

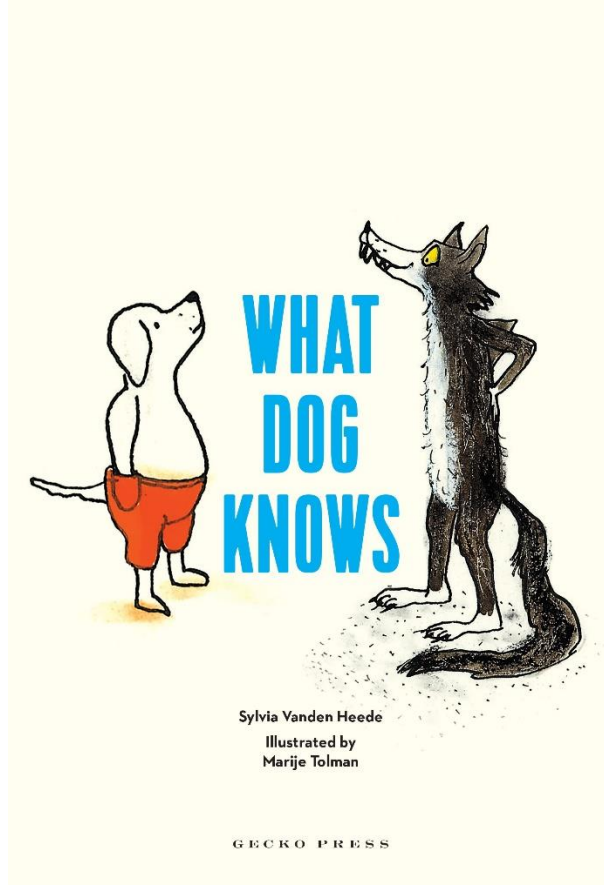


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Teaching Notes

What Dog Knows

by Sylvia Vanden Heede, illustrated by Marije Tolman



Synopsis:

When Wolf finds a fact-filled book in the library, he thinks he will at last outsmart his clever cousin Dog. But who knows more about robots, dragons, knights and pirates? Or what about setting traps, playing tricks and chewing bones? And how will Wolf and Dog's new found knowledge impact on these competitive cousins' relationships with one another, not to mention on Wolf's nemesis, Cat, and the surrounding environment?

The Author:

Sylvia Vanden Heede was born in 1961 in Belgium, and is one of the most accomplished and popular Flemish children's book authors.

The Illustrator:

Marije Tolman was born in 1976 in the Netherlands. She studied design at the Royal Academy of Art in The Hague, and illustration at the Edinburgh College of Art. She has worked as a full time illustrator since 2004 and has been published in many countries.



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Themes:

This fresh and funny book, with its mix of fiction and nonfiction, has several themes.

These include the complexities of family relationships. Wolf and Dog are competitive cousins who are constantly in battle to see who is the best. However, it is clear there is a strong familial bond between them as kind and loyal Dog, even if he is a little scared of him, helps out Wolf because they are cousins.

Other themes illustrated are those of curiosity and the desire for knowledge. Wolf appears to be reading books to be as, or more, knowledgeable as his clever cousin, Dog, and in undertaking this activity both he and Dog learn, and try out, a myriad of new and interesting information and activities.

A further theme seen is that of the many different types of learners, intelligence and abilities. Wolf is keen to learn and know and so seeks out information. His kind cousin, Dog, takes the time to share information which he knows from books and to explain it to his illiterate cousin, Wolf, and help him understand it. And while Wolf may be illiterate, he shows he has an ability with words, particularly rhyming, as well as an unquenchable thirst for knowledge.

A final theme is that of humour. This consistently funny book entertains and delights the reader as Wolf and Dog undertake their learning journey together.

Activities:

1. Before reading the book, look at the cover image and title. Discuss what you think this story might be about?
2. The book could be considered a postmodern picture book, as it is a fictional story whose plot is interrupted by nonfictional information and interesting design features have been used in the layout. Define the literary terms 'fiction' and 'nonfiction' and find three examples when each are used in the book.
3. Look at the table of contents. The book is divided into three main sections. As a group, choose one of the sections and brainstorm what you know about one of the topics mentioned in the title of the section. Next, read through the section and list on a chart any information that is similar or different to your groups.



4. In pairs, choose a section and take turns to read the section aloud to one another. Discuss which is your favourite page and design element on the page and why. Do you agree with your partner's choice? Why/why not?
5. Anthropomorphism is when gods, animals or things are depicted with human attributes and behaviours. Find three examples of this from the book. Find other books where animals are depicted in this way, for example, *Wolf and Dog* (Gecko, 2013), *I Don't Want to Go to School* (Gecko, 2015), *Detective Gordon: A Complicated Case* (Gecko, 2015) and *How to Be Famous* (Gecko, 2016).
6. Do you like the Wolf and Dog as characters? Why/why not? Write a character study on either Wolf or Dog.
7. Similes, onomatopoeia, rhyme, and idioms are some of the many language features in the book. Find the definition of each of these, match each with the following examples from the book and then find more examples for each from the book:
 - 'To an animal? Or a piece of meat?
To a muscle or sinew? What a treat!' (p. 17)
 - 'as dead as a doornail' (p. 24)
 - 'he snarls and growls' (p. 64)
 - 'in the wink of an eye' (p. 83)
8. Exclamation marks, question marks, ellipses, speech marks, full stops and commas are all types of punctuation found in the book. Find and list an example of each from the book and explain their grammatical purpose.
9. Investigate what a 'glossary' is and what its purpose is. Choose a section from the book and create a glossary of terms.
10. In pairs, choose your favourite section from the book and do the 'Try This' activities and answer the 'Quiz' questions which are featured. Then make up another 'Try This' inspired activity and three further quiz questions based on your chosen section, for your classmates to complete.
11. Think of another topic that Wolf and Dog may be interested in researching. Create a page with information based on your topic using a similar design to the book. For example, you may continue the adventures in a small story about Wolf and Dog, some factual information, quiz questions and/or a 'Try This' style activity.



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12. Examine the illustrations in the book. Do you like the style? What colours are used? What kinds of lines and textures are used? Choose your favourite illustration from the book and create your own artistic interpretation of it, for example, a painting, drawing, photograph, model, poem, etc. Or, design your own illustrations for the cover and/or one page of text.
13. In pairs, discuss what you think are the most humorous elements in this book and how they succeed in being funny and entertaining.
14. Review the book for your favourite magazine, website or blog. What do you like about it? Why? What did you dislike about it? Why? Give it a rating, such as stars, or a number out of ten.