
Reading Differences

Teaching sequence for *Eye of the Wolf*

written by Daniel Pennac, illustrated by Max Grafe, translated from French by Sarah Adams
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About the book

This short novel exemplifies the nature of reading differences. The two main characters in the book each 'read' each other's differences as they learn more about the contrasting worlds and cultures from which they come. The reader shares in these experiences and gradually comes to understand the story's paradox: what brings boy and wolf together is the fact that they have both been born into crisis, have both been sold, and are both dispossessed – temporary survivors in a world where both the far north and the remote south are being destroyed by humans. Apart from the cover picture, the illustrations in the book are in shades of grey, in which outlines are often blurred and one image merges with another. Illustrations punctuate the story suggestively, continuing the theme of questioning point of view and what is seen.

Structure of the teaching sequence

The teaching sequence is structured in four main parts that follow the divisions in novel:

- i how they met
- ii the eye of the wolf
- iii the human eye
- iv the other world.

Within these parts there are suggestions for a range of sessions, including whole-class and group reading, text marking and discussion. The sequence culminates in an improvised drama and a trial.

Depending on the interest and experience of the children, adaptation of these sessions is possible. The aim should be to ensure an in depth engagement with the themes and style of the novel, and a sustained reading experience for the whole class.

Links to the national curriculum and the primary national strategy (PNS)

This work relates to the requirement in the English national curriculum programme of study for reading: *a range of literature drawn from a variety of cultures and traditions; myths, legends and traditional stories* (8e and 8f).

It also connects with specific teaching objectives in the *PNS Framework for Teaching* for years 5 and 6 to do with reading and responding to texts from different cultures.

Anticipated outcomes

Children will:

- understand more about the development of a complex narrative and about the way different strands in a plot can be brought together
- learn about the use of viewpoint in a novel, and the relationship between a narrator's viewpoint and that of the characters
- develop an appreciation of how novels and short stories explore ideas as well as actions and characters
- through discussion, identify some of the important themes that run through this novel.

Resources and preparation

- Display board for a 'questions chart' to develop throughout the work.
- A3 photocopies of three sections of the novel for group reading (see session 2)
- Enlarged copies of the front and back covers of book.
- Chart to develop character profile of wolf and boy.
- Globe or large atlas to trace the journeys made by wolf and boy.
- Sticky notes for children to use.

Background information about the geography of North America and Africa, as well as about the destruction of rainforest, will broaden understanding of the book's themes, but work on these topics should proceed alongside the reading itself.

Teaching sequence

How they met

Session 1: Whole-class reading and discussion

Before embarking on the book, make a list with the class of the four main chapters listed above. Refer to this outline of the structure of the novel as you read it together.

Read the whole of the first chapter (three sections) to the class, pausing briefly to discuss each section. Ask them to jot down questions they have about the book.

Start a 'questions chart' about the book. Ask the children to discuss the questions, puzzles, problems and mysteries that they find in this chapter and want to find out more about as the book unfolds. You can return to and add to this chart throughout the reading of the text.

Session 2: Who's telling the story?

Divide the class into groups of four for a text-marking exercise. Photocopy three passages onto A3 paper, leaving wide margins, and give one to each group with the appropriate question:

- 'The wolf only sees the boy...' to bottom of page 9. How much do we learn about the wolf and his life from this passage?
- 'The wolf frowns' (page 11). What do we learn about the wolf's attitude to humans, and about his life in the zoo, from this paragraph?
- 'So you want to stare at me?' to bottom of page 15. What do we learn about the wolf's inner feelings and the boy's character from this passage?

The groups should read their passage aloud and then annotate it, drawing attention to any points they want to comment on or that relate to questions on the question chart.

Ask the groups to explain to the class what they learnt from these passages. Then add to the question chart, or annotate with possible answers to some of the class's questions.

This is a book about storytelling; the voices of different storytellers punctuate the text. But who tells the whole story? Where can you hear the voice of the storyteller? Ask children to find examples of the storyteller's voice in the passages they have been looking at, and to look out for signs of a storyteller's voice as you read the book together. How is this writing like speech?

Encourage children to notice the way the book is written, for example:

- the rhythm of the sentences
- the use of short sentences
- repetition and echoes in the writing
- the way speech is indicated
- changes in tense from present to past.

Discuss the impact of these ways of writing on the reader's response. Look also at the opening words of each section, where the storyteller moves the story along. How do these help to structure the narrative?

Session 3: Viewpoint

Enlarge both front and back cover pictures and have them on display in this session. From now on encourage the children to add notes to this display, using sticky notes, as they read. Questions for discussion:

- how are these pictures good illustrations of the ideas in the story?
- discuss the front cover illustration: what does it suggest? Whose faces? Whose eye? Why only one eye? How does this illustration link to the title of the book?
- whose viewpoint is given in the first three sections? How does this affect the story?

In the course of the novel, boy and wolf will come to share each other's viewpoint – make opportunities to discuss ideas of convergence and difference, sharing point of view, and similarities and contrasts between animal and human ways of seeing. Ask children to notice which viewpoints different parts of the book are written from.

Begin making character profiles of boy and wolf: what do we know about them? What are they like? How do they feel about each other? Make a chart to display alongside the enlarged cover illustrations on which you can list developing ideas about these two characters.

The eye of the wolf

Session 4: Whole-class reading and discussion

Read the first two sections of this chapter to the class. As the boy and the wolf stare at each other, their eyes link and they begin to communicate deeply. Discuss with the class how we look at other people and how we communicate with them through looking directly at them. What happens when people make eye contact? Do animals look directly into humans' eyes?

Discuss how you could make a film of the first section. How could you show the boy looking into the pupil of the wolf's eye and seeing into his past?

Make a chart to show the wolf's family relationships. Discuss the landscape that the wolves live in.

Session 5: Group reading and discussion

Children read sections 3, 4 and 5 in groups and then think about how the wolves see humans. Make a list of the feelings the wolves have towards humans and the reasons they have for these feelings. Discuss these lists with the class.

What does a young wolf have to learn and why? In groups or as a class, make a plan for the education of a young wolf. What is special about Shiny Straw?

Session 6: Whole-class discussion and reading

The wolves are fascinated by human beings: they tell stories about them and study them. They need to know how humans behave in order to escape them, just as the hunters need to study how wolves behave in order to catch them. Write up two of Black Flame's sayings and discuss them as a class:

- 'Human beings eat everything: the grass that caribou eat as well as the caribou themselves.'
- 'What is a human being? A human being is a collector.'

How do these sayings give a clue to the relationship between humans and wolves in the book? How do the sayings help to explain the role of human beings in this story? Keep these sayings on display throughout the work on the book.

Read the exciting events of sections 6 and 7 to the class.

Session 7: Whole-class reading and discussion

Read section 8 to the class.

- By the end of this chapter what has changed between the boy and the wolf?
- Discuss passages and sentences that give a picture of what is happening between them.
- What is the image the boy sees in the wolf's eye now? Why?

Construct a flowchart to show how the wolf arrived in the zoo. How does his history explain his attitude to humans?

Return to the character profiles of the wolf and the boy. Ask the children:

- what can you add to them now?
- you know a lot more about the wolf, but do you also know any more about the boy?

The human eye

Session 8: Whole-class reading and discussion

Read sections 1, 2 and 3 to the class, discussing between each of the sections.

- What is happening in section 1?
- Where is the boy when this happens?
- Why is it so important to understand and remember people's names?

The boy's story begins in section 2.

- What seems to be happening?
- What pictures does the story begin with?
- Who might the woman be?
- Why is she so insistent that the trader should save this child, and ready to give him all she has to do it?

'When he's older he'll become a storyteller; he'll tell stories to make people dream.'

- How do stories make people dream?
- Why is it important to have storytellers?

Introduce a globe or a large atlas to help trace the locations in the book. Ask the class to find Alaska, where the wolf comes from. The boy's story will mainly be set in Africa: three different regions that the storyteller calls Yellow Africa, Grey Africa, and Green Africa. As you continue with the story, ask children to locate these different Africas:

- where is Yellow Africa?
- why does the wolf initially think it is snow-covered?

Session 9: Group reading and discussion

Children read sections 4 and 5 in groups. Ask them to discuss the landscapes that the story is set in, and to make notes on their ideas of what Yellow Africa and Grey Africa look like. They can record these ideas on sticky notes and add them to the display begun in session 3.

Themes have begun to emerge in these chapters, for example the boy, like the wolf, has been sold. Ask the groups to discuss any patterns that they find in the story so far, and share their ideas.

Make a list of the patterns the children have found in the book and discuss them.

The other world

Session 10: Whole-class reading and discussion

Read sections 6 and 7 to the class.

- What have they learnt about the boy as a storyteller from these chapters?
- Why do people enjoy his stories so much?
- Why do they need stories?
- Ask the class to find evidence for their ideas.

Return to the character profiles and add to the profile of the boy, using knowledge about what has shaped his character and about how other people and animals see him.

Session 11: Group reading and drama

Children read sections 8 and 9 in groups of four. Ask the groups to create a play from section 8. They can double up on the parts (for example Africa can also be the narrator, the parrot can also be the gorilla). How does Green Africa feel as a place to live, after life in Yellow Africa and Grey Africa?

At the end of section 9 the story might end happily ever after. What tells us that it is not going to?

Session 12: Individual presentations and discussion

Prior to this session, provide some resources that will help children understand the effects of the destruction of the tropical rainforests on the ecology of parts of Africa. Who is responsible for destroying the rainforests? Why does it come about? Ask some children to research this topic and be prepared to give two or three very short presentations on it at the beginning of this session.

Read section 10 to the class. Discuss what is happening to the African landscape and why.

- Where is Green Africa?
- How did Grey Africa come about?
- What is the effect of the logging on the creatures of the forest, on the rivers, on the people in the book?
- Where do the children think that the other world is likely to be?

Session 13: Whole-class reading and storytelling in pairs

Read sections 1 and 2 to the class. This final chapter ties the whole book together: nearly all the characters turn up in the zoo, which becomes a kind of sanctuary for them despite being a prison.

Everybody has a story. Make a shared writing and drawing chart together, showing all the animals in the zoo. Ask children to come up to contribute to the chart.

Working in pairs, children take the parts of different animals and tell each other their stories of how they came to be in the zoo.

Session 14: Whole-class drama: the trial

In this session, the animals in the book put humans on trial for what they have done to the wild natural world and its creatures. Who will they be accusing? (Hunters, tourists, businessmen who buy up and destroy the rainforests.).

Decide who will speak for the animals (the wolf, the gorilla, the crocodile, the cheetah, the hyena). Discuss who will speak for the different humans and what their defence will be. What role will the boy have in the trial? What is he likely to think about the way people and animals should live together?

Session 15: Concluding discussion and reflections

To end your discussion of this book return to the first chapter ('How they met') and read the first section aloud again. Ask children:

- what do we now know about how and where these two characters meet and why they do?
- what extra meanings can we find in the first section now?

Discuss the structure of the story and how it begins and ends in the zoo. Revisit the character profiles and see if anything more can be said about them. Who is the boy, and how does he develop as a character throughout the book? Why is he special?

Look at the back cover illustration again, and talk about what it expresses about the book.