

A DOG CALLED HOMELESS

BY SARAH LEAN

KATHERINE TEGEN BOOKS, 2012

Synopsis

Fifth-grader Cally Louise Fisher becomes convinced what she says doesn't matter, so she gives up talking altogether. Not sure if she is seeing a ghost, or it is just wishful thinking, Cally has begun to see her dead mother, who is sometimes accompanied by a very large dog. She stops talking partly because her father and brother never speak of her mother who died a year earlier and partly because no one believes that she can see her mother even though she's dead.

When her father sells the home they shared with her mother and moves the family across town into a smaller apartment, Cally meets Mrs. Cooper, a neighbor in their new apartment building who lovingly cares for her blind, nearly deaf 11-year-old son, Sam. Cally and Sam become friends, communicating through their shared silence, when they find themselves followed around by the dog that Cally has seen with her dead mother. The dog is a wolfhound who Cally calls Homeless, and she becomes convinced that Homeless belongs permanently in her life. She also meets a transient man named Jed, who has been looking after Homeless and to whom Cally comes to the aide of when he is beaten and robbed. Through interacting with Jed, talking with both a psychiatrist and Mrs. Copper, and plotting adventures with Sam, Cally struggles to overcome her vow of silence and finds a way to express both her grief and her needs.

Hooks

- How do you grieve? Do you let it all out, or hold it in? Do you talk about who you lost, or try to go on as if it hadn't happened so things can return to "normal"?
- Have you ever lost a pet? How long do you think people should grieve the loss of a pet? How is losing a pet different from losing a friend? A sibling? A parent?
- What does it mean to be disabled? Do you know anyone who is disabled? Does being disabled make someone less or more empathetic towards others? What do you think about the term "differently abled" as an alternative?
- Can you imagine ever being homeless yourself? Why do you think people are homeless? Do you think some people choose to be homeless?

- How long have you gone without saying a single word aloud? Have you ever not wanted to talk at all? Not to anyone? Not about something really bad? Not about anything?

About the Author

Sarah Lean grew up in Wells, Somerset. The first book she read was *Hans Christian Andersen's Fairy Tales*, and she started writing at age ten, asking her mother to type up the stories she made up on the spot. Sarah Lean has a degree in English and worked as a primary school teacher before returning to the University of Winchester to earn her Masters in Creative and Critical Writing. She has worked as a layout artist for newspapers, a stencil maker, and a gardener.

Sarah Lean recalls childhood smells that elicit strong memories--apple pie, mowed grass, warm tarmac--as well as childhood sounds, pages in a book being turned slowly and deliberately. "Reading is, I believe, how we understand others and ourselves more fully, how we explore, safely, from the comfort of an armchair or our beds."

Sarah Lean lives near Poole in Dorset with her husband, her teenage son, and their dogs, Coco and Harry. *A Dog Called Homeless* is her first novel; her other novels include *A Horse for Angel*, *The Forever Whale*, and *Hero*.

Related links

Sarah Lean's official website, <http://www.sarahlean.co.uk/about-sarah/>

Review of *A Dog Called Homeless*, <http://whatkidsarereading.co.uk/sarah-lean/>

Connections

Selective Mutism

Chan, Crystal. *Bird*. Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2014.

DeGuzman, Michael. *Finding Stinko*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007.

Fletcher, Ralph. *Flying Solo*. Clarion Books, 1998.

Hannigan, Katherine. *True (. . . Sort of)*. Greenwillow Books, 2011.

Konigsburg, E.L. *Silent to the Bone*. Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2000.

Leal, Ann Haywood. *Also Known as Harper*. Henry Holt and Company, 2009.

LeFleur, Suzanne. *Listening for Lucca*. Wendy Lamb Books, 2013.

Mahy, Margaret. *The Other Side of Silence*. Viking, 1995.

Grief/ Loss of Mother

Blackstone, Matt. *Sorry You're Lost*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2014.

Carmichael, Clay. *Wild Things*. Front Street, 2009.

Chapman Willis, Cynthia. *Dog Gone*. Feiwel and Friends, 2008.

Geinthner, Carole. *If Only*. Scholastic Press, 2012.
Hautala, Beth. *Waiting for Unicorns*. Philomel Books, 2015.
Hays, Tommy. *What I Came to Tell You*. Egmont Publishing, 2013.
Jones, Traci L. *Silhouetted by the Blue*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2011.
Lopez, Diana. *Confetti Girl*. Little, Brown & Company, 2009.
Nuzum, K.A. *The Leanin' Dog*. Joanna Colter Books, 2008.
Roth, Judith L. *Serendipity & Me*. Viking, 2013.

Dogs

Bauer, Michael Gerard. *Just a Dog*. Scholastic Press, 2012.
DeFelice, Cynthia C. *Wild Life*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2011.
Engle, Margarita. *Mountain Dog*. Henry Holt and Company, 2013.
Ibbotson, Eva. *One Dog and His Boy*. Scholastic Press, 2012.
MacLachlan, Patricia. *The Truth of Me: about a boy, his grandmother and a very good dog*. HarperCollins, 2013.
Martin, Ann M. *Rain Reign*. Feiwel and Friends, 2014.
Paulsen, Gary. *Road Trip*. Wendy Lamb Books, 2013.
Pyron, Bobbie. *A Dog's Way Home*. Katherine Tegen Books, 2011.
Tolan, Stephanie. *Listen!* HarperCollins, 2006.

Other books by Sarah Lean

A Hundred Horses. New York: Katherine Tegen Books. 2014.

Activities

IN THE LIBRARY

Be a Helper

How could you help others in need in your community? Choose a charity or shelter in your community and raise money as a class or as a school to donate. How would you decide who to raise money for? What would you do to raise money?

Our Five Senses

Sam is blind and mostly deaf. He uses his other senses to become familiar with the world around him. Discuss the 5 senses and what it would be like to not be able to use one or more of your five senses.

Using Our Senses

Sam must use his senses other than sight and hearing to become familiar with the world around him. Pair into teams of two. Blindfold your partner and introduce them to objects. Have the blindfolded partner try to feel, smell and possibly taste their way around guessing what the objects are to truly see how we can use all of our senses to better understand the world around us.

Drawing from Memory

Cally drew her memories. Choose two of your favorite memories and draw them. Share why you chose the memories that you did. Why do you think you have these memories? What makes them so memorable to you? What makes them special?

IN THE CLASSROOM

Make a Memory Box

Use a shoebox or another small box and select five to ten objects to put in it that represent you. Have your classmates try to guess what box belongs to what student. Why did you include what you did in your box? After everyone has had a chance to match up the right box to the right student, have a discussion about why you included what you did in your box. Did your classmates learn new things about you that they did not know from the items you decided to include in your box?

Author's Website with Additional Activities for the Book

<http://www.sarahlean.co.uk/resources/>

TRUE (... SORT OF)

BY KATHERINE HANNIGAN

GREENWILLOW BOOKS, 2011

Synopsis

True (... Sort Of) is the story of an endearing but rambunctious girl named Delly Pattison. Delly's quick temper gets her in trouble day after day. Her exuberance leads her on "Dellyventures" that only her little brother RB seems to really understand. One day there is a new kid in school, Ferris Boyd, who doesn't talk and is never, ever to be touched. Ferris is a "mysturiosity" to Delly and must therefore be investigated.

Brud Kinney loves basketball nearly to the point of obsession. When the Boyd family moves to town, Brud is thrilled to discover that Ferris loves basketball with his same passion and intensity. Their friendship deepens as they enjoy weekly basketball practice sessions, even though they never speak.

Meanwhile, Delly and RB have created a special hideaway with Ferris where each child feels safe. But Ferris Boyd's silence covers a secret, and Delly and Brud soon must face difficult choices in order to keep their friendship with Ferris. Although it is whimsical and humorous at times, *True (... Sort Of)* is amazingly powerful, dealing with the important childhood themes of true friendship, bullying, and learning to define oneself. It also touches on the subject of parental abuse in a meaningful yet appropriate way for children.

Hooks

- Have you ever had the urge to fight? What did you do to stop yourself?
- Have you ever made up words? What types of words would be useful or fun to put together?
- Do you know anyone who has a special way with animals?
- What are some reasons people are mean to each other? Have you ever been mean to another person?
- What trick do you use when you're upset or angry in order to calm down?
- Have you ever gotten to know a person to find out that they are very different from what you thought at first?
- Have you ever protected a friend from somebody that was being mean to them? Who are safe adults from whom to seek help?

- Have you ever been really good at a sport? Did your sports talent help you make friends?
- Do you have more friends that are boys or more that are girls? How are friendships between boys and girls different?

About the Author

Katherine Hannigan has studied mathematics, painting, and studio art and has worked as the education coordinator for a Head Start program. Most recently she has worked as an Assistant Professor of Art and Design. In addition to being the author of *True (... Sort Of)*, she has also written *Emmaline and the Bunny* and the national bestseller *Ida B... and Her Plans to Maximize Fun, Avoid Disaster, and (Possibly) Save the World*. She lives in Iowa with a bunch of cats and the occasional bunny or bird visitor. Her backyard hosts an additional array of creatures, including deer, raccoons, possums, and sometimes a skunk. But no alligators... yet!

Related Links

[Video: Katherine Hannigan Discusses "True \(... Sort Of\)"](#)

Katherine Hannigan's official website, www.katherinehannigan.com

Connections

Bullying

Angleberger, Tom. *The Strange Case of Origami Yoda*. Amulet Books, 2012 (First book of the series).

Blume, Judy. *Blubber*. Yearling, 2012.

Clements, Andrew. *Jake Drake, Bully Buster*. Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2002.

Chreve, Susan. *Joshua T. Bates in Trouble Again*. Knopf Books for Young Readers, 1998.

Estes, Eleanor. *The Hundred Dresses*. HMH Books for Young Readers, 1944.

Fox, Annie. *Real Friends vs. the Other Kind*. Free Spirit Publishing, 2009 (Second book of the series).

Gervay, Susanne. *I Am Jack*. Tricycle Press, 2009.

Going, K.L. *The Liberation of Gabriel King*. Puffin Books, 2007.

Kline, Suzy. *Song Lee and the "I Hate You" Notes*. Puffin Books, 2001.

Kowitt, Holly N. *The Loser List*. Scholastic, 2012.

Wilcox-Richards, Nancy. *How to Tame a Bully*. Scholastic, 2006.

Yulo, Michele. *Super Tool Lula: The Bully-Fighting Super Hero!* BookLogix Publishing Services, 2011.

Friendship

Airgood, Ellen. *Prairie Evers*. Puffin Books, 2012.

Black, Holly. *Doll Bones*. Margaret K. McElderry Books, 2013.

Byng, Georgia. *Molly Moon's Incredible Book of Hypnotism*. HarperCollins Publishers, 2002.

DiCamillo, Kate. *Because of Winn-Dixie*. Candlewick Press, 2000.
DiCamillo, Kate. *Flora and Ulysses: The Illuminated Adventures*. Candlewick Press, 2013.
Lord, Cynthia. *Half a Chance*. Scholastic, 2014.
Park, Linda Sue. *Project Mulberry*. Yearling, 2007.
Patron, Susan. *Lucky Breaks*. Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2009.
Pennypacker, Sara. *Clementine*. Hyperion Books for Children, 2006.
Spinelli, Jerry. *Eggs*. Little, Brown, 2007.
Standiford, Natalie. *How to Say Goodbye in Robot*. Scholastic, 2010.
Ursu, Anne. *Breadcrumbs*. Walden Pond Press, 2011.

Child Abuse

Coman, Carolyn. *What Jamie Saw*. Front Street, 1995.
Draper, Sharon M. *Forged by Fire*. Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2011.
Greenburg, Dan. *Claws*. Yearling, 2007.
Lowry, Lois. *Gossamer*. Houghton Mifflin, 2006.
McKinnon, Hannah Roberts. *Franny Parker*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009.
McMahen, Chris. *Box of Shocks*. Orca Book Publishers, 2011.
Weeks, Sarah. *Jumping the Scratch: A Novel*. HarperCollins Publishers, 2009.
White, Ruth. *Tadpole*. Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2003.

Siblings

Blume, Judy. *The Pain and the Great One*. Bradbury Press, 1994.
Choldenko, Gennifer. *Al Capone Does My Shirts*. Putnam's, 2004.
Gutman, Dan. *Back in Time with Thomas Edison*. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2012.
Hanlon, Abby. *Dory Fantasmagory*. Dial Books, 2014.
Hunter, Erin. *Dark River*. HarperCollins Publishers, 2008.
Naylor, Phyllis Reynolds. *Alice in Blunderland*. Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2012.
Ryan, Pam Munoz. *Becoming Naomi Leon*. Scholastic, 2004.
Voigt, Cynthia. *Dacey's Song*. Atheneum, 1982.

Activities

Publisher's Discussion Guide

Greenwillow Books, an imprint of HarperCollins, has created a great Discussion Guide for *True (... Sort Of)*. There is an extensive list of questions related to the book.

[http://www.katherinehannigan.com/Content/True%20\(...Sort%20Of\)%20page/True%20\(...Sort%20Of\)%20Discussion%20Guide.pdf](http://www.katherinehannigan.com/Content/True%20(...Sort%20Of)%20page/True%20(...Sort%20Of)%20Discussion%20Guide.pdf)

IN THE LIBRARY

Delly Words

Delly loves to create words that uniquely capture her mood, "surpresent," "Dellyventure," "hideawaysis," "mysturiosity." Have students find or share other Delly words from the book and discuss what these words mean to Delly. Then ask students to think about words. Do they love to do something or do they ever feel a certain way, and they've found

there is no perfect word? Have students create their your own words and then share with the class.

Playing Basketball

Ferris and Brud love to play basketball. If a basketball court is easily accessible, borrow some basketballs from the PE teacher and invite students outside to the basketball court. Divide students into four groups, if there are four courts nearby, and explain the rules to “knock out.”

The goal of “knock out” is to make a free throw before the student in front of you or behind you in line does. It is acceptable to “knock” a student’s ball in the air if it is about to go into the basket. Begin by having students line up at the free throw line. The first student shoots a free throw. Right after the first student shoots, the second player shoots a free throw. If the ball for the first student goes in, then the first student runs to get the ball and passes it to the third person in line, who will then try to make a free throw. If the first person misses the free throw, she/he runs to get the rebound and tries to make the basket before the second person can make the basket. It is acceptable for the second shot by a player to be closer than the free throw line. If the second player can make the free throw or the follow up basket before the first player, then the first player is “out” and must sit at the side of the court, waiting for the game to finish. The winner is the last player who continues to make baskets before the other remaining player.

If there are no basketball courts nearby, bring in some buckets and small balls to the library. Create a “mini” version of “knock out” in the library.

Conclude by talking about how important practice is to any sports skill.

Safe Adults

Ferris Boyd’s father does not treat Ferris appropriately. Delly suspects something is wrong, but she’s not sure what to do to help her friend. Who are safe adults from whom you could seek help if you had a friend who was in trouble? Brainstorm as a class when and how you should seek help for a friend.

IN THE CLASSROOM

Character Analysis

After reading the story, have students brainstorm a list of words to describe the main character, Delly Pattison. Then, have students narrow the list down to the six adjectives that capture her personality best. Next, have students, working alone or with partners, search the book for passages showing how Delly fits the adjectives on the brainstormed list. Have students mark the text passages with stick-on notes. Finally, have students share their textual support for each adjective.

Character Trading Cards

Have students use this interactive tool created by Read Write Think, http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/interactives/trading_cards_2/, to create a trading card for one of the characters in the book, capturing information that highlights each character's search for friendship and his/her role as a friend to the other.

Fakebook

Have students select a character from the novel. Then, using the online tool [Fakebook](#), ask them to put together a Facebook like profile based on facts from the story. Have students spend some time thinking about who might be friends with whom and why, and what they might all say to each other. Create a "friends" list and write wall posts depicting events from the story.

Character Evolution

Using a graphic organizer, show how Delly's character changes throughout the story.

Hero Writing

Begin the lesson by asking students what the word *hero* means to them. Write students' answers on the board. Tell students to think about characteristics or personality traits that they think make someone a hero. Have students write about a person whom they know who has done something heroic, making sure to share the characteristics and actions of that person.

Persuasive Writing

Have students write a persuasive letter convincing Delly's mother that Delly is a hero.

Famous Basketball Players

Have students research famous basketball players and create short digital presentations about the highlights of their careers.

Creating Character Blogs

In this lesson by Read Write Think, <http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/creating-character-blogs-1169.html?tab=3#tabs>, students view examples of appealing blogs, learn the basic elements of blog creation, and then create a blog from the perspective of a fictional character. Students demonstrate understanding of the text by including images, quotations, links, and commentary on their blogs. Students then help one another develop their blogs by acting as editors during the creation stage and reviewing one another's blogs upon completion.

WILDWOOD

BY COLIN MELOY

ILLUSTRATED BY CARSON ELLIS

HARPERCOLLINS CHILDREN'S BOOKS, 2011

Synopsis

Wildwood is the story of an ordinary girl, Prue McKeel, living an ordinary life in Portland, Oregon. Until, that is, her baby brother Mac is kidnapped by a murder of crows while he and Prue are playing at the park. The crows fly off with Mac in tow, to a place across the Willamette River called the Impassable Wilderness by Portlanders and Wildwood by those who live within its borders. Prue and her friend Curtis take off into this wilderness on a hair-raising adventure to rescue Mac. They meet all sorts of characters, including powerful mystics, warring creatures, and other figures with the darkest intentions.

In Part One, Prue and Curtis enter the Impassable Wilderness (I.W.), where they encounter a band of talking coyote soldiers fighting amongst themselves. Curtis is captured and taken off to the Dowager Governess, Alexandra, the ruler of the coyotes and the crows. Prue evades capture and hitches a ride with the Postmaster on the Long Road that connects the three parts of Wildwood: South Wood, The Avian Principality, and North Wood. It is here that the adventures of Prue and Curtis diverge until the end of the novel.

Prue heads for the mansion at the heart of South Wood to ask for help from the Governor-Regent. She is imprisoned there and eventually rescued by birds from the Avian Principality. Curtis is convinced to join the coyote soldiers and becomes ensnared by the Dowager's lies. Initially swayed by the Dowager, Curtis fights against the Wildwood Bandits, a group of men and women who live freely in the woods. However, during a victory celebration, Curtis discovers that the Dowager Governess has Mac and is intending to sacrifice him to the ivy in order to rule Wildwood.

In Part Two, Curtis finds himself imprisoned in the Dowager's dungeon after refusing to join her in her plan to sacrifice Mac. In prison, he meets members of the bandit gang and makes friends with a rat called Septimus. Together they break free from prison, and Curtis, along with Septimus, finds his place among the bandits. Meanwhile, Prue heads north to find the mystics, who may be able to help her locate Mac. She meets the Dowager Governess, who convinces her to go back home to Portland. Once home, she learns from her parents that they'd made a deal with a mysterious woman from the I.W. in order to have children. Their deal included giving their son, if they had one, to her.

In Part Three, Prue returns to the I.W. determined to rescue her baby brother. She discovers from the mystics that the mysterious woman with whom Prue's parents had bargained was Alexandra, the Dowager Governess. The mystics tell Prue of the Dowager's plans to sacrifice Mac in order to destroy all of the people, animals, and life of the woods. Prue helps muster an army, while Curtis joins forces with the bandits, and a great battle is fought. In the end, the Dowager loses the battle, and is herself sacrificed to the forest. Prue and Curtis are reunited, and Mac is rescued. While Prue and Mac return home to Portland, Curtis decides to stay in the I.W. to live with the bandits.

Curtis and Prue's further adventures can be followed in Colin Meloy's *Under Wildwood* and *Wildwood Imperium*.

Hooks

- If you were about to embark on an exciting adventure, who would you choose to accompany you? Why?
- Have you heard of anyone who can communicate with plants or animals? What do you know about research in these areas?
- What would your first question be if you met an animal who could speak English?
- If your survival on a wilderness expedition depended upon trusting someone, what traits would that person need to possess?

About the Author

Colin Meloy is the charismatic lead singer and songwriter of The Decemberists, a highly celebrated band that has sold in excess of 1 million records. He has been recognized as much for his musical abilities--his ear for inventive and timeless melodies and his lilting vocals--as he has been for his unmatched lyrical prowess. Crafting each song as a vivid, imaginative story unto itself, Colin Meloy has become one of the most distinctive and appreciated voices of our time. *Wildwood* marks his debut as children's author.

Related Links

Colin Meloy's official website, <http://colinmeloy.com>

Follow Colin on Twitter, @[colinmeloy](https://twitter.com/colinmeloy)

The official Wildwood Chronicles website, <http://www.wildwoodchronicles.com>

About the Illustrator

As a kid, **Carson Ellis** loved exploring the woods, drawing, and nursing wounded animals back to health. As an adult, little has changed--except she is now the acclaimed illustrator of several books for children, including Lemony Snicket's *The Composer is Dead*, *Dillweed's Revenge* by Florence Parry Heide, and *The Mysterious Benedict Society* by Trenton Lee Stewart. Colin Meloy and Carson Ellis live with their son, Hank, in Portland, Oregon, quite near the Impassable Wilderness.

Related Links

Carson Ellis's official website, www.carsonellis.com

Connections

Friendship Between Boys and Girls

Bantle, Lee, F. *Diving for the Moon*. Macmillan Books for Young Readers, 1995.

Fitzmaurice, Kathryn. *The Year the Swallows Came Early*. HarperCollins Publishers, 2008.

Giff, Patricia Reilly. *All the Way Home*. Delacorte Press, 2001.

Hannigan, Katherine. *True (...Sort Of)*. Greenwillow Books, 2011.

Haworth, Danette. *Violet Raines Almost Got Struck by Lightning*. Walker & Co., 2008.

Henkes, Kevin. *Bird Lake Moon*. Greenwillow Books, 2008.

House, Silas and Vaswani, Neela. *Same Sun Here*. Candlewick Press, 2011.

Konigsburg, E.L. *The View From Saturday*. Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 1996.

Lloyd, Natalie. *A Snicker of Magic*. Scholastic, 2014.

Lord, Cynthia. *Half a Chance*. Scholastic, 2014.

Lord, Cynthia. *Touch Blue*. Scholastic, 2012.

Mass, Wendy. *11 Birthdays*. Scholastic, 2009.

Mass, Wendy. *The Candymakers*. Little, Brown and Co., 2010.

Mass, Wendy. *Every Soul a Star*. Little, Brown and Co., 2008

Messner, Kate. *The Brilliant Fall of Gianna Z*. Walker, 2009.

Oppel, Kenneth. *The Boundless*. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2014.

Paterson, Katherine. *The Bridge to Terabithia*. Crowell, 1977.

Schmidt, Gary, D. *Okay for Now*. Clarion Books, 2011.

Spinelli, Jerry. *Eggs*. Little, Brown and Co., 2007.

St. Antoine, Sara. *Three Bird Summer*. Candlewick Press, 2014.

Urban, Lynda. *A Crooked Kind of Perfect*. Harcourt, 2007.

Fantasy/Quests

Adams, Richard. *Watership Down*. Macmillan, 1977.

Alexander, Lloyd. *The Book of Three*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964 (Book one of a five book series).

Appelt, Kathi. *The Underneath*. Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2008.

Barron, T.A. *The Lost Years of Merlin*. Philomel Books, 1997 (Book one of a five book series).

Collins, Suzanne. *Gregor the Overlander*. Scholastic, 2003 (Book one of a five book series).

Cooper, Susan. *The Dark is Rising*. Atheneum, 1977 (Book one of a five book series).

Farmer, Nancy. *The Sea of Trolls*. Atheneum, 2004 (Book one in a three book series).

Funke, Cornelia. *Dragon Rider*. Scholastic, 2004.

Gordon, Roderick and Williams, Brian. *Tunnels*. Chicken House/Scholastic, 2008 (Book one in a six book series).

Hunter, Erin. *Warriors and Seekers* series. HarperCollins Children's Books, various publication dates.

Kibuishi, Kazu. *Amulet: The Stonekeeper*. Graphix, 2008 (Book one of a six book series).

Lewis, C.S. *The Chronicles of Narnia*. HarperCollins, 2010 (7-book set).

Mull, Brandon. *Spirit Animals: Wild Born*. Scholastic, 2013 (Book one of a series currently being written by various authors).

Jacques, Brian. *Redwall*. Philomel Books, 1986 (Book one of twenty-two books).

Lin, Grace. *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon*. Little, Brown and Company Books for Young Readers, 2009 (Book one of two books).

Nesbet, Anne. *The Cabinet of Earths*. HarperCollins Publishers, 2012.

Oliver, Lauren. *The Spindlers*. HarperCollins Publishers, 2013.

Riordan, Rick. *The Lightning Thief*. Miramax Books/Hyperion Books for Children, 2005 (Book one of a five book series).

Riordan, Rick. *The Lost Hero*. Disney/Hyperion Books, 2010 (Book one of a five book series).

Rutkoski, Marie. *The Cabinet of Wonders*. Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2008 (Book one in a three book series).

Smith, Jeff. *Bone: Out From Boneville*. Scholastic, 1996. (Book one of a ten book series).

Stephens, John. *The Emerald Atlas*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2011 (Book one of a three book series).

Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Fellowship of the Ring*. Houghton Mifflin Co., 1965 (Book one of a three book series).

Vanderpool, Clare. *Navigating Early*. Delacorte Press, 2013.

Weston, Robert Paul. *Zorgamazoo*. Razorbill, 2008.

Other Books by Colin Meloy

Under Wildwood: Book 2 of the Wildwood Chronicles

Wildwood Imperium: Book 3 of the Wildwood Chronicles

Activities

IN THE LIBRARY

Animal Dialogue

Prue and Curtis discover that, in *Wildwood*, animals can talk just like us! What would you talk about if you met an animal that could talk? Choose an animal and write a short dialogue that captures the first few minutes of your encounter. The animal can be “wild” or your pet Basset Hound! Imagine what you’d talk about!

Fairy Tale Connection

Wildwood has many features in common with classic fairy tales. For example, Prue begins her adventure by entering a dark, mysterious forest. This is common to such tales as “Little Red Riding Hood,” “Hansel and Gretel,” and “Snow White.” What other features in *Wildwood* can be traced to fairy tales? With a partner, discuss the connections between this novel and fairy tales. Why do you think these features are common in so many stories? (Evil queen/witch/stepmother; children venturing out alone/parents are missing/at fault for children’s fate; talking animals; children tempted by evil; children overcoming obstacles to find fulfillment)

Nature or Nurture

Several of the characters in *Wildwood* are chosen for their stereotypical behavior. Can you think of why ivy was chosen to represent an unstoppable evil? Why do you think coyotes were chosen to be the Dowager’s soldiers? Is this a fair characterization? What other animals in the text represent certain characteristics (e.g. owls, eagles, rats, etc.)? Is this an accurate portrayal of animal behavior? How can this be an effective technique in literature? Can it backfire? Discuss as a class the ways in which it can have both positive and negative outcomes.

IN THE CLASSROOM

Debate

Each side has a story--nothing is black or white. Are the bandits completely innocent? Does the Dowager have a reason to be upset at the people who abandoned her in the forest? Divide the class into three sections and assign a role to each group: Bandits, Dowager, and jury. The groups representing the Bandits and the Dowager must provide arguments to support the reason why they deserve to win the war for *Wildwood*. Every student should provide at least one unique statement to support the group’s argument. After arguments have been presented, the jury group will determine whose arguments were the most successful.

Google Earth/Impassable Wilderness

Prue's father identifies several areas in an atlas that are "impassable" (e.g. Siberia). With a partner, use Google Earth to find an area in California that could be an "Impassable Wilderness." What would you name this land? What features would it have? (Talking animals? An evil queen?) What is the reason it has become impassable? What keeps us from entering? Write a description of this place and its inhabitants. Include its coordinates from Google Earth.

A New Identity

At the beginning of the novel, Curtis is a lonely kid--he struggles to fit in at school and is desperate to belong to a community, to have friends. He finds this community in Wildwood--with the Bandits. They provide him with the kinship and adventure he's been longing for, and he's willing to give up his family back home to maintain this new identity. If you could, would you "start over"? Would you join a group of bandits? Would you join the mystics and commune with the trees? Or would you settle down in a quiet town with talking rabbits and foxes as your neighbors? Would you want to give up your current life or are you happy as you are? Why or why not? Explain in a one-to-two-page essay.