

A Curriculum Guide for

**The Wolf Chronicles, Book 1: *Promise of the Wolves***

By Dorothy Hearst

**Discussion Questions for Grades 7–10**

The questions below correlate to the following Common Core Standards: (RL.7–10.1, 2, 3) (RL.7–8.6) (RL.7.5) (RL.9–10.5)

1. What do the three rules that guide the covenant of wolves in the Wide Valley—to stay away from humans as much as possible, to never kill a human unprovoked, and to mate only with wolves inside the valley—reveal about the tensions between wolves and humans in this region? How did this covenant originally arise, and what roles do the Greatwolves and the krianans play in transmitting this to the packs that inhabit the Wide Valley?
2. “You must stay and become part of the pack. Do not come for me until then. You have promised.” How does the forced departure of Kaala’s mother, Neesa, from the Swift River pack affect Kaala’s standing among her fellow wolves? Why do the Greatwolves support Neesa’s being exiled, but refuse Ruuqo when he wants to kill Kaala because of her mixed blood? To what extent does Kaala’s existence in the Swift River pack depend on the Greatwolves’ ongoing protection of her?
3. How would you characterize Ruuqo’s relationship with Kaala? To what extent does Kaala strive to win Ruuqo’s admiration and respect? In what ways does Ruuqo thwart Kaala’s efforts to obtain *romma*? How are Ruuqo’s feelings for Kaala complicated by his own brother’s being exiled for interacting with humans?
4. “My legs shook and my head whirled. My chest began to burn like the very fires the humans kept, and I felt as if an invisible vine had wrapped itself around my heart, and now pulled me over to the human homesite.” How does Kaala’s attraction to the humans in her midst betray her unique heritage? Why does she risk being exiled from the pack to help save TaLi?
5. In *Promise of the Wolves*, author Dorothy Hearst gives the reader a deep look at wolf life from the actual source—the entire novel is narrated from the perspective of Kaala. How did the insights you gained from seeing the world through the eyes of a wolf impact your appreciation of this novel and the wolf as a species? If you could have asked Kaala any questions about her experiences, what would they be?
6. “Trevegg walked over to him. ‘No wolf is a pack unto himself, Ruuqo,’ the old wolf said softly.” How does the author explore the similarities between wolves and humans in *Promise of the Wolves*, and why does she choose to juxtapose them repeatedly? Why might the human–wolf relationship elicit anxiety or fear in some cultures or societies? How is this anxiety related to long-standing historical assumptions about wolves?

7. Throughout *Promise of the Wolves*, other animals—including the raven Tlitoo and the elkryn Ranor and Yonor—are given voices that wolves can understand. How do some of the more fantastical elements of this novel—the fact that animals can communicate with humans and with one another—affect your regard for this work of fiction? To what extent did you find yourself appreciating or being distracted by some of the more fantastical elements?

8. “I’d thought my feelings for TaLi were wrong and unnatural. Now this wise and ancient human was telling us that it was not so, and that so much of what we’d been told about the humans—and about our own history—was untrue. How could I believe her?” Why do the Greatwolves mislead Kaala and the other wolves in her pack, and why does TaLi’s grandmother, a krianan, choose to expose their deception?

9. Kaala is helped along her journey by many: her mother, Neesa; her aunt, Rissa; Zorindru and the other Greatwolves; her packmates Ázzuen and Marra; Trevegg; Tlitoo; Lydda, the spiritwolf; and TaLi and her grandmother. Of all of these aides, who do you think is most responsible for her survival and why? How does Kaala’s development over the course of the novel, from outcast and misfit to mature she-wolf, reflect the typical arc of a fictional protagonist? In what respects is Kaala like other heroines in novels you have read?

10. “I started a journey that you must complete, daughterwolf.” What role does Lydda, the spiritwolf, play in Kaala’s awakening to her heritage as the wolf that can unite wolves and humans? How do her interactions with Kaala throughout *Promise of the Wolves* reveal her allegiances? Why do you think the author chose to begin and end the novel with glimpses of Lydda, and how did her decision to do so affect your appreciation of this novel as part of a continuum, or larger story, about the wolves in the Wide Valley?

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