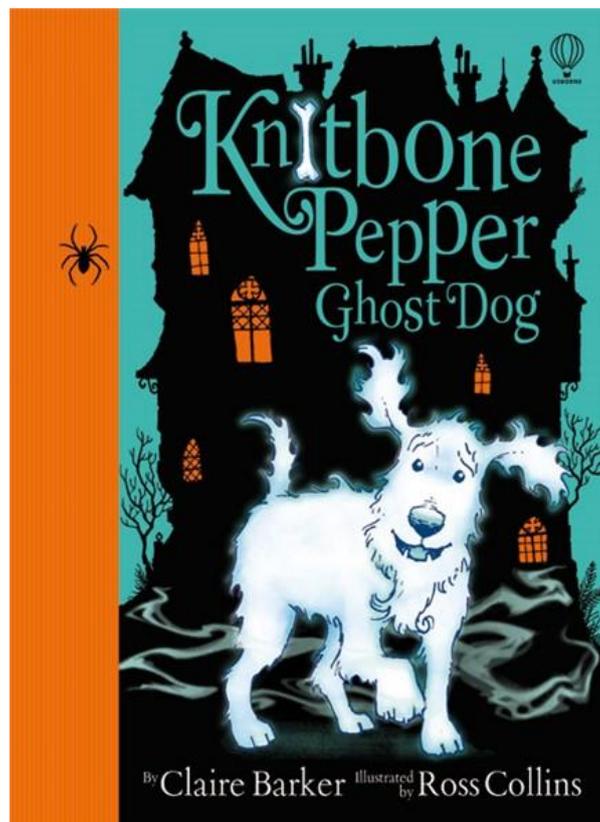


Chatterbooks Activity Pack

Knitbone Pepper Ghost Dog



Reading and activity ideas for your Chatterbooks group



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
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**CHATTER
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***Knitbone Pepper* by Claire Barker**

About this pack

Here's a pack about a dead special ghost dog called Knitbone Pepper, his beloved owner Winnie, and his ghostly animal friends. ***Knitbone Pepper*** is the first book in a new series by Claire Barker, with illustrations by Ross Collins.

Read all about Knitbone and his friends, the 'Spirits of Starcross Hall' (S.O.S.) – and their attempts to help Winnie and her parents save their home, Starcross Hall, from the devious Nora Sockpuppet and her brother Krispin, ghost hunter extraordinaire... and enjoy these ***Knitbone Pepper*** discussion ideas and activities with your Chatterbooks group!

This pack is brought to you by **The Reading Agency** and their Children's Reading Partner, **Usborne Publishing** www.usborne.com

Chatterbooks [www.readinggroups.org/chatterbooks] is a reading group programme for children aged 4 to 14 years. It is coordinated by The Reading Agency and its patron is author Dame Jacqueline Wilson. Chatterbooks groups run in libraries and schools, supporting and inspiring children's literacy development by encouraging them to have a really good time reading and talking about books.

The Reading Agency is an independent charity working to inspire more people to read more through programmes for adults, young people and Children – including the Summer Reading Challenge, and Chatterbooks. See www.readingagency.org.uk

Children's Reading Partners is a national partnership of children's publishers and libraries working together to bring reading promotions and author events to as many children and young people as possible.

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[Top Tips for a Successful Session](#)

Knitbone Pepper



The author, Claire Barker

Claire Barker graduated from Bath Spa University with a degree in English Literature and History. She studied illustration for a further two years and worked as a teaching assistant for several more. Claire used to live on narrowboats but now lives with her family on a small, untidy farm in deepest, darkest Devon.

When she's not busy writing or illustrating she spends her days wrestling sheep, battling through nettle patches and

triumphantly catching rogue chickens. <http://clairebarkerauthor.com/>

The illustrator, Ross Collins

Ross Collins is an award-winning illustrator who has worked on over 100 books, including titles by authors such as Michael Morpurgo, Julia Donaldson, Francesca Simon and Ali Sparkes. He has also written over a dozen picture books, including *The Elephantom*, which has now been brought to the stage at London's Royal National Theatre by the creative team behind "War Horse". Ross studied at the Glasgow School of Art, achieving a first in Illustration, and winning the MacMillan Children's Book Prize for his first book *The Sea Hole* the same year.

Knitbone Pepper – what people say about the book

'It is sad, funny (some very funny lines) and ADORABLE. It is perfect for anyone who loves dogs, animals and ghosts and also perfect for anyone who doesn't...There's lots of opportunities to 'do the voices' when reading aloud, too.'

'This is a wonderfully funny book but also genuinely touching and will appeal to any young reader who has loved and lost a pet, or even only dreamed of owning a pet. Claire Barker knows exactly how to keep the interest of younger readers, but doesn't shrink from the occasional use of quite sophisticated language. There are dozens of deliciously quotable lines but one stand-out favourite was : 'Then Knitbone had such a bright idea it should have had its own lampshade.'

'This book really is a treat of a read for any child who

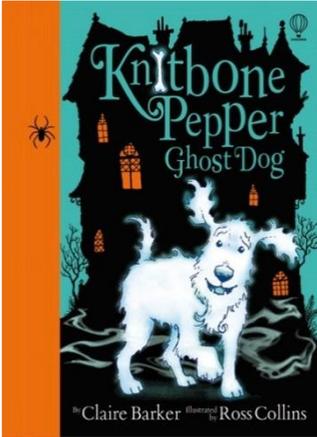
A) Has a pet they love

B) Has lost a pet they love and/or

C) Love ghosts especially pet shaped ones.'

'The pictures are really lovely...'

'Beautifully illustrated...'



The book

Knitbone Pepper is a friendly ghost dog, haunting the crumbling Starcross Hall with a gaggle of other ghostly pets. But when he discovers that the Hall is up for sale and his beloved owner, Winnie Pepper, and her madcap parents must leave their home, he smells a rat. Can Knitbone and his ghostly gang of animals help Winnie save Starcross?

This is the first in a wonderfully whimsical new series.

Each book comes in hardback with a ribbon bookmark and black and white illustrations. And look out for the spider!

Knitbone Pepper: Discussion and Activity Ideas

Get together a collection of stories and non-fiction about ghosts – there are some suggested titles at the end of this pack. And have sheets of flipchart paper for collecting people's discussion thoughts and ideas.

Things to talk about

Introducing the book

Look at the blurb, set the scene, and read aloud Chapter One (p7) to introduce the book to everyone.

Then read this book all the way through, either reading aloud to everyone together, or letting everyone read and experience the book for themselves. At the end allow some time for people to reflect on it and think about their responses to it.

Talking about the book: some book-talk questions

Get everyone to share their first responses to this book. This could be with the whole class – or children could discuss in small groups, and then share key feelings and questions with everyone.

Ask lots of open questions to get people talking and encourage discussion about feelings and responses to the story, the characters, and the writing.

There are no right or wrong answers – we will all have our own feelings and opinions about the book, and the things we like, or don't like.

Here are some questions to get you going:

- What did you like about the book?
- Was there anything that you disliked?
- Was there anything that puzzled you?
- Were there any patterns – any connections – that you noticed?

Your pets – and when your pet dies

Talk together about the pets which people in your group have – and pets they would like to have.

How do they feel about them – look at how close Knitbone and Winnie were (pp10 & 36) and the special things he would do for her. Talk about the special things about your pets. *He even had a special trick where he fetched a hanky when she cried. (p36)* Has anyone had a pet who has died? Talk about feelings when this happens, and ways of celebrating them and remembering them.

Ghosts



The Beloveds – the ghostly family pets who become Knitbone’s friends – are the ghosts of pets who lived at Starcross Hall through the past 800 years.

(For more about the Beloveds have a look at [Claire Barker’s website.](#))

What ghosts might you have in your house from years past? Or in your street, or your village or town?

What characteristics do you think ghosts might have? E.g. not visible to humans; floaty and misty; creating a chilly atmosphere. Collect together people’s ideas and make a list on a flipchart sheet.

Look at pp74 and 75 ‘Handy Hints and Tips for the New Beloved’ – can your group think up some more Hints and Tips for Ghosts?

‘Very Important Matters for S.O.S.’

As the meeting went on, it emerged that S.O.S weren’t so much heroic defenders as domestic caretakers of Starcross Hall. (p55)

Who are the S.O.S.?! If you had them in your house, think about what needs fixing there, which they might help with! – e.g. mobile phone reception; a dripping tap....

Your talents

Winnie was no idiot. She was good at maths, science, Monopoly and untangling Christmas lights. (p162)

What are your group’s special talents? – maybe looking after a baby sister, or wrapping up parcels?!

Make a list, and vote for the most useful !

Warm up activities

Hats!

When (the Peppers) weren't tending the bees or digging up vegetable 'treasures' in the bramble-tangled garden, their time was devoted to being loopy and cheerfully parading around in big hats without a care in the world...They had an impressive array of headgear to suit every imaginable occasion.... (p20)

Talk about all the hats listed here – when could you wear them?

What hat would you wear for these occasions?

Get your group to bring in lots of hats from home, for a loopy and cheerful parade !

Scrambled!

Can you unscramble these words? They are the names of people and ghostly pets in *Knitbone Pepper*. (Answers at the end of this pack)

KNITBONE

WINNIE

GABRIEL

VALENTINE

ORLANDO

MARTIN

STARCROSS

NORA SOCKPUPPET

KRISPIN

SPIDER

Knitbone Pepper Quiz (N.B. One of these questions has more than one answer)

1. Knitbone's Best Friend Forever (BFF) is:

- a. Winnie Salt
- b. Chilli Pepper
- c. Winnie Pepper

2. Knitbone lives at:

- a. Starry Hall
- b. Starcross Hall
- c. Crosskeys Hall

3. Knitbone got his name from the plant in the garden where he was found as a puppy. What is this plant used for?

- a. Healing
- b. Making wine
- c. Cleaning silver

4. Who or what is S.O.S. in this story?

- a. A Morse code distress signal
- b. Spirits of Starcross
- c. Send Out Sausages

5. As one of the Beloveds, Gabriel is:
 - a. An angel
 - b. A librarian goose
 - c. A Canada goose

6. Another Beloved is Orlando, a monkey who collects:
 - a. Stamps
 - b. Coronation mugs
 - c. Spoons

7. What does Nora Sockpuppet and Bartonshire Council threaten to do?
 - a. Sell the Hall and its land at an auction
 - b. Pull down the Hall and build council houses
 - c. Turn the Hall and its land into a zoo

8. What's the name of the book which the Beloveds use to train as ghosts?
 - a. Special Tips for Spooks
 - b. The Good Ghost Guide
 - c. The Spectral Encyclopaedia

9. What's the name of the chapter in this book about creating really awful smells?
 - a. Ponking Pongs
 - b. Stinky Stenches
 - c. Stonking Stinks

10. Who is Krispin O'Mystery?
 - a. A ghost hunter
 - b. A pop star
 - c. Nora Sockpuppet's brother

11. What kind of biscuits give the Beloved lots of energy to defeat Krispin?
 - a. Custard creams
 - b. Pink wafer biscuits
 - c. Jammy dodgers

12. What is the name of the artist whose work Winnie finds, which is sold to pay off all her family's debts and save the Hall?
 - a. Vincent Van Fluff
 - b. Veneer Vermeer
 - c. Vernon Van Bike

Longer activities

Being a ghost

Talk about how it is for Knitbone when he becomes a ghost. How does he feel? How might you feel if you were a ghost? What could you do? What wouldn't you be able to do?

Imagine you're a ghost wandering around your school.

Write a page about what you do, where you explore, what you see.

What is Knitbone?

Knitbone Pepper gets his name from the knitbone plant where Lady Pepper found him in the garden. (p25) It's also the plant on the Pepper Coat of Arms. (p108)

See if you can find out more about this plant – have a look at page 109, and also use reference books and the internet. Here's a research sheet you can use:

	Your findings ○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○
What other names are there for the knitbone plant?	
What uses does it have?	
Where does it grow?	
Describe its leaves	
Describe its flowers	
Draw a picture of a knitbone Plant	

Sounds

'Are you listening, Knitbone Pepper?'... 'It's soooo beautiful,' moaned Knitbone dreamily. 'Like sunlight and snowflakes and liver-flavoured dog treats...' (p221)

Think what kind of sound would send you into a dream – what might it sound like? What lovely things would it make you think of?

Write a Guide to Ghosts

In this story Krispin is a 'Ghost Hunter Extraordinaire' who can track down ghosts and spirits, such as boggarts (p143) and headless horsemen.

What kind of ghosts, spirits and spooks can everyone think of?

Get your group to make a list, and then use this to create a special **Guide to Ghosts**. Have a page for each ghost, with details of its special characteristics, what it looks like and how it haunts.

Vincent Van Fluff

Such a nice young man...always gawping at the stars and the flowers, taking his easel out into the fields, ginger hair sticking up all over the place. (p114)

I remembered that dear old Vincent did a few paintings when he was here...stars and sunflowers and swirls. (p234)

Of course the real-life painter that this character is based on is Vincent Van Gogh. Get together some books and internet information, print out some of his pictures, and talk about him and his paintings.

Which of his paintings do people like best, and why?



(See too our Chatterbooks [Inspiring Art](#) activity pack)

For some **more activities** have a look at the Fun Ideas section on author Claire Barker's [website](#) - and also our [Spine-tinglers! Chatterbooks activity pack](#)

More Books about ghosts and dogs and ghost dogs!

AUTHOR	TITLE	PUBLISHER	ISBN
GHOSTS			
Mac Barnett and Christian Robinson	<i>Leo: a Ghost Story</i>	Chronicle	978-1452131566
Annie Barrows and Sophie Blackall	<i>Ivy and Bean and the Ghost that Had to Go</i>	Chronicle	978-0811849111
James Carter and Brian Moses	<i>Spooky Poems</i>	Macmillan	978-1447272588
Kevin Crossley-Holland and Alan Marks	<i>Storm</i>	Egmont	978-1405262644
Neil Gaiman	<i>The Wolves in the Walls</i>	Perfection Learning	978-0756954383
Pete Johnson	<i>The Ghost Dog</i>	Yearling	978-0440863410
Jan Pienkowski	<i>Haunted House</i>	Walker Books	978-1844288748
Otfreid Preussler and Anthea Bell	<i>The Little Ghost</i>	Andersen	978-1849397711
Chris Riddell	<i>Goth Girl and the Ghost of a Mouse</i>	Macmillan	978-0230759800
DOGS & GHOST DOGS			
Steve Barlow and Steve Skidmore	<i>Action Dogs: Ocean of Peril</i>	Usborne	978-1409520191
Andrew Cope	<i>Spy Dog</i>	Puffin	978-0141318844
Eva Ibbotson	<i>One Dog and His Boy</i>	Marion Lloyd	978-1407124247
Sarah Lean	<i>A Dog Called Homeless</i>	HarperCollins	978-0007455034
Michael Morpurgo	<i>Born to Run</i>	HarperCollins	978-0007230594
NON-FICTION			
Harry Glover	<i>Dogs – Usborne Spotters Guide</i>	Usborne	978-0746073629
Emma Helbrough	<i>Dogs (Beginners)</i>	Usborne	978-0746080481

Answers:

Scrambled

BENTKION

LANDOOR

SPRINKI

ININEW

TIMRAN

PRIDES

BAGRILE

ROSCRASTS

TIVENLANE

ROAN

Quiz

1c, 2b, 3a, 4b, 5b, 6c, 7a, 8b, 9c, 10a & c, 11b, 12a