



Why Not “The Good, Sweet Wolf”?

National Science Content Standards:

Unifying Concepts and Processes

- Evidence, Models, and Explanations
- Change, Constancy, and Measurement

Vocabulary:

Fairy tale
Perspective
Myth
Cultural values
Legend
Attitudes

Links:

The Wolf in Children’s Literature
-a good source, if you have time to browse, or would like to post a list of books for your students

<http://www.npl.lib.va.us/cove/2awolf.shtml>

Stories:

International Wolf Center, Gray Wolves, Gray Matter

Social Systems, Section #3
Folk Stories on the Wolf, pages 22-27, a seven stories compilation

http://www.wolf.org/wolves/learn/educator/gwgm/pdfs/gwgm_sec3.pdf

Introduction:

There are many words and phrases in the English language that make negative references to wolves. Childhood stories also portray wolves as “the bad guy”, teaching children from an early age that wolves are dangerous. This lesson looks at the villain in the story of “The Three Little Pigs” as well as at a list of descriptive ways we attribute negative characteristics to wolves and how this symbolism can color how we think of wolves. Students write their own short story showing the wolf as “the good guy”. Finally, students read a variety of wolf stories from different cultures and analyze how each viewed the wolf. This lesson is divided into three parts. This lesson could be done before or after playing *WolfQuest*.

Objectives:

At the end of this activity, the student will:

1. Analyze phrases/idioms with the word “wolf” in them.
2. Describe the characterization of the “Big, Bad Wolf”.
3. Write a short story showing the wolf as “the good guy”.
4. Analyze a number of wolf stories to determine how various cultures viewed wolves and why they may have taken this view.

Procedure:

Part #1

1. Begin class by putting the following words and phrases on the board/overhead: (See transparency master: Wolfish Words)
 - **Wolf call**
 - **Wolf whistle**
 - **Wolf down food**
 - **Wolf in sheep’s clothing**
 - **Cry wolf**
 - **Lone wolf**
 - **Wolf** (ex. He’s a wolf.)
 - **Throw to the wolves**
 - **Wolfish**
 - **Wolf pack**
2. Ask them to discuss, in small groups, what each of these phrases/words mean. Give them several minutes, then discuss as a class. If you have a younger class and feel some of the phrases wouldn’t be appropriate for your students, omit them.

Grimm's Fairy Tales- The Wolf and the Seven Little Kids

(This is well-told
version of the story.)

<http://www.familymanagement.com/literacy/grimms/grimms04.html>

Wolf Song of Alaska

Includes an excellent explanation of how wolves may have become vilified in legends and stories. Also includes a story of Lawrence the fox, a farmer and an unnamed wolf that would work very well with this activity. This excerpt is attached at the end of this lesson.

http://www.wolfsongalaska.org/wolf_folklore_and_fairy.html

Lone Wolf

These are a compilation of other wolf stories you may elect to include. Most are not written in story form, however, and are just explained.

<http://1onewolf.com/lakota/Wolf/folklore.htm>

3. Go through the definitions with them. (Definitions compiled with help from The Random House College Dictionary and the World Book Encyclopedia, 2001, dictionary section.)

- **Wolf call**-a whistle, shout or the like, uttered by a male in appreciation of a female's appearance. While some woman may be flattered by such attention, others are offended and see it as disrespectful.
- **Wolf whistle**-a whistle consisting of a high and low note, made by a male in appreciation of an attractive female. As with the wolf call, some woman may be flattered by such attention, while others are offended and see it as disrespectful.
- **Wolf down food**-to devour voraciously, gobble down food
- **Wolf in sheep's clothing**-a person who conceals his true evil intentions or character beneath an innocent exterior, hypocrite
- **Cry wolf**-to raise a false alarm
- **Lone wolf**-someone who keeps to himself, perhaps to the point of unsociability, someone who chooses to live, act, or work alone
- **Keep the wolf from the door**-to avert poverty or starvation
- **Wolf** (ex. He's a wolf.)-a man who makes amorous advances to many women, a man who flirts with or tries to entice women; philanderer. Also, a cruel, greedy person
- **Throw to the wolves**-to abandon to a hostile enemy or force or to some unpleasant or ruinous condition
- **Wolfish**-adjective meaning like a wolf; savage. For example, a wolfish-looking dog, wolfish cruelty, rapacious, greedy. For example, a wolfish appetite
- **Wolf pack**-(Figurative) a group of violent criminals. In World War II, a body of submarines acting in concert against enemy shipping, especially a body of German submarines using tactics such as are traditionally ascribed to wolves, as a harrying pursuit or mass assault at night.

Other wolf references:

- **Wolfsbane**-a poisonous plant in the buttercup family. In lore, it is attributed to either causing werewolves to morph or to reverse the effect.
- **Lupus**-a series of skin disease, often affecting the internal organs, caused by a bacterium. A now rare effect of lupus is a severe face rash that resembles the bite of a wolf.

4. After discussing the list, ask why a wolf is used in conjunction with those often-negative phrases. (They are borne out of fear of the animals. In places where there are more people and/or less prey, wolves could cause hardships by hunting domestic animals. This point will be brought up in part #3.)

Part #2

1. Tell or read the story of "The Three Little Pigs". Be sure to be well animated!

2. Discuss the following questions with the class: (See transparency master: The Three Little Pigs)
 - a) Describe the characteristics of the big, bad wolf. (evil, greedy, heartless, etc.)
 - b) When did you first hear this story? (Most first heard it when they were very young, possibly giving them a negative view of wolves from an early age.)
 - c) How does this story teach children to think of wolves? (They are dangerous, evil, sneaky, greedy, etc.)
 - d) Why is learning about animals, such as wolves, from a fairy tale, sometimes a problem? (It predisposes children to fear wolves. Wolves are neither good nor evil. They are animals acting on instincts.)
3. Select one of the “fractured fairy tale” books (Borrow it from the library!) and read it to the class. Some of the kids may have already heard the story you select, but they are all fun stories. “The True Story of the Three Little Pigs by A. Wolf” by Jon Scieszka. This story allows the wolf to explain his side of the story. The whole pig fiasco was all just a big misunderstanding! “The Three Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig” by Eugene Trivizas The pigs were the jerks in this story! “Betsy Who Cried Wolf” by Gail Carson Levine, Illustrated by Scott Nash Instead of “crying wolf”, Betsy wins over the wolf who becomes a shepherd, too!
4. Have the students work in groups to write a “Three Little Pigs” story with the wolf being a positive character. This could also be done as an interdisciplinary activity. Students with artistic talents could make one or more illustrations for their short story. Have them read their stories to the class.

Part #3

Make copies of the wolf stories (See links). Chose lesson style (a or b). Tell the students that most of these stories are from the 1600s or earlier.

- a) Give each group one story. Have each group narrate and act out their story for the class. Have them fill out the “Wolf Story” information (See “Wolf Story” sheet.) for their group. After they present their story, they should share how their wolf was portrayed. Collect this information on a data table on the overhead or a large sheet of paper for comparison.

or

- b) Read the stories in groups or as a class. Copy the data table (See Wolf Stories Data Table), back-to-back, and give one to each student or group. Have individuals or groups read and analyze each story. Compile the results after the groups are done reading the stories.

Discussion question:

The people who originally told these stories frequently made their living by raising livestock, grain farming, hunting and gathering, and/or fishing. How could this affect how they viewed wolves?

THE FOX, THE FARMER AND THE WOLF

Excerpt taken from **Fables, Folklore and Fairy Stories** by Ivy Stanmore, Sidney Australia, Wolf Song of Alaska volunteer

http://www.wolfsongalaska.org/wolf_folklore_and_fairy.html

This is the tale of the fox, called Lawrence, who watches a farmer plowing his fields with oxen. The oxen do not like plowing and behave badly. The farmer says, "The wolf shall have you all." Lawrence goes to the wolf and tells him of the farmer's words. The wolf confronts the farmer demanding the oxen. Dismayed, the farmer tries to back away from his threat and an argument ensues between the wolf and the farmer. Lawrence reappears and all agree that Lawrence the Fox should judge and decide the matter. Lawrence whispers to the farmer that the wolf is a bad fellow and will insist on taking every single ox the farmer owns. However, Reynard says he can save the situation if the farmer will promise him six of his best hens. The farmer agrees.

Lawrence then goes to the wolf, saying, "You don't think that farmer will give you all his oxen, do you?" "He promised them to me" says the wolf. "Well" says Lawrence, "you will not get them. But I have made an arrangement with this farmer that might solve the problem. He says if you forgo the oxen he will give you a cheese instead." "What would be the use of a cheese to me?" says the wolf. Lawrence replies, "It is the most beautiful cheese in the world. A huge creamy cheese, wonderful eating." "I should like to see this cheese," says the wolf. "And tonight I shall show it to you" says Lawrence.

That night the fox leads the wolf through the forest to a well. "There is the cheese" says Lawrence and tells the wolf to look down the well. The full moon is shining in the well. Lawrence explains "The cheese is kept in the well so it will remain fresh and perfect." The wolf licks his lips. "For a cheese like that I would give up those oxen," he says. Lawrence volunteers to bring up the cheese for the wolf and jumps into the well bucket. After a while, the wolf calls down asking Lawrence the reason for the delay. Lawrence replies the cheese is so large and heavy he cannot manage to bring it up alone, will the wolf come down and help him? The wolf jumps into the other bucket and as it descends the bucket containing Lawrence passes it. The wolf is angry and calls "Lawrence, why are you leaving when I am coming to help?" Lawrence laughs, "That's what life is my friend - one person moves up and another goes down." And he rushes away to collect his six hens leaving the wolf at the bottom of the well.

THE THREE LITTLE PIGS

- a) Describe the characteristics of the big, bad wolf. (Besides Big and Bad)

- b) When did you first hear this story?

- c) How does this story teach children to think of wolves?

- d) Why is learning about animals, such as wolves, from a fairy tale, sometimes a problem?

WOLFISH WORDS

What do these words and phrases mean?

Wolf call

Wolf whistle

Wolf down food

Wolf in sheep's clothing

Cry wolf

Lone wolf

Wolf (ex. He's a wolf.)

Throw to the wolves

Wolfish

Wolf pack

Wolf Stories

Story Name:

What descriptive phrases or words are used to describe the wolf?

What specific actions does the wolf take in the story?

What do the other characters in the story do to the wolf?

Wolf portrayal (foolish, mean, helpful, wise, etc):

Story	What descriptive phrases or words are used to describe the wolf?	What specific actions does the wolf take in the story?	What do the other characters in the story do to the wolf?	Wolf Portrayal (foolish, mean, helpful, wise, etc)