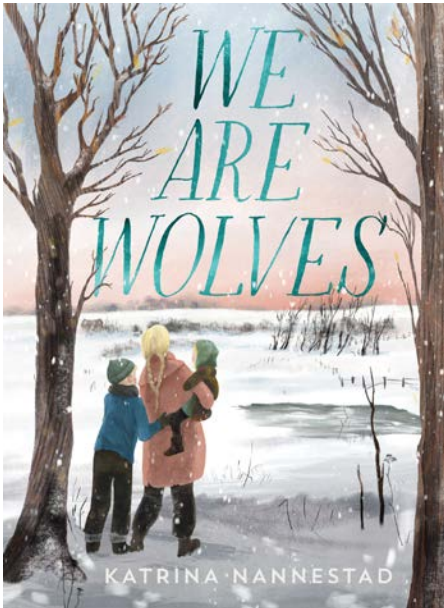


Classroom Resources



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We Are Wolves

Katrina Nannestad

BOOK SUMMARY

THE POWERFUL NEW NOVEL FROM AWARD-WINNING AUSTRALIAN WRITER KATRINA NANNESTAD

*Sometimes it's good to be wild.
Sometimes you have to be wild.*

When the Russian Army marches into East Prussia at the end of the war, the Wolf family must flee. Liesl, Otto and their baby sister Mia find themselves lost and alone, in a blizzard, in the middle of a war zone. Liesl has promised Mama that she will keep her brother and sister safe.

But sometimes, to survive, you have to do bad things. Dangerous things. Wild things.

Sometimes to survive, you must become a wolf.

Bestselling author Katrina Nannestad returns with her most masterful novel yet – a book to crack open your heart, a book to light you up inside, a book to love.

KEY LEARNING OUTCOMES

- ACELA1553
- ACETL1635
- ACETL1552
- ACETL1633
- ACETL1807

THEMES

- Growing up
- Discovery
- Belonging
- Identity

Recommended Ages: 10+

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Before Reading

Identity, culture and differing viewpoints

Writers choose the context and setting of a book very carefully because it allows them to explore how conflict, culture and history shape individual identity and life experience. The particular context and setting for this story allows readers to investigate and explain differing viewpoints about the world, cultures, individual people and concerns. This story allows readers to explore the interconnectedness of country and place, people, identity and culture.

This story is set during World War II in East Prussia at the end of Germany's involvement in the war. Which countries are included in the story? What are the divisions between the nations? What potential moral dilemmas does this create for children caught in the transition between one country losing a war and another country winning it?

- Why is the setting and time period significant?
- What differing viewpoints about the world, cultures, individual people and concerns, can be explored in this setting? How?
- Why do readers like reading about stories from this period of time?
- What values do people have in common?

Think about your identity and yourself. Draw a mind map, with yourself at the centre, to map your own identity. Include what you think about your:

- Likes and dislikes
- Roles in the family, outside of the family
- Abilities and talents
- Interests
- Language and religion or spirituality
- Friends, groups and relationships
- Local, regional, national and global identity
- How much of your identity is connected to your family, country, time and place?

Think about this in relation to the three children in the story.

- How does their concept of identity change over the course of the novel?
- How is their understanding of identity challenged?
- How would your identity be challenged if another country assumed control of your country or place?

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Resilience and the power of story telling

A key theme of this text is the power of stories and resilience. Humans have been creating and telling stories since humanity began. We seem to have a deep need to tell stories. It is part of who we are. Stories give people a sense of identity and belonging, communicate knowledge and wisdom and help us regulate our feelings and emotions. Stories inspire us and remind us who we are.

- While you read, think about the power of the stories Liesl and her siblings and parents tell each other.
- Why are they important?
- How do the stories help get them through tough times?
- What are favourite stories from your family?
- Why do you like hearing them again and again?
- How do the stories make you feel and why?

In small groups, pairs or individually, prepare a multimodal presentation about your own experience or the experience of your family. Each student/group should read/tell/present (podcast or multimedia) a short story and select music and/or images to accompany the presentation. Explain why the story is important.

During Reading

Motifs

Motifs are an important literary device, which develop the central themes of a story. Motifs are a repeated, recurring element in a novel, film or story and they help point a reader towards the story's big idea or theme. A motif can be a physical object, image, action, sound, symbol or an abstract idea.

Think about the wolves as a motif in this story.

- What meanings and associations do wolves typically evoke?
- What values could a wolf represent?
- What are common characteristics of wolves?
- How many times do the children find comfort with each other and then other people?
- Over the course of the story, track how the meaning of the word 'wolf' changes. Why does it change?
- What does wolf mean at the beginning of the story and then at the end?
- What obvious message does the motif of the wolf communicate to the reader?
- What lesson is the author asking the reader to learn?

Drawing on evidence from the text, write a 400-word response on the ideas and values wolves represents in the novel.

The children are very resilient, and through thick and thin they manage to stay together like a pack of wolves. Write a short 400-word story using your own motif to represent the idea of resilience.

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After Reading

Coming of Age

A coming-of-age story is when a young person undertakes a hazardous journey, encounters numerous challenges along the way and learns more about themselves and the world as a consequence. The character goes from a state of innocence to a state of experience. Another way of looking at it is that the events described in the novel, transform the character from an old self to a new self.

Think about the character of Liesl.

- How does she change from the beginning of the novel to the end?
- Why does she change?
- What role does she begin to play to her siblings?
- Create a map or graph of the way Liesl changes across the course of the novel:
 - Describe her as she is at the beginning of the novel;
 - Plot each event that affects her, and describe how and why it changes who she is;
 - Describe Liesl as she is at the conclusion of the novel.

In Chapter Five, Liesl learns that contrary to what she has been told or believed, Germany is unlikely to win the war. She overhears her mother and Oma whispering:

Oma says, 'A mere scrap of bread will cost a diamond. You were Otto's age when the last war ended; you must remember what it was like afterwards – the hunger, the cold, the disease.'

The truth shocks her, but when her brother can't sleep, she starts to tell him a story about what life will be like when Germany wins the war.

She says, 'Germany will stretch across the entire world and the sun will shine down on us ...The fountains will be full of ice-cream. Chocolate ice-cream and strawberry ice-cream. And we will get a puppy for Christmas – one each year, so that soon our house will be full of sausage dogs, yipping and yapping and chewing the laces from our shiny new boots.'

- Why does Liesl tell this story?
- Aren't we supposed to always tell the truth?
- What does this scene show you about Liesl?
- How do you feel about her and why?
- Does this scene make Liesl interesting? How?
- Why would you like to read more about what happens to her?
- How is she beginning to change and why?

Write a 250-word scene, where a teenage character lies to a younger sibling, because he or she wants to protect the younger sibling from the truth.

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Characters

There are many interesting characters in this story. A great character experiences all sorts of internal and external conflict. He or she tends to be funny and interesting, have a special ability and is courageous or charming. Great characters with an interesting setting and beautiful writing all work together to create a wonderful story. Against the backdrop of the last days of World War II, Liesl, Otto and Mia are all engaging, funny, interesting and intriguing.

Fill out this chart.

Character's Name	How is she or he funny, interesting or intriguing? Give three examples.	What special ability does she or he have? Do they have amazing problem-solving or survival skills, creativity, a gift for friendship or perseverance? Give three examples.	How is he or she courageous, charming or brave? Give three examples.	What is the character's key internal conflict? What problem do they have to solve again and again?
Liesl				
Otto				
Mia				

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Think of a period of history or a story you like. Using the three characters from *We are Wolves* as a starting point, create a central character for your story.

- What is the character's problem and what does she or he have to do to solve the problem?
- What or who is getting in the way? How is your character funny, interesting or intriguing?
- What special ability do they have?
- Do they have amazing problem-solving or survival skills, creativity, a gift for friendship or perseverance? How are they courageous, charming or brave?

Write a 250-word scene with your interesting character trying to solve a problem.

Essay/short answer questions

- Research the concept of community and the idea of belonging. Write an essay on the value of resilience and community in human experience.
- Why do we like to read stories set in World War II? Why are they relevant today?
- How does the author use setting, conflict and motifs to convey the central themes of the novel? What is the author's purpose?
- How is this a coming-of-age novel? What lessons do readers draw from this book?

About the Author

Katrina Nannestad is an award-winning Australian author. Her books include *The Girl Who Brought Mischief*, *The Girl, the Dog and the Writer* series, the *Olive of Groves* series, the *Red Dirt Diaries* series, the *Lottie Perkins* series and *Bungalow Creek*. Katrina grew up in country New South Wales in a neighbourhood stuffed full of happy children. Her adult years have been spent teaching, raising boys, perfecting her recipe for chocolate-chip bickies and pursuing her love of stories. She now lives near Bendigo with her family and an exuberant black whippet called Olive.

Learn more at www.katrinanannestad.com

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