

GUARDIAN OF GIRIA

READING GROUP RESOURCE PACK

This resource pack has been produced as an accompaniment to the middle grade novel, Guardian of Giria, by June Molloy.

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GUARDIAN OF GIRIA

STORY SUMMARY

Felix, a grumpy wild boar and undisputed king of the forest, is annoyed to discover an intruder has visited his private clearing. The only traces are a strange scent and an even stranger set of footprints —footprints that appear to have been left by a dog with only two feet. A few days later, a young fox cub goes missing and her frantic mother asks Felix for help. Felix investigates and discovers two enormous wolves. When he learns of their hunting capabilities from a travelling raven, Felix realises the residents of Giria Wood are now in great danger and immediately devises a plan to guard the animals and eliminate the wolves.

What follows is an exciting adventure as the animals band together to protect and defend against this new threat. The plot involves a varied cast of characters, including a group of misfit pre-adult boars, a family of foxes, a family of beavers, a knowledgeable raven and an assembled group of magnificent red stags who would really rather be preening themselves for the annual rut than dealing with wolves.

Age Range: 9-13

STORY NOTES

1. Guardian of Giria is written in British English.
2. The animals in Guardian of Giria are all native to Europe. (More details on the individual species included in the story can be found in the Animal Facts Resource Sheet.
3. Apart from the fact that the animals can speak (and have facial expressions associated with speech such as smiling and frowning), all animal behaviour is true to the behaviour of the individual species.
4. Animals are referred to using the pronoun “who” rather than the conventional pronoun “that” to reflect the fact that the animals can speak and have individual personalities.
5. The story was inspired by the wildlife and countryside surrounding the author’s home in Lithuania, but also incorporates elements from neighbouring countries, including Poland, Belarus, Latvia and Russia.

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TOPICS & THEMES

1. Family
2. Friendship
3. Comradery
4. Leadership
5. European forest animals
6. Hunting of animals by humans
7. Sexual dimorphism and gender roles in animals

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Do you like the cover? Do you think it is a good reflection of what happens in the story?
2. Did you enjoy the book? Would you recommend it to others?
3. Did you think the story and language were appropriate for your age group?
4. The story is written in short chapters that are all more or less the same length. Do you like this format? Does it make it easier to read? Does it help to keep your interest? Does it make you want to read “one more chapter” before you put it down?
5. The book includes a map of Giria Wood. Do you think this is useful? Does it help you to imagine the forest, or could you do this without the map? Can you visualize the various sections of the forest and countryside from the author’s descriptions?
6. Did you like Felix? If you disliked him at the start of the story but liked him by the end, what changed your mind? How would you describe his character?
7. Felix is described a number of times as “master” of the forest. In what way do you think he is “master” of the forest? Is this the same as being a leader?
8. The bachelor boars have two leaders – Maksy and Leo. Which did you prefer and why? How do you think they became leaders of the group? What qualities do they have that makes them good leaders?
9. Nox and Indigo are brothers who are different in both appearance and character. Which did you prefer and why?
10. Overall, who was your favourite character and why?

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11. Wild boars live in matriarchal societies. What does this mean? Do you know of any other animal species that live in matriarchal societies?
12. Hunting wild animals is controversial. What are your views on hunting wild animals? Consider the question in each of the following scenarios:
 - a. Hunting for meat to sustain yourself and your family, taking care not to have a negative impact on the overall population of a species or on the environment.
 - b. Hunting to maintain optimal population numbers – not so many that they risk running out of food or damaging their environment, not so few that there is a risk the species will disappear altogether.
 - c. Hunting to protect your crops or livestock.
 - d. Hunting for sport – that is, purely for the thrill of the kill, and perhaps for a trophy such as antlers or tusks.
 - e. What about fishing – is that different from hunting for mammals or birds?
13. At one point in the story, Felix mentions that he does not look after piglets because that is “all sows’ work”. Do you think this indicates unfair treatment of the sows by Felix or is a true reflection of wild boar behaviour?
14. Do you think Felix actually does more for his family than he likes to let on?
15. Compare Felix’s approach to fatherhood to some of the other fathers in the story, such as Patinas, Reno, Curtis and Jixi. Do they leave the rearing of young to the females or are they actively involved in the process?
16. Females are initially left out of the plan to eliminate the wolves, but in the end, they are needed. Why do you think they were initially left out? Do you think it is right that they were initially left out? Do you think it is right that they were eventually included?
17. How many of the animal species featured in Guardian of Giria can be found in your country? If they can be found in your country, are they native to your country or were they introduced? If they’re not in your country, is it because they are not native to your country or because they have become extinct? If they have become extinct, what is the cause? If these animals are not native to your country, do you have different but similar animals?
18. Did you learn about animals and animal behaviour from reading the book? Do you think stories like these are a useful way to learn about animals and nature?
19. Leo and Sal hide with Felix in an underground cave built by humans. What do you think humans used this cave for?
20. The moon plays an important role in the story. What do you know about the moon’s cycle? What impact does the moon’s cycle have on planet earth?

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ACTIVITIES

1. Write a short review of the book. Did you enjoy it? Would you recommend it to others? What was your favourite scene? Who was your favourite character? Who was your least favourite character? Did you like the ending?
2. Write a short story about what happens in the days or weeks after the end of the book.
3. Draw a picture of one of your favourite scenes from the book.
4. Take a group trip to a local forest and take note of the trees, plants, animals and birds you see. Can you find any of the animals featured in Guardian of Giria?

OTHER BOOKS ABOUT ANIMALS

1. Run to Earth, by Tom McCaughren (O'Brien Press, **ISBN-13:** 978-0863279294)
2. Watership Down, by Richard Adams (Puffin Books, **ISBN-13:** 978-0141354965)
3. The Animals of Farthing Wood, by Colin Dann (Red Fox, **ISBN-13:** 978-0099417248)
4. The Jungle Book, by Rudyard Kipling (Public Domain)
5. Warrior Cats, by Erin Hunter (HarperCollins, **ISBN-13:** 978-0007217878)
6. The Call of the Wild, by Jack London (Public Domain)
7. Tarka the Otter, by Henry Williamson (Puffin, **ISBN-13:** 978-0141354958)