

A TEACHER'S GUIDE TO

HOX by Annemarie Allan

Winner of the Kelpies Prize 2007

Shortlisted for the Royal Mail Awards for Scottish Children's Books 2008 (8-11 category)



www.florisbooks.co.uk

Themes/issues addressed in this book

Family, single parenting, animal research, science, trust, independence, the Highlands

Book Summary

When twelve-year-old Robbie has to spend yet another weekend at the Institute for Animal Research because of his father's job, he is angry and frustrated. A disturbing encounter with an enigmatic lynx named Baldur, sets off a chain of events that thrusts Robbie into a perilous journey through an inhospitable Highland landscape, and ultimately leads him to the truth about his own background. This prize-winning novel introduces contemporary issues such as genetic engineering, animal research, and single parenting. It should be particularly appealing to boys.

BEFORE READING

Group Activities

- Discussion: what do you know about genes? What colour of hair and eyes do your parents have? Are yours similar to either of your parents? What other similarities do you and your parents have?
- Discussion: what is a lynx? What does it look like? How many types of big cat can you name?
- Discussion: have you heard of Motor Neurone Disease? What do you know about it?

AFTER READING

Individual Work

- Write a paragraph on the thoughts and feelings you had when:
 - a) Robbie's father forbids him to go near the animal house (chapter 3)
 - b) Stella Loomis tells Robbie his genes were altered (chapter 11)
 - c) Baldur 'tells' Robbie he's not lonely anymore (chapter 20)
 - d) Robbie's father tells him about his mother (chapter 22)
- If you could share genes with an animal, what kind of animal would it be? Write at least four paragraphs on the characteristics you might share with the animal, the animal characteristics you would like to have, and the human characteristics your 'brother' or 'sister' animal would have.
- Draw or paint a picture of a lynx like Baldur or Freya. You can use your school library, or the internet to find a picture.

Group Activities

- Class visit: if you live near the Highland Wildlife Park, arrange a class visit so you can see a live lynx and learn all about them (the Park does a special rate education package).
- Group activity: print out or photocopy a map of Scotland and use the following place names – Sherrifmuir, Bridge of Orchy, Appin – to trace Robbie and the animals' journey from the Animal Institute to his grandmother's cottage. Try to find some more place names in the book to plot his journey further. Try to calculate how many miles they walked if they: a) went in a straight line, and b) followed the main road.
- Class discussion: science – how does the world of science help us each and every day, from the time we get up in the morning until we go to bed at night? If you could be a scientist, what kind of scientist would you like to be? You can use your library and the internet to do some research into this.

Vocabulary, see overleaf

KELPIES

Series Summary

The award-winning Kelpies series is Scotland's favourite collection of children's fiction. Floris Books took over the list in 2001, republishing classic works by authors such as Kathleen Fidler and Allan Campbell McLean. Since then, we have continued to add to the series with a range of highly successful new Scottish novels for children. Of these, *Chill* by Alex Nye won a Royal Mail Award in 2007 and *Hox* by Annemarie Allan was nominated for a Royal Mail Award in 2008.

CURRICULUM REQUIREMENTS COVERED

5-14 Curriculum (Scotland)

Years: P4-P7

Listening:

Listening in Groups

Listening for Information, including instructions and directions

Reading:

Reading for Information

Reading to Reflect

Awareness of Genre

Talking:

Talking in Groups

Talking about Texts

Talking about Experiences, including feelings and opinions

Writing:

Functional

Imaginative

National Curriculum (England, Wales, Northern Ireland)

Key Stage 2

English: Reading

Reading Strategies

Response to Texts, including analysing and evaluating

Reading for Information

National Literacy Strategy:

Text-Level Reading

Text-Level Writing

Vocabulary

- Check you know what the following words mean:

abandoned	disgruntled	formulate	jargon	persistent	surrogate	vertical
antidote	enthusiasm	gesture	laboratory	recognition	sympathy	zombie
anticipation	ferocious	gnarled	meagre	resentment	tentatively	
claustrophobic	flagstone	insignificant	modified	scurried	tranquilizer	
disdainful	flourish	instinct	mutinous	sterile	uncanny	