



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
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Blame It on Little Red Riding Hood

Curriculum Unit 13.01.02
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Introduction

I near the end of our read-aloud 'wordless picture book', *One Scary Night*, by Antoine Guilloppé (2004), and I have my captivated audience of first-graders in the palm of my hand. What appears to be the dark silhouette of a wolf is readying himself to spring on the lone boy who is hurrying nervously through the snowy woods at night. The suspense is riveting. I point out the nearby tree that is abnormally tilting, hovering, surrounded by others more upright—offering it as a clue. On the next page this tree crashes to the ground, but not before the wolf has leaped forward and pushed the boy out of danger. The following scene: the boy is hugging the 'wolf'—which is actually a big dog (perhaps his own pet?)—who has saved his life. My students "ooh" and "aah," clearly having not expected this turn of events. Taking advantage of their rapt attention, I say: "People always assume that the wolf in stories is the bad guy. Why is that?"

My young learners need more prompting, and so I ask them to describe the wolf in *Little Red Riding Hood* and *The Three Little Pigs*. A consensus is quickly reached. The wolf in storybooks seems always to be shown as big and bad, greedy and unrelenting. "But what are wolves really like?" I ask. That becomes the starting-point of our inquiry—into the real nature of wolves.

In an effort to design age-appropriate lessons for my class I have decided on the very rich topic of wolves, which becomes an umbrella-heading under which such issues as the again-endangered gray and red wolves, their role in the fragile ecosystem and the unvarying image of the wolf found in traditional fairy tales and fables can be placed. In my initial research I have discovered two excellent texts that will assist me in my pursuit: *Picturing the Wolf in Children's Literature* (2012) by Debra Mitts-Smith and *Wolf* (2012) by Garry Marvin. Both are recent publications which suggests to me that this topic—how did the wolf get such a bad rap?—continues to be a very timely issue of high interest to many. I have selected a number of Grade 1 objectives taken from the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts that my unit will focus on. They are listed in Appendix A.

Reading literature and informational texts requires different skills, and so my unit will include a variety of book response activities in which students can explore the different features and structure encountered in each text type. Because it is often easier to create mental images while reading fiction (and the story often follows a predictable structure), young students may tend to favor this type. Reading nonfiction, with its challenging

vocabulary and new concepts, requires the student to read the text content more critically and it is better managed if the reader can apply his/her prior knowledge to the subject. I will begin by looking at wolves from the literature lens and then proceed to informational texts. Beginning our study of wolves with fiction will generate student interest in how people used to perceive wolves and how that image has been passed down to us in many children's stories. From there we will move to informational texts which offer a realistic look at the wolf, its physical characteristics and habits. Comparing and contrasting fiction and nonfiction texts will help my young learners more fully grasp the challenging aspects of true versus make-believe, and fact versus fiction as derived from both text and pictures.

I am a first-grade teacher at Davis Street Arts & Academics Interdistrict Magnet School. The self-contained class of students to whom I will be teaching this unit are a heterogeneous group with varying abilities within the 5-to-7-year-old age range. Although I have designed this unit with them in mind, I am confident that it could easily be adapted for use by teachers in other primary and intermediate grades as well.

This curriculum unit will be interdisciplinary in scope, incorporating reading, history, science, writing and art. My students will work in both small and large group settings on the activities included in it. The unit lessons will be taught four times a week for a period of 40 minutes over a 3-month period.

My unit will be divided into four sections:

Section 1: How did wolves get such a bad rap?

Section 2: From fiction...

Section 3: ...to fact

Section 4: Being an activist

Content Objectives

- To ask and answer questions about key details in a text.
- To retell elements of a story including author's message.
- To identify who is telling the story.
- To distinguish between fact and fiction.
- To compare and contrast the experiences of characters in a story.
- To use informational text features to better understand content.
- To participate in shared research and writing projects on wolves.
- To write informative texts about wolves
- To express one's feelings about wolves by writing poetry.

Teaching Strategies

- To compare and contrast story elements in a series of fairy tales and their fractured counterparts using a matrix-style graphic organizer.
- To use a timeline to better visualize and track the history of wolf-treatment in North America over time.
- To activate one's prior knowledge about wolves by using a K-W-L chart (What we already know, what we want to know, what we have learned).
- To demonstrate one's acquired knowledge on wolves through the use of an 'are, can, have, need' columned graphic organizer.
- To formulate questions about the topic during readings and class discussions.
- To use a Venn diagram to compare and contrast pictorial portrayals of the wolf in literature books.
- To demonstrate one's understanding of the tarnished image of the wolf in literature by writing him a letter.
- To discuss one's responses to text both in small and larger group settings.
- To take on the different perspectives of predator and prey through courtroom role-plays and readers' theatre plays.
- To use multiple sources including the internet to do paired research on wolves.
- To write cinquain and ode poems that show one's understanding of the real and imagined image of wolves and our relationship to them.
- To become a wolf advocate by adopting a wolf and informing others at school about wolves and their plight.

Section 1: How did wolves get such a bad rap?

Sadly, humans have a long history of eradicating wolves. According to Rebecca L. Grambo in her book *Wolf: Legend, Enemy, Icon*, throughout history "wolves have been hunted with a vengeance seldom seen against any other animal" (p. 138). Over the last few centuries almost every culture has hunted wolves to extinction. In the first written record of such actions, Solon of Athens in the 6th century BC encouraged widespread bounty hunting of wolves. In the 16th century the last wolf was killed in England under Henry VII. Throughout the 13th through 15th centuries wolf persecution continued unabated in Scotland and during James V's reign whole forests were burned down in an effort to wipe out wolves. Moving to the United States, by 1930, not a wolf was left in 48 contiguous states due to an unrestrained campaign to kill them. It is clear that many people became totally intolerant of carnivorous competitors like wolves.

Not all cultures regarded the wolf in such a negative light. Many Native Americans believed in and respected the wolf for its spirit and power as well as its prowess as a great hunter. The Cherokee did not hunt wolves because they believed its brothers would later exact revenge. Other tribes such as the Arikana, Mandan and Cheyenne would kill wolves for their warm pelts but seldom for food. According to Grambo, "... few killed it

[the wolf] out of fear, and then usually because of apprehension about the wolf's power or spirit, rather than from dread of the animal itself" (p. 134).

In this section I plan to limit my discussion of the cultural history of wolves to western cultures because a wider study would require a much larger format than this unit allows.

For many thousands of years early humans and wolves hunted an abundance of wild animals without conflict. There was enough for everybody. With more dwindling supplies of large prey and man's domestication of both sheep and goats between 10,000 and 6,000 years ago, vicious competition arose between humans and wolves. The wolf was no longer a hunting rival but a thief. Farmers and herders viewed their livestock as valuable, heavily-invested-in property which they were bound to care for and protect. They were dependent on these animals for their economic well-being and any threat to them, either by humans or wild animals, was regarded as downright theft. Due to their vulnerability to wolf predations, pastoralists developed a very strong revulsion toward these carnivores who sought to take away their livelihood. As Garry Marvin maintains in his book, *Wolf* "Wolves became unwanted, often feared, intruders into human affairs" (p. 36).

The response to this growing fear and hatred of wolves, perceived as "an enemy of humankind" (Marvin, p. 81), was persecution and eradication. Through the unrestrained and systematic use of traps and bounties, wolf populations across Europe by the 19th century were obliterated or at least severely reduced.

In the 1500s European colonists brought their old-world myths, fears and hatred of wolves to the New World. The hostile relationship between human beings and wolves turned into an "all out war" (Marvin, p. 84) when English settlers came to North America. The domesticated livestock that they brought with them were foreign to this new land. Unknowingly, the settlers introduced a new prey into the landscape for wolves and other predators to attack (Marvin, p. 86). Early settlers in America killed wolves to protect their livestock but also out of fear and loathing for a species demonized for centuries in folklore. Granted, their views were shaped by immediate survival and, as has been established earlier, both their land and their animals were resources of economic benefit. The wolf was seen as just a useless and harmful intruder that needed to be destroyed.

The mentality of the settlers, unlike the indigenous peoples, was to forcibly take control of their new surroundings, tame it and exploit it. Hunters who made great profits from the sale of animal furs and hides saw themselves in direct competition with wolves. Wolves became reviled not only for their attacks on livestock but also for their intense rivalry with hunters.

Different from colonial times, the U.S. in the 19th century saw growing numbers of professional wolf hunters who systematically killed wolves through the use of poison, dogs and specially-designed traps. From the 1860s to the 1880s wolves themselves became a valuable commodity and were killed in large numbers for their fur. With the demise of the buffalo, wolf predation turned to cattle and ranchers were enraged and vowed to extirpate the wolf.

At the beginning of the 20th century, national preserves for livestock to graze on were established for which owners paid government fees. In return the government was bound to protect their livestock from predators like wolves. With the government involved, wolf management became a pressing societal issue. A relentless campaign against wolves ensued. The result of this predator control initiative was that park rangers "poisoned, trapped or shot almost every wolf from all the national parks in the contiguous USA" (Marvin, p. 117). An estimated one to two million wolves were killed.

This merciless 'wolf hunt' went on unabated until the 1930s when scientists, through their studies of wolves'

relationship with their prey, arrived at a more informed understanding of the important ecological niche that wolves played in the balance of nature that keeps both the predator and the prey healthy. They learned that wolves have a very dynamic relationship and influence on their prey. Their removing unhealthy, aging and post-reproductive prey from the population results in availability of more forage for the young and healthy members.

The image of the wolf as a scheming predator with an insatiable hunger changed as a result of scientific studies of wolves done beginning in the mid-20th century. Drawing on the factual information gleaned about wolves, writers of informational texts began to describe a wolf's diet, habitat, physical characteristics and the delicate position this vulnerable carnivore is now in as it hunts to survive. In 1963 there were two publications that came out that presented a more informed and positive view of wolves and helped foster a greater appreciation for them. One was an article in the *National Geographic* on a study of wolf-moose predation on Isle Royale written by Durward Allen and David Mech. The second was Farley Mowat's book, *Never Cry Wolf*. In this account the famous naturalist described his experiences living with wolves while on assignment by the Canadian Wildlife Service to study wolf-caribou predation in Manitoba. Results of his study showed that the diet of the wolves consisted primarily of small rodents rather than large prey animals. Such pro-wolf publications based on scientific research have helped to "diminish the threat posed by this species while directly and indirectly deconstructing the wolf of traditional European and Euro-American narratives" (Mitts-Smith, p. 27). The wolf as predator is now presented in a more benign and objective way.

In 1973 at a meeting in Stockholm of the Wolf Specialist Group of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources people rallied on behalf of the wolf, calling for peaceful coexistence of all living creatures with man. It was at this point that re-evaluation of the wolf began. In 1974 the grey wolf was included in The Endangered Species Act and federal agencies as well as individuals could no longer carry out destructive activities against wolves. Instead their responsibilities included working to conserve wolf populations.

Although gray wolves were protected under the Endangered Species Act in the lower 48 states for decades, they have recently been stripped of their federal protection in the Northern Rocky Mountains and Western Great Lakes, This has left wolf management in the hands of individual states in these areas, resulting in many cases in the start of wolf hunting seasons. Many argue that because wolf populations are still recovering, state management of wolves could be disastrous.

Now that we have gained some historical perspective on the treatment of wolves, let us examine some of the traditional folklore that so highly influenced people's negative view of wolves. We will also look at revisions and fractured fairy tales which have served to rehabilitate and reinvent the wolf's image.

I plan to help my young earners gain some historical perspective on the treatment of wolves over time in North America by using Meish Goldish's book, *Gray Wolves: Return to Yellowstone*. As I read the simplified account given on pages four to eleven of this book I will mark the following time periods on a large timeline displayed on the wall:

-- Before the 1600s - 2 million wolves roamed freely and the Native Americans respected them as mighty hunters.

-- 1600s - European settlers came to North America and brought their fear and hatred of wolves with them. Farmers, eager to protect their livestock, began killing wolves and then hunters were hired to kill them too.

- 1800s – Pioneers built homes and ranches on the land and began using traps to kill wolves.
- 1850-1900 – About 1 million wolves had been killed.
- 1900s – Nearly all of the wolves in North American were gone.
- 1930 – Scientists began to write about the importance of wolves to our ecosystem and people began to think differently about wolves.
- 1944 – Aldo Leopold, a scientist, devised a plan to bring wolves back to Yellowstone.
- 1995 – Wolves were released into Yellowstone.

I am confident that this activity will lead to rich discussions among my students about the treatment of wolves over time.

Section 2: From fiction...

Debra Mitts-Smith explains in her book, *Picturing the Wolf in Children's Literature*, before the mid-20th century "most of what was know about wolves was based on folklore and anecdotal bounty hunters' tales" (p. 44) and served to justify their indiscriminate killing. In this section we will look at some of the folklore that shaped people's views of wolves.

I have selected two popular fairy tales for use in this unit: *Little Red Riding Hood* and *The Three Little Pigs* , both of which employ the wolf as a compelling main character. Starting with the traditional versions will provide a solid basis for the later readings of revisions and fractured tales.

Questions to prompt retelling of the main elements of a story will include:

Who is the story about?

What was the problem?

When and where did the story take place?

How was the problem solved?

Why did things turn out the way they did in the end?

Little Red Riding Hood

As far as fairy tales go, the tale of *Little Red Riding Hood* "has had more influence than any other in creating the image of wolves as bad creatures" (Marvin, p. 64). The wolf is the villain in this tale and Grandma and Little Red Riding Hood are the naïve and innocent victims. This moralizing tale warns young girls against venturing into the wild where they will likely encounter deceitful, rapacious and depraved wolves that dress and speak like humans and whose sole purpose is to rape, kill and eat them.

In the traditional versions of this fairy tale the wolf is characterized by such terms as 'wicked beast', 'old sinner', 'scoundrel', and 'wicked wolf'. He meets his fate—death—in a variety of ways: tumbling out of a window, beheaded by a hunter, pierced with an arrow by the Green Archer after being stung on the nose by a bee, stabbed, and having his belly cut open with shears or an ax and then filled with rocks and sewn up again. It is interesting to speculate why such brutal means were used to dispatch the wolf. According to Mitts-Smith, his violent end is justified and celebrated because his behavior "transgresses acceptable human conduct and poses as a threat to society" (Mitts-Smith, p. 22).

In each version both Grandma and Little Red Riding Hood are portrayed as poor unsuspecting souls while the villainous wolf, through his deceptively polite and well-spoken manner, is able to entrap and eat them both. True to form, in this western-European folktale "the wolf represents human predation and gluttony" (Mitts-Smith, p. 4).

Through the use of the following matrix I will chart our findings taken from the read-alouds of several traditional versions and revisions of *Little Red Riding Hood* :

Title	Author	Terms to describe the wolf	How Grandma is treated	How Little Red Riding Hood Fares	In the end, the wolf...

In an effort to broaden students' perception of the wolf image I will then begin the reading aloud of several revisions and fractured tales of *Little Red Riding Hood* where the wolf's role "varies from villain to benign character and even to victim" (Mitts-Smith, p. 76). Apparent will be the change in the wolf's characterization as he becomes a character to laugh at or sympathize with rather than to fear or abhor.

As each revision is read aloud we will continue to chart descriptions under the same matrix headings. In these retellings both Red Riding Hood and Grandma now possess more assertive and strong personalities and they are more prepared to take control of the situation they find themselves in. We will also see more harmless (even virtuous?) intentions on the part of the wolf as he approaches these two female characters. In one version, *Little Red Riding Hood: A Newfangled Prairie Tale* by Lisa Campbell Ernst he becomes the chief baker in Granny's muffin shop. In another, *Carmin: A Little More Red* by Melissa Sweet, he just filches soup bones from Grandma and brings them home to feed his pups. In *Wolf* by Becky Bloom he is simply looking for companionship and is finally accepted as a peer by the farm animals after he learns to read well.

In *What Really Happened to Little Red Riding Hood: The Wolf's Story* by Toby Forward the wolf tells the story from his point of view, describing how initially he had done a number of odd jobs for Grandma—putting up shelves, shopping, gardening and doing alterations on her clothes. One day he rushed off to Grandma's house to warn her of the sticky toffee that her granddaughter was bringing over that could wreck her teeth. Once inside, the wolf explained, that he was simply trying to help Grandma reach for her dress when there was an accident and she fell unconscious inside the wardrobe after hitting her head. Afraid of being accused of hurting Grandma, the wolf quickly disguises himself by putting on her dress and jumps into bed just as Red Riding Hood enters the room. The chase began in the house when the girl attempted to pop a toffee in his mouth but the woodsman rushes in and chops off part of his tail as he jumps out of the window. His dodgy justification for his actions leaves the reader wondering if his account is true or not. The wolf is portrayed as

untrustworthy but not vicious and the story is presented in a very humorous way.

The Wolf On Trial

In an effort to continue to consider things from the wolf's perspective, this simple role-play will involve one student at a time playing the wolf and the rest of the class will ask him questions, some of which are listed below:

What were you doing in the woods that day?

Was anyone else there with you?

Why did you stop and talk to Little Red Riding Hood?

What did you think of her?

Why did you go ahead to her grandmother's house?

Did anyone bully you when you were young?

Where did you learn to talk like a human?

What should you try to do better?

Picturing the Wolf

Some students comprehend better in the visual mode than in the verbal or written mode and so I plan to create a display of the wolf character in both the traditional and fractured versions using xeroxed copies of book illustrations. After close examination and rich discussion I will record the differences that my students note in the visual portrayal of the wolf on a Venn diagram. I will also encourage my students to draw their own versions of the wolf.

The Three Little Pigs

The second fairy tale that we will examine is *The Three Little Pigs* and when we listen to the traditional versions we will quickly notice there is little variation in story-line in this tale. The wolf destroys the homes of two pigs, eats them up, is unable to blow down the 3rd pig's house and ultimately lands in a pot of boiling water where he is subsequently eaten by the surviving pig. In each case the wolf is portrayed as a cold-hearted, ravenous villain who meets a just end.

There is much more diversity in plot in the revisions of this fairy tale. Through the use of role reversal in *The Three Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig* by Eugene Trivizas the wolves are portrayed as the helpless victims of a very mean, home-wrecking pig who, at the story's end is transformed by the sweet smell of the wolves' flowers into a moral and compassionate porker. In *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs* by Jon Scieszka change of perspective is employed and the wolf feigns innocence, claiming that the killing of the 2 pigs during his quest to get a cup of sugar for the cake he was baking for his granny was purely accidental. At the end of the story he blames the media for framing him in order to sell a more sensational story. In *The Three Horrid Little Pigs* by Liz Pichon the wolf's generosity and compassion transform the lazy pigs into law-abiding and hard-working citizens. In *Wait No Paint* by Bruce Whatley the wolf's efforts to attack the 3 little pigs is foiled

and he is left in the very humorous position of being re-costumed by the illustrator as Goldilocks at the end of the story. In these last two fractured tales the wolf suffers humiliation rather than a violent death as seen in the classic versions. In *the Three Little Pigs and the Somewhat Bad Wolf* by Mark Teague the wolf, unable to blow the brick house down, comes in the house and is offered potato chips and sody-pop by the first two pigs and then a healthy meal by the third pig. The wolf decides to move in with the pigs and final scenes show him lounging around the pool with his porcine friends.

In modern children's literature the wolf has been rehabilitated in a number of other ways. Through the use of slapstick events in *Bad Boys Get Cookies* by Margie Palatini the two fumbling 'bad boy' wolves end up without catching the gingerbread boy and instead find themselves in the candy house where Hansel and Gretel almost met their fate. The end of the story shows them standing near the old woman opening her stove, unsuspecting of any impending danger. In *The Wolf's Chicken Stew* by Keiko Kasza the wolf starts out having his stomach rule his actions as he devises a plan to eat a family of chicks but at the story's end he is transformed by the loving dotting attention of the cute little chicks who call him uncle. His heart melts and he stays for dinner and plans to bake scrumptious treats for the little ones later.

The wolf is portrayed as very helpful in *Big Bad Wolf Is Good* by Simon Puttock when he successfully finds Mrs. Duck's missing 5th duckling and returns him safely to his home. In *Mind Your Manners, B.B. Wolf* by Judy Sierra an aging wolf who resides in a senior center does his very best to demonstrate good manners as he sits at a tea party to which he was invited by a children's librarian along with many of the storybook characters that he has antagonized in the past. In *the Story of the Kind Wolf* by Peter Nickl the stereotype of the cold-hearted wolf is broken. In this story the wolf becomes an animal doctor who befriends all the animals in the forest and helps them when they get sick with his healthy herbal medicines and good advice. In *Wolf's Coming* by Joe Kulka the young reader is completely disarmed at the unexpected ending when all the forest animals, thought to have been fleeing the mean wolf, in fact had planned a surprise birthday party for their canine friend.

In addition to using a visual display of text illustrations, I will use a highly interactive strategy: a Venn diagram to compare and contrast wolf depictions. After acting out a second courtroom role-play which will arm my students with ideas the wolf has about himself and his actions, I will ask my students to write a letter to Mr. Wolf where they can ask him questions, offer him advice and opinions and give him suggestions. Below are possible questions to include in the courtroom scene.

Wolf on Trial

Where were you the day the pig's straw house was blown down?

Why did you pick on these pigs?

You are a home wrecker! How would you feel if someone destroyed your home?

What were your thoughts when you could not blow down the brick house?

What advice would you give to other wolves and pigs?

Have you ever considered becoming a vegetarian?

What community service do you plan to do to make up for your crime?

Section 3: ...to Fact

To begin this section I plan to 'test' my young learners' knowledge of real wolves by having them respond to the following survey of statements. I will read each statement and they will place an X in the box for either true or false.

WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT WOLVES?

Statement	True	False
Wolves live alone.		
Wolves do not make good pets.		
All wolves look alike.		
Wolves kill animals for the fun of it.		
Wolves are mammals.		
All wolves live in forests.		
Wolves like to attack people.		
Wolves' babies are called pups.		
Wolves can hear faraway sounds.		
Wolves howl to talk with other wolves.		

By employing this survey I will spark my students' interest in doing research on wolves.

On a KWL chart such as the one below I will record my students' ideas about wolves. This interactive strategy activates prior knowledge and heightens students' curiosity about a subject.

What we know	What we want to know	What we have learned

I will begin our scientific study of wolves with the book, *Wild, Wild Wolves*, by Joyce Milton. It is an age-appropriate text that presents a well-balanced introduction to wolves, their behavior, pack structure and endangered status as well as their place in folklore and in people's imagination. This reading will be followed on subsequent days with children's informational texts that use many of the standard features that my young students need to be able to use skillfully in order to extract text meaning. They include: table of contents, index, glossary, maps, labels, diagrams, photographs, headings, and bold text or terminology. My read-aloud books will include *Wolves* by Gail Gibbons, *Wonderful Wolves* by Justin McCorry Martin and *Gray Wolves* by Patricia Fink Martin. A collection of other informational texts will be offered in the classroom for use by my young researchers.

After these readings as a whole group we will gather some initial facts about wolves and record them on a large version of the following graphic organizer:

Wolves

can	have	are	need

Important terminology such as alpha wolf, beta wolf, pack, predator, territory, canine, den, incisor, litter, omega wolf, prey, snout, endangered will be explained and displayed on our topic of study word wall for the class to refer to.

I have found much success with pairing students to do research. I call it 'buddy research' and I plan to suggest two possible research projects that students can do. The first booklet will be a natural extension activity taken from the dialogue of *Little Red Riding Hood*. Each page will feature a different exclamation: What Big Eyes You Have, What Big Ears You Have, What A Big Nose You Have, What Long Legs You Have, What Big Hands You Have, What Big Teeth You Have, What a Big Tail You Have, and What a Thick Coat You Have. Under these titles students will research and record related facts as well as sketch pictures that further explain the content.

In the second type of research project students will formulate 4 questions about wolves and research and record answers on each of 4 pages in a flip booklet. In Lesson Plan 1 I explain this in greater detail. These booklets will be on display in our classroom library for classmates to 'check out' and read. The internet also provides a rich source of information on wolves. The websites my students will be encouraged to use are cited in the bibliography at the end of the unit.

Now I will move to some creative writing activities so that my students can take all their newfound knowledge and perspectives about wolves and express their feelings about them. First, we will write cinquain poems about wolves, both real and imagined. In Lesson plan 2 I will present a step-by-step description of this activity. A second type of poetry that I will teach my students to write is the ode. I chose this format because it will allow students to tap into their emotions and senses as they express their feelings about wolves. In Lesson Plan 3 I will describe how I plan to go about this in greater detail.

Readers' Theatre activities allow the young student to do repeated readings of a script, strengthening his/her reading skills, fluency and comprehension. Students also will be able to practice their speaking skills of pronunciation, inflection and expression. Two of the readers' theatre plays that I plan to use in this unit feature wolves and pigs. One is called the *The 8 Little Pigs and the 2 Wolves* and the other is entitled *Mock Trial Script: B.B Wolf (a/k/a Big Bad Wolf) v. Curly Pig*. These particular scripts will help students to learn about looking at an event from the eyes of both the wolves and the pigs and may help them to question the pervasive use in fairy tales of a negative depiction of wolves.

Section 4: Becoming an activist

So what are people doing to help the wolf? What can we do? That will be the subject of this last section. I will use three informational texts that will explain the reintroduction of the wolf into Yellowstone Park as well as the crucial role the wolf plays in our ecosystem.

In 1926, Yellowstone National Park saw its last official kill of gray wolves. These animals were absent from the park for 70 years. Then, in 1996, the National Park Services began the reintroduction of these wolves into Yellowstone. After six years, 21 new packs of wolves roamed the countryside. The results have been a healthy ecosystem where the elk population no longer over-graze the land. Young trees and shrubs, long decimated by elk, are now growing in greater numbers along the streams which in turn provide a better home for beaver, fish, birds and bears. But the whole issue of wolf introduction remains a controversial one. Many farmers, who are worried for the safety of their livestock, continue to vehemently oppose wolf recovery initiatives like this one.

As this unit is being written the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has proposed removing federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) protections for wolves across nearly the entire 48 states. Although the past 30 years have seen significant successes in wolf recovery efforts in the Northern Rockies and the western Great Lake states, there remain other areas where they have yet to recover, including in the Pacific Northwest, northern California, the Northeast and the southern Rockies. If wolf regulation is put in the hands of individual states, the allowance of unregulated hunting and killing of wolves, as has happened in Wyoming, Idaho and Montana, will likely occur. As we contemplate this proposal, let us consider the following quotation from Grambo in her previously mentioned book: "After so many centuries together, many filled with fear and hatred on our part, where does the human-wolf relationship stand now? And, more importantly, where do we go from here?" (p. 147)

There is no question that farmers and ranchers have very legitimate concerns about managing wolf populations so that their animals do not come to any harm. In my readings I have found that there are a number of ways to help keep wolves from killing livestock before resorting to lethal predator control:

- Have a shepherd and guard dogs monitor livestock, especially sheep and goats who are more vulnerable to attack by wolves than cattle.
- Bring livestock into an enclosed place at night.
- Move grazing pastures away from wolf dens.
- Have calving and lambing occur in protected conditions near inhabited areas.
- Wait for calves and lambs to grow in size and stamina before sending them out to pasture.
- Use electric fences (a costly alternative).
- Create a system where farmers and ranchers are fairly compensated for loss of livestock due to wolf attacks.

I plan to put this question to my students:

How can farmers and ranchers stop wolves from killing their livestock?

In our discussion I will ask them to suggest some other ideas that might be effective in managing wolves. Following this, I plan to take a look at these complex issues through the use of some excellent resources that use compelling but simplified text and engaging pictures to explain to children why we should not kill wolves. I will begin our exploration with the question:

What do you think happens if wolves no longer lived in a place?

After considering possible results as suggested by students I will read the book, *What If There Were No Gray Wolves?* by Suzanne Slade. This book presents a very simplified view of what results when a key species becomes extinct in an ecosystem. Gray wolves are presented at the top of the food chain and their prey include rabbits, beavers, moose, elk, bison and deer. If no longer hunted by wolves, these animals would grow in large numbers and eat more and more of the plant life in the forest which, in turn, would result in loss of homes for birds, squirrels and moose. These animals would begin to starve and would also become easy prey for other meat-eating animals. Eventually deer would run out of food and would end up disappearing just like the smaller animals had. Other predators like owls, coyotes and foxes would no longer have access to an adequate food supply. The book ends bleakly with the statement: "Without Gray Wolves, temperate forests would become quiet, empty places" (Slade, p. 18). What is the author's message? We need wolves to help maintain the balance of nature within an ecosystem.

A second book, *Wolf Island* by Celia Godkin also effectively fosters ecological awareness. Written in narrative form and based on a true event, this book recounts what happens after a family of Canadian wolves leaves the island they had inhabited after boarding a raft and floating away from their home. Similar to the results in the aforementioned book, the deer population increases and eats so much of the plant life that rabbits and mice have fewer offspring and foxes and owls have less prey. Fortunately, the wolves eventually return and the habitat is restored. To track and better see the cause-effect relationship in an ecosystem I will record the events on a graphic organizer made up of five boxes connected by arrows to show the impact of one event on another. The facts I will insert are:

- Wolves no longer live in the habitat.
- Deer grow in large numbers
- Deer eat more and more of the plant life. Land becomes stripped of vegetation.
- Smaller animals lose their homes and protection. Larger animals no longer have enough to eat either. Both began to die off.
- Habitat becomes quiet and empty.

A third book, *Gray Wolves: Return to Yellowstone*, by Meish Goldish is an informational text for children that gives an engaging and accurate account of how scientists devised and implemented the reintroduction of wolves to this nationally known park. It speaks of the unified effort with which many wolf advocates took on this project and saw it through with beneficial results for both the wolves and the ecosystem. In this book man is helping wolf instead of man killing wolf.

A fourth book, *The Wolves Are Back*, by Jean Craighead George celebrates the return of the gray wolf to Yellowstone through vividly colored illustrations and text written in a very poetic style. A fifth book, *When The*

Wolves Returned, by Dorothy Hinsaw Patent features beautiful photographs of wildlife in Yellowstone and emphasizes the extent to which this habitat was at risk until the wolves returned. All of these books will present my first-graders with a clear picture of a viable way that wolves can be reintroduced into our environment.

One way to become an advocate for wolves is to join Wolf Haven International which offers a classroom the wolf adoption option which includes a picture and biography of the selected wolf along with an issue of their magazine, *Wolf Tracks*, and other educational handouts. What's appealing about this organization and program is that they try to personalize the experience for children so that they are able to learn more about the wolf that they have adopted.

Becoming a wolf-advocate involves the very important task of informing others and this could be done school-wide where my students would present their reports to individual classes, lend their student-made books to our school library to reach a larger audience and conduct a 'wolf fair' with tables for the school population to visit to learn more about these admirable and majestic creatures so like our human families and society in the way they organize their activities.

Appendix A

Common Core State Standards for Grade 1

RL.2 Retell stories including key details, and demonstrate understanding of their central message or lesson.

RL.6 Identify who is telling the story at various points in a text.

RL.9 Compare and contrast the adventures and experiences of characters in stories.

R.I.5 Know and use various text features to locate key facts or information in a text.

R.I.7 Use the illustrations and details in a text to describe its key ideas.

W.2. Write informative/explanatory texts in which they name a topic, supply some facts about the topic, and provide some sense of closure.

W.7. Participate in shared research and writing projects.

SL.2. Ask and answer questions about key details in a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.

Lesson Plan 1

Objective: To make a 4-page flip book about wolves.

Materials, 8 1/2 x 11 inch white cardstock, pencils and lined paper, colored pencils, informational texts on wolves and the book, *Why Do Wolves Howl?* by Melvin Berger.

Procedure:

1. I will point out to the class that many of our informational texts on wolves used a question-and-answer format and read from Berger's book to give further examples of this format.
2. I will then stipulate that students will be working in pairs to write down 4 questions about wolves that they will research the answers to in the collection of informational texts available to them in the classroom. They will write each question down on paper and then the facts they find about it. I will work with them on any necessary editing.
3. On a 4-page flip book they will work together to write each question on the front of each flap and the answer (perhaps including a small pictures using colored pencils) on the inside of each flap.
4. They will share their books and later they will be put in the class library for everyone to read.

Lesson Plan 2

Objective: To write a cinquain about wolves.

Materials: large chart paper and marker, large, colorful photographs of wolves, writing paper and pencils.

Procedure:

1. There are a number of patterns for cinquains you can choose from but I plan to use the following structure:

Line1: A noun

Line2: Two adjectives

Line 3: Three -ing words

Line 4: A phrase

Line 5: Another word for the noun

2. Displaying large photos of wolves (i.e, pages taken from a calendar devoted to wolves) I will ask the students to brainstorm lists of words that name the wolf (nouns) describe the appearance of the wolf (adjectives) and that describe the actions of a wolf (ing-verbs). I will record these lists on large chart paper and display them.

3. I will model the writing of two cinquains. An example that follows a more factual nature might look like this:

Wolf

Majestic, graceful

Watching, hunting, howling

Near the forest pond

Wild dog

Another example taken from children's literature might look like this:

Villain

Hungry, tricky

Sneaking, chasing, blowing

Close to the straw house

Beast

4. After much discussion and examination of the features of the sample poems I will send students off to write cinquains of their own reminding them to make use of the displayed charts of word lists.

5. After repeated revisions they will write a final draft of the poem which they will share with the class. Later these writings will be made into a class book.

Lesson Plan 3

Objective: To write an ode to a wolf.

Materials: large chart paper and marker, color photos of wolves, writing paper and pencils

Procedure:

1. I will explain to my students that an ode is a type of poem that celebrates something ordinary as quite extraordinary. This will be their chance to tell the wolf what they think of it and how you feel about it.

2. I will use the following framework or structure:

-- Think about a wolf.

-- Give the wolf thanks or praise using "Oh _____" as your sentence starter.

-- Speak directly to the wolf.

-- Use adjectives to describe it.

-- Use verbs that bring the wolf to life.

-- Use repeated lines.

3. I will model the writing of an ode by using the one I wrote to my pet cat.

Ode to my cat:

Oh Leo,

Your orange and white fur is so soft.

My hand glides along your endless fluffiness.

You arch your back and purr.

You ask so very little.

And are perfectly content

Simply to sit on my lap.

Oh Leo,

When you look up at me with your big yellow eyes

I feel that you can read my every thought.

You are a true furry friend

Who accepts me as I am

In bathrobe, jeans or tailored suit.

4. Together we will identify the different parts of speech used and the feelings that are expressed toward the subject.

5. Then we will write an ode to a wolf, as a group and I will record it on large chart paper.

6. I will then send students off to write ode poems of their own to the wolf but this time they will work in pairs.

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