



White Fang

Author: Jack London (1876–1916)

Teaching Notes author: Jo Tregenza

Information about assessment and curriculum links can be found at the end of these Teaching Notes.

Synopsis

White Fang tells the story of how a wolf is gradually transformed into a dog. He is half-dog, half-wolf and the only survivor in his litter. The story is told mainly from his point of view. He starts life in the wild with his mother Kiche, but then they are kept and trained by Grey Beaver, a Native American. Grey Beaver is a kind but firm owner but White Fang clashes with Lip-Lip, a working dog also kept by the tribe. White Fang is taken to Fort Yukon on a trip to trade furs, where Grey Beaver is tricked into selling him. White Fang is beaten and turned into a fighting dog, but two men save him and treat him with kindness. In time he responds and is tamed.

Social and historical context

White Fang is set in the Yukon region of North America where western Canada borders Alaska. This region was controlled by The Hudson's Bay Company until it was purchased in 1870 by the Canadian government. In the 1890s this area's population rapidly increased because of 'gold fever' during the Klondike Gold Rush. This was a time of trading posts, fur trappers, Native Americans, miners, gold prospectors and the origins of the Canadian Mounted Police. The story explores civilisation and nature, and the violence and morality that exists in both these spheres. Ultimately it is a tale of redemption as the wild wolf-dog responds to kind owners.

Group or guided reading

Introducing the book

- *(Predicting)* Focus on the front cover. Ask the children: *What conclusions can you draw about the characteristics of the wolf? Do his eyes give any clues?*
- *(Clarifying)* Look at a map of North America and find the Yukon region. Discuss the features of its landscape with the children. Ensure they become familiar with some of the vocabulary related to the setting. Children might like to look into the background of Native Americans to support their understanding.

During reading

- *(Clarifying, Summarising)* Read the first two chapters together, taking opportunities for individual children to read sections to the others. Once the reading is finished ask the children to summarise what they have understood so far.
- *(Clarifying)* Can the children identify the two main characters in the book? What do they understand has happened so far? Take the opportunity to clarify any misunderstandings.
- *(Questioning, Deducing)* How do the children feel about the way the author describes the death of the four cubs in such a matter-of-fact way? Why do they think the author has handled it in this way? This question will introduce children to the themes of natural selection and nature's hierarchy of predators.



Classics

Assessment: Check that children:

- can understand, retrieve and summarise information from the text
- can deduce why the author has described the events in the way he has.
- (*Predicting*) Now read Chapter 3 together. Discuss with the children how this chapter sets up the strong relationship between the mother and the cub. Can the children predict what might happen between the two animals?

Independent reading

- (*Imagining, Summarising*) The children should read Chapters 4–7 independently. Tell the children that when they have finished reading you are going to ask them to create three freeze-frame images that will summarise and explain the plot so far.

Assessment:

- Can the children choose key scenes that demonstrate the main points of the text?
- Ask the children to finish reading to the end of the story independently.

Returning and responding to the text

- (*Clarifying*) When the children have read the whole story, ask them to talk about how they felt as they read the story. Did it evoke an emotional response from the readers? If so, how did the author achieve this?

Assessment:

- Can the children comment on the overall effect of the text on the reader?

Speaking, listening and drama activities

Objective: Use and explore different question types. Reflect on how working in role helps to explore complex issues.

- (*Questioning, Imagining*) Ask the children to work in pairs to develop questions that they would like to ask White Fang, Grey Beaver, Kiche and Scott. Some children could go into role as these characters so that they can have the opportunity to gain some answers to the questions.

Writing activities

Objective: Adapt non-narrative forms and styles to write fiction or factual texts.

- Discuss the characteristics of White Fang.
- Identify examples in the text where figurative writing has been used to describe characteristics.
- Demonstrate how to write a character profile by modelling a profile of Kiche.
- Provide a planning structure to support children's writing, e.g. introduction with background information, physical appearance, main character trait, secondary trait, hopes and desires.
- Provide interesting paper, e.g. paper with a wolf outline, for children to write their character profile.

Assessment:

- Can the children use clues from the text, both literal and implied, to create a character profile of White Fang that has a clear structure?



Classics

Whole class reads

Companion novel:

- *Call of the Wild* by Jack London. (A tale of a domestic dog that reverts to living as a wild animal.)

Books on a similar theme:

- *The Wolves of Willoughby Chase* by Joan Aitken
- *Wolves in the Wall* by Neil Gaiman
- *Eye of the Wolf* by Daniel Pennac

Cross-curricular links

Geography

- Make maps of the Yukon and plot the journey of White Fang. Use atlases, globes, maps and plans to gain experience in using secondary sources of information, including aerial photographs.

I.C.T.

- Use an internet search programme such as 'Google Earth' to identify the landscape of the book.

History

- Research the Klondike Gold Rush.
- Research the origins of the Canadian Mounted Police.

Oxford
OWL

For teachers

Helping you with free eBooks, inspirational resources, advice and support

For parents

Helping your child's learning with free eBooks, essential tips and fun activities



www.oxfordowl.co.uk

White Fang (Oxford Level 15) curriculum coverage chart

Links to Oxford Reading Criterion Scale:

- Can refer to the text to support opinions and predictions. (R/D) [ORCS Standard 5, 7]
- Can use clues from action, description and dialogue to help establish meaning. (D) [ORCS Standard 5, 8]
- Can identify the effects of different words and phrases to create different images and atmosphere, e.g. powerful verbs, descriptive adjectives and adverbs. (E) [ORCS Standard 5, 17]
- Can sometimes explain different characters' points of view. (D) [ORCS Standard 5, 23]

Comprehension strategies

- Comprehension strategies are taught throughout the Teaching Notes to enable pupils to understand what they are reading in books that they can read independently. In these Teaching Notes the following strategies are taught:

Predicting, Questioning, Clarifying, Summarising, Imagining, Deducing

ENGLAND The National Curriculum in England: Years 3–4

Spoken language	Pupils should be taught to ask relevant questions to extend their understanding and knowledge (SpokLang.2)
Reading: Word reading	Pupils should be taught to apply their growing knowledge of root words, prefixes and suffixes (morphology and etymology), as listed in Appendix 1, both to read aloud and to understand the meaning of new words that they meet (Y3/4 ReadWord.1)
Reading: Comprehension	<p>Pupils should be taught to develop positive attitudes to reading and understanding of what they read by increasing their familiarity with a wide range of books, including fairy stories, myths and legends, and retelling some of these orally (Y3/4 ReadComp.1iv)</p> <p>Pupils should be taught to understand what they read, in books they can read independently, by checking that the text makes sense to them, discussing their understanding and exploring the meaning of words in context (Y3/4 ReadComp.2i)</p> <p>Pupils should be taught to understand what they read, in books they can read independently, by predicting what might happen from details stated and implied (Y3/4 ReadComp.2iv)</p> <p>Pupils should be taught to understand what they read, in books they can read independently, by identifying main ideas drawn from more than one paragraph and summarising these (Y3/4 ReadComp.2v)</p> <p>Pupils should be taught to participate in discussion about both books that are read to them and those they can read for themselves, taking turns and listening to what others say (Y3/4 ReadComp.4)</p>
Writing: Composition	<p>Pupils should be taught to plan their writing by discussing writing similar to that which they are planning to write in order to understand and learn from its structure, vocabulary and grammar (Y3/4 WritComp.1i)</p> <p>Pupils should be taught to draft and write by organising paragraphs around a theme (Y3/4 WritComp.2ii)</p>

SCOTLAND Curriculum for Excellence: Literacy and English experiences and outcomes – Second level

Listening and talking	I can show my understanding of what I listen to or watch by responding to literal, inferential, evaluative and other types of questions, and by asking different kinds of questions of my own (LIT 2-07a)
Reading	<p>I regularly select and read, listen to or watch texts which I enjoy and find interesting, and I can explain why I prefer certain texts and authors (LIT 2-11a)</p> <p>Through developing my knowledge of context clues, punctuation, grammar and layout, I can read unfamiliar texts with increasing fluency, understanding and expression (ENG 2-12a)</p> <p>I can select and use a range of strategies and resources before I read, and as I read, to make meaning clear and give reasons for my selection (LIT 2-13a)</p> <p>To show my understanding across different areas of learning, I can identify and consider the purpose and main ideas of a text and use supporting detail (LIT 2-16a)</p> <p>To show my understanding, I can respond to literal, inferential and evaluative questions and other close reading tasks and can create different kinds of questions of my own (ENG 2-17a)</p> <p>I can discuss the writer's style and other features appropriate to genre (ENG 2-19a)</p>

Writing	I consider the impact that layout and presentation will have and can combine lettering, graphics and other features to engage my reader (LIT 2-24a) By considering the type of text I am creating, I can select ideas and relevant information, organise these in an appropriate way for my purpose and use suitable vocabulary for my audience (LIT 2-26a)
----------------	--

WALES Programme of Study for English: Year 4

Oracy	Learners are able to, after listening, respond, giving views on what the speaker has said (Y4_OracList.2)
Reading	Learners are able to accurately identify the main points and supporting information in texts (Y4_ReadComp.1) Learners are able to deduce connections between information, e.g. sequence, importance (Y4_ReadComp.2) Learners are able to use a range of strategies to make meaning from words and sentences, including knowledge of phonics, word roots, word families, syntax, text organisation and prior knowledge of context (Y4_ReadStrat.1) Learners are able to read texts, including those with few visual clues, independently with concentration (Y4_ReadStrat.2)
Writing	Learners are able to adapt what they write to the purpose and reader, choosing words appropriately, e.g. descriptive, persuasive language (Y4_WritMean.1) Learners are able to use specific structures in writing, e.g. tables, questionnaires (Y4_WritStru.1)

NORTHERN IRELAND Levels of Progression in Communication across the curriculum: Primary Level 3

Talking and listening	Pupils can ask and respond to questions to extend understanding (L3_com_talk.2ii)
Reading	Pupils can recognise, understand and sequence main points (L3_com_read.1i) Pupils can choose and use reading strategies independently (L3_com_read.2) Pupils can make deductions using information from the text (L3_com_read.4ii)
Writing	Pupils can talk about and plan their writing (L3_com_writ.1i) Pupils can structure and sequence their writing (L3_com_writ.2ii) Pupils can use the form appropriately (L3_com_writ.3)