Human and Animal Interactions

by Kim Griswell
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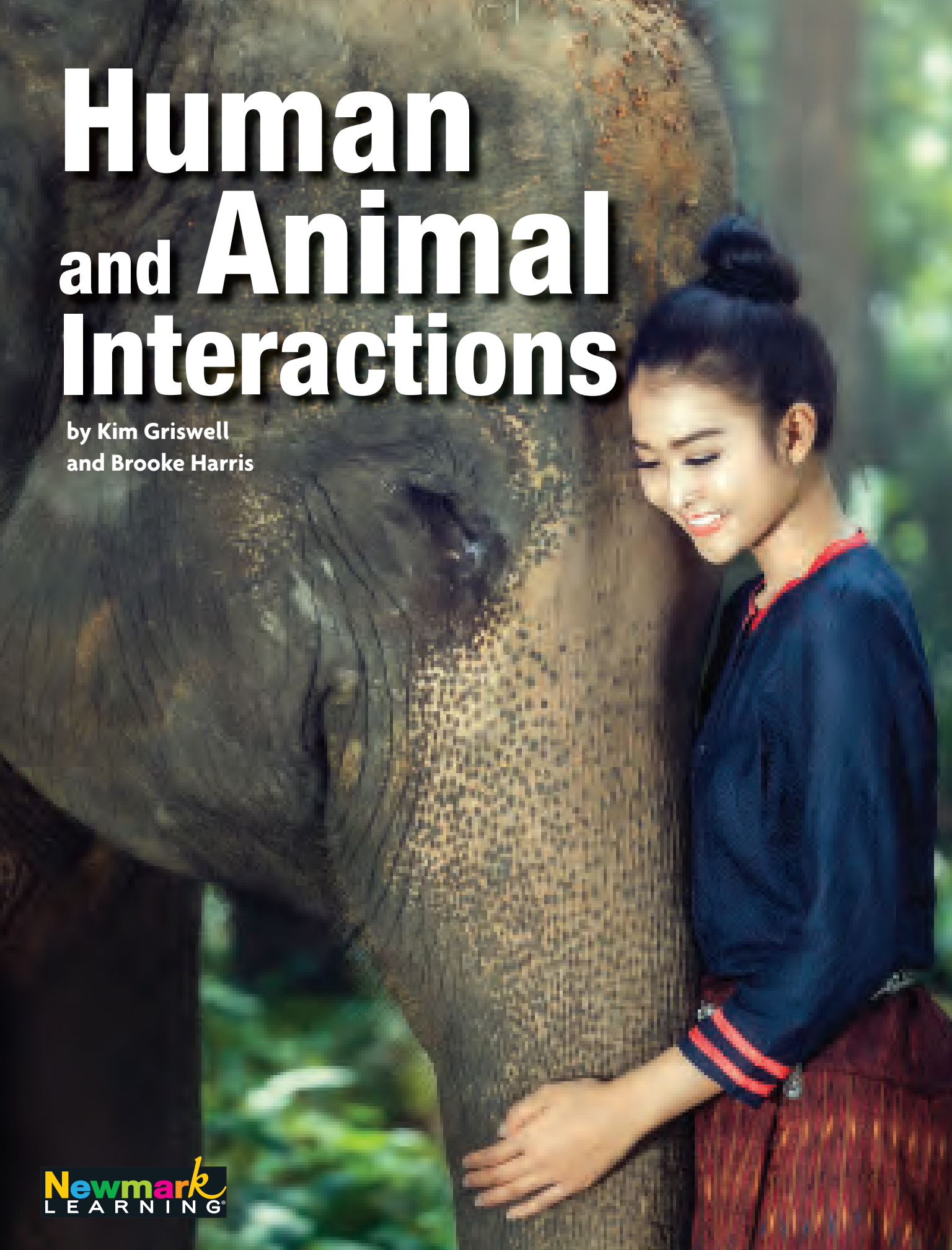

Newmark LEARNING

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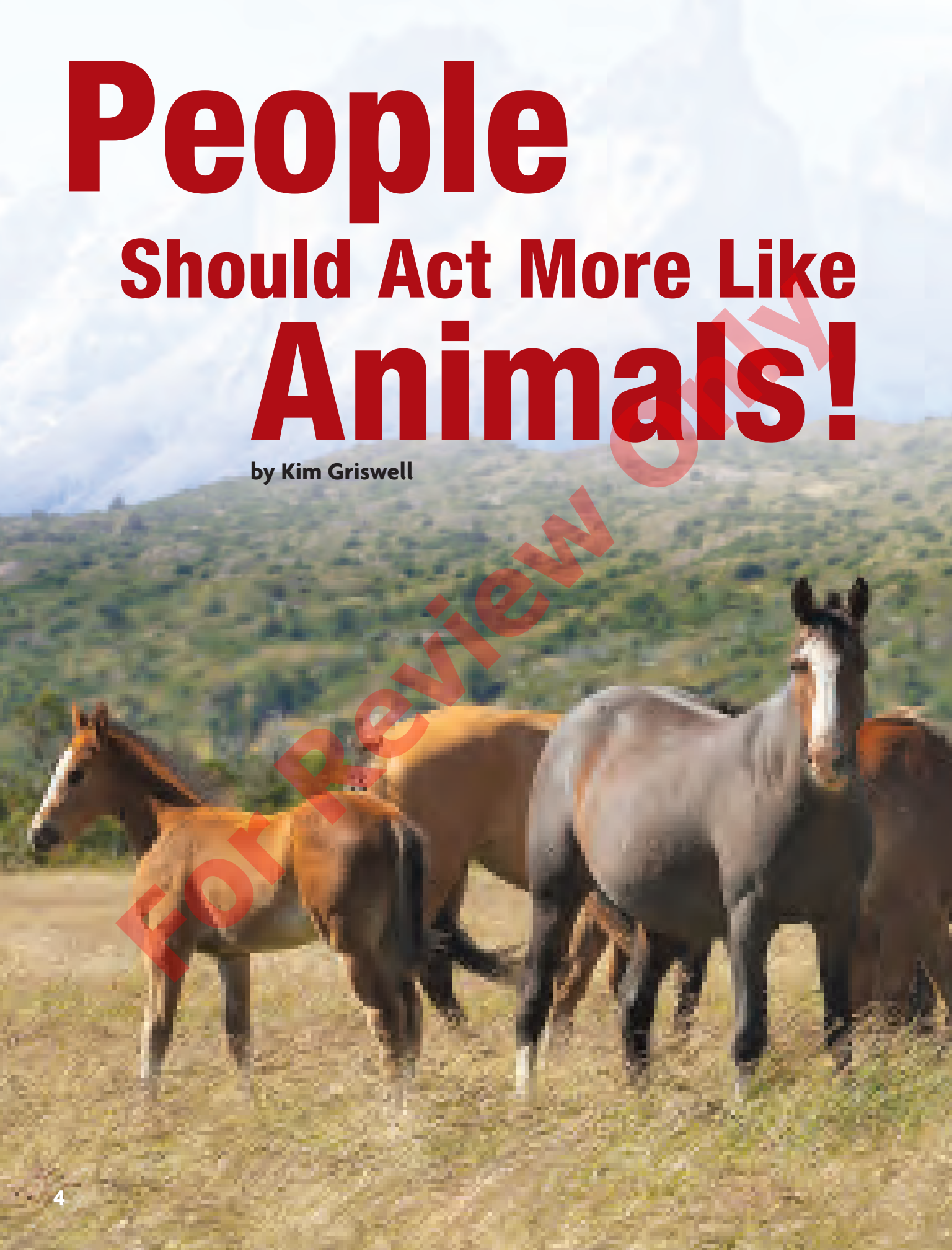
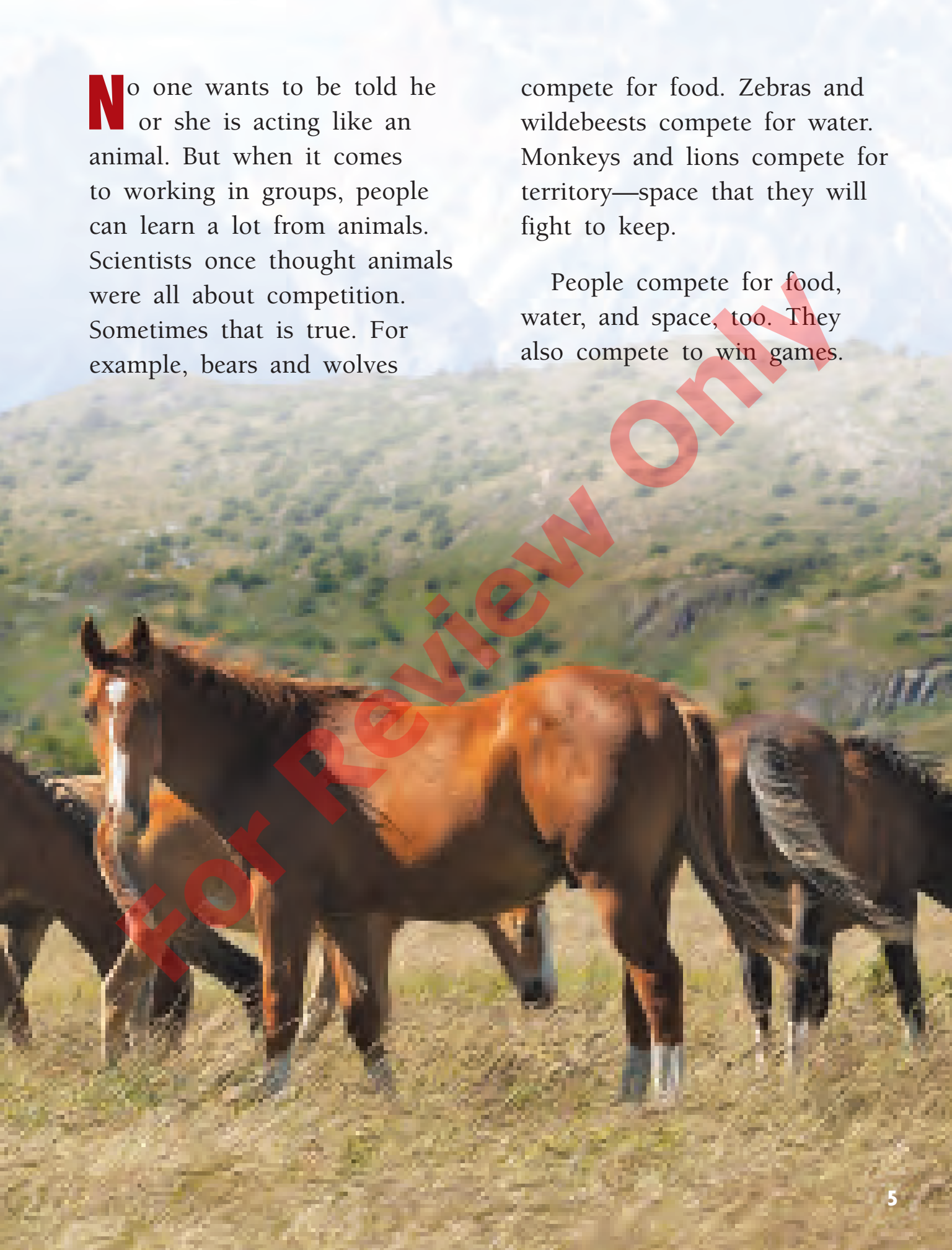
People Should Act More Like Animals!

by Kim Griswell



No one wants to be told he or she is acting like an animal. But when it comes to working in groups, people can learn a lot from animals. Scientists once thought animals were all about competition. Sometimes that is true. For example, bears and wolves compete for food. Zebras and wildebeests compete for water. Monkeys and lions compete for territory—space that they will fight to keep.

People compete for food, water, and space, too. They also compete to win games.



The animal world is not all about competition, though. Sometimes cooperation is the key to success. Animal studies now show that certain species —for example, Canada geese, ants, elephants, and naked mole rats—cooperate far more than they compete. These animals work together to find food, defend themselves, and deal with changes. They follow strong leaders. They divide the work. They talk things over, and they help each other out. People who act more like these animals may find they can get a lot more done—together.

Canada geese can fly farther in a V-formation.

Go, Team Goose!

- Canada geese honk to encourage the leader of the flying V to keep going.
- Flying in a V-formation helps geese communicate and keep track of each other.
- If a goose falls sick or is hurt, two geese drop out of the V. They stay behind to protect the sick goose until it can fly again.

Follow the Leader

Like Canada geese, people have leaders that they follow. Unlike Canada geese, however, human leaders do not always step aside to let someone else take charge. People can learn from Canada geese how to share the leadership role.

Canada geese spend summers in Canada and other places in North America. They fly south before winter sets in. According to the Department of Fish and Wildlife, geese can fly 2,400 kilometers (1,500 miles) from cold Canada to warm southern California in a single day. Canada geese fly far and fast by working together. They fly in a V-formation.

The leader flying at the tip of the V pushes the air out of the way. Those behind the leader can use less energy to fly. At some point during a long flight, the lead goose tires. For the good of the group, the leader moves aside. Another goose takes the lead. Because the flying V-formation requires less energy from each bird, the flock can fly farther than if each goose flew alone.

Divide the Work

Both people and ants work in teams to do a job. But if a task looks too big, people might worry, "How can we do this?" Ants, however, don't doubt. They share the work and get it done.

▲ **Different types of ants do different jobs all for the good of the colony.**

Ants live in a group called a colony. Each ant has a special job that helps the colony survive. The queen ant is the colony's mother. Her job is to lay eggs that will become new colony members. A few ants are soldiers. These ants guard the colony. Most ants, though, are workers. They keep the nest clean, take care of larvae (ant babies), and forage for food.

By sharing the work, a colony of tiny ants can complete big tasks. For example, scientists wanted to know what ants would do if they found food that was too big for a single ant to carry. They used a cereal O for bait. A worker ant found the cereal. Soon a team of ants showed up. They circled the cereal O. Each ant grabbed hold with its mandibles. Moving together, the ants carried off the cereal.

▲ Ants working together can carry a cereal O home to their nest.

Little Weight Lifters

Compared to ants, humans are weaklings. Ants can lift fifty times their body weight or more. Most people, however, can lift only one-half to three-fourths of their body weight. A cereal O weighs about 350 times that of a single ant. Yet it took just twelve ants to move one cereal O. If the cereal O had been scaled to people size, it would have taken about 450 people to move it.