

## READING GRADE 3

### A. Article

#### Smokey Bear

“Only you can prevent wildfires.” Maybe you’ve heard these words from the famous Smokey Bear. People used to hear his words all the time on the radio and on television. There were Smokey Bear posters, a song, toys, and books. Why was this bear so important?

In the 1940s, forest fires became a major concern for the United States. Park rangers wanted to find a way to keep forests safe. They knew they needed to warn people about the dangers of forest fires. Forest fires could burn down many, many trees. They could also harm humans and animals. The rangers wanted a way to teach people the rules of fire safety. What was the best way to get this important message out?

They decided to start a campaign to help people learn about forest fire safety. Posters were made using a picture of a bear wearing a hat. The name on the hat was Smokey. Smokey Bear, as he was known, was pouring a bucket of water over a campfire. The posters worked. Smokey Bear became very popular.

Then something terrible happened. A human started a huge forest fire in the Capitan Mountains in New Mexico. The fire destroyed 17,000 acres of trees. This is the size of a giant forest! During the fire, a bear cub raced up a tree to stay safe. The cub held onto the tree for dear life. Firefighters finally saw the cub and rescued him. He was badly burned, especially on his feet. The bear cub was taken to an animal hospital in Santa Fe to get well. Then he was taken to live in a zoo.

At first, the bear cub was called “Hotfoot Teddy.” However, his name changed and the cub was renamed Smokey Bear, after the bear pictured on the posters. The real bear cub was used in ads and stories.

The real Smokey Bear became as popular as the bear on the poster. He even received mail. In fact, he got so much mail, the postal service had to give Smokey his own ZIP Code™! Many years later, a Smokey Bear postage stamp was made. The stamp is meant to celebrate all the work the bear has done to protect our forests.

