

**OXFORD CAMBRIDGE AND RSA EXAMINATIONS  
GCSE**

**A680/02/RBI**

**ENGLISH/ENGLISH LANGUAGE**

**Information and Ideas (Higher Tier)**

**READING BOOKLET INSERT**

**TUESDAY 10 JANUARY 2012: Morning**

**DURATION: 2 hours**

**SUITABLE FOR VISUALLY IMPAIRED CANDIDATES**

**INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES**

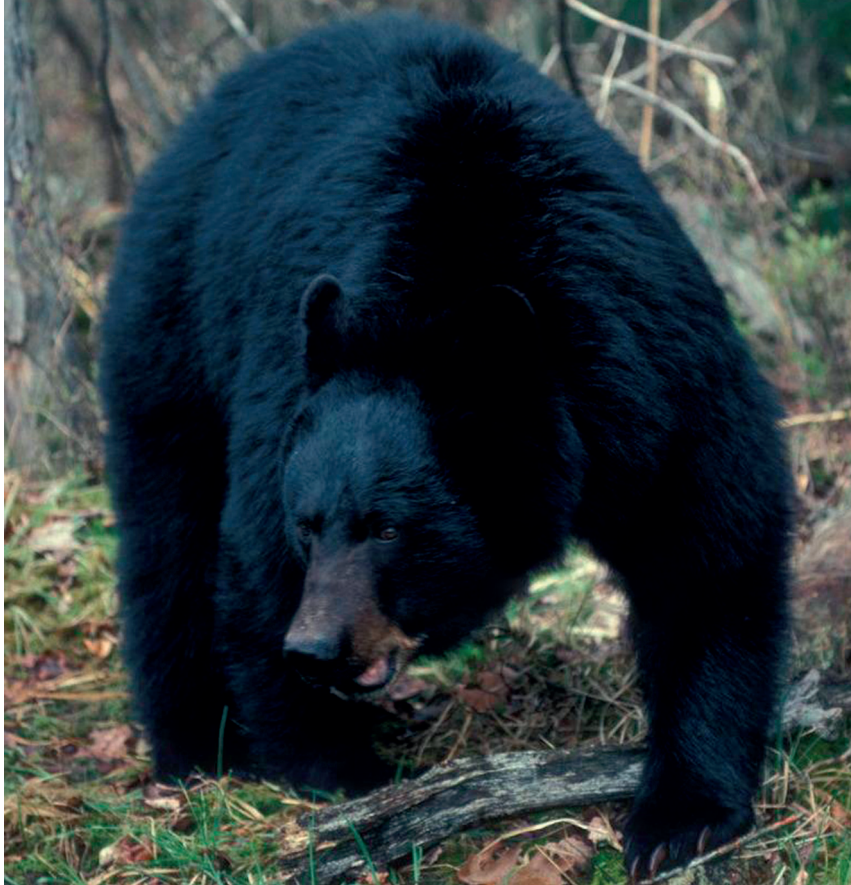
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# **The day I survived a very grizzly bear attack**

**By Guy Grieve**



**[A huge black bear: ‘As long as I live, I will never forget that powerful animal charging towards me.’]**

**You never forget a close encounter with a bear. They can approach slowly, sedately, stealthily, but once they are upon you, it is one of the most terrifying experiences you are ever likely to have. Forget the cuddly creature you snuggled up to as a child; the real thing is a 70-stone killing machine which can move with devastating, explosive speed.**

**A few years ago, I lived alone in a tiny log cabin in the wilderness of Alaska for a book I was writing. During that year, I faced every kind of danger, from starvation to excruciating cold – but none was as downright terrifying as my encounters with the black and grizzly bears that were the undoubted masters of the dark sub-arctic forests I called home.**

**Of all the meetings, my first was by far the most frightening. I was bathing in the river after a day chopping wood for the cabin I was building. I had just jumped into the fast-moving water and was happily brushing my teeth when an unexpected movement caught my eye upstream. I pulled myself up on to a tree trunk to take a closer look. And my heart jumped into my mouth.**

**A huge black bear had waded up to its shoulders into the river and was straining to get a better look at me. I saw it lift its vast head to sniff the air, then – catching a whiff of me – turn and bound out of the water at a surprising pace.**

**Initially, I felt relieved – until I saw that it was trying to outflank me along the shore, its small, eager eyes fixed on me all the time.**

**I was lucky enough to have been armed – although my gun was on the shore, far out of reach. Knowing it was my only chance of survival, I crept slowly towards the shore, where my rifle hung from an upturned root.**

**All the while, the bear kept coming, waving his nose around in search of my scent – bears' eyesight is very poor, so they rely on smell – but unable to get a really good sniff as I was downwind. This bought me valuable time.**

**I loaded my rifle with a shivering hand and readied myself for whatever might come – which turned out to be a full-blown attack.**

**Finally catching a good whiff of me, and deciding I really was prey, this huge killer dropped to all fours and began to bound towards me along the river bank at full tilt.**

**As long as I live, I will never forget the sight of that powerful animal charging towards me, its nostrils flared and its teeth bared. Like many others, I had made the mistake of assuming that bears are slow and lumbering. I was wrong. This bear moved with the speed and agility of a cat – and I had only a couple of rounds with which to stop him.**

**Suddenly, however, he veered sideways and disappeared into the scrub – and I lowered the rifle, light-headed with relief. But then I heard crashing within the bush. He was now coming at me through the thick undergrowth. If a black bear attacks, you should back away as gently as possible. And if that fails, fight back with everything you've got. (None of the advice mentions running – the very notion of outrunning a bear is ludicrous, as they can easily reach 35 miles an hour.)**

**I certainly wouldn't have outrun my black bear. And so, reluctant to shoot unless it was my only option, I began shouting, making as much noise as possible in an attempt to scare him off.**

**And up to a point, it worked. He slowed down and then stopped uncertainly, peering at me myopically from just a few yards away. In that moment we were both making a decision.**

**He was sizing me up before making a final, probably fatal lunge; I was trying to establish whether I could keep my cool for long enough to fire that vital shot. Neither of us moved.**

**For minutes. Three, maybe four – it seemed like hours. And then, with a snort, he turned slowly round and lumbered back into the bush. I felt like the most fortunate man alive.**

## A Walk in the Woods

[In his book 'A Walk in the Woods', Bill Bryson describes his attempt to walk the 2,000 mile long Appalachian Trail in North America. He was accompanied by his old college friend, Stephen Katz, who was not an experienced walker. In this extract he describes a worrying night-time encounter.]

It was perfect sleeping weather, cool enough to need a bag, but warm enough to sleep in your underwear, and I was looking forward to a long night's snooze – indeed was enjoying a long night's snooze when, at some indeterminate dark hour, there was a sound nearby that made my eyes fly open. Normally, I slept through everything – through thunderstorms, through Katz's snoring – so something big enough or distinctive enough to wake me was unusual. There was a sound of undergrowth being disturbed – a click of breaking branches, a weighty pushing through low foliage – and then a kind of large, vaguely irritable snuffling noise.

**Bear!**

I sat bolt upright. Instantly every neuron in my brain was awake and dashing around frantically, like ants when you disturb their nest. I reached instinctively for my knife, then realized I had left it in my pack, just outside the tent. Nocturnal defence had ceased to be a concern after nights of tranquil woodland repose.

There was another noise, quite near.

'Stephen, you awake?' I whispered.

'Yup,' he replied in a weary but normal voice.

**‘What was that?’**

**‘How the hell should I know?’**

**‘It sounded big.’**

**‘Everything sounds big in the woods.’**

**This was true. Once a skunk had come plodding through camp and it had sounded like a stegosaurus. There was another heavy rustle and then the sound of lapping at the spring.**

**It was having a drink, whatever it was.**

**I shuffled on my knees to the foot of the tent, cautiously unzipped the mesh and peered out, but it was pitch black. As quietly as I could, I brought in my backpack and, with the light of a small torch, searched through it for my knife. When I found it and opened the blade I was appalled at how wimpy it looked. It was a perfectly respectable appliance for, say, buttering pancakes, but patently inadequate for defending oneself against 400 pounds of ravenous fur.**

**Carefully, very carefully, I climbed from the tent and put on the torch, which cast a distressingly feeble beam. Something about 15 or 20 feet away looked up at me. I couldn’t see anything at all of its shape or size – only two shining eyes. It went silent, whatever it was, and stared back at me.**

**‘Stephen,’ I whispered at his tent, ‘did you pack a knife?’**

**‘No.’**

**‘Have you got anything sharp at all?’**



**He thought for a moment. ‘Nail clippers.’**

**I made a despairing face. ‘Anything a little more vicious than that? Because, you see, there is definitely something out here.’**

**‘It’s probably just a skunk.’**

**‘Then it’s one big skunk. Its eyes are three feet off the ground.’**

**‘A deer then.’**

**I nervously threw a stick at the animal, and it didn’t move, whatever it was. A deer would have bolted. This thing just blinked once and kept staring.**

**I reported this to Katz.**

**‘Probably a buck. They’re not so timid. Try shouting at it.’**

**I cautiously shouted at it: ‘Hey! You there! Scat!’ The creature blinked again, singularly unmoved. ‘You shout,’ I said.**

**‘Oh, you brute, go away, do!’ Katz shouted in merciless imitation. ‘Please withdraw at once, you horrid creature.’**

**I peered and peered, but I couldn’t see anything but those two wide-set eyes staring from the near distance like eyes in a cartoon. I couldn’t decide whether I wanted to be outside and dead or inside and waiting to be dead. I picked up a stone and tossed it. I think it may have hit it because the animal made a sudden noisy start, and then it emitted a noise – not quite a growl, but near enough. It occurred to me that perhaps I oughtn’t to provoke it.**



**‘What are you doing, Bryson? Just leave it alone and it will go away.’**

**‘How can you be so calm?’**

**‘What do you want me to do? You’re hysterical enough for both of us.’**

**‘I think I have a right to be a trifle alarmed, pardon me. I’m in the woods, in the middle of nowhere, in the dark, staring at a bear, with a guy who has nothing to defend himself with but a pair of nail clippers. Let me ask you this. If it is a bear and it comes for you, what are you going to do – give it a pedicure?’**

**‘I’ll cross that bridge when I come to it,’ Katz said implacably.**

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