

# A WOLF CALLED WANDER

BY ROSANNE PARRY

## Educators' Guide



Grades 3–7

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### Booktalk

Swift, a young wolf cub, lives with his pack in the mountains learning to hunt, competing with his brothers and sisters for hierarchy, and watching over a new litter of cubs. Then a rival pack attacks, and Swift and his family scatter. Alone and scared, Swift must flee and find a new home. The trip is full of peril, and Swift encounters forest fires, hunters, highways, and hunger before he meets a mate and they start a new pack of their own.

Inspired by the extraordinary true story of a wolf named OR-7 (or Journey), who traveled a remarkable one thousand miles across the Pacific Northwest, this is an irresistible tale of survival. It invites readers to experience and imagine what it would be like to be one of the most misunderstood animals on earth.

### Discussion Questions

1. Describe each of Swift's sibling pups. How do their names describe their personalities? Which of them would you want to have for a brother or sister? Describe the adult wolves in Swift's pack. What role does each of them play in keeping the pack safe?
2. What does Mother mean when she tells Swift to "Wait until you have a fighting chance" before venturing outside the den (p. 5)? How do the adults in the pack teach the pups about survival in the outside world? What are the most important things Swift learns from them to help him survive on his own?
3. Compare the characters of Swift and Sharp. How are they similar and how are they different? What different paths do they choose when the pack is attacked and scattered? What do you think Father meant by his last song, "Carry on. Carry on. Carry on . . ." (p. 44)?
4. Why does Swift head away from his home territory? Discuss his thought: ". . . if my pack is not in the mountains, then it is no home for me" (p. 48). What makes him choose a different path than Sharp? Why doesn't he try to join the two wolves he spots attacking a sheep? What does he mean when he says, "They must have learned to hunt from watching coyotes" (p. 53)?
5. How does Swift survive his injuries after trying to hunt an elk on his own? What help does he receive from the raven? How do they help each other to survive? Why does Swift follow the raven away from the territory that is familiar to him?
6. Why did Swift's mother tell him "Men are the worst of all dangers" (p. 70)? How does Swift experience the world of men? What does he mean when he talks about a black river, lightning, and noisemakers? Why do you think men were hunting Swift and his brother?
7. How does Swift feel when his raven ignores him after they encounter more birds? What does he mean when he says, "My raven has her pack now" (p. 141)? What advantages does he gain after the raven leaves him on his own again?
8. How is Swift affected by watching the foal being born? What are his emotions as he watches the herd of wild horses? Why does Swift risk his life to lead the cougar away from the horse herd?
9. How do Swift's instincts help him escape the wildfire? What are the signs that tell him he has found a place where he can make a new home? How does he find his mate?
10. Why does Swift create a new name for himself when he meets his mate? What does the new name mean to him? How, exactly, has he changed from the "young wolf that ran away from his home ground" (p. 197)?

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### Extension Activities

**Myths about Wolves.** There are many myths about dangers that humans might experience from wolves, but few of them are true. Look up the facts about wolf populations and the ways they help conservation and ecosystems, especially during and after the recent reintroduction of wolves into Yellowstone Park.

**The Social Network of Wolves.** Wolves, as you have learned from this book, are social animals that are happiest when they are part of a pack. Research the facts about wolf families and how they interact and communicate with each other.

Discuss these lines from "The Law for the Wolves," by Rudyard Kipling (1865–1936) and how they relate to what you have learned about wolf families:

"Now this is the law of the jungle, as old and as true as the sky,  
And the wolf that shall keep it may prosper, but the wolf that shall break it must die.  
As the creeper that girdles the tree trunk, the law runneth forward and back:  
For the strength of the pack is the wolf, and the strength of the wolf is the pack."

**Partners in the Wild.** In the story, Swift partners for a while with a raven that helps him hunt and find his path. Look up information about the symbiotic relationship between wolves and ravens. Write a report about the activities between wolves and ravens that have been observed by naturalists. How many ways can these "partners" benefit each other in the wild?

**Where Wolves Wander.** Using the map in the back of the book, trace the path of OR-7, the real-life wolf that inspired the story about Swift. Divide your class or reading group into teams to research different habitats along that journey, creating a complete picture of each area including terrain, water sources, food sources, and suitability for sustaining a wolf pack.

**Be a Wolf Explorer.** Want to learn about life as a wildlife explorer? Visit [or7expedition.org](http://or7expedition.org). Then follow the path of OR-7 with a team of people who attempted to retrace his steps in the wild to learn more about the habits and special characteristics of the wolf. Make a list of the equipment you would need to join such an expedition.



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### Additional Resources

For more information about people and wildlife in the area OR-7 traveled through and now lives in, please visit:

[nezperce.org](http://nezperce.org)

[burnspaiute-nsn.gov](http://burnspaiute-nsn.gov)

[digital.library.upenn.edu/women/winnemucca/piutes/piutes.html](http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/winnemucca/piutes/piutes.html)

[oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/equity/equityinitiatives/Documents/IndiansinOregonToday.pdf](http://oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/equity/equityinitiatives/Documents/IndiansinOregonToday.pdf)

[dfw.state.or.us](http://dfw.state.or.us)

### Bibliography for Further Reading

*The Call of the Wild*, by Jack London, 1903

*The Incredible Journey*, by Sheila Burnford, 1961

*Julie of the Wolves*, by Jean Craighead George, 1972

*Pax*, by Sara Pennypacker, 2016

*Endling: The Last*, by Katherine Applegate, 2018

*Endling: The First*, by Katherine Applegate, 2019

### Praise for *A Wolf Called Wander*

**"Riveting and lyrical, *A Wolf Called Wander* is a vibrantly imagined celebration of the natural world. Don't miss this dazzling tour de force."**

—Katherine Applegate, Newbery Medal-winning author of *The One and Only Ivan*

★ **"Parry perfectly conveys her character's curious, alert, and social nature . . . a page-turning narrative."**—*School Library Journal* (starred review)

**"Rife with details of the myriad scents, sounds, tastes, touches, and sights in Swift/Wander's primal existence, the immediacy of his intimate, first-person, present-tense narration proves deeply moving."**—*Kirkus Reviews*



Photo by Brian Garaths

### About the Author

Rosanne Parry is the author of the acclaimed novels *Heart of a Shepherd*, *Second Fiddle*, and *Written in Stone*. She has taught writing at schools, conferences, educational nonprofits, and online at the Loft Literary Center. She and her family live in an old farmhouse in Portland, Oregon. She writes in a tree house in her backyard.