ rescued primates. **have rehabilitated / have been rehabilitating**

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Key point: Use present perfect (have/has + past participle) for actions/states up to now, often with SINCE/FOR or SO FAR. Use past simple (lived, took; passive: was/were + past participle) for finished past time, with dates or past points (in 2015, when he was 11).

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