

Reading Group Guide **Spirit of the Wolves**

Fourteen thousand years ago in southern Europe, young wolf Kaala discovers that she alone can unite wolves and humans, and must do so for survival of both species. In *Promise of the Wolves* and *Secrets of the Wolves*, Kaala came to understand her role. Born of a forbidden, mixed blood litter, and abandoned by her mother, Kaala struggled to earn her place in the Swift River pack. When she saved the life of a human girl, she put her hard-won acceptance at risk, and responsibility for keeping peace between wolf and humankind fell to her. She failed.

Now, in *Spirit of the Wolves*, Kaala has one last chance. She leaves her home in the Wide Valley with her young packmates, the human girl she loves, and an obnoxious raven. Together, they travel to the land beyond the valley to find her long-lost mother and a solution to the problem of the humans, only to discover that new challenges await them. Kaala's mother has no answers, a faction of ruthless Greatwolves will stop at nothing to maintain control, odd little wolves seek to take Kaala's place, and, in the mysterious village of Kaar, humans are undergoing a transformation that could destroy everything she is working for. Only by calling on all of her strength and on the bonds of love with her human, raven, and wolf companions can Kaala hope to succeed. Kaala must decide how far she is willing to go for peace...when every step she takes leads wolfkind and humankind toward war.

CCSS FOR: *SPIRIT OF THE WOLVES* (TOPICS & QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION)

(For grades 7-10)

1. Kaala tells us, "Some creatures break promises as easily as a raven snaps a twig. Wolves do not, for trust is everything in a wolf pack." Why would trust be so important to wolves? Kaala makes her promise to keep wolves and humans together when she is very young, yet strives to keep this promise at great cost. She has many opportunities to break the promise, or to choose an easier path. Why doesn't she? What would her life have been if she had broken the promise as others before her had? What does it mean to keep a promise when it isn't easy to do so? CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. RL 8.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. RL 9-10.3

2. The Greatwolf Milsindra warns Kaala "Your problem is that you cannot decide which pack you belong to, wolf or human. It is one of the things that makes you so dangerous." Is she right? How do Kaala's divided loyalties affect her choices and actions? CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. RL 8.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. RL 9-10.3

3. Kaala is often told that her love for the humans is wrong, and she fears that she is abnormal in some way, both because of her feelings for humans and because of her ability to move through the minds of others. How do Kaala's feelings that she is different affect how she acts? Does this change throughout her journey?

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.3

4. The tale of Little Red Riding Hood runs through *The Wolf Chronicles* trilogy, and the wolves' legends shape many of the choices Kaala and her friends make. What is the role of stories and who tells them in *Spirit of the Wolves*? CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.9; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.9

5. *Spirit of the Wolves* is, among other things, Kaala's journey to leadership and the story of how she and her friends take on adult responsibility. What are some ways Kaala succeeds and fails as she steps into her role as a leader? CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1

6. Ázzuen, Marra, TaLi, Tlitoo, and Pell also grow into new roles in the book. What challenges do these characters face and how do they overcome them, if they do? How does Kaala rely on her friends to help her with her task? CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1

7. The raven Tlitoo is a trickster, Kaala's way to see into the minds of others, and her guide to the world between life and death. How does he influence Kaala and her friends? How does his ability to take her into the minds of others affect the story, and how does this relate to the mythological role of the raven? CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.3

8. Kaala tells us: "The Balance was what kept the world whole. Every creature strove to live, and to have as much food and territory as it possibly could. But if one creature grew too strong or took too much, the Balance would collapse and many creatures would die." The fate of the wolves and humans in *Spirit of the Wolves* will have implications far beyond Kaala and her friends. How does the survival or extinction of one animal, like the wolf, affect others and the world as a whole? CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.3

9. Many humans in *Spirit of the Wolves* prefer the more submissive stretchwolves to the wilder wolves of Kaala's pack. Why do you think this is? What are some of the differences in behavior between wolves and dogs, and how do those differences reflect how we humans relate to them? CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.2; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.2; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.2

10. DavRian tries to establish his power by claiming that wolves are vicious and dangerous. Today, wolves are demonized by some people and loved by others. What is it about the wolf that inspires some passion. How do we feel differently about dogs, which are domesticated wolf descendants? ? CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. RL 8.1; CCSS. ELA-LITERACY. RL. 9-10.1

11. The story is set 14,000 years ago. What about life in this time made it easier for wolves to interact with humans than they might now? In what ways has our relationship to animals changed in the last 14,000 years? CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.2; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.2; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.2

12. The book takes place at about the time humans started farming rather than relying on hunting and gathering. How might the wolves and later dogs have contributed to this change? How would partnering with wolves and dogs have affected what people ate, how they spent time, and what was important to them? How did it then affect animals and the environment? CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.2; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.2; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.2

13. Do you think Kaala has succeeded at the end of the book, or is *Spirit of the Wolves* a tragedy? Wolves today are constantly at risk of extinction. Did Kaala make the right choice by letting the wolves that would become dogs take responsibility for the humans? What do you think of Kaala's final choice at the end of the book? What about her sacrifice? Was she the savior of wolfkind or the destroyer of it? ? CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. RL 8.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. RL 9-10.3

BONUS EXERCISES

Who is your favorite character? Who would you be in *The Wolf Chronicles*?
What are some qualities of wolves, dogs or ravens that you would like to see in yourself?
If you could go into the minds of others, would you? How would you use this ability?