



THE WOLF TWINS

Ewa Jozefkiewicz

Teaching
Resources

What images does the title conjure? Looking at the cover, what do you think the novel will be about?

Opening

Read the first paragraph.

'I see her in the clearing outside our house the day after the snowstorm...' (Page 1)

Discuss: How does the author make the scene feel wintry? How does she make the wolf seem almost human?

Activity: Continue the story from 'separating our worlds.' Think about the title of the chapter as well as the first paragraph.

Activity: Now take the phrase 'separating our worlds.' Why is a separation/a liminal space between two worlds or spaces a key theme for novelists?

Writing Style

Discuss: Why has Jozefkiewicz chosen to write in the first person in alternating chapters from two characters' point of view? Which tense is the book written in? What effect do these choices have on the reader?

Read the first two chapters.

Discuss: What do they have in common? Which questions do you find yourself asking about the story and characters? What impact do the end of the chapters have? Pick out dramatic sentences from the chapters.

Characters

Look at the adjective descriptors that preface the names in each chapter.

Activity: Collect a list of the adjectives for each twin. How do they change throughout the novel?



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Discuss: Does it give the reader a preconceived idea of each twin's character? Why has the author chosen to do this?

Activity: Make a list of adjectives that describe you. Perhaps you want to attribute an adjective to yourself for each month of the last year. You can do this for a friend or sibling too. Be kind!

Lucy

Discuss: What do you understand about Lucy from the first chapter? Look at the vocabulary that Jozefkiewicz uses about her: 'hesitates', 'whispers' etc. How do you know that Lucy has an interest in outer space from the first chapter?

'You're twelve, Lucy – what a magnificent age. You should be out there with your friends, enjoying yourself, being silly, discovering the world.' (Page 11)

Discuss: Do you think being 12 is magnificent?

Activity: What are the pros and cons about being 12, or 11 or the age you are now? Make a two-column list.

Discuss: Is there anything unusual about Lucy? Does she seem typical of a normal 12-year-old?

'She'd make an awesome coach.' (Page 16)

Discuss: Do you agree with this statement? Use evidence from the text to back up your answer.

Activity: Write a recipe for a great coach, using the attributes as ingredients, and behaviour as method. Does Lucy's character fit into this?

'I watch her fingers move to her hair and pull.' (Page 34)

'I feel a swoosh of excitement, then a stab of fear, as I remember this is a wild animal. My hands fly to my hair and I want to pull, pull, pull, but Mum and Gra are looking at me...' (Page 48)

'Sometimes I miss Dad so much I feel winded, and the only thing that makes it better is the pick, pick, pick of my fingers against my scalp.' (Page 99)



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Discuss: Why does Lucy pull her hair? Is this a kind of self-harm? What is self-harm? (Teachers or carers should be aware that this is a sensitive topic and students may need guidance, a safe space and access to support organisations for this discussion).

Activity: Make a list of emotions that are hard to deal with. Now make a list of life events that could lead to these emotions – you may wish to draw threads between the two lists.

Discuss: When do difficult emotions lead to self-harm? Is there a list of people or places to go to for help with self-harm and difficult emotions?

Activity: Research what help is available? Now think about would you would do if a friend was self-harming? Make a flowchart of the right steps to follow to help a friend in a difficult situation, such as Lucy's.

Discuss: After reading the whole novel, think about why and how Lucy stopped self-harming.

Discuss: Do you think topics such as these should be addressed in children's fiction?

'I'm helpless, like Claw. Sometimes I'm afraid I'll be stuck forever, clawing at a gate to another world.' ... scared of what's beyond (Page 51)

'Lucy was the best at school, but somehow she still needed rescuing.' (Page 73)

Discuss: Why do you think Lucy identifies with Claw? Does this lead her to form a bond with Claw? Why does Jozefkiewicz compare Lucy to Claw?

Activity: If you were an animal, which would it be and why? Which characteristics do you share? Create a mind map of your animal and their characteristics. You may wish to decorate this with illustrations of your animal.

'Anger bubbles inside me. It's an unfamiliar feeling, threatening to spill over, and I don't know how to deal with it.' (Page 139)

In Chapter 25, the reader learns about Lucy's Incident with Mr Bray through a flashback/memory.



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Discuss: Why does Jozefkiewicz choose to show it at this point in the novel? What is the purpose of flashbacks/memories in a work of fiction?

Activity: Check through the novel and see if this is the only place in which the chronological timeframe is altered. What does this mean to the adjectives used to describe the twins at the title of chapters? Plot the timeline of the novel on a line graph. When do major incidents happen? What patterns can you find in the novel's structure and the twins' character development?

Discuss: How is Lucy shown differently in this chapter – or is she?

Activity: Have you ever stood up to someone who is wrong? How does it feel? Write down your memories.

Discuss: Is there a good or bad way to stand up to somebody in authority? Does Lucy do the right thing?

Activity: Hold a debate to see whether it is right to contradict a teacher in front of a class? In which circumstances do you think it is okay?

'The discovery of Lucy points to the reality of diamonds among the stars.' And what do you know about diamonds? 'It's the hardest known material in the universe,' I whisper.' (Page 185)
'You're made of stronger stuff than any of us, though. And when it comes to Claw, you'll know what to do. You don't need Alpha or anyone else to tell you.' (Page 185)

Discuss: Do you feel that Lucy is the 'strongest' of the characters in the novel?

Activity: Investigate the elements. Which element or material are you like? Create a classroom display to show all the different materials and elements that make up your form.

Alpha

'She hasn't noticed the wolf that she's scared off.' (Page 2)

Discuss: How does Lucy show what Alpha is like in the first chapter? Re-read the first chapter and note your impression of Alpha. Which parts of grammar does Jozefkiewicz use to describe Alpha? What does the name Alpha mean?



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'I run from Gra's house to the bus stop, like a jungle explorer running from a leopard or a tiger.' (Page 4)

Discuss: Compare the pace of the text in Chapter Two to Chapter One. What differences can you work out in the text between the two voices? Do you have a different impression of Alpha from the one you gained of her from Lucy in Chapter One?

'So here I am, on the bus with 'the usuals'. (Page 7)

'I finally breathe a sigh of relief, because I feel as though I'm coming home.' (Page 8)

Discuss: What makes Alpha feel at home?

Activity: What are the things that make you feel at home? Is it a place or something different? Brainstorm your ideas around the word 'home'.

Activity: Can you identify your 'usuals' on your ride to school or somewhere you go frequently? Create a map or a character profile of the 'usual' things you see around you. Identify which feelings seeing 'usual' things gives you. Mark this on a spider-graph.

'My sister was Alpha Centauri – not one star, but a cluster of some of the brightest stars in the night sky.' (Page 66)

Discuss: Think about the names given to the twins. Can a name do more than 'name' someone? What can a name indicate?

Activity: Find out why you were given your name. Draw up a family tree, paying special attention to the names of your relatives – why were they given these names and do they mean anything? Is there a pattern?

'I remember when we were four or five, Dad used to call me Hot Head.' (Page 119)

'I could hear the rage in her voice, and the disappointment, and I knew she needed to be left alone until her volcano stopped spitting lava, and then, when it was done, she'd need a hug.' (Page 125)

'yelping, wriggling bundle of rage' (Page 144)

'Everything has gone wrong and I feel like Claw. I want to rage until my breath sticks in my throat. The only difference is that Claw wants to run back to captivity and I want to break free –' (Page 146)



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Discuss: Does Alpha come across as a 'hot head'? Explain your answer with evidence from the text.

Discuss: Which twin is Claw most like? Why? Have you changed your mind during the course of the novel?

Activity: Create an anger iceberg. Anger is usually an emotion that is disguising other emotions 'under the surface'. See if you can place these other emotions under the surface of the sea (the iceberg that doesn't show above water). Look carefully at Alpha's actions and thoughts to identify the emotions.

Activity: Create a series of flashcards that state useful activities to calm someone's anger. Brainstorm these ideas in a group. Does Jozefkiewicz suggest any calming activities during the course of the novel – how do Lucy and Alpha calm down when they have been angry?

'To care,' he says eventually. 'To look out for everyone around you, because at our core, we're all the same.' (Page 150)

Discuss: Do you think Alpha's father is correct that this is the 'greatest lesson in life'?

Activity: Create a 'life's greatest lesson' wall hanging for your house, like a mission statement. What does yours say? Decorate it accordingly.

Gra

'Gra isn't like most grandfathers.' (Page 9)

Discuss: What does Lucy mean by this? Is there a preconceived or stereotypical idea of a grandfather?

Activity: Draw a stereotypical idea of a grandparent. Now make a mind-map about grandparents. Compare a grandparent of yours to the stereotype.

'Gra has knowledge that runs deep, but he only offers it when the time is right and he knows you're truly listening. Not just with your ears, but with your heart.' (Page 9)

Discuss: What do you think Lucy means by listening with your heart?



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Activity: Try the listening game. Ask a friend or family member to talk to you for 60 seconds without interruption about an event that made them feel something. After the 60 seconds, you need to check with them that you have understood exactly what happened and how it made them feel. Did you listen? Now try reversing the game.

Discuss: Do older people have knowledge that 'runs deep'? What does this mean?

Activity: Ask an older person/a grandparent for advice that they would pass on. Gather the advice on a poster or display board. Does their advice stem from their lived experience? You may wish to conduct an interview with them about this experience.

'In winter, we'd go sledging in the hills on planks of wood we'd found in the shed. When spring came, we'd help him plant carrots, tomatoes and beans, and in summer, we'd go wild swimming.' (Page 20)

Read the passage on page 24-35 about Gra's house.

Discuss: How does Lucy make life with Gra sound appealing? Which literary devices are used?

Activity: Write a descriptive passage about a favourite place of your own. What devices can you use to show the reader how attractive it is and why.

Themes

Wolves and Rewilding

'It was a creature of the beautiful, vast wild.' (Page 48)

Look at the way Jozefkiewicz describes the cub on pages 48-55.

Activity: Write your own description of a wolf from a picture, or make a drawing using the text as inspiration.

'It's research into the behaviour of canines, which include foxes, jackals and wolves.' (Page 21)

Discuss: What do you learn about wolves during the course of the novel?



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Activity: Search the text for data and collect into notes. Then using the notes, and supplementary research, create a leaflet about wolves including info boxes about jackals and foxes too.

'They rely on their natural furry coat and their winter layer of fat to keep warm. They find shelter beneath trees and they hunt.' (Page 52)

'Every wolf knows how to hunt. It's what he was born to do.' (Page 96)

Discuss: What is animal adaptation? Brainstorm different types of adaptation.

Activity: Using a picture of a wolf, annotate the different parts of its body, and caption behaviour to show how the wolf has adapted to the landscape it lives in, how it behaves as a predator and how it behaves in a pack.

'I sense she's not one of hers.' (Page 1)

Discuss: When Lucy sees the wolf on page 1, she doesn't think it comes from her mother's rewilding centre, but her phrasing suggests 'ownership'. Is it possible to own something wild?

'She's going to be... wait for it – a rewilder.' (Page 6)

Discuss: What is a rewilder? Do any rewilding projects exist in England?

'There are many reasons. The main one being biodiversity. Wolves can prevent overgrazing and they help many other species to flourish, mainly through the food opportunities they provide.' (Page 22)

Research: What are the other reasons for rewilding wolves?

'Mum explains there are two key stages to the rewilding process.' (Page 47)

Activity: Write a series of captions for the rewilding centre that would explain the process to visitors if the rewilding centre opened as a tourist attraction.

'How could she keep him in a cage, when all he wanted was to run free.' (Page 71)

'They held a protest here when the reserve opened.' (Page 171)

Discuss: What are the different views on the pros and cons of rewilding?



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Activity: Write a letter to the local paper as if you are an anti-rewilder. Use page 171 to help you. What is the main reason local people would be against rewilding?

Discuss: Do protests work? Have you ever been on a protest – what were you protesting about?

'It's going to be in the local papers tomorrow, and who knows? It might even make the national news.' (Page 178)

Activity: Write a newspaper article about Claw going missing. How will you present the facts? Who will you interview? You may also write a leader or opinion piece on the rewilding centre. Will you be in favour?

Read the paragraph on page 259 about real Wolf Rewilding.

Activity: Investigate the rewilding in Yellowstone National Park, USA, and present your findings as a speech and accompanying PowerPoint presentation.

Outer Space

'We'd go and look through the 28-inch refractor telescope and see the moon.' (Page 3)

When the reader is first introduced to Lucy, Jozefkiewicz shows that Lucy's 'special' thing is outer space.

Discuss: How does Lucy's hobby make her feel? What is your 'special' thing or hobby?

'for once I don't feel scared about being alone.' (Page 85)

'I take out the telescope and distract myself by counting the stars.' (Page 147-148)

Activity: Make a list of when 'outer space' helps Lucy during the course of the novel, using examples from the text to support your answers.

'Even though I use outer space to make sense of what is happening, I still don't understand.' (Page 63)

Read the whole of page 63.



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Discuss: What do you think the trigger is that caused a separation between Lucy and Alpha?

'They have curved mirrors that gather light from the night sky,' (Page 83)

Discuss: Lucy knows a lot about telescopes. Is she right about them?

Activity: Draw a diagram of how a telescope works, using annotations and captions to give information. Research the Greenwich or James Webb telescope, and create a Power Point of your findings.

'The ancient astronomers said the best time to view the moon was during the day.' (Page 84)

Research: Who were the ancient astronomers? How much of what they discovered holds true today?

Choose one famous astronomer and create a profile biography of them.

'It's only when I see the constellation of Lupus and the image of the tiny wolf among the stars that the darkness retreats, and I can breathe again.' (Page 68)

Discuss: Why do you think humans have attributed shapes to the constellations of stars? Research who first did this. Do different cultures have different ideas of the constellations? Why were stars so important to ancient peoples?

Research: Investigate the different stars in a constellation. Are they near each other? You may wish to look at the activity 'Build the Big Dipper' on the AMNH website <https://www.amnh.org/explore/ology/astronomy/build-the-big-dipper2>

Activity: Choose your favourite constellation and draw it on your page as a dot to dot. Now see if you can find it in the night sky. You will need adult help for this.

Activity: Create your own constellation from dropping lentils onto a sheet of paper. Where do they land? Can you construct a shape from their positions.

'Saturn is my favourite planet because it looks calm and beautiful. ... Alpha's favourite planet is Jupiter, because she says it's the biggest and most exciting.' (Page 137)



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Activity: Match the rest of the characters in the story to planets. Which planet do you identify with most?

Activity: Create a solar system using fruit, showing your understanding of the different sizes of the planets.

Millicent names the wolf with the fur star pattern Valentina:

'That's why I named her Valentina – after the first woman in space.' (Page 224)

Discuss: Who is the Valentina referred to in the text? What did she do in space?

Activity: Create an interview with Valentina to find out more about her. What would you ask her? How do you think she would respond? Use your research to help you.

'Take a look at your hands right now. There's a bit of star there. A beautiful supernova that blew up aeons ago.'
(Page 151)

Discuss: Why does Alpha's memory of her father explaining supernovas make her want to look after Claw? Do we really have bits of the stars in us?

Activity: What is a supernova? The text gives you clues but you can research more online. Create a poster to explain what a supernova is. Use images from the Internet or create your own painting to accompany information that you have found.

'And this star is possibly the biggest diamond ever found. It's a staggering ten billion trillion, trillion carats.' (Page 184)

Discuss: Does 'Lucy' in the sky exist?

Activity: Find out what you can about the white dwarf called Lucy.



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Nature and the Environment

'I breathed in deeply when I touched the bark and in those few moments, I was completely at peace.' (Page 25)

Discuss: How does the 'Emperor of the South' make Lucy feel at peace?

'What's the Place of Strength?' I ask.

'It's a magical space among the ancient trees in the forest, and for centuries people have believed it has special healing powers.' (Page 47)

Discuss: Compare the 'Emperor of the South' with the 'Place of Strength'. What do the names have in common? What do the places have in common?

Discuss: Can you think of real places in nature that people believe have special powers?

Activity: Create a tourist leaflet for a natural place that has healing powers or gives a sense of peace. Include photographs from the Internet.

'There's actually something great about being outside in the snow, as though we're hunters fending for ourselves, battling the elements.' (Page 57)

'The air is crisp and brilliant and the sunshine sparkles on the snow – it helps to force Alpha from my mind.' (Page 75-76)

Discuss: How does the natural world help the characters in the novel?

Activity: Think of some activities in nature that help calm the mind. Create a top trumps game of cards with the activities on them. You may wish to think of the healing each activity gives, but also whether it holds any disadvantages or minor discomforts at first, such as coldness, wet etc.

'I dive beneath the noise, exploring what's beyond. Slowly, my ears tune in to subtler sounds.' (Page 45)

'I could hear the cheep-cheep of sparrows, the sispī si-bi-bi-bi-bi of the blue tit...' (Page 110)

'There are chirps, rattles, whistles and trills. When I listen harder, I hear drumming somewhere above my head. I recognise all these now as bird sounds, but at night they seem louder, stranger, almost ghostly.' (Page 202)

Discuss: What sounds can you hear right now in your soundscape? What heightens the sounds for you – darkness, lack of other senses? Work out what's immediate and what's further away.



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Activity: Record a local soundscape. Now see if you can find a quieter nature spot. What are the different sounds you can hear? Think about downloading a bird sound recognition app such as Merlin so that you can identify the birds. What else can you hear?

'I like how he is respectful to every living thing.' (Page 113)

'She knows lots about healing injuries with plants from the forest.' (Page 220)

'I breathe in her smell of earth and leaves and the rich spice she uses in her cakes.' (Page 223)

Discuss: Do these attributes make Janus and Millicent sympathetic characters? Are all characters who are respectful to living things/kind to nature good people?

Activity: Create a poster guide to plants in your locality that have healing properties. Find pictures of the plants and annotate them.

Read the note on page 260 about Whitecastle Forest.

Research: Find a map of Bialowieza. Where is it in the world? Investigate the range of plant or animal species that make this forest their habitat. Design a poster or illustrated map to show your findings.

Discuss: Which other novels are based on a real place?

Research: Look up pictures of Miejsce mocy. Is it how you imagined from the descriptions of the Place of Strength in the novel?

Activity: Do you have your own 'Place of Strength'? Describe it in a paragraph, and illustrate your text.

Twins

'She's technically my mirror image... But inside we couldn't be more different.' (Page 2-3)

'For that tiny, tiny moment we're the way we always were. Two hearts beating as one.' (Page 56)

'We look like those babushka dolls that Nanna got us – identical, but different sizes.' (Page 67)

Discuss: What might it be like to have an identical twin? Are there other novels you've read that feature twins? Why might identical twins be a useful device in a novel or piece of literature?



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Activity: Draw a Venn Diagram for the twins Alpha and Lucy – and identify what they have in common besides their appearance? Do their similarities or differences become more apparent during the course of the novel?

Activity: Write a letter from each twin to their old school/friends/neighbourhood describing where they have moved to. Explore the very different outlook of each twin from the other.

'As I open the door, she raises her hand for a high five, and I deliberately miss, which has been our joke since we were about three.' (Page 26)

'I know Alpha better than anyone in the world.' (Page 26)

'She flinches. It's barely noticeable, but I see it.' (Page 27)

'There was a time when Luce and I could read each other's thoughts.' (Page 29)

'Why are you so quick to defend her, Lucy?'

'Because she's my twin,' I said, without thinking.' (Page 124-125)

'Something in me stops when he mentions Luce. It's like an alarm. I won't let anyone speak badly of my sister.' (Page 146)

Discuss: Do twins have a special bond? Do siblings have a special relationship?

Activity: Write about a close relationship you have with someone, noting things you do that are a shared joke/behaviour between you.

Activity: Make up your own secret code or language or way of communicating with one other person.

'Fine.'

We sit in silence. There's something enormous hiding behind that word, and although I'm Luce's Wonder Twin, I don't understand it.' (Page 34)

'That doesn't bother me as much as the main difference – which is so huge, it has cracked the ground between us.' (Page 67)

'I wish that Alpha and I weren't twins. I wish we weren't even related.' (Page 67)

Discuss: What causes the wedge between Alpha and Lucy according to Lucy? Is it different for Alpha?

Activity: Describe Lucy writing as Alpha, and then describe Alpha writing as Lucy. Would the opinions change at different points in the novel? When is your description based?



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Discuss: Which twin do you identify with most? To whom are you most sympathetic?

'When I left the reserve, I was two versions of Alpha. Just like when I stood with Luce on the meridian line at the observatory, with my legs in two different hemispheres. Half of me was filled with happy soup, the other with prickly frustration.' (Page 55)

Discuss: Does everyone have two sides to themselves? Did you notice this when writing about each twin from the other twin's point of view?

'Allie 2.0, the inferior model.' (Page 41)

'Ah, I see this for what it is – another family photo where I'm out of shot, because it's all about Lucy, Lucy, Lucy... I've suddenly had enough of everything always being about Luce.' (Page 42)

'So I've separated my universes. Alpha can live in the same multiverse as me, but we're not connected any more. We stay out of each other's way.' (Page 63)

'That I would always be a bit smaller than Alpha, a bit weaker. I was a piece of space dust. My sister was Alpha Centauri – not one star, but a cluster of some of the brightest stars in the night sky.' (Page 66)

'Golden child Lucy being praised, praised, praised.' (Page 71)

Discuss: What is jealousy? Have you ever been jealous of someone else? What for?

Activity: Jealousy, like anger, is often masking another emotion. Brainstorm ideas for how to do turn jealous thoughts into kinder thoughts. Write an acrostic poem about jealousy, using your brainstorm to help you.

Activity: Write a story about jealousy from two points of view, such as twins. Does it help to understand the jealousy feelings if you look at the story from different viewpoints?

'You've probably heard about the nature versus nurture argument.' (Page 118)

Discuss: What is the nature vs nurture argument?

Activity: Take a famous person such as a footballer or musician. Investigate their background. How much of their talent is nature and how much nurture in your opinion?



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Broken relationships

'My parents are great at making selfish decisions. First Dad, now her.' (Page 5)

'the shouting months.' (Page 21)

'The mention of Dad always makes the air thicken around me. . . He doesn't deserve to be forgiven. He's a deserter.'
(Page 33)

Discuss: How has the twins' parents breakup affected the twins?

Activity: Write a letter to Alpha's Dad as if you are her. How do you feel about the situation?

Activity: What is your family makeup? Draw a picture of them. How does it compare to others in your class, or those around you?

'There were no awkward questions, no arguments, no suspicion.' (Page 78)

This is Alpha's view of Hector's family.

Discuss: Could this be true? What is your opinion of Hector's house?

Activity: Compare the different families in the novel. Hector's, Janus's, Vern's.

Activity: What are the qualities of a happy family? Write a job advert for a family member. What must they be, how must they behave?

'After he's gone, I find three pairs of his socks in the wash basket and an old pencil case with his favourite green highlighters. Bits of himself that he has left behind. I gather them up and put them in a box under my bed.' (Page 135)

'even though she's rejected her brand-new, blue mountain bike because it came from Dad.' (Page 177)

Discuss: How important are objects that connect us to other people? Can you think about objects you own that you associate with someone else, perhaps the giver or the previous owner?

Activity: Make an inventory of objects around your house that connect one person to another.



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'When we joined Year 7, I thought he was being mean to everyone, but he has a weird sense of humour, which is something I like about him.' (Page 16-17)

Discuss: What do you think of Vern's 'sense of humour'?

Read pages 17-19, noting Vern's conversation with his father.

'You're never ever good enough...' (Page 79-80)

'Come on!' barks Vern. 'He's only a baby. How are you going to help if you're scared of a baby wolf? Stop being pathetic. You're worse than Lucy.' (Page 146)

Discuss: Why do you think Vern is so angry? Is it covering up other feelings? If you were Vern's friend, what could you do to make him less angry?

Activity: What is anger? Draw a picture of it. Now write down some things people do or say when they're angry. Write a list of things that might cause someone to be angry. Now write a list of healthy ways to deal with anger.

'the fury has expanded in my stomach like a balloon, and I'm about to reach bursting point.' (Page 31)

Discuss: What does Alpha's fury mask? Why does she hit out at Gra like that? Do you agree with her? Look again at the work you did when studying Alpha's character.

'Fury rips through me like a tornado.' (Page 189)

Activity: Draw a circle of anger – Triggering Event, Negative Thoughts, Emotional Response, Physical Reaction, Behavioural Response. Can you match a moment in the book using Vern or Alpha, and map their anger onto the circle?

Activity: Now draw up a coping response for Vern or Alpha. What are their triggers, and which techniques could they use to cope, eg. distractions, physical release, sharing feelings.

'There's something broken inside him. Something he's kept hidden, that has managed to slip out. A damaged, dirty babushka doll with a glossy exterior.' (Page 189)

Discuss: Which order would you put the characters if they were babushka dolls, nesting one inside the other?



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Activity: Using cardboard or paper, make your own babushka dolls. You may wish to base them on the characters in the novel. You can look at this Youtube for inspiration <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wj1QZAVDu1I>

'But Janus is in defence mode and all of a sudden, there's a side to him I've never seen before.' (Page 172)

'So that's final,' says Vern with a knowing smile, which I'd always thought was confidence, but is actually a mask that tricks people into following his lead.' (Page 215)

'It's only when I say it aloud that I sense I've been squashing this fear somewhere inside ever since Claw went missing.' (Page 223)

Discuss: Who in the novel hides their emotions? Is it important to share real emotions? Are some feelings easier to express than others? Why do Vern/Janus/Alpha find it hard to express their real feelings?

Activity: Revisit the anger iceberg you drew before. Can you add more hidden emotions under the surface of the water?

Activity: It's important to recognise emotions before you can share them. Write a diary entry for one of the characters after an angry moment. Janus, after he hits someone, or Vern when he says something mean. What real emotions might they put down in a diary?

Activity: Can you identify a range of emotions you have felt? Use emojis to list as many as you can. Separate the emojis into good emotions and difficult emotions. Now brainstorm strategies to alleviate difficult emotions. You may wish to do this in groups.

Speaking Up

'I wish I could find the words to tell Gra exactly what happened. They're stuck deep inside me...' (Page 12)

Discuss: What are some of the tools you can use to draw words out of someone when they're afraid to speak about something?

Activity: Make a list of thoughtful questions and gestures to draw information and emotion out of somebody. Do you need to make sure that you have left listening spaces too?

'I seem to have lost my voice.' (Page 14)



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'But if I can't tell Luce, or Mum or Gra and especially not Dad, Mr Selling will have to do.' (Page 18)

Discuss: How is Alpha losing her voice or being unable to say something different from Lucy's inability to speak about the Incident?

'There's so much I want to say about what happened that day at school. But the words sit there, tripping on the tip of my tongue.' (Page 34)

'I don't say any of this aloud.' (Page 61)

'I can't answer her question without lying, and I've never lied in my life. So there's a long, sad silence in the air between us.' (Page 128)

'I want to say something – anything – to make him stay, but I'm so baffled I can't get my words out.' (Page 172)

'She doesn't want to talk about it, but whatever it is, it's big and it's eating at her, piece by piece.' (Page 177)

Discuss: Again and again in the novel, Lucy and Alpha find it difficult to express themselves. Why is this?

Activity: Take each quotation above and work out what it is that the character can't speak up about. What are the underlying emotions? Who can't they speak to? Make a table to show your findings.

Activity: Using one of these incidents, compose a poem or rap to show what's going on in the character's head.

'There's something he knows that he isn't telling me. Just like Alpha.' (Page 45)

'Her right foot is tap, tap, tapping on the floor and I sense there are many other places she'd rather be, the basketball court topping the list.' (Page 51)

'When I try to describe it to Dad on the phone later, I can't find the words. It was like a warm vibration, an understanding transmitted through a look.' (Page 53)

'I say none of this to Mum. Instead, I throw my phone on the floor. I just don't want to hear her excuses. The screen smashes, just like the plates, and I think I might feel better, but I don't.' (Page 107)

Discuss: Look at the body language of the characters in each of these situations. Sometimes, feelings and thoughts are conveyed through actions rather than words. Which body language conveys which emotion?

Activity: Take a scene from the book and perform it as a mime, in silence. How much can you convey without using words?



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Activity: Now, take a scene in which the characters are holding back on their speech, and write dialogue for them. Add in body language and actions. What effect does the addition of 'stage directions' have on the scene?

'Her voice is tired' (Page 126)

Discuss: How often is it the tone of voice rather than what is being said?

Activity: Find a scene from a television programme you watch. Play it in silence with just the subtitles. Now play it with the volume up. What is the difference when you can hear tone of voice?

'My voice is clear and calm, as it always is when I talk about astronomy.' (Page 83)

Discuss: Which tools make someone good at oracy? How is Lucy so articulate here?

Activity: Make a list of prompts that might help somebody to be a better public speaker. Take into account body stance as well as topic knowledge, confidence, audience etc.

Read Chapter 25 again.

Activity: Write the scene in which Lucy speaks up against Mr Bray from Alpha's point of view. How is it different? Which adjective might you ascribe to Alpha for this chapter.

Discuss: What do you think Alpha should have done differently in this scene? Do you think the scene would have occurred if the twins' father hadn't left?

Activity: Note the body language Lucy displays in this scene. How could the rest of the class have behaved differently to give Lucy more confidence?

'before I can answer, a flurry of words escapes his mouth.' (Page 92)

'You don't have to,' I interrupt, because it looks as though the word-avalanche might continue forever and a day.'
(Page 93)

Discuss: Why does Lucy mention Janus's 'flurry' of words so much? Why do you think Janus talks so much?



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Activity: Practise your oracy skills. Take an everyday object and talk about it for a full sixty seconds, making up a history for it and describing it. Be as creative as you like.

Activity: Now brainstorm ways to improve your speech. Make a series of flashcards that can assist someone with their oracy. Do they use eye contact, body language, expressive tone of voice etc.

'Her words floated around me like a hug and I felt as though our universes may have just come back together.' (Page 246)

Discuss: Why is it so important that Jozefkiewicz emphasises words when the twins make up?

Activity: Take the line 'words floated around me like a hug' and create a poem from this title. You can make it about Lucy and Alpha, or use your imagination and make it simply about words.

Further Reading

The Words That Fly Between Us by Sarah Carroll
The Wolf Wilder by Katherine Rundell
The Last Bear by Hannah Gold
Prisoner of Ice and Snow by Ruth Lauren
The Secrets of Sam and Sam by Susie Day
Perfectly Ella by Candy Harper
The Kid Who Came from Space by Ross Welford
The Wolves of Currumpaw by William Grill
Rewilding: Bringing Wildlife Back Where it Belongs by David A Steen
My Heart was a Tree by Michael Morpurgo and Yuval Zommer

Older Students

Unstoppable by Dan Freedman
Crossover by Kwame Alexander