These days they’re harmless. In fact, you can find them mounted and on display at Chicago’s Field Museum.

But when they were alive, they were a terror. There were only two of them, but they killed at will. People lost sleep worrying about who would be the next victim. One person died of shock just thinking about “the man-eaters of Tsavo.”

In 1898 the British were building a railroad across east Africa. It was not an easy task. The tracks crossed mile...
after mile of barren land. Food, water, and supplies had to be hauled in from far away. Skilled workers had to be brought in from the East Indies. Then, when the railroad workers reached the Tsavo River, they faced an even bigger problem. This new problem was lions—two huge lions that fed on human flesh.

Colonel John Henry Patterson was in charge of the railroad project. At first he didn’t believe the workers’ stories of lion attacks. He thought they were just rumors. Then one night he became convinced of the lions’ existence. One of the lions snuck into the tent of a railroad worker. The lion grabbed the worker by the throat. As another worker watched in horror, he was dragged out of the tent. “Let go!” he cried. But the lion’s grip was too strong. The next day, Patterson found the worker’s remains. It was not a pretty sight.

The other workers, of course, were terrified. Many ran away or refused to work. Patterson was scared too. He also knew that the lions had to be killed. Otherwise, the railroad line would never get finished. Being a skilled hunter, he decided that he would kill them himself. He didn’t think it would be that hard to do. He was wrong.

That night Patterson, taking his rifle, climbed up into a tree near the area where the worker had been killed. There he waited for the lions. He had tied a goat to the tree, hoping this tasty meal would entice them. The lions, however, had a different meal in mind. Late that night, one of the cats attacked another tent, far away from the spot where Patterson was waiting, and dragged away another worker.

Patterson heard the victim’s screams, but there was little he could do. Work camps stretched for eight miles along the railroad. He couldn’t guard them all. Instead, he decided to build thick thorn fences around each camp. He thought that would keep the man-eaters out. The workers felt much safer with the fences in place. They also began keeping a fire burning in each camp throughout the night.

None of these safety measures worked, however. The lions never missed a meal. They either jumped over the fences or they crawled through weak spots in them. Once again, the killings terrorized the workers.

Patterson was frightened, too. “In the whole of my life,” he said, “I have never experienced anything more nerve shaking than to hear the deep roars of these dreadful monsters.” When the roaring came closer, “[I knew] that some one or other of us was doomed to be their victim.” Just before the lions entered a camp, their roaring ceased. That’s when the men knew one of the lions was stalking its prey. Soon the beast would attack. But where? Patterson never seemed to guess right. He kept setting traps, but the lions kept striking someplace else. The lions, he later said, always seemed to know where his traps were.

At last, Patterson decided to try a new tactic. He would no longer wait for the lions to come to him. He would hunt the lions on their own ground. Day after day he crawled through the bushes. He never found them. That was probably just as well. If he had come across them, they would almost certainly have killed him before he could kill them.
Meanwhile, work on the railroad had come to a complete stop. Hundreds of workers had run away. Those who stayed could think of only one thing—how to stay safe. Some tied their beds up in trees. Others slept on the top of water tanks or roofs. Still others stayed in their tents but dug pits in the middle of the dirt floor. They slept in the pits, which they covered over with heavy logs.

One day Patterson came across a donkey that the lions had killed. They hadn’t eaten all of it and Patterson thought they might return to finish their meal. So he built a platform near the donkey’s body outside one of the camps. That night he sat on the top of the platform with his rifle and waited.

Soon one of the lions came near. With no moon, the night was black, and it was difficult to see. But Patterson could hear the lion’s deep sigh. The animal was hungry. But it was not going after the donkey. It was going after Patterson! Slowly the lion circled the platform. Patterson sat there terrified, “hardly daring even to blink my eyes.”

The lion came closer and closer. Still Patterson could not see it. Then at last he saw the lion’s faint form crouched under a nearby bush. Patterson pulled the trigger of his rifle. The lion gave a terrific roar. It ran into the thick brush.

Patterson kept firing where he thought the lion was hiding. The lion’s growls turned to moans. Then the night was silent. One of the man-eaters of Tsavo was dead.

The shooting woke up the whole camp. When the workers heard the news they gave a loud cheer. “Every man in camp came out,” said Patterson, “tom toms split the night air and horns were blown as men came running to the scene.” The workers danced the rest of the night away.

The dead lion was huge. It measured nearly nine feet in length and three and a half feet in height. (Male lions rarely grow more than eight feet in length and three feet in height.) It took eight men to carry its body to camp.

One lion was dead, but there was still one roaming free. For the second lion, Patterson used dead goats as bait. When the lion approached, he shot it in the shoulder. This lion, however, managed to slip away before he could shoot it again. Ten days later, the beast came back to get one of the men sleeping in a tree. This time Patterson was in the right place. He fired shots at the lion, but didn’t kill it. The next night, Patterson climbed the same tree. When the lion returned, he shot it in the chest. Once again, the lion got away, badly wounded but not dead.

In the morning Patterson went after the lion. He knew it was injured, so he thought it would be easy to hunt it down. He spotted the lion hiding in some bushes. He fired his rifle. He hit the lion, but that didn’t stop it from charging. Patterson shot it again and again. Each time the lion tumbled to the ground only to get up and charge once more. Finally, its leg shattered, the lion could barely move. Patterson killed it with another volley of shots. The lions’ reign of terror was over. The workers returned to their jobs. By then, however, “the man-eaters of Tsavo” had claimed more than 120 lives.

If you have been timed while reading this article, enter your reading time below. Then turn to the Words-per-Minute Table on page 55 and look up your reading speed (words per minute). Enter your reading speed on the graph on page 56.

**Reading Time: Lesson 3**

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**Minutes** | **Seconds**
A  Finding the Main Idea

One statement below expresses the main idea of the article. One statement is too general, or too broad. The other statement explains only part of the article; it is too narrow. Label the statements using the following key:

M—Main Idea  B—Too Broad  N—Too Narrow

__________  1. Two man-eating lions managed to halt work on a railroad in Africa and kill more than 120 people before being killed by Colonel Patterson.

__________  2. Colonel Patterson had to fire several shots at the lions in order to kill them.

__________  3. Man-eating lions terrorized people in the Tsavo area in Africa in the late 19th century.

Score 15 points for a correct M answer.
Score 5 points for each correct B or N answer.

Total Score: Finding the Main Idea

B  Recalling Facts

How well do you remember the facts in the article? Put an X in the box next to the answer that correctly completes each statement about the article.

1. Colonel Patterson became convinced of the existence of the lions when
   □ a. he heard the workers’ stories.
   □ b. he found the remains of one of the workers.
   □ c. a lion grabbed him by the throat.

2. In order to protect the workers, Patterson decided to
   □ a. build thorn fences around each camp.
   □ b. feed goats to the lions.
   □ c. build pits in the workers’ tents.

3. The workers knew a lion was about to attack when
   □ a. they heard its roar.
   □ b. they saw the beast.
   □ c. it grew silent.

4. Patterson drew one of the lions to the tree where he was hiding by
   □ a. tying his bed in the tree.
   □ b. building a platform.
   □ c. waiting near a donkey it had half-eaten.

5. In order to kill the second lion, Patterson had to
   □ a. shoot it several times over several days.
   □ b. tie a goat to a tree.
   □ c. build a platform.

Score 5 points for each correct answer.

Total Score: Recalling Facts
C Making Inferences
When you combine your own experience with information from a text to draw a conclusion that is not directly stated in that text, you are making an inference. Below are five statements that may or may not be inferences based on information in the article. Label the statements using the following key:

C—Correct Inference    F—Faulty Inference

1. The lions liked the taste of human flesh more than the flesh of other animals.
2. Patterson volunteered to kill the lions because he knew he could outsmart them.
3. The railroad workers didn’t have guns to protect themselves from the lions.
4. Lions cannot climb trees.
5. The lions of Tsavo were very strong.

Score 5 points for each correct answer.

Total Score: Making Inferences

D Using Words Precisely
Each numbered sentence below contains an underlined word or phrase from the article. Following the sentence are three definitions. One definition is closest to the meaning of the underlined word. One definition is opposite or nearly opposite. Label those two definitions using the following key; do not label the remaining definition.

C—Closest    O—Opposite or Nearly Opposite

1. As another worker watched in horror, he was dragged out of the tent.
   a. thrown
   b. pulled
   c. pushed

2. He had tied a goat to the tree, hoping this tasty meal would entice them.
   a. attract
   b. bait
   c. disgust

3. Just before the lions entered a camp, their roaring ceased.
   a. stopped
   b. began
   c. became quieter

4. Then at last he saw the lion’s faint form crouched under a nearby bush.
   a. sleeping
   b. lying close to the ground
   c. standing
5. Finally, its leg shattered, the lion could barely move.
   a. whole
   b. weak
   c. broken

Score 3 points for each correct C answer.
Score 2 points for each correct O answer.
Total Score: Using Words Precisely

Enter the four total scores in the spaces below, and add them together to find your Reading Comprehension Score. Then record your Reading Comprehension Score on the graph on page 57.

Author’s Approach

1. The authors use the first sentence of the article to
   a. get the reader’s attention.
   b. inform the reader about the lions of Tsavo.
   c. describe the lions of Tsavo.

2. The main purpose of the second paragraph is to
   a. summarize the article.
   b. describe the setting of the article.
   c. introduce the characters in the article.

3. Which of the following statements from the article best describes Colonel Patterson’s reasons for trying to kill the lions?
   a. Patterson was scared, too.
   b. At first he didn’t believe the workers’ stories of lion attacks.
   c. The railroad line would never get finished.

Number of correct answers
Record your personal assessment of your work on the Critical Thinking Chart on page 58.
**Summarizing and Paraphrasing**

Follow the directions provided for questions 1 and 2. Put an X in the box next to the correct answer for question 3.

1. Reread paragraph 8 in the article. Below, write a summary of the paragraph in no more than 25 words.

   [Blank line]
   [Blank line]
   [Blank line]
   [Blank line]

   Reread your summary and decide whether it covers the important ideas in the paragraph. Next, decide how to shorten the summary to 15 words or less without leaving out any essential information. Write this summary below.

   [Blank line]
   [Blank line]
   [Blank line]

2. Look for the important ideas and events in paragraphs 11, 12, and 13. Summarize those paragraphs in one or two sentences.

   [Blank line]
   [Blank line]
   [Blank line]

3. Choose the best one-sentence paraphrase for the following sentence from the article: “The lions’ reign of terror was over.”

   [ ] a. The lions were not a threat any longer.
   [ ] b. The workers were no longer frightened of the lions.
   [ ] c. There were no more lions in the Tsavo area.

   Number of correct answers

   Record your personal assessment of your work on the Critical Thinking Chart on page 58.

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**Critical Thinking**

Follow the directions provided for questions 1, 4, and 5. Put an X in the box next to the correct answer for questions 2 and 3.

1. For each statement below, write O if it expresses an opinion or F if it expresses a fact.

   [ ] a. He didn’t think it would be that hard to do.
   [ ] b. Work camps stretched for eight miles along the railroad.
   [ ] c. The dead lion was huge.

2. From the article, you can conclude that if Colonel Patterson had not killed the lions,

   [ ] a. someone else would have killed them.
   [ ] b. the lions would have stopped terrorizing the railroad workers.
   [ ] c. the railroad would not have been completed.
3. What was the effect of Patterson waiting for the lions near a half-eaten donkey?

☐ a. Another person in the camp was killed.
☐ b. Patterson was able to kill one of the lions.
☐ c. Patterson built a platform near the donkey.

4. In which paragraph did you find the information you needed to answer question 3?

5. Choose from the letters in the phrase bank below to correctly complete the following statement. Write the letters on the lines.

Phrase bank:
a. the railroad workers
b. work on the railroad stopped
c. fear for their lives

According to the article, two man-eating lions caused _______ to _______, and the effect was _______.

_____ Number of correct answers

Record your personal assessment of your work on the Critical Thinking Chart on page 58.