This Wolf Was Different
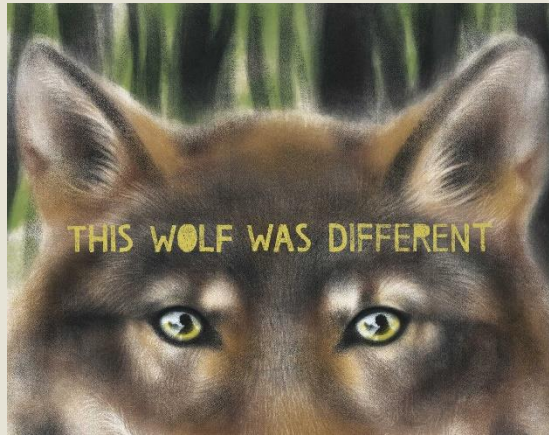
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Discussion Guides

THIS WOLF WAS DIFFERENT

Four Topics:

- *This Wolf Was Different* is a fictional story that is based on real facts.
    - It can help teach the **difference between fiction and nonfiction**.

- *This Wolf Was Different* is a story filled with emotions that may resonate with readers.
    - It can foster **social and emotional discussions**.

- *This Wolf Was Different* is based on real science.
    - It can teach about **STEM fields** such as genetics, paleontology, and archaeology.

- *This Wolf Was Different* is illustrated with beautifully thematic artwork.
    - It can show **how art can convey story, setting, and mood**.

**Read on to find guided questions for each of these four main topics!
Some possible answers are included, for teacher reference.**

Exploring the Difference Between Fiction and Nonfiction

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Background:

FICTION is the word for stories that are made up. NONFICTION is the word for stories that really happened.

In *This Wolf Was Different*, we follow a young wolf who doesn't feel like she fits in. She ends up finding a new home with humans, which kickstarts an idea that changes the world: domesticating animals. We can't go back in time to watch this play out. Which means the story told is not a true story—it did not really happen. But something similar to it possibly did.

Questions for readers:

Is *This Wolf Was Different* fiction or nonfiction?

> Answer: It is fiction. However, it is based on true events. Sometimes this is called *having elements of nonfiction*.

Where can you find pure nonfiction in *This Wolf Was Different*?

> Answer: The backmatter is all nonfiction!

List three fictional things in the story itself. List three things that are based on facts (elements of nonfiction).

> Fictional examples: 1. The wolf wishes she were like a real wolf. We do not know if that is how a wolf felt long ago. 2. The wolf follows snails. We do not know if prehistoric wolves had this behavior. 3. A young girl finds the wolf. We do not know who the first person to befriend a wolf was.

> Fact-based examples: 1. Wolves and humans lived at the same time, in the same places, long ago. This allowed them to come into contact with each other! 2. Wolves live in packs. Losing a pack is a hard thing for a young wolf to experience. 3. Wolves have a great sense of smell. A wolf meeting a human would make many observations based on smell.

Social and Emotional Discussions

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Background:

Feeling different from others is something many of us experience, for many different reasons. The wolf in this story has many feelings—some that change through the story, and others that remain. Let's start by identifying a few, and then look closer at our own feelings and experiences.

Questions about the wolf:

What feelings does the wolf experience while living with her pack?

> Examples: Love, longing, comfort, curiosity.

What feelings does the wolf experience when she gets separated?

> Examples: Despair, loneliness, inadequacy.

What feelings does the wolf experience living with humans?

> Examples: Love, relief, belonging.

What differences does the wolf have from her pack that end up helping her lead a new kind of life?

> Examples: Curiosity, gentleness, attachment.

Self-reflective questions:

What was a time you wished you were more like others?

Give an example of something you are happy to have as a part of you, even if it makes you different than others.

Not all of our differences feel good. What is a difference you are not happy about? Can you think of a way it might help you in the future, even if you do not like it now?

The wolf in the story is loved by her mother, even with her differences. Who in your life supports you for who you are?

The Science of Prehistory

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Background:

The backmatter of *This Wolf Was Different* includes many details about how the domestication of dogs took place, thanks to the sciences of ARCHAEOLOGY, PALEONTOLOGY, and GENETICS.

ARCHAEOLOGY is the study of human history (and prehistory) from artifacts, structures, art, and even skeletons left behind. It is different than PALEONTOLOGY, which is the study of ancient life based on fossilized remains. (FOSSILS are signs of life left in rock, like bones that turned to mineralized stone or footprints that hardened into rock). An important third player from modern science is GENETICS, which is the study of genes and how things are related based on their DNA.

Together, these three tell us that the first wolf/dog domestication happened sometime between 20,000 – 45,000 years ago, somewhere in Eurasia. DOMESTICATION is when a species changes over generations to become reliant on humans, often also helping humans in return.

Questions for readers:

Why do you think wolves were the first domesticated animal?

What kinds of clues could archaeologists search for to learn when humans first lived with dogs?

Why do you think some clues could be tricky to figure out?

> Example: A child and dog walked together in a cave, leaving footprints behind. How could you tell if the canine footprints were from a dog or a wolf? How could you tell if they were walking together, or if one was following the other?

How can archaeology, paleontology, and genetics work together to figure out where the first dog came from, and when?

How Art Tells a Story

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Background:

Using pictures to tell a story is one of the oldest cultural instincts humans have. The oldest cave paintings date back to approximately 40,000 years ago. That was just around the time that humans and wolves may have began working together, as well!

The art of *This Wolf Was Different* is full of details to help readers feel pulled into this prehistoric tale. Done with charcoal and colored pencil, the art shows important story elements: SETTING (the location of the story and when it takes place in time), EMOTION (the feelings of the characters), and ACTION (what the characters are doing). The art also adds SYMBOLISM (a color, object, or other art choice that suggests a theme or feeling to a scene—but is not part of the reality of the scene).

Questions for readers:

What about the art helps you notice that the story happens in a prehistoric time?

Wolves have a strong sense of smell. Can you notice anywhere in the art where this is illustrated?

Do you notice anything special about the sky throughout the story?

How do the colors used help readers feel the wolf's emotions?

What clues can you find on the book's jacket, case cover, title page, and back matter that help extend the story without words?

Reader Challenge:

If you could recreate the cover of this book or a particular scene from the story, how would you draw it?

Give it a try!

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