

# Wild Kids



## The Many Faces of the Wolf

by Kevin Strauss

**H**ave you ever read or heard a story about a wolf? Stories often help us learn about animals that we don't see everyday. You probably remember hearing stories like "Little Red Riding Hood" and "The Three Little Pigs" in which the wolf acts like a villain. But there are other kinds of wolf stories. In other, less known stories, wolves may act wise, foolish, or helpful.

Read the following story and think about what kind of wolf character the author was trying to portray.

## Wolf and Dog (an Aesop's Fable)

retold by Kevin Strauss © 2001

**L**ong ago, Wolf was hungry. Now you might think that Wolf is always hungry, and you would be right. But on this day, Wolf hadn't eaten for weeks. It was almost as if all the deer and rabbits had evaporated from the forest like mist in the morning. Wolf was so hungry that he decided to look for food near where the humans lived. It was dangerous for Wolf to hunt near humans. Some wolves that go there never come back. But Wolf had never been this hungry before. So as the sun dipped red behind the western hills, he walked through the forest to the edge of a farmer's field.



Illustrations by Joan Ouellette

Wolf sniffed the air and scanned the field, looking for a calf or lamb to eat. It was then that he heard a strange sound. The barking noise was coming from a creature that looked a lot like he did. The creature was running toward Wolf.

“Woof!” said the creature.

“Brother, why are you speaking so strangely? We wolves never bark that way,” said Wolf.

“I’m not your brother. I am a dog and we bark when we see wild animals near the farm,” said Dog.

“Well we certainly do look alike, perhaps we are related in some way,” said Wolf. And then he noticed how fat Dog was.

“Say brother, how is it that I am starving while you seem to have plenty of food?”

“I work for my meals. I chase wild animals and robbers away from the farm, and for that work I am well paid. Every evening, my master scrapes his table scraps into a bowl and feeds me until I am full,” said Dog.

“You mean you don’t have to hunt for your food and catch it in the forest?” said Wolf.

“Of course not, why would I do that? The only hunting I do is for fun,” said Dog.

“Say brother, do you think that your master could use another worker? I could chase wild animals away from the farm, too,” said Wolf.

“Well, I guess so,” said Dog, “There is always work to do. Let’s go ask my master.”

So as evening settled on the fields, Wolf and Dog walked up to the farmhouse. As they got closer to the house, the light from the windows shone on them, and for the first time, Wolf noticed that Dog had no fur around his neck.

“Dog, why do you have no fur on your neck,” said Wolf.

“Oh that, it’s nothing, you’ll get used to it,” said Dog.

“Get used to what, Dog?”

“Well it’s nothing, really. My master doesn’t want me running off during the day, so he ties me up near the house, and when I pull at the rope, it wears away the fur on my neck. It’s fine though; all I do is sleep through the day. You’ll get used to it,” said Dog.

Wolf stopped. He looked at the forest, then back at Dog and then back at the forest.

“No, Dog, I don’t think I can get used to that.”

And Wolf turned and ran back to the darkness of the woods. People say that from that time on, wolves have lived in the forest, and dogs have lived with people, and they have never spoken since. ■

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### Activity:

Go to your local library and check out as many books as you can find that have wolf characters in them. Make a list of the ways wolves are portrayed. Is the wolf a villain? foolish? wise? helpful?

Answer these questions:

- What personality does the wolf have?
- How do you think the author of this book wants you to feel about wolves?
- What problems are there in learning about wolves from folktales?