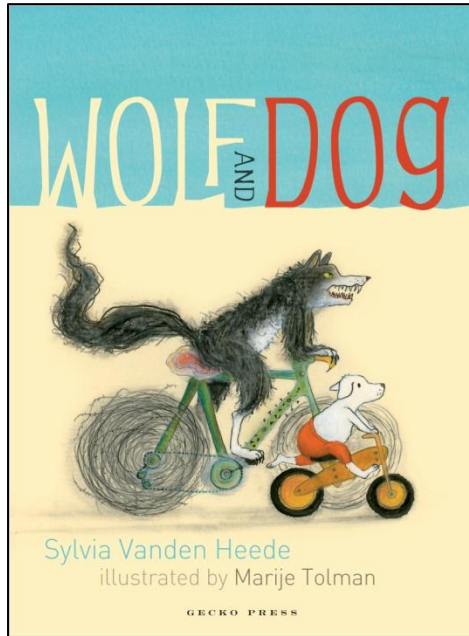


**Teaching Notes**  
***Wolf and Dog***  
by Sylvia Vanden Heede  
& illustrated by Marije Tolman



**Synopsis**

Wolf and Dog are cousins. Wolf is wild and Dog is tame. Wolf lives in a forest on top of a hill. Dog doesn't. Dog has a basket. And a boss. Wolf and Dog delight in testing their relationship – they push the boundaries, make and break promises, set up tests and challenges, tease and trick. However, their shared love of language and word play - especially rhyme – alongside a sense of fairness and loyalty to family, means they ultimately look out for and help each other when it counts.

**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.

### **Themes**

This laugh-out-loud, lushly illustrated book of short stories has several themes.

These include the complexities of family relationships. Dog and Wolf are competitive cousins who instigate dastardly deeds against one another in order to see who is best.

Bravery and heroism are other themes explored as they push each other to face their fears, such as fearsome cats and biting fleas.

However, despite the on-going rivalry, family loyalty and a bond between cousins wins in the end.

Their unusual bond is made even stronger by their mutual love of language. This theme is evident throughout the stories as Dog and Wolf delight in word play; puns, palindromes and, last but not least, rhymes feature throughout.

Their love for one another is also evident when Dog, knowing Wolf is illiterate, rises above their differences and writes the rhyming sign Wolf has always desired.

### **Activities**

1. *Wolf and Dog* is a collection of illustrated short stories. After reading all of the stories, choose and discuss your favourite story and character. Then write a plot summary and character study.
2. The blurb on the back of the book states that these stories are about ‘The important things in life – like food, family, and fleas.’ Do you agree that these are important things in life? Why/why not? Choose the three most important things in your life to write a short story about, with you as one of the main characters.
3. Dog is tame and Wolf is wild. What is the difference between a tame and a wild animal? Discuss or divide into teams and debate the concept that: ‘A wild animal can’t be tamed’ (p. 18).
4. Dog explains to Wolf about a family tree leaflet (p. 42). Draw Dog’s family tree leaflet, including portraits of Dog’s family members. Research and draw your own family tree leaflet.
5. Dog has a vivid dream (p.47). Using another medium, for example, drawing, painting, sculpture or photography, create your own artistic interpretation of Dog’s dream.

6. Wolf leads Dog to believe there will be an article about his heroic actions in the newspaper (p. 55). Imagine you are a journalist and write the article. Present it in a newspaper format, including a picture of Dog.
7. Dog is afraid of the cat, as he thinks it is a lion (pp. 60-61). In his description, what are the three statements he chooses to describe a lion. Choose ten animals to describe using three statements. In pairs, try and guess the animals each other has described.
8. Anthropomorphism is when gods, animals or things are depicted with human attributes and behaviours. Find ten examples of this in the stories. Find other stories where wolves or dogs are depicted in this way, for example, *The Three Little Pigs*, *Little Red Riding Hood* and *The Wolf and the Seven Kids*.
9. Examine the illustrations in the book. What attracts your attention to a particular picture? What colours are used? What kinds of lines and textures are used? Do the pictures mirror the text or go beyond what the story tells you? Which is your favourite illustration and why?
10. There are many language features in book. For example, similes, onomatopoeia, rhyme, silent letters, palindromes, alliteration, common sayings or puns. Find the definition and an example of each of those listed above.
11. Review the book for your favourite magazine or website. What do you like about the book? Why? What did you dislike about the book? Why? Give it a rating, such as stars or a number out of ten.
12. In groups, choose one of the stories from the book. Devise a script, costumes, and scenery. Act it out for you class. If you have access to a video camera, tape it.