



Jake Reynolds: Chicken or Eagle?

Sara Leach

Interest level: ages 8–11

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AR Quiz # 133960

Consider the following question as you read *Jake Reynolds: Chicken or Eagle?*:

What does it take to be a hero?

Story

Eleven-year-old Jake Reynolds wants to save seal pups from the talons of bald eagles, protect his little sister Sierra and brave the wolf he is sure stalks Hidalgo Island in southwestern British Columbia. But his best friend Emily calls him a chicken, comforts Sierra when she falls and doesn't believe the wolf exists. Even as Jake hears howling in the night, part of him hopes Emily is right, for while he dreams of being a hero, he is terrified by the thought of running into a wolf. When Jake leads Emily into the woods in search of adventure, he finds more than he bargains for. Will he be able to conquer his fears and act like a true hero?

Author

Sara Leach lives in Whistler, British Columbia, with her husband and two children. She is the teacher-librarian at a local elementary school and gets to spend her work day sharing children's literature with her students. When she isn't writing or teaching she likes to ski with her family, dance and read. Each summer since she turned three, she has been lucky enough to spend time on an island in Georgia Strait. Although she's never run into a wolf, she's heard them howling in the night.

Author Website

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Connecting to the Curriculum***Language Arts***

- Jake's cabin on Hidalgo has no electricity. Have students write a short paragraph about what they would miss the most if they lived without electricity. What would their parents miss?
- Mr. Timmins is a stranger, yet Jake and Emily go looking for him and go into his cabin when he's not there. Why is this acceptable behavior on the island but not in the city? Ask students to write about whether they think Jake and Emily made good decisions and why.
- Ask students to write a short safety manual. Have half of them write about staying safe in the city and the other half about staying safe in the woods, then get them to compare their manuals.
- Have students imagine that Emily stayed in the clearing alone while Jake went for help. Ask them to choose one of the characters and write a journal entry as that character about what happened during the time they were separated. Remind students to consider their chosen character's emotional state—and don't forget to include information about what their character experienced through his or her senses while alone.

Science

- Jake is obsessed with wolves. Have students list all the information about wolves in the book and then get them to do research to verify that information.
- There is a lot of wildlife on Hidalgo Island—wolves, seals, eagles, spiders, crabs, clams, spiders, deer. Have students select a topic and write a brief report on the animal of their choosing.
- Mr. Timmins says the wolf's tracks differ from a dog's tracks. Ask students to learn more about animal tracks, including learning the tracks made by animals that live near their city or town. Students can create an impression, cast or drawing of some of these tracks and share them with the class.
- It's actually quite rare for a wolf to attack a human. Have students think of several examples of stories where wolves are painted as the "bad guys." Discuss what historic events might have led to people's perceptions of the wolf as evil. Online or in reference texts, have students gather information that refutes this myth.
- When Jake studies the wolf scat (ch. 3), he easily differentiates it from dog droppings because it has hair in it. Have students research the diet of a gray wolf. What sorts of foods would the wolf find on Hidalgo Island?

Social Studies

- Have students draw a detailed map of Hidalgo Island, including all the places mentioned in the book. As an added challenge, see whether students can draw a relief or thematic map. Be sure to ask them to include a legend, a compass rose and a title for their map.
- Jake and Emily disagree on how to deal with the stranded baby seal (ch. 1). Divide students into two groups, one that supports Emily and one that supports Jake, and have them debate the issue.

Health/Personal Planning

- Jake doesn't want to enter Mr. Timmins's cabin, because he knows it's not the right thing to do (ch. 2). How do Emily's words cause him to act against his own values? Ask students if they have ever experienced similar peer pressure.

Drama

- Jake wants to be a superhero. Ask students to write and act out a short script about the kind of superhero they would like to be. What powers would they have? What kind of world would they live in? Who are their enemies?
- Ask students to dramatize the argument between Jake and Emily after the friends discover they've become lost. They can do this through pantomime, as a scripted performance or as a series of tableaux.
- Invite students to write and perform a radio show or a television broadcast. Students should interview the story's characters and summarize the main events in the style of a newscast, but they may also wish to interview secondary characters such as Mr. Timmins, Jake's mom or dad—or even Sierra!

Art

- Mr. Timmins has a mosaic of an eagle on his wall. Have students research how mosaics are made, and then create a paper mosaic of one of the animals on Hidalgo Island.
- At the end of the book, Jake has come up with a new comic book character: Eagle Boy. Have students draw a page of Eagle Boy's adventures.

Connecting to the Text

- Choose Jake or Emily. Make a list of personality traits that describe your character. Go through the book and find examples of where your character shows each trait through his or her actions/behavior.
- In the last paragraph of chapter six, the author shows us how Jake feels. Why is showing Jake's feelings more powerful than simply saying, "Jake felt afraid"? Find five more examples in the book where the author shows instead of tells.
- A simile is a comparison using the words *like* or *as*. To help describe Jake's character's feelings, the author uses a simile at the beginning of chapter 8: "Fear rushed through Jake's body like lightning exploding a tree." How does this image help the reader understand the intensity of Jake's feelings? What is the author describing in chapter 1, when she writes the following simile: "It glared at him like a scruffy pirate's face"? How do similes help the reader to understand the story? Find another example of a simile in the book.
- In *Jake Reynolds: Chicken or Eagle?* the author uses descriptive phrases to develop the setting of the story. Find five passages where the author develops the setting through descriptive writing. Share these with the class.
- Good writers use dialogue to show us a character's personality. Read the conversation in chapter 1 between Emily and Jake. How does the dialogue here help the reader understand Emily's personality?

Connecting to the Students—Discussion Questions

1. At the beginning of the book, we learn that Jake is scared of wolves. What kinds of things scare you? Why?
2. Jake and Emily meet Mr. Timmins and learn from his wisdom. Think of an example of when an older person shared their wisdom with you. Share this with the class.
3. Jake worries that he might not be able to protect his younger sister from harm. Think about a time when you were responsible for keeping someone or something safe. What were you worried about?
4. When Sierra falls (ch.4), Jake feels hurt that his little sister prefers to be comforted by Emily rather than him. Have you experienced a situation where you've only been 'second best'? What was that like?
5. In chapter 6, both Emily and Jake decide to risks. How is Emily's decision to follow the deer into the forest different from Jake's decision to investigate the "tent" in the clearing?
6. Sometimes a series of small decisions ends up being a big problem. Describe how Emily and Jake's decision to follow the deer leads them into a dangerous situation.

7. When the storm hits and Emily twists her ankle, Jake asks himself what his dad would do. How does this help him decide which course of action to take? Have you ever faced a tough decision and wondered what someone you love and respect would do in your shoes?
8. One of the ways Jake copes with frightening thoughts is to scoop them into a net inside his mind and sweep them away from his thoughts. How do you cope with thoughts or ideas that frighten you?

Author's Note

Hi Readers,

For thirty-five years I've been lucky enough to spend a few weeks of every summer on an island very much like Hidalgo. Several years ago, my husband and I were walking on the beach and we saw a seal pup lying on a boulder that poked out of the water. As we watched, an eagle almost managed to scoop it up and eat it for lunch, but the seal pup got away just in time.

My husband turned to me and said, "You should write a story about two kids on an island like this. Imagine all the adventures they could have." By the time we walked home, Jake and Emily had started to take shape in my head. I knew that they were "summer friends" who didn't see each other the rest of the year, that Emily was a know-it-all, and that Jake wanted to be a hero but was also very cautious. They both loved playing outside and exploring the beach.

I love exploring the seashore too. Even after thirty-five years on the island, I still discover new plants and animals. Sometimes I sound a bit like Emily as I tell my kids all about the sea life. One of my family's favorite things to do is to make the geoducks (pronounced gooey-ducks) squirt water into the air, just like Jake and Emily do.

When I was a kid, a wolf swam to the island. I never saw it, but the idea that it was roaming the woods made me shiver. As I wrote the manuscript, that wolf crept into my memory, and it became the villain Jake had to overcome.

In the seven years between writing the first draft of the manuscript and the book being published, another wolf came back to the island. And then another wolf arrived. And by last year, we had eleven wolves on the island! Fortunately most of them swam away in the spring, but we could still hear one howling this summer.

It's a beautiful day, so I'm going outside to play. The next time you're outside, no matter where you are, take time to look around, get down on your hands and knees and explore. You never know what you'll find. Happy reading!

Sincerely,
Sara Leach

Resources

Books

Fiction

- George, Jean Craighead. *Julie of the Wolves*
Lawson, Julie. *Cougar Cove*
Marshall, James. *The Three Little Pigs*
McFarlane, Sheryl. *A Pod of Orcas: A Seaside Counting Book; Waiting for Whales; Jessie's Island*
Orr, Wendy. *Nim's Island*
Stevenson, Robert Louis. *Treasure Island*
Waber, Bernard. *Courage*
Zolotow, Charlotte. *The Seashore Book*

Nonfiction

- Court, Rob. *How to Draw Cartoons*
Hickman, Pamela. *At the Seashore*
Hudack, Heather C. *Chickens*
Jalma, Barrett. *Wolf*
Petrides, George A. Peterson *First Guide to Trees*
Snively, Gloria. *Exploring the Seashore in British Columbia, Washington and Oregon: A Guide to Shorebirds and Intertidal Plants and Animals.*
Spilsbury, Richard. *A Pack of Wolves*
Swanson, Diane. *Welcome to the World of Wolves*
Townsend, Emily. *Seals*
Wilcox, Charlotte. *Bald Eagles*

Online

National Geographic Kids (click on video and sound to listen to and see wolves)
<http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/Animals/CreatureFeature/Graywolf>

Enchanted Learning (seashore printouts and activities)
www.enchantedlearning.com/biomes/intertidal/intertidal.shtml

Ocean Link
<http://oceanlink.island.net/biodiversity/intertidal/intertidal.html>

Monterey Bay Aquarium (online field guide)
www.montereybayaquarium.org/animals

Mosaic basics
www.youtube.com/watch?v=nKsxr_RBjG0