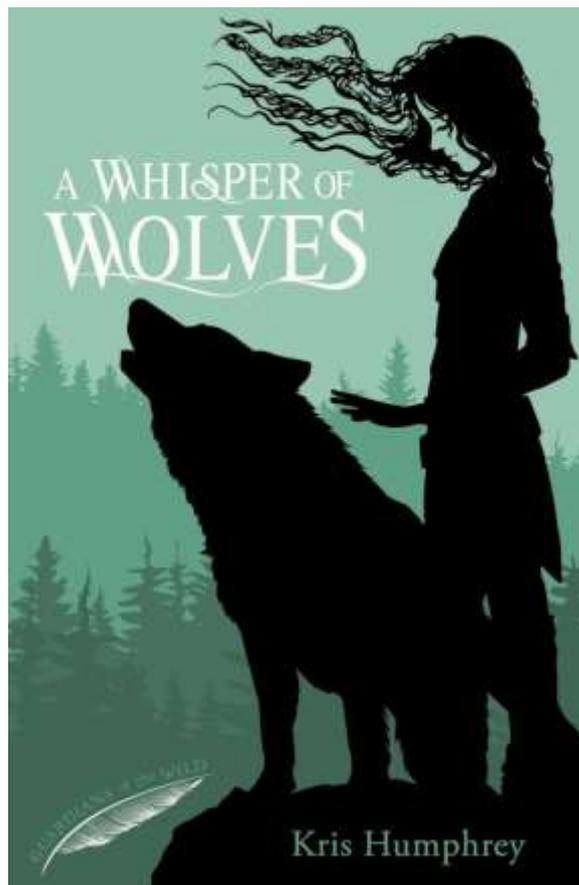




A Whisper of Wolves

Chatterbooks activity pack



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***A Whisper of Wolves* by Kris Humphrey**

About this pack

Do you feel it? *she asked.*

Alice reached out with her Whisperer sense. There was a strange presence in the trees. It rushed towards her, taking on a sickening intensity, as if the air itself was tainted by a skin of oil. Alice drew back, alarmed and afraid. The demons are close, said Storm...

Whisper of Wolves is the first title in an exciting new 4-part fantasy series, ***Guardians of the Wild***, by debut author Kris Humphrey.

It's especially for young pre-teen readers – an adventure encompassing animal companionship, self-reliant courage, and protection of the wild and everything that lives in it.

Here is a Chatterbooks pack for your reading groups with discussion and activity ideas exploring the themes and characters in this book, plus a list of more reading ideas.

It's brought to you by The Reading Agency and their Children's Reading Partner, Stripes Publishing – www.littletiger.co.uk

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 young people as possible.

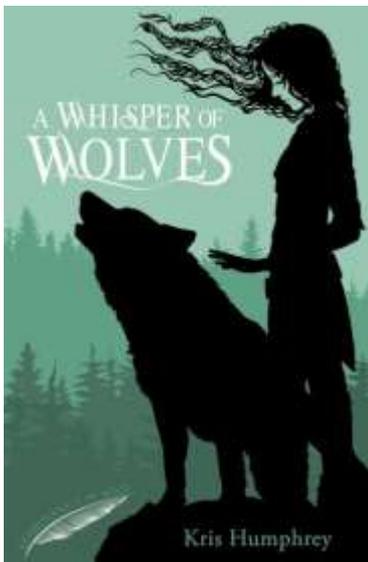
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***A Whisper of Wolves* – author Kris Humphrey**



Kris grew up in Plymouth, where he spent most of his time reading books, riding around on his bike and daydreaming about writing a book himself one day. Since then, Kris has had more jobs than he cares to think about. He has been a cinema projectionist, a blood factory technician and worked at an animal sanctuary in the Guatemalan jungle. Kris has recently completed the MA in Writing for Young People at Bath Spa University. He graduated with Distinction and was awarded the prize for Most Promising Writer.



***A Whisper of Wolves* – the book Stripes Publishing 978-1847155962**

When a raven drops a white feather at the doorstep on the day of your birth, it is a symbol of your destiny. You are a Whisperer - a guardian of the wild.

Many years have passed since the people of Meridina last knew war, but a shadow has settled over the kingdom. Could the Narlaw be returning from the Darklands? It is up to the Whisperers and their animal companions to defend Meridina, protect Princess Ona and stop these demons from destroying their world. When hunters from her village disappear without a trace, 12 year old Alice, a novice Whisperer, suspects that something sinister is at work.

With the help of Storm, her wolf companion, Alice fights to save her village, and protect the entire balance of the natural world. The Narlaw are on the attack and it's up to the Whisperers to stop them...

A Whisper of Wolves is the first title in a dramatic new 4-part series, *Guardians of the Wild*

Alice turned uphill towards the trees and reached out with her Whisperer sense. The treeline altered minutely as a familiar grey silhouette padded into view. Alice smiled. She ran the rest of the way, swinging the basket of supplies at her side, and plunged into the forest, letting its coolness envelop her. Dogwood and sagebrush whipped harmlessly as she ran. She ducked the low, sweeping branches of oaks, and dodged between the slender aspens and pines. And then Storm was there, grey and black and golden-eyed, nuzzling into her. Alice ran her hands through the thick, soft fur behind her companion's velvety ears. The bond between them pulsed with the warmth of their friendship – and with anticipation: Storm had something to tell her. (p12)



Here is what readers say about *A Whisper of Wolves*:

Rich in atmosphere, this is a powerful story set in a timeless world. (lovereadings.co.uk)

I liked the shift in attitude throughout the story as the Whisperers (the kingdom's protectors) return to a position of respect within the community as they use their ancient knowledge and teachings to help the people. I liked that women had strong roles within the Palace Guard and community and I loved the link with the natural world and the relationship of the animals and Whisperers... there's adventure, fantasy, mystery and friendship all woven in! A great read suitable for 9+. (www.goodeads.com)

This was a really exciting fantasy tale with some very strong female characters. I enjoyed the way animals and humans worked together to defeat evil. (Rebecca,10)

#wildguardians

@stripesbooks

@krisdhumphrey

A sample Chatterbooks session plan (times approx.)

Welcome

Getting started – ice breaker; a simple warm up activity (10 mins)
– e.g. Scrambled! or Telepathy – see below.

Discussion – eg. Talking about the book, what people think about it (10 mins)

Longer activity – see the suggested activities, including discussion items (30 mins)

Choosing books (10 mins)

Goodbye – and Dates for the next meeting

Ideas for your Chatterbooks sessions

First of all read the book! Start by introducing it in a session and reading one or two chapters together. Then spend the following session on some of these discussion and activity ideas.

Warm up

Scrambled!

Can you unscramble these words?

They are all the names of characters in *A Whisper of Wolves*

ROMINEA

WARNAL

CELIA

BYONE

AYSOAR

WAND

NOA

TROMS

HELZA

WONE

What do you remember about each character?

On a flipchart have four columns, one for each Whisperer – collect all the things you know about each of them – their age, their family background, their animal/bird companion, their skills and experience, their strengths.

Telepathy

Each Whisperer and their animal or bird companion can communicate with each other without saying anything – sending out and receiving thoughts, their words entering each other's minds directly. This is called **telepathy**.

We sometimes think that we can read someone else's mind and communicate in this way – though there is no real scientific evidence for telepathy, and when such communication happens it's probably because we are close to the other person and know each other well, or share particular knowledge or experiences.

However it's fun to try a bit of telepathy – sending mind messages to each other! Have a go at transmitting simple thoughts such as colours, shapes, or numbers – agree what type of thought you are going to share.

Choose one person to be the sender and one to be the receiver.

Each person needs to concentrate carefully.

The sender writes down their thought or number, or draws a shape, without the other person seeing it – then thinks hard about it and imagines the thought going into their partner's mind.

The receiver writes down the thought that comes into their mind.

Do this with 5 or 6 thoughts. Then see how everyone's done!

Our ancient ancestors probably thought in pictures - long before they used words to communicate.

Things to talk about

Here are a few discussion ideas to get your group thinking and talking.

Use big sheets of paper to write and draw on and keep these on hand for the whole session to inspire and motivate.

Talking about the book

Here are some questions to ask your group to get them talking about the book.

- How did you feel when reading this book? And when you'd finished it?
- Which parts of the story do you remember most?
- What did you like best? What didn't you like?
- Who was your favourite character? Why?
- Was there anything that took you by surprise?
- Were there any parts you didn't make sense of?
- Was the ending what you expected?
- What was the thing you most liked finding out from the book?
- What kind of a book did you think it was going to be?
- Does the story work for you? What does the book say to you?
- Has reading the book changed or affected you? At the end of the story did you feel as if you'd shared a real experience?
- Did you stop and start, or did you want to read it all through in one go?
- Are there parts you want to read over again?
- What would you say about this book if you were telling someone what you've just read? Would you recommend the book to your friends?

Special powers

Alice and the other Whisperers have several special powers. Talk about what these are:

- They can communicate with their animal and bird companions through their minds, without speaking. (See **Telepathy** above)
- They can create protection spells called 'wards'. Why do you think they are called this?
- They can reach out to the earth and become a channel for its power.
- They can then use this power to freeze an enemy or to enact a banishment so that the Narwal disappear to the Darklands.

If you could have a special power, what would it be? Why?

Shapeshifters

The Narwal are shapeshifters, which means they can physically change into another being or form. They use this power to deceive their enemies and infiltrate their enemies' territory.

In the story they capture a group of hunters, take on their appearance, and get into the city because everyone thinks they are friends, not foes.

When might you find it useful to have another shape? What shape would you have?
Eg: to get to the front at a music concert ...to swim in the sea really well...to get away from something... to get to talk to your favourite celeb!

Listening

Alice and the other Whisperers make keen use of all their senses so that they are in touch with the earth and everything around them.

They passed into a shaded area, where an immense rubble of boulders lay piled to twice the height of their cottage. The air became still. Then Storm suddenly stopped, her ears pointed forwards.

Alice peered ahead, probing with all her senses. Beyond the rocks the sun was blinding. She squinted, listening. (p111)

Do you think we listen enough to what's around us? Do we sometimes not notice sounds – or blank them out?



In your group, sit in complete silence for 2 to 3 minutes, and listen really carefully for all the sounds around you.

Then collect on a flipchart all the sounds that everyone has heard - there will probably be a lot, even when you think things are pretty quiet!

Activity ideas

Catching and holding your attention!

First lines, cliff-hangers, last lines – and write your own first paragraph for the second book in *Guardians of the Wild*!

The opening sentences of a book are really important – they have to grab your attention, then hold your interest so that you want to read more.

Have a look at the **first lines** of this book. How do they work for you? What do you think the author is aiming to do here?

Alice hurried through the narrow streets of Catchwood. Today was market day and the village was packed with traders from all over the mountainside; boots, hooves and cartwheels rumbled across the hard-packed mud.

The author ends some of his chapters with a **cliff-hanger**, often something exciting or scary - leaving you in suspense (as if you were hanging on the edge of a cliff!) and wanting to see how things can work out in the next chapter.

Here's an example:

Alice nodded. Tonight then. She would attempt what had not been done in a hundred years: a banishment of demons. (p133)

Look for some more cliff-hanger chapter endings and talk about how well you think they work.

And here are the **last lines** of the book. How did you feel when you read these? Does it make you want to read the next book?

The lantern swung and the horses' hot breath hissed into the cool evening air. Alice held fast to the reins and let the calm, patient creature carry her away towards the palace and the council of war.

Variety in a story: talk about what keeps your attention most when you're reading a story. Is it action? Fighting? Descriptions? Dialogue? People's thoughts? Suspense? Or a mixture? You'll probably find that people like different things. Do you think there is a good mixture in these books, to keep readers interested?

What do you think might happen in the next book in this series? Might we meet Soraya again, and her bear? Will Alice and Dawn get to know each other more? Could Moraine be the heroine?

Have a think about this, talk about it with a partner or the rest of the group – jot down some ideas. Then **write the first paragraph, and think of a title for the book.**

Animal companions

Each whisperer has an animal or bird companion, to whom they are very close.

Can you think of other storybook characters who have animal or bird companions?

Here are some suggestions, all mixed up so you need to match the right creature with the right character. N.B. There are two owls!

Storybook character	Animal
Kester from <i>The Last Wild</i>	 wolf
Winnie the Witch	 moth – and shapeshifter!
Alice in <i>A Whisper of Wolves</i>	 owl
Harry Potter	 raven
Dawn in <i>A Whisper of Wolves</i>	 cat
Lyra in <i>Northern Lights (The Golden Compass)</i>	 bear
Moraine in <i>A Whisper of Wolves</i>	 cockroach
Soraya in <i>A Whisper of Wolves</i>	 owl

Draw a map of Meridina

Together make a list of all the places you could put on a map of Meridina – eg:

- The forest
- The mountain
- Darklands
- The city of Meridar
- Catchwood

Decide where each place is located – eg. the Darklands is in the far North – think where the other places are in relation to this. (See p24)

Then think of further things you could add to it & where these are sited– eg:

- Alice’s cottage
- Soraya’s cottage
- Moraine’s cottage
- The palace
- Owen’s trap

Draw your map – as a group, in pairs, or individually – A3 size or larger. Give it a title.



And then write short notes adding information to some of the places – eg. for the Darklands: *The Narwal were banished to here*

Plants with special powers

Alice has learned from Moraine about using plants and their essence in spells. Together they make a ward (protection spell) around the city, using the essence of a plant which then flowers round the walls and holds the city safe with its magic. And Alice uses fireweed blossom, arnica, and dog lichen to make a dousing ward to put out the forest fire.

In real life many plants have medicinal or restorative powers. Find out about these:

Plant	What it’s good for: its medicinal power.....
Echinacea	
Garlic	
Lavender	
Peppermint	
Parsley	
Rosemary	
Sage	
Thyme	

Forest fire and other disasters!



Here's how the author builds up the picture of the fire in the forest, as Alice and Storm try to get through it – and put it out:

First came the smoke. It drifted through the trees, stinging Alice's eyes and burning her throat. Then came the crackling, popping, creaking cacophony of the blaze. And slowly, building and building, came the heat...Somewhere in the midst of the blaze, a tree creaked and fell. A wave of hot air rushed out...The forest burned around them. Trees splintered and fell out of sight, sap boiled and hissed, and pine needles sparked, disintegrating into ash on the forest floor. The heat was almost unbearable...Branches burned and sparked all round. The river was blocked. (from pp124-129)

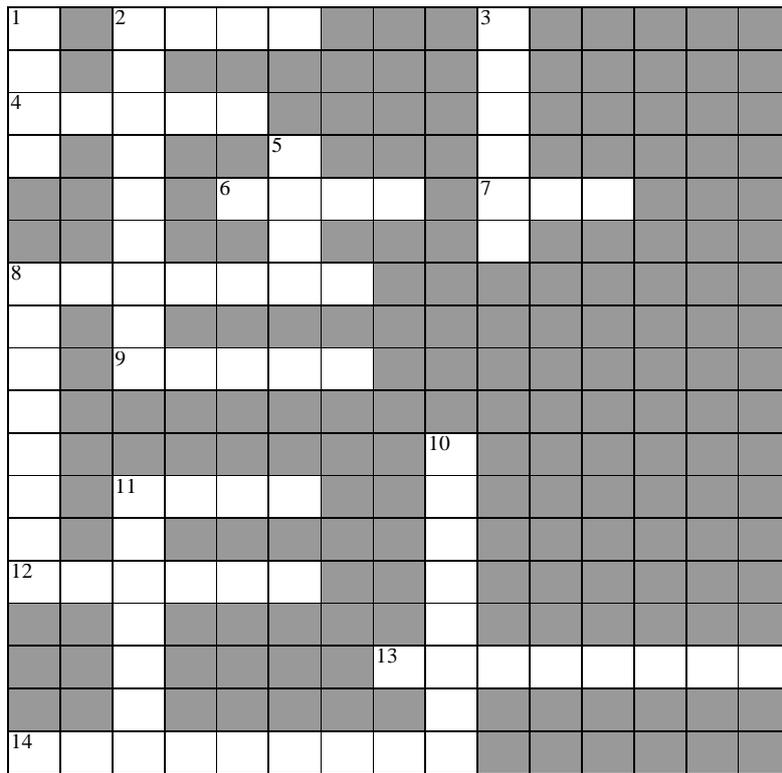
What do people think of this description? Which words and descriptions do they think work especially well in getting across a picture of the fire? Why?

Choose another disaster scenario, such as a flood, a storm or a hurricane.

On a flipchart collect all the words and phrases you can think of to describe this – and then shape them into sentences and a descriptive passage. Or you might write a poem?



A Whisper of Wolves Crossword Puzzle



ACROSS

2. What kind of animal is Storm, Alice's companion? (4)
4. This is the name of the heroine of A Whisper of Wolves (5)
6. Alice uses this plant to put out the forest fire (4)
7. What kind of bird is Hazel? (3)
8. M----- is the name of Alice's teacher and mentor (7)
9. What kind of bird is Ebony? (5)
11. Alice uses a banish---- spell to make the Narlaw vanish (4)
12. These are the demons in the story (6)

DOWN

1. What kind of animal is Soraya's companion? (4)
2. Alice is a W----- with special senses and skills (9)
3. E----- is the king of Meridina (6)
5. D--- is a Whisperer in the city (4)
8. Soraya lives in a cottage on a - ----- (8)
10. Shape----- can change their appearance (8)
11. The name of the city where Dawn lives (7)



More Reading

AUTHOR	TITLE	PUBLISHER	ISBN
David Almond	<i>Mouse Bird Snake Wolf</i>	Candlewick	978-0763659127
Jean George	<i>Julie of the Wolves</i>	(Library Binding)	978-1439548059
Erin Hunter	<i>Warrior Cats: Into the Wild Fire and Ice & 4 more titles, plus more series</i>	HarperCollins	978-0007217878 978-0007217885
Kathryn Lasky	<i>Wolves of the Beyond: Lone Wolf</i>	Scholastic	978-0545093118
Gill Lewis	<i>Sky Hawk White Dolphin Moon Bear</i>	OUP	978-0192756244 978-0192756213 978-0192793546
Michelle Paver	<i>Chronicles of Ancient Darkness: Wolf Brother Spirit Walker Soul Eater & 3 more titles</i>	Orion	978-1842551318 978-1842551134 978-1842551141
Daniel Pennac	<i>Eye of the Wolf</i>	Candlewick	978-0763618964
Philip Pullman	<i>His Dark Materials: Northern Lights The Subtle Knife The Amber Spyglass</i>	Scholastic	978-1407130224 978-1407130231 978-1407130248
Ali Sparkes	<i>The Shapeshifter series: Finding the Fox Running the Risk & 3 more titles</i>	OUP	978-0192754653 978-0192754660
Piers Torday	<i>The Last Wild The Dark Wild The Wild Beyond</i>	Quercus	978-1780878300 978-1848663787 978-1848668485
Beth Webb	<i>Star Dancer</i>	Available on Kindle	B00917HGJ6
Non-fiction			
Jim Brandenburg	<i>Face to Face with Wolves</i>	National Geographic	978-1426306983
Jen Green	<i>Amazing Animals: Wolves</i>	Franklin Watts	978-1445100074
Tim Harris	<i>Animal Families: Wolves</i>	Wayland	978-0750284554
Stephanie Turnbull	<i>Beginner Magic: Easy Mind and Body Tricks</i>	Franklin Watts	978-1445121789

Scrambled! answers

MORAINÉ NARWAL ALICE EBONY SORAYA
DAWN ONA STORM HAZEL OWEN

Crossword Puzzle answers

Across

2.WOLF 4.ALICE 6.SAGE 7.OWL 8.MORAINÉ 9.RAVEN
11.MENT 12.NARWAL

Down

1.BEAR 2.WHISPERER 3.ENERON 5.DAWN 8.MOUNTAIN
10.SHIFTERS 11.MERIDAR

