

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

KATHLEEN O'NEAL GEAR is a former state historian and archaeologist for Wyoming, Kansas, and Nebraska for the Department of the Interior. She has twice received the federal government's Special Achievement award for "outstanding management" of our nation's cultural heritage.

W. MICHAEL GEAR, who holds a master's degree in archaeology, has worked as a professional archaeologist since 1978. He is currently principal investigator for Wind River Archaeological Consultants.

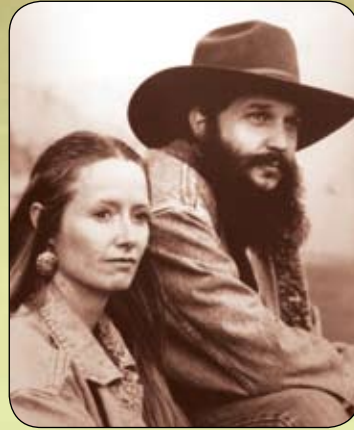


Photo: Jeff Corney

THE GEARS, whose First North Americans series and Anasazi Mystery series are both international as well as *USA Today* bestsellers, live in Thermopolis, Wyoming. *Children of the Dawnland* is their first book for young readers.

FUN FACTS ABOUT THE GEARS

- Michael and Kathleen are award-winning archaeologists as well as award-winning authors.
- The Gears raise North American bison, or buffalo, on a ranch in Wyoming.
- One of the Gears' first buffalo was named Pia. Pia's mother abandoned her when she was less than one day old, so the Gears raised Pia on bottles of goat's milk. Pia was the star of the National Geographic special, "Thunderbeast." Since that time, the Gears have raised three other "bottle-babies:" Nebi, Keeza, and Wyatt.
- The Gears operate their own archaeological research company, Wind River Archaeological Consultants, and present papers about their findings every year at the national meetings of the Society for American Archaeology. Their paper for 2009 is entitled, "Science and Prehistoric Diet: Utilizing the PEOPLE books for Public Education."
- They are currently working on a Paleo-Indian Clovis site in northern Wyoming that dates to 13,000 years ago. One of the fascinating things they've found is that when the Clovis people lived there, this small valley was filled with California Live Oaks, Pecan trees, huckleberries, and blueberries—though today it is high desert country characterized by juniper, cactus, and sagebrush.
- The Gears live in a canyon at the edge of the Wind River Indian Reservation. The closest house is seven miles away, and they can't get phone service in their home, so they have to drive to the top of the mountain to make cell phone calls!



Buffalo overview



Buffalo cow and new calf



Morning ritual: Nebi waiting for Kathy to make her breakfast bottle

THE GEARS' SCRAPBOOK



Kathy and Nebi



Nebi (5 days old) helping Kathy research PEOPLE OF THE OWL



Mike feeding Pia (8 days old)

Photos: Michael and Kathleen Gear

Starscape Teacher's Guide



CHILDREN of the DAWNLAND

THE END OF THE ICE AGE:
A TIME OF MELTING GLACIERS, MASS
EXTINCTIONS, UNPREDICTABLE DANGERS...
AND YOUNG HEROES

**Kathleen O'Neal Gear
and W. Michael Gear**

DEAR EDUCATOR,

Children of the Dawnland is set around 12,900 years ago and focuses on the earliest culture in North America: Clovis culture. These first Americans were an amazing people. They hunted—and in some cases were hunted by—dire wolves, short-faced bears, giant beavers the size of black bears, mammoths, mastodons, and ancient bison. Within four hundred years of arriving in North America they had colonized the entire continent. Clovis archaeological sites are found in every state, as well as in Canada. Some of the most important Clovis sites are found along the edges of what were, when they lived there, massive glaciers.

But 12,900 years ago, their extraordinary culture suddenly ceased to exist. Archaeologists call this moment in time “the Clovis horizon,” because it is clearly marked by a black layer, or mat, of soil. No Clovis sites have ever been found above this layer.

Children of the Dawnland is about one of the earth’s greatest environmental catastrophes. Recent TV shows have

called it “The Clovis Comet,” but it was much more than that. The best scientific evidence now suggests that the comet was only a small part of the debris of a supernova explosion 41,000 years ago that reached the earth around 13,000 years ago.

Our goal in writing *Children of the Dawnland* is to allow children to see through the eyes of prehistoric peoples so that they can learn about this fascinating time in North American history. In accord with that goal, we hope this book helps you to teach your students not only about the original First Americans and their remarkable cultures, but also about astronomy, geology, chemistry, climate change, botany, mass extinctions, and many other scientific subjects.

This Teacher’s Guide will also be available online at us.macmillan.com/childrenofthedawnland. If you or your students ever have any questions, please feel free to email us at: kathleengear@yahoo.com. Just be sure to put *Children of the Dawnland* in the subject line to avoid the spam filters!

We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Kathleen O’Neal Gear
and W. Michael Gear



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WRITING AND RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

I. CLOVIS CULTURE

- Go to the library or online to learn more about Clovis and pre-Clovis archaeological sites across North America. Divide into small groups to create informative posters about individual sites and how discoveries made at those sites have contributed to our understanding of ancient human history.
- Divide into three groups to debate the question: How did the great beasts become extinct? Each group should argue in favor of one of the following theories: (1) overhunting by humans, (2) climate change or (3) disease. Go to the library or online to research these positions.

II. DREAMS AND DREAMERS

- Research and write a short report about the role of dreams in African American, Native American, Chinese, or another culture. Learn to make a Native American dream catcher or study the importance of the mandala in Hinduism and Buddhism. Think of a favorite novelist, musician, or visual artist who explores the theme of dreams and study one of his or her dream-related works.
- Twig’s dreams suggest a troubling fate for her people. Use chalk, watercolor paints, or other visual arts media to depict a scene from one of Twig’s dreams. Share your completed artwork with friends or classmates and invite them to share their drawings or paintings. Are colors, images, or other elements common to several pictures? What was most challenging or exciting about trying to depict a dream through art?
- Review passages in the novel, written in italics, in which Twig experiences powerful dreams. Examine the word choice, point-of-view, tense, sentence structure, and other elements of these passages. Then, in a style inspired by the novel, write your own 2–3 paragraph dream story. It can be based on a real, recalled dream, or a fictional dream idea.

III. CHANGE

- With friends or classmates, take turns role-playing a conversation between Twig and Greyhawk in which you discuss the animals you encounter, such as terns and short-faced bears, and those which have disappeared, such as mammoths. How do you feel when elders tell stories of lost beasts? Do you worry about the melting Ice Giants or other natural occurrences? Can you imagine what your world will look like when you are Twig’s grandfather’s age?
- Twig and her people live in a time of great climatic change. In addition to a threatened environment, our world is undergoing dramatic economic changes. Divide a sheet of paper into two columns headed, “Prehistoric Changes” and “Modern Day Changes,” listing at least ten changes for each below. Compare and contrast the lists. Does this exercise help you better understand Twig’s world? How might Twig’s story help you gain perspective on what is happening in the world today? Write a 2–3 paragraph essay discussing one or two comparisons which you find particularly interesting.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- From whose viewpoint is Chapter 1 told? What does this perspective help readers learn about the world in which the story takes place? What elements of the landscape seem frightening or worrisome to you?
- What are the Ice Giants? How are their actions explained and understood by Twig, her mother, and their people? What are Thunderbirds and Cloud People? What do such names reveal about the prehistoric peoples’ understanding of natural occurrences, such as rain?
- Who is Cobia? Why was Twig’s grandfather sent to kidnap Cobia as a child? Why are warriors from Buffalobead Village sent to find Cobia? What happens to the warriors?
- How does Chapter 8 change your understanding of Twig’s character and your sense of the story? How does this chapter, and other dream chapters, make the novel unique? Do you believe in Twig’s dreams? Explain your answer.
- On page 77, Twig asks Greyhawk and Grizzly, “Do you want the buffalo to go away forever, like the mammoths have?” What is important about her question? How does it help readers to better understand the time in which Twig lives? What resources do we fear losing in our own time? What other modern-day comparisons might you make to Twig’s concern for the buffalo?
- Why does Riddle finally allow Twig to study with Screech Owl? What does Screech Owl mean when he tells Twig that “...every great Dreamer, at some point, must step into the mouth of the Spirit that wants to chew her up” (Chapter 16)? How might this also be an important piece of wisdom for Twig’s entire community? Does it have meaning for modern leaders?
- How does Water Snake’s spirit help Twig elude the Thornback raiders? What terrors do Greyhawk witness? How does Twig persuade Greyhawk to continue their search for Cobia, despite their village being raided?
- What happens when Twig calls for her spirit helper, Eagle Man? How does this terrifying moment lead her to Cobia? Is Cobia a real person, a spirit, or another type of being in her early conversation with Twig? Explain your answer.
- How does Cobia protect Twig and Greyhawk? How do Twig’s dreams help lead her back to her people? Where does Twig tell the Sunpath people they must go? How do you understand the relationship between Twig and Cobia at the end of the story?
- Do you think it is important that the final paragraphs of the novel are told from Twig’s dream viewpoint? How does the Afterword affect your understanding of the novel’s end? Had you been Twig, would you have had the courage to dream and to embark on a journey to the Duskland? Why or why not? Do you ever feel you need a similar type of courage in your own life? Explain your answer.

To order *Children of the Dawnland*, please contact:
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