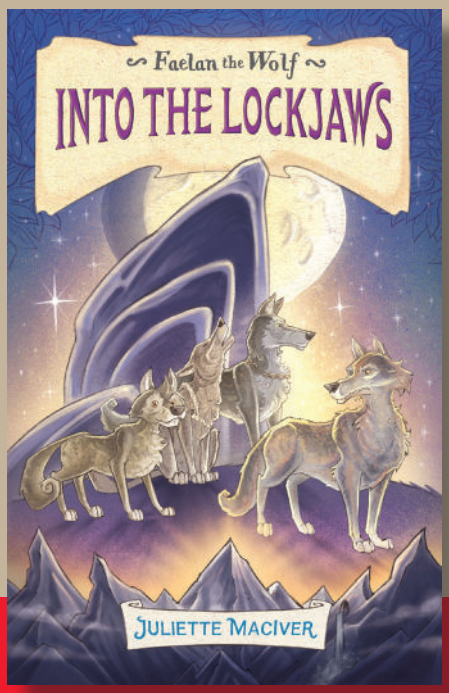
teacher notes

Faelan the Wolf

Into the Lockjaws (Book 2)

By Juliette MacIver



• Reading • Writing • Social Studies

Synopsis

Faelan the wolf and his friend Tala, daughter of the Pack Leader, must head into the treacherous Lockjaw Mountains to meet with the leader of their neighbouring pack and their arch enemy, the white wolf Varg. Tala intends to negotiate the return of their sacred Moonstone, which has fallen into Varg's paws. Against Tala's instructions, Faelan brings his friends Ralph and Luna along as support. The negotiations with Varg go badly, and when Varg realises who Faelan really is, he sets his henchwolf Rezso on him. The four young wolves are involved in a frightening chase, with Varg and Rezso almost destroying them but for some unexpected help from Faelan's brave and cunning chicken-friend, Avian.

Escaping Varg and Rezso, the four wolves travel further into the Lockjaws and receive further help from a mysterious lone wolf, who keeps himself out of sight. Eventually Faelan's companions meet Avian face to face, and she saves one of them from drowning. An unlikely allegiance forms between the wolves and the chicken, and Tala promises Avian protection in their territory. In return, Avian asks Faelan to help her free her flock. She has one thousand and eight chickens to free from the Slave Barn in which they live. Faelan reluctantly agrees to help her.

As the weary heroes return home to their territory, they have one more narrow escape from a gun-toting farmer. This time it is Faelan who saves them. Being a peculiar, most unwolf-like vegetarian who loves cheese, Faelan is very familiar with the dairy sheds on the nearby farms and manages to hide his terrified companions from the farmer and her gun.

Safe home once again, Faelan confronts Bardolph, the Pack Leader, and asks to be told the true story of his father, a story everyone has always refused to tell him. Bardolph gives him a partial truth: the story as he has always believed it. Faelan is left believing his father was banished from the pack for killing his older brother.

Finally Granny Beowulf delivers Faelan another star prophecy. Although the first has come true already, the meaning of the second is not in the least bit clear to Faelan. The book ends with Granny's wise assurances that all will be well.

About the Author

Juliette MacIver is an award-winning children's picture book author of many Scholastic titles such as the wonderful Marmaduke Duck series, *Henry Bob Bobbalich*, *Grasshoppers Dance*, and most recently, *Duck Goes Meow*. She has twice won the picture book category for the New Zealand Book Awards for Children and Young Adults. She is the five-time recipient of the Storylines Notable Book Award and has received multiple nominations for NZ, Australian and US children's book awards.

Juliette has a BA in Linguistics, and Diploma in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages and is part-way through a Master's degree, also in Linguistics. She lives near Wellington with her husband and four children.

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Writing Style

Faelan the Wolf: Into the Lockjaws is the second of three books in a fantasy series written for the 8+ age group. The author has written the story in the third person past tense. Faelan is the main character, a young odd-ball wolf who embarks on an epic adventure into the Lockjaw Mountains with three young wolves to retrieve the sacred Moonstone. The treacherous journey gives the author many opportunities to explore the themes of bravery, friendship, leadership, trust and tolerance.

The book begins on page 1 with text that sets the tone and gives the readers a glimpse into what to expect from the 15 action-packed chapters. The illustrator's map on pages 8–9 is from Book 1 and helps to remind you where the Lockjaw Mountains are located in relation to the other landmarks in the setting. The book is divided into chapters, with each chapter beginning with a lovely black-and-white illustration done in an ancient Gaelic style.

The author is a wonderful wordsmith. Her highly descriptive phrases and sentences bring the many dramatic, fast-paced scenes to life. She ends the second book in the trilogy with Granny Beowulf telling Faelan that every wolf has their place. So who will be the next true Leader? Will it be Tala's brother, weaselly Weylin, or will another wolf lead the pack?

Shared Learning and Discussion Points

Asking questions before the students read a book helps them to make predictions about the text and relate the story to their own experiences. Asking questions during and after reading usually helps them to think about the characters, events, problems and possible solutions. Questions also encourage critical thinking and a more in-depth exploration of a topic. Use the questions below to help promote discussion before, during and after reading this story.

ASK YOUR STUDENTS:

Look at the front cover and read the blurb on the back cover. Then read the text on page 1.

- Where do you think the four wolves are? How do you know?
- How do you know which wolf is Faelan on the front cover?
- What kind of chicken do you think a ;ninja' chicken is?
- How would you describe a feather-raising mission?
- What is the aim of the text on page 1?

COMPREHENSION:

- Look at the map on pages 8–9. Refamiliarise yourself with the place names and landmarks. Find the Lockjaw Mountains and make a note of the terrain.
- Read the heading on page 11. What is a prologue? How does it help you in a trilogy? (p.11)
- Varg sent a message demanding to see Faelan. Do you think Tala and Faelan can trust him to return the sacred Moonstone? Why or why not? (p.16)
- How do you feel if you have a tight knot in your stomach? Have you had this feeling? Why did you have it? (p.16)
- Faelan considers throwing himself off a high branch of the Great Oak to get out of visiting Varg. Have you ever thought of ways to get out of something that you didn't want to go to or do? How is Faelan feeling? (p.17)
- When Faelan visits Luna, how does she know that he's acting oddly? (p.17)
- What is a 'cover story'? Why do the wolves need one? (p.18)
- Why do the young wolves need to trust one another? How do you get someone to trust you? (p.22)
- Why does Faelan feel proud to be carrying out 'pack matters'? (p.23)
- Why are Tala's words cutting to Faelan? (p.24)
- Is Tala's advice about not speaking unless Varg addresses them directly wise? Why or why not? (p.26)
- How does Faelan feel about heights? (pp.27–28)
- What does Faelan wish for in the last paragraph on page 32? Why does he keep those thoughts to himself? (p.32)
- How is Faelan feeling in the underground tunnel with the tight spaces? What is the word that describes that feeling? Write down any clues in the text that tell you Faelan feels this way. (pp.34–35)
- Why does Tala want to use Faelan as bait to attract Varg to a meeting? (p.36)
- Why does Tala stand firm and have her chin held high when Varg announces himself? Does her wolf hierarchy determine how she acts? Why or why not? (p.39)
- What is a sceptre? Why would Varg be holding one? (p.39)

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- Why does Ralph think the huge feather on the sceptre is glorious? Why does the sight of the feather make him forget Varg's immense power? (p.41 and p.44)
- The author says that Ralph creeps towards the sceptre 'as slowly as the moon crosses the night sky'. This is a *simile*, which is a comparison of one thing with another using the words 'like' or 'as'. What other similes could describe Ralph's creeping? (p.44)
- What snaps Ralph out of his feather trance? (p.45)
- Ralph says that Varg can't have Faelan. What does this tell you about his friendship with Faelan? (pp.45–46)
- Varg charges down the rocky terrain 'like a malevolent snowball'. 'Malevolent' means 'harmful' or 'malicious'. Why did the author use 'snowball'? What other similes could the author have written? (p.49)
- Who is the winged creature? What does the mention of fire make you remember? (p.50)
- What is an apparition? Why does the author use such a word? (p.52)
- Why is a porcupine or a toad possibly the last thing that a wolf would eat? (p.58)
- Varg wants to kill his own son. Why might he want to do that? (p.59)
- In the morning, despite all their problems, Tala smiles at Faelan for the first time. Why do you think she does that? (p.62)
- Why does Faelan feel disgusted with himself when he thinks of eating juicy animals? (p.63)
- Ralph takes the peacock feather from the sceptre, but doesn't retrieve the Moonstone. How does Tala react to this? What does this tell you about her? (pp.64–65)
- Why does Tala not want Varg to put the Moonstone around his neck? Or Why does Tala beseech Mother Moon not to let Varg to put the Moonstone around his neck? (p.65)
- Tala thinks the flying creature is a tiny dragon. Why is this a reasonable guess? (p.68)
- Faelan makes a resolution, which is a firm decision to do something. He wants to help Avian free her family from the Slave Barn. Do you think Faelan is the kind of wolf to keep a promise that he makes? Why or why not? (p.73)
- How does Faelan justify eating the goat meat? (p.74)
- Remind the students that some of the wolves believe that Ulfred the Lame, who has a torn-off ear, lives in the Lockjaw Mountains. Ulfred is supposed to come in the night and steal naughty pups. Do you think the wolf that Faelan sees is good or bad? Why? (pp.75–77)
- Why does Avian think that saving a wolf is a mad idea? (p.84)
- Would all wolves feel happy to be saved by a chicken? Why or why not? Why does Faelan feel happy about it? (p.84)
- How else could Avian make fire? (p.87)
- Irony is a saying or an expression that has the opposite meaning of what is really meant. Irony is often used in humour. Find an example of irony on page 89. ("What a surprise!") What other ironic phrase could Ralph say? (p.89)
- Why is Avian helpful in an emergency? Have you ever been in an emergency? Who took charge? What skills do you need in an emergency? (pp.93–94)
- Why is Faelan so happy that Tala says he was right to befriend Avian? (p.95)
- How does the author use humour on page 96 to wrap up a dramatic event in the story? (p.96)
- Why is Faelan surprised at his own bravery when he says to the others to follow him to the dairy shed? (p.99)
- Why do Tala, Ralph and Luna sniff fearfully at the cheeses? Is this a reasonable reaction? (p.103)
- What does Luna mean when she says that they almost went to the Land of Spirits? (p.107)
- How do we know that Ralph is not keen on the cheese around Faelan's neck? How else could he have described the cheese? (p.108)
- Why do the three wolves have a newfound respect for Faelan? (pp.108–109)
- Weylin demands answers and talks haughtily to Tala, Faelan, Ralph and Luna. How should you talk to others? (p.110)
- Faelan has a horrible feeling in the pit of his stomach that what Weylin says about Varg is true. How does Faelan react to that news? (p.111)
- Does it surprise you that Varg is a chicken-lover? Why or why not? (pp.118–119)
- Faelan's father was banished from the pack. How does not ever speaking about it make Faelan's life more difficult? (p.121)
- Why is Bardolph such a respected leader? (pp.122–124)
- Bardolph says that Faelan's father was a good wolf. Why do you think he says that? (p.124)
- How different will the chickens' lives be in the grassy plateau? (pp.131–132)
- How do you think Faelan feels when Avian says that he would make a fine 'ninja chicken'? (p.134)
- Would Lobo listen to a wolf like Faelan? Why or why not? Why does Faelan give advice anyway? (p.139)
- Who do you predict will become the true Leader when Bardolph dies? Would Tala or Faelan make a good leader? Why or why not? (p.141)
- What does Granny Beowulf mean when she says '*every wolf* has their place'? Do you believe what Granny says? Why or why not? (p.142)

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Activities

ACTIVITY 1: FEARS AND PHOBIAS

Faelan is a fearful wolf. He is afraid of heights. He also has a fear of being in small enclosed spaces, something you'll often hear referred to as claustrophobia. If you have an extreme, irrational fear of something, it is known as a phobia. However, many people (like Faelan) are frightened of heights, enclosed spaces, spiders, snakes, dogs, cats, water, injections, germs, thunder and lightning, darkness and crowds ... but these are normal fears, and are not necessarily phobias. However, some people's fear of such things makes them incapable of rational thought and can be completely debilitating, such as agoraphobia, the fear of going outside. There are people who have not walked outside their doors for many years because they are crippled by agoraphobia. All phobias have names. For instance, the fear of numbers is called arithmophobia, the fear of spiders is called arachnophobia, and the fear of night is called noctiphobia.

Research ten different phobias and what they mean. For an additional activity, work in pairs. Write each phobia and its meaning onto strips of paper. Cut the strips of paper to separate the words from their definitions. Jumble the strips of paper. Have your partner match the phobia words to their correct definitions.

ACTIVITY 2: A FUNNY FRIENDSHIP

Faelan and Avian are an unlikely pair. Normally, a wolf and a chicken would never form a friendship in the wild. However, an author of a fantasy adventure series has the freedom to dream up all kinds of different characters and scenarios. However it's not all based on fiction and fantasy. There are many examples in the natural world of two different kinds of animals forming unlikely bonds. Research online to find an example of a real but unusual animal friendship. Present your work in poster format. Remember, poster designs need to have a big, bold heading, eye-catching pictures and short, snappy, easy-to-read text. Other features often include subheadings, captions and labels.

ACTIVITY 3: FAMILY CONNECTIONS

When Faelan meets up with Varg, he starts by saying, "I come from the land between the Lockjaw Mountains and the River Fluvin; from the Pack of Bardolph Lupus the Eighth, wise and revered Leader of Wolves." Then Varg says "I am Varg Ákafar ... I hail from the Great Southern Territory that lies between the Lockjaw Mountains and the River Fluvin; I am the Leader of my mighty pack ...my mother was Gerwulf, my father Fenrisulfur. I – am – Lord – Varg!" In tikanga Māori, a pepeha is a formal way of introducing yourself. It lets others know the places and people that you are connected to. Pretend you're going to introduce yourself to Varg and his pack. Write your pepeha. Firstly identify a mountain and body of water (river, lake, ocean) that is special to you or that you live by. Then say the canoe or ship that your ancestors came to New Zealand on. Now say your family name (iwi, hapū, marae). Finally say your first name and greet your audience. Practise saying your pepeha out loud. Remember to say it with mana and pride.

ACTIVITY 4: WORD INVENTOR

Juliette MacIver uses wonderful words, phrases and sentences to add drama to this gripping adventure story. There are even words that she has made up, such as *pluckery-bunk* and *wolf-bluster*. The famous children's book writer Roald Dahl was the master word inventor. He invented more than 500 words and character names. In fact, a dictionary has been published that contains his invented words. It features what the words mean, where they came from and how Roald Dahl used them in his stories. Pretend you're a word inventor. Choose 10 ordinary words from the story and turn them into 10 made-up words. Then design a fun dictionary page featuring your 10 words. Remember a dictionary includes the words, easy-to-understand definitions, pronunciation guides and sentence examples.

ACTIVITY 5: WHAT A LEGEND!

The three wolves thought that Avian was a tiny fire-breathing dragon. Storytelling has been part of many cultures for hundreds of years. Traditional stories often explain how a creature looks and behaves. For instance, a well-known Māori legend explains how the kiwi lost its wings. Imagine you're a storyteller. Write a legend that explains how and why a dragon looks like it does and how it came to breathe fire. Brainstorm your ideas first. Then write your legend. Remember to edit and revise your work. Check the spelling, punctuation and grammar. Finally practise retelling your story to a friend or the rest of the class.

Written by Janine Scott

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