



Barrington Stoke

CLASSROOM RESOURCES



RUN WILD

Gill Lewis

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In partnership with
Rewilding Britain



PART I SYNOPSIS AND THEMES

SYNOPSIS AND THEMES

This guide has been produced to provide ideas for guiding young readers through Gill Lewis' **Run Wild**, a brilliant short novel with pertinent and powerful themes. The guide is written to be used after reading the full text in order to discuss the book as a whole.

A synopsis is followed by quotes from the book with suggestions for discussion points designed to help young readers engage with the topics the book covers. The questions assigned to each quote are intended to further understanding of the text and provide opportunities for classroom discussion or writing work. This guide also includes a note from author Gill Lewis about her inspiration for the book and further information from **Run Wild** supporters Rewilding Britain, a charity dedicated to bringing wildlife and wild spaces back to the urban landscapes of the UK.

We hope you enjoy using these materials with your students.

Gill Lewis' **Run Wild** is the story of Izzy and her friends, and what happens when they stumble across an urban wilderness and an injured wolf that desperately needs their help.

Izzy and Asha really want a space they can call their own where they can practice skateboarding and escape from bullies and the issues they're facing at home. When they stumble across a derelict gasworks it looks like they've found the perfect spot. But the site is home to more than they bargained for and Izzy, her younger brother Connor, and Asha are soon confronted with a wilderness they never expected and a lonely, injured wolf.

They're determined that they can look after the wolf and the other unusual wildlife they discover on the site but keeping the wolf a secret proves difficult. They're soon joined by Connor's friend Jakub, a wolf enthusiast, and Scott and Luke – the infamous Skull Brothers who have been nothing but trouble for the girls. But there's something in the freedom the wilderness brings. It gives them the space they need to express themselves, to play, explore, and grow together as friends. They feel safe in the wild and, for Izzy and Scott particularly, it becomes a sanctuary from difficult home lives.

But it can't stay theirs forever. Soon their secret is discovered and they're in a lot of trouble. The school isn't happy, Izzy's parents aren't happy and, worst of all, the wolf is gone.

When they think there's no hope left, an impassioned plea from Izzy sparks a conversation with a local charity who believes 'Wolf Land' is the perfect spot for a conservation area. With the charity's help Izzy and her friends are able to convince the land owners that the wilderness should be saved.

Run Wild is a powerful story that covers a wide array of topics. This book is perfect for classroom discussions as it will help children to engage with environmental issues and is a fantastic companion piece to other discussions happening in the classroom around this topic. The book also covers other broader themes like bullying, different family make-ups, mental health and anxiety in a gentle, accessible way and these issues are also important points for discussion.



PART 2

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS TO DEVELOP READING STRATEGIES

The characters in **Run Wild** all live in London – a big, sprawling, busy city with lots of cars, people, buildings and pollution.

Start by discussing with your pupils where they live and what it's like:

If they live in a city:

- What do you like/dislike about living in a city? Is it noisy and dirty or exciting and entertaining?
- Do you have to travel far to get to wild, natural, or open spaces? Do you feel like you can access them at all?
- Do you wish it was easier to find wild areas like Izzy and Asha? Would you like to live in a more rural area or somewhere in between like a town?

If they live in a town:

- What do you like/dislike about living in a town? Is it too small and boring or is it nice to live close to all your friends?
- Do you have to travel far to get to a big city or the countryside?
- Would you like to live in a big city like in the book? Or would you like to live somewhere rural?

If they live in a rural area:

- What do you like/dislike about living in the countryside? Is it too far away and too quiet or peaceful and a good place to explore?
- Do you have to travel far to get to a big city? Do you like visiting cities?
- Would you like to live in a big city like in the book? Or somewhere in between like a town?

Then I see it, about ten feet away on a pile of old sacks. It's licking its front paw. It stops and lifts its head to look at me. It's huge, bigger than any dog I've ever seen. It has rough grey fur and golden eyes. And it stares back at me. This isn't anybody's pet. It has the wild inside. (pg.17)

Discuss the setting of the gasworks, the wild and what this means for the wolf in the book:

- Why do you think the wolf is hiding at the gasworks? How do you think it ended up there?
- Is the gasworks the best place for the wolf to be?
- Where do you think the wolf should be living?
- Do you think it feels safe at the gasworks? Why?
- Why do you think the wolf trusted the children to help it?
- Do you think they have a special connection?
- Why do you think it felt safe with them there?

Jakub opens his hands and we see a small beetle with bright-green metallic wings and a red body. It moves so quickly that Jakub has to let it scuttle from hand to hand ... Jakub pulls up a stone, and about ten little green beetles scuttle away to find shelter under other rocks. (pg.36-38)

Discuss the other animals and insects that they find on the site:

- There are lots of other animals that live alongside the wolf at the gasworks including the rare bombardier beetle. What does this tell you about the site?
- Is it a good place for these animals to be living?
- What does natural habitat mean? Do you think this describes the wilderness?
- Do you think this makes the site an important place? Why?

"Some sites are good for wildlife, especially insects. The picture your brother drew of a bombardier beetle confirmed that the gasworks site is one we'd love to have. City nature reserves become a space for wildlife." (pg.85)

- Why do you think the beetles help the conservationists with their case to save the wilderness on the site?
- Do you think we should give more built-up city areas back to animals and nature? Why?



I feel my body sink against the small stones and soft grass. I dig my fingers deep into the earth, and it's as if everything is draining out of me. I lie still and listen to the lap of small waves from a riverboat and a pop of seed heads bursting in the heat.

Everything is quiet.

Everything is still.

For the first time in a long while I feel I can breathe. (pg.40-41)

Discuss the wilderness and 'Wolf Land' in relation to the characters of the book:

- Why is the wilderness more than somewhere to skate for Izzy and Asha?
- **Examine the above quote:** How does the wilderness make Izzy feel?
 - Do you have an outside space that's important to you?
 - Does being outside help you feel calm? Why?
- What does the wilderness offer to Connor?
 - Does being outside help you feel creative? Do you like to draw animals and insects like Connor does?
- How does exploring and playing in 'Wolf Land' help Scott and Luke?
 - Why do you think it's easier for everyone to get along when they're in 'Wolf Land'?
 - How are Scott and Izzy's experiences of 'Wolf Land' similar?



PART 3

GILL LEWIS ON RUNNING WILD

“The story of **Run Wild** began as a seed of an idea a few years ago when I visited a primary school on the edge of a town. The pupils were playing games on the concrete playground. Beyond the playground, diggers and concrete mixers were nosily digging up the earth and new houses were being built. ‘That used to be our playing field,’ a Year Six pupil told me. She remembered being in reception and catching grasshoppers in the long grass at the field edge. The field had been sold for a huge sum, yet so much more had been lost.

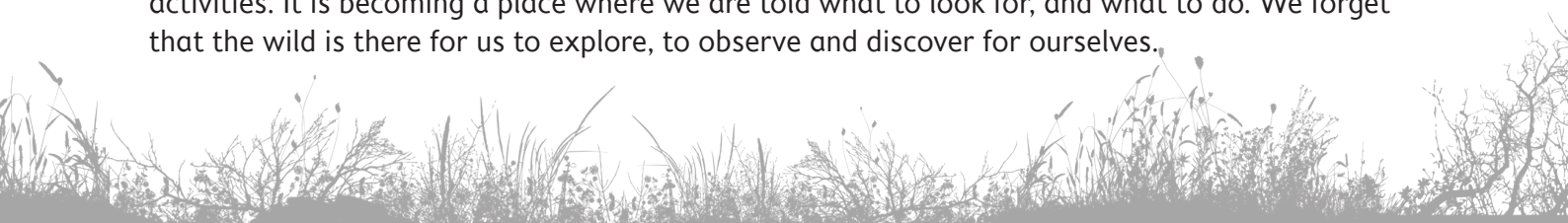


The teachers said how much the pupils missed playing in the field. They spoke about how childhood had changed and reminisced about their own, about being free to play unsupervised and roam in packs. My own childhood was the same. Where I lived in the suburbs of a city, there was a scrap of council owned wasteland that we called The Woods. It was a scraggly wood of spindly trees and thick undergrowth, yet it was a whole world to me, and to the friends that I ran barefoot and feral with. We built dens, crafted bows and arrows and dipped for tadpoles in the marshy pond. The Woods became as big as our imaginations. It became a tropical forest where we swung Tarzan-like on ivy creepers. It became a lost valley where

we hid from velociraptors. We shrunk to the size of ants and explored the world of mini-beasts. It was a wild space away from school and the supervision of adults. It was a place to play and simply just to be. Yet, it too was lost beneath roads and houses many years ago. It only exists in my memory and of those who played there.

Slowly and quietly wild spaces have been disappearing from our urban and suburban landscape; a field here and there, an old railway cutting, a school playing field swallowed up in urban sprawl. As it goes, the wild goes with it. It slips slowly from our minds and from our language. If we lose our connection with the wild, we lose our love of it, and risk losing it forever.

We all know access to nature is good for us. Wild space not only brings us closer to wildlife, but it gives us chance to immerse all our senses; to feel the squelch of mud between toes, to hear the wind roar through the trees, or to lie in the grass and watch clouds pass overhead. It is a place where we learn to take risks and feel the dizzying fear of pushing our boundaries. It's a place we unclutter our minds and give ourselves space and time to think and dream. But with so many of us living in towns and cities, getting out to nature reserves or the countryside can be difficult and expensive. Nature is becoming a place to visit with tick boxes on a clipboard, and a place of organised outdoor activities. It is becoming a place where we are told what to look for, and what to do. We forget that the wild is there for us to explore, to observe and discover for ourselves.



So how can we get out into nature?

Maybe the answer is creating our own wild space and letting the wildlife come back to us.

When many people think about re-wilding, they think of wolves and bears and vast landscapes. But re-wilding can happen on any scale in any landscape. Re-wilding is letting nature take over and repairing lost or damaged habitats. Many adults have an obsession with cut lawns, neat borders and tidy gardens. These places are empty of wildlife except for the occasional robin on the bird feeder. Pesticides and weed-killers keep the natural world at bay.

Maybe it's time for children to start a green revolution; to start a wild makeover and takeover.

It's time to let parts of gardens and communal spaces grow wild and create space for nature. No place is too small. Plant pots can grow wildlife friendly plants. Undisturbed log piles become home for many insects. Small ponds create unique aquatic habitats. So-called weeds such as nettle and dandelion are the food plants for many insects. Ivy provides a place of shelter and berries for birds in winter. By re-wilding part of every garden, balcony and communal space, we could create a green patchwork of wild space across towns and cities.

Re-wilding is not only about giving nature a space to grow and thrive, it is about re-wilding ourselves. A wild space is a place to build a den, to play with friends or to have quiet time to read or think, to wonder and to dream. It is about placing ourselves in nature, not outside of it. It is a place to run wild and barefoot, and let our imaginations soar."



ABOUT GILL LEWIS

Gill Lewis worked as a vet in the UK and across the world before becoming the acclaimed author of several books for children, including *Sky Hawk* and *Gorilla Dawn*. Gill's writing has earned her numerous awards such as the UKLA Children's Book Award and the Little Rebel Award, and several nominations for prestigious awards including the CILIP Carnegie Medal. Gill lives in Somerset. Find out more about Gill and her books at www.gilllewis.com.



PART 4 REWILDING BRITAIN

WHAT IS REWILDING BRITAIN?

Rewilding Britain is a charity that is doing work to help restore our wildlife and plants. In Britain we have a big problem. Many of the animals, birds, insects, fish, sea life, trees and plants that have lived and grown here for thousands of years are now becoming very rare. Some are even in danger of becoming extinct. For example, hedgehogs, animals that were really familiar to our parents and grandparents when they were children and could be seen in our back gardens and in the countryside, are now very rare animals. Birds like sparrows, that were found outside every house and farm just a few decades ago are now endangered in Britain. At the seaside there are places where children used to be able to see crabs on the beach or shellfish growing in rockpools where now there's no life at all.

This is bad news for the animals, insects and plants. It's bad news for people too. Because we need them for our land and seas to be healthy. We rely on them for so much – food, shelter, fuel.

There are lots of reasons why this is happening. But one reason is that there's not enough 'wild' land and sea for our wildlife. That's land that isn't farmed or used for us to live on or put businesses or industry on, and parts of the sea that is given a rest from fishing.

Rewilding Britain is helping to find places in our countryside and seaside where nature can be helped to go wild again. This might be places that used to be farmed or have a lot of fishing going on that need a rest now. Or it might be places like in **Run Wild** where there used to be industry that's not needed any longer. By letting nature take time to recover and by helping wildlife to live undisturbed lives we know that magical things can happen. Birds, animals, fish, plants and trees that we thought were gone forever can come back and surprise us!

Find out more at www.rewildingbritain.org.uk



PART 5 RUN WILD ACTIVITIES

HOW TO GO "WILD" WHERE YOU LIVE

Here are some ideas for ways you could find out more about the nature and wildlife in your part of the world and how things have changed over time. Go wild!

Who is the oldest person you know? Do an interview with them and ask them:

- What can they remember about wildlife and nature in your area when they were children?
- What birds, animals, insects did they see?
- Do they still see them now?

Do some research and find out more about what has changed:

- Look at the internet and see what you can find out
- Connect with local wildlife organisations - what can they tell you about this?
- Look at satellite maps of your area. Now see if you can find older maps or photos of the same places
 - What has changed?
 - What has stayed the same?

Get out into your local area:

- Can you find any mini wildernesses where you live?
- See if anyone is organising nature trails or walks near where you are
- What's out there?
- What wildlife do you see?

Write a story or draw a picture of your real or imaginary wilderness:

- Where is it?
- What lives there?



FIVE "RUN WILD" ACTIVITIES TO DO AT HOME OR SCHOOL

1. Build a bug-house. Use rocks, sticks and hollow pieces of bamboo and cover with bark or natural material to create a perfect habitat for mini-beasts.
2. Make a mini nature documentary with a camera. It can be about any animal or habitat however big or small. Give an introduction and five fascinating facts. Try out different camera angles for the best effect. Show it to friends and family to highlight how important the wild is to you.
3. Make mud creatures. Mould mud or clay into creature shapes and decorate with sticks, leaves and feathers and other wild treasures. (Be careful not to pick wild living plants or disturb wild creatures.)
4. Plant an Elven World Plant Pot. Build a miniature elf world in a plant pot. Place a few stones at the base of a large plant pot and fill with multipurpose compost. Create miniature pathways with stones and use mud or clay to create your own elven house. Plant insect friendly plants such as lavender, marigold and cosmos, yarrow and chives.
5. Build a den. You could use old sheets, rope and long sticks and cover with smaller sticks and leaves. Maybe decorate your den with mud gargoyles. Mould mud into different faces and stick onto your den to ward off enemies.

