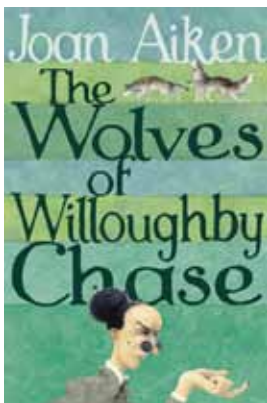


# Pie Corbett's Reading Spine

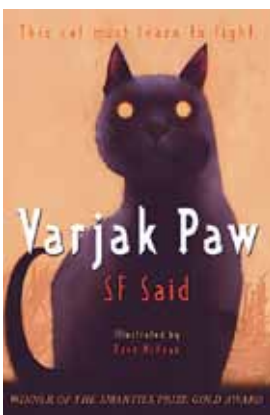
It was only when I had made my list for Year 5 that I realised how animals feature heavily – cats, wolves and foxes! These are romping reads as well as stories that touch deeply. I have listed them in a suggested order that leads towards what I would say is the greatest novel ever written for children.



## The Wolves of Willoughby Chase

Joan Aiken (Red Fox)

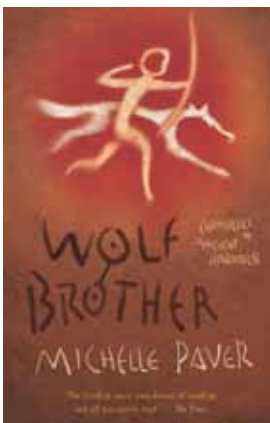
There are 12 novels in this series (the 'Wolves Chronicles') and 'The Wolves' is the first, set in Joan Aiken's own historical world (1832) where wolves have travelled through the Channel Tunnel! Begin by researching some information about wolves. There is a good film that can be used to compare with the book (though it has a PG certificate so get parental permission). Try reading the book chapter-by-chapter and watching the film alongside, section-by-section. With the class list difficult vocabulary for discussion and create a glossary of historical terms. At the end, discuss what should happen to Miss Slighcarp and Mr Grimshaw. Check out Joan Aiken's website where you can download a bookmark for the book. (<http://www.joanaiken.com/pages/books.html>)



## Varjak Paw

SF Said (Random House)

After reading the book, ask children to paint dark city landscapes and skylines. Then together draw role-on-the-wall for Varjak, collecting clues and quotes about his developing character. Ask: *Why is Varjak rejected and yet why does he return?* Explain the difference between Varjak, the Elder Paw and the other cats. Can the children contrast the inside of the house with outside in the city? Together invent a 'Jalal tale' and explain 'the way'. Invite the children to write a night adventure for Varjak – for example, a story in which he nearly gets caught by Sally Bones. Encourage them to write a sequel adventure and then read *The Outlaw Varjak Paw* (Random House).



## Wolf Brother

Michelle Paver (Orion)

Before reading draw a map and during the story, mark where events occur. With the class make a list of the words or phrases that Wolf uses instead of human terms and give their definitions, such as *'Tall Tailless, Bright White Eye, thundering Wet'*. Encourage them to try inventing other phrases for everyday things and try writing a scene from the book from Wolf's viewpoint using his language. The story is set 6,000 years ago and imagines what life might have been like. Together describe the main settings – the Raven camp, the ice river, the wide water, the cave and the forest. Draw and discuss as a class the significance of the main events – Torak's father's death, meeting Wolf, fighting Hord, discovering the prophecy and defeating the bear. Compare this book to other 'quests' – typical characters, events and plot patterns.



## Street Child **READ & RESPOND**

*Berlie Doherty (HarperCollins)*

Based on the true story of an orphan, Jim Jarvis, who inspired Dr Barnardo to set up his famous children's home, this book is ideal as a read for any Victorian project. Background work on Barnardo and the life of street children would set the context. Read 'Tell me your story Jim' and in pairs invent a possible tale for Jim. In role as 'agony aunts' ask children to advise Jim after each chapter on his next moves. Map the story as it unfolds and at the end have them retell Jim's story in role as they now know it. At the end, discuss 'what is a home?', children's rights and how Jim survived. (See the *Read & Respond* title for further ideas.)



## The Midnight Fox **READ & RESPOND**

*Betsy Byars (Faber)*

Read the first two paragraphs and discuss as a class what the story might be about. Tom says: 'I like the way I am'. Discuss the tension between his father's and Uncle Fred's expectations and Tom's view. Ask the children to invent newspaper titles for key incidents and use these to label a class map of the story. Provide time to write letters to Petie Burkis about the main events. Ask: *Why did Uncle Fred and Aunt Millie 'never mention what I had done'?* At the end, Tom says 'it was as if it had happened to another boy'. *What did happen? How did he change?* Then discuss who was right: Uncle Fred or Tom?



## Tom's Midnight Garden **READ & RESPOND**

*Philippa Pearce (Oxford University Press)*

This book demands a timeline of events so that the class can see the way in which the plot is constructed and how time shifts. (You can see the house that Philippa Pearce used as a basis for the book online: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2644779/Country-house-inspired-Philippa-Pearces-Toms-Midnight-Garden-goes-market-3-5million.html>) Mime moving as a ghost through a door into a different world. When reading Chapter 20 discuss 'time no longer'. Before reading Chapter 26, discuss with the class how the tale will end. Invite them to draw the garden and write an extra episode for Tom and Hatty. Can they write their own midnight trip into another world, such as *Pie's Midnight Forest* and identify the link with time travel in *The Lion*, *The Witch and the Wardrobe* from Year 3? (See the *Read & Respond* title for further ideas.)



## FATHER **Picture book**

*Grahame Baker-Smith (Templar)*

Begin by reading the cover and ask: *Why is the title 'FATHER'?* *Why the poppies? The birds? The wings? Are dreams important?* Explain 'another call claimed him'. Ask: *What is the story about? What does it mean to each child?* Gather clues as a class about each character and then interview them in turn – mother, father and son. Also, read and explore the wonderful *Leon and the Place Between* (Templar), as well as picture books by David Wiesner, such as *Free Fall*, *Flotsam*, *Hurricane*, *Art and Max*, *June 29, 1999* and *Sector 7* (Houghton Mifflin).