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### Summary of “The Girl Who Married the Bear”

Throughout literature, there has been a fascination with the interconnectedness of the human and natural worlds. In the oral story “The Girl Who Married the Bear,” the focus zeros in on interactions and consequences each world has on each other, questioning if either has true loyalties to their own. The story opens immediately with the main protagonist disrespecting the natural world and doing it arrogantly. While berry picking, the little girl seems to need to say “all kinds of the world to [the bear droppings] and kicked and jumped,” even though she’s been scolded by her mother multiple times (Johns and Wedge, 7). In the middle of their trip, the girl gets distracted and meets a man who lures her away from her family deeper and deeper into the woods. The tension between the man and girl intensifies as the girl constantly discusses her family and home while they are together, making it clear that she wants to go home. The man repeatedly bangs her on the head to ensure for at least a short period of time, the girl has no recollection of her family. When the girl recognizes her surroundings and tries to get her family's attention, the man figures out and scolds her, but unlike when her mother scolds her, she listens. The main tension is created when the girl realizes the man is part bear and part human, scared to leave and die; she decides to “stay with him as long as he was good to her”(Johns and Wedge, 9). Eventually, the girl learns to love and care for him as she bears their two kids, giving birth in February at the same time “bears have their cubs”(Johns and Wedge, 9). Soon their peace is disturbed by the girl’s brothers going to the bear's cave to retrieve their sister. The man insists on

fighting the brothers, most likely murdering them, but after many attempts, the girl tames the man. The brothers eventually make it to the bear's cave, but in the battle kill the bear and search and find their sister. The girl returns back home with her two children, still tainted by her trauma of losing her husband. A year later, the brothers pester her into playing with them by dressing up as a bear, but she refuses because she'll turn into a bear if she puts on the hide. The boys end up tricking her and putting the hide on their sister and her children. She turns into a grizzly bear murdering all her family members except the youngest brother, weeping while she does it. The girl and her two cubs head into the wilderness on their own. As said in the beginning, this story focuses on the relationship between the natural and human world. Still, I think it really focuses on the risk associated with humans encroaching onto the natural world, basically the environment. The girl ultimately turned her life upside down because she disrespected the natural world when she knew she wasn't supposed to. Though she faces murdering her own family and becoming a bear as a consequence, she also finds love and has two children of her own which can be seen as a plus. The question 'is the risk worth it all,' can also be seen in modern society. Almost every day, another example of deforestation or an industry contributes to more greenhouse gasses, which aid human consumption and life but ultimately harm the environment. This story makes the reader reflect if human gratification is worth the consequences of the natural world.