

B2-C1 Worksheet: When Chimpanzees Turn on Former Friends - 14 April 2026

Article

For years, the Ngogo chimpanzees in Uganda seemed to be an unusually tight-knit community. Researchers had watched this huge group - around 200 animals - live, feed and travel together for decades. That is why scientists were stunned when the group began to grow apart and finally split into two rival sides. What had once looked stable from the outside slowly started to come apart, and by 2018 the break was impossible to ignore.

According to the new study, the smaller western side then began to carry out coordinated attacks on the central group. Former companions turned on each other, adult males were killed and infants were picked off in a conflict that has lasted for years. Researchers say it is the first clearly documented case of a permanent split inside a wild chimpanzee community leading to sustained lethal violence. The whole story has played out in Kibale National Park, where scientists have followed the animals closely for decades.

No one can pin down a single cause, but researchers think the group may simply have become too large to hold together. Competition for food, mating opportunities and status may all have helped set off the split, while changes in leadership may also have played a part. The findings point to an uncomfortable truth: even among our closest relatives, social bonds can break down when pressure builds. Scientists are careful not to turn it into a simple human comparison, but the echoes are hard to brush aside.

True/False

Decide if each statement is True (T) or False (F).

1. Researchers had seen the Ngogo chimpanzees as a stable community for many years.
2. The split was obvious to scientists from the very beginning.
3. The western group is reported to have carried out coordinated attacks on the central group.
4. The study describes this as the first clearly documented permanent split within a wild chimpanzee community.
5. Scientists are certain that one single event caused the conflict.
6. Competition over food, mating and status may have contributed to the division.
7. The article argues that chimpanzee behaviour can be explained as exactly the same as human behaviour.
8. The findings suggest that strong social bonds can weaken under pressure.

Phrase Match

Match the phrases (1-10) to the correct definitions (A-J).

Phrases (1-10)	Definitions (A-J)
1. grow apart	A. to remain united or stable
2. come apart	B. to kill or remove one by one
3. carry out	C. to break down or stop functioning as one whole
4. turn on	D. to identify something exactly
5. pick off	E. to suggest that something is true
6. play out	F. to do or complete something
7. pin down	G. to cause something to begin
8. hold together	H. to become less close over time
9. set off	I. to happen over a period of time
10. point to	J. to suddenly attack someone you were close to

Synonym Match

Match the words (1-10) to the correct synonyms (A-J).

Words (1-10)	Synonyms (A-J)
1. tight-knit	A. very shocked
2. stunned	B. deadly
3. rival	C. continuing for a long time
4. coordinated	D. clear signs of something similar
5. sustained	E. stress or force from a difficult situation
6. lethal	F. closely connected
7. status	G. close connections between people or animals
8. pressure	H. competing against another
9. bonds	I. social rank or position
10. echoes	J. organised to work together

Use the new language

Please choose 5 words or phrases and make your own sentence using the new word or phrase.

Discussion Questions

Student A

1. Have you ever seen friends or colleagues slowly grow apart? What happened?
2. Do animal stories like this interest you, or do you usually prefer human stories?
3. What kinds of behaviour help a group hold together?
4. Do you think competition always sets off conflict, or can it sometimes be healthy?
5. Have you ever been stunned by a sudden change in a group you knew well?
6. Why do you think people often find stories about animals so fascinating?
7. What is one situation where pressure can bring out the worst in people?
8. Do you think close bonds are easy or difficult to maintain over time?

Student B

1. What does this story point to about the importance of social stability?
2. Why might a very large group come apart more easily than a smaller one?
3. How far should scientists go when comparing animal conflict with human conflict?
4. Can leadership changes really set off deep division in a community?
5. What can workplaces, schools or societies learn from the way groups break down?
6. Does modern life make it harder for communities to hold together?
7. Why are people often drawn to stories that play out like a drama?
8. Are conflict and rivalry unavoidable when status and resources are limited?

Answer Key

True/False: 1=T, 2=F, 3=T, 4=T, 5=F, 6=T, 7=F, 8=T

Phrase Match: 1=H, 2=C, 3=F, 4=J, 5=B, 6=I, 7=D, 8=A, 9=G, 10=E

Synonym Match: 1=F, 2=A, 3=H, 4=J, 5=C, 6=B, 7=I, 8=E, 9=G, 10=D

Example sentences with the phrases

1. I grew apart from a few university friends after we moved to different cities.
2. The old agreement came apart once money became an issue.
3. The research team carried out the study over two years.
4. Some fans turned on the coach after a run of poor results.
5. The wolves picked off the weakest animal first.
6. The dispute played out in public for months.
7. It is hard to pin down the exact reason sales dropped.
8. Small routines can help a family hold together during stressful times.
9. A careless remark set off an argument at dinner.
10. The latest figures point to a change in travel habits.