

## When Dogs Were Wolves

**Suggested Grade Levels:** 4-6

**Subject:** Science/Language Arts/Art

**Character:** Respect – Safety around Wildlife

**Materials and technology to be used:**

- Computer with audio capabilities – **x1**
- The First Dog by Jan Brett – **x1**
- Large paper or half poster board (About 11in x 14in) – **x1 per student**
- Various art supplies (EX = crayons, markers, colored pencils, paint, yarn, paper bags, tissue paper, scissors, glue, etc. – supplies selection up to the teacher) – **x enough for each student**
- Pencils – **x1 per student**
- Informational wolf and dog books for research purposes – **x enough for each student**
- Computers and/or tablets – **x enough for each student (optional)**
- Loose-leaf rings – **x3**
- Exit Ticket (sticky note, paper, notecard, etc.) – **x1 per student (optional)**

**Objective(s):**

Students will learn the difference between a “companion” animal and a “wild” animal through studying about how domesticated dogs evolved from wild wolves.

**Anticipatory Set/Hook:**

Have the book, The First Dog by Jan Brett, displayed at the front of the room. As students are walking into the classroom or transitioning from another subject, begin to quietly play a recording of wolf sounds in the background. Numerous recordings of these sounds can easily be found on YouTube. Ask students: “What might we be talking about in our next lesson?” *Wolves!* Tell students that they are going to learn about the differences between a “companion” animal and a “wild” animal through studying how domesticated dogs have evolved from wild wolves.

### Lesson Beginning:

1. Define “companion” animal: domesticated or domestic-bred animals whose physical, emotional, behavioral, and social needs can be readily met as companions in the home, or in close daily relationships with humans.
  - Ask for specific examples (cats, dogs, hamsters, certain birds, guinea pigs, rabbits, etc.) ...
  - Explain that companion animals are “domesticated” and depend on people to take care of their needs.
  - Ask for examples of what some of these needs might be. Have students turn and talk with a neighbor, first, and then discuss with the whole group.
2. Define “wild” animal: an animal that is not tame and lives on its own without any help from people. A wild animal finds its own food, shelter, water, and all its other needs in a specific natural habitat.
  - Ask for examples of wild animals that live near the students’ homes and school.
  - Ask: “Who takes care of the wild animals?” Call on volunteers to answer.
  - Ask: “How is a wild animal different from a companion animal?” Have students “Stand Up, Hand Up, and Pair Up” (video example below) to discuss this question. Call on three pairs to share their thoughts.

#### **“Stand Up, Hand Up, Pair Up” Kagan Structure:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xOUPvzaY7H0>

### Middle of Lesson:

1. Read the book The First Dog by Jan Brett.
2. Ask students: “Do you think this is a real or fictional account of how wolves evolved into dogs?” Have students give a thumbs up for *real*, thumbs down for *fictional*. **FICTIONAL!**
  - Discuss how the wolf in the story became the boy’s companion but explain that it is not safe to interact with wild animals and that this is a fictional account of how wolves evolved into dogs.
  - Ask: “What did the wolf in the story do to help the boy?” “How did the wolf benefit from staying close to the boy?” Turn and talk with a neighbor. Share.

**3. Provide background information:**

*Approximately 14,000 years ago, wolves were domesticated as hunting and watchdogs. They provided protection and helped ancient people hunt and, in turn, people provided companionship, food, and shelter for them. These wolves evolved into the companion animals we now call dogs. Though they are no longer wild, dogs still have the instinctive need to live in packs, like wolves (defenders.org – “The Wolf and the Dog”). A dog’s pack is its human family and the other pets that live in the household. Dogs still contain other instinctive needs like their wolf ancestors. You will find out more about these next...*

**End of Lesson:**

1. Have students create a “big book” that shows the difference between wild wolves and domesticated dogs. Include information in the book such as: the needs of wolves versus the needs of a dog, who takes care of a wolf versus a dog, the similarities between them both, factual background information on how dogs evolved from wolves, etc. The topics covered in the book are up to the teacher.
2. Give each student an oversized piece of paper or half of a sheet of poster board.
3. Each student will conduct research and then design a page for the big book that covers their chosen topic.
  - Encourage students to use research methods that they are familiar with – i.e.. internet search of quality articles, non-fiction books, research apps on tablets, interviewing a professional, etc.
  - Each page needs to contain a detailed and realistic illustration (allow students to use different mediums such as paint, colored pencils, yarn, collages of pictures, etc.), and then one paragraph of factual text below the illustration.
4. Once students have finished their pages, have them show their page to the class and read what they wrote.
5. Combine all the pages into a “big book” with loose-leaf rings and keep it in your classroom library.
6. Have a **Post-Discussion:**
  - “If a dog is let loose to live in the forest, could it become wild again?” Have students turn and talk with a neighbor for 30 seconds. Call time. Ask students to move to one side of the room if they say “YES”, and then have the other students move to the other side of the room if they say “NO”. Ask for justifying points from each side. *Discuss how once an animal*



*is domesticated, it can never be wild again. It would not be able to survive in the forest because it depends on people for all its needs.*

EX) A skunk came into the **Nebraska Humane Society** and had lived in a home its entire life, therefore was domesticated. The individual surrendering it had raised it from a baby. Because the skunk had been raised in a home since birth, it did not know how to search for food, protect itself from predators, seek shelter in bad weather, and other natural instincts needed to survive in its natural habitat. Thus, NHS could not release the skunk back into the wild. Sadly skunks are illegal to have as pets as well.

**\*\*For more stories on wildlife that could not be re-released into the wild due to domestication or injury, reach out to **Nebraska Wildlife Rehab** at <https://nebraskawildliferehab.org/>**

- "What other animals have been domesticated? Why were they domesticated?" Turn and talk. Share with the group.
- "Should you bring a wild animal into your home and try to make it a pet?" *Discuss how a wild animal can never be a pet, simply because it is wild. It takes thousands of years to domesticate a species. Also, it is not safe to interact with wild animals, nor is it fair to that wild animal. Wild animals do NOT want to live with us. They would be incredibly scared, stressed, and unhappy in our homes or locked up in our backyards. It is also important to leave them alone because they need to be able to take care of themselves and not depend on people for food or other things.*

#### **Closure:**

1. Provide students with 1 minute to reflect on what they have learned from this lesson.
2. Engage the whole class in a quick **3..2..1**: Ask for **three** volunteers to share one new fact that they learned. Ask for **two** different volunteers to share their favorite part of the lesson, or simply something they found interesting. Ask for **one** volunteer to share a question that they still have. Answer this question at another time.

-If you wish to hold each student accountable, the **3..2..1** questions can be answered individually on a written "exit ticket". Simply have the students write out their answers on a sticky note, notebook paper, fake ticket, note card, etc. and then turn it in to the teacher.

#### **\*\*Additional Resource:**

[https://defenders.org/sites/default/files/publications/the\\_wolf\\_\\_the\\_dog\\_first\\_friend\\_to\\_best\\_friend.pdf](https://defenders.org/sites/default/files/publications/the_wolf__the_dog_first_friend_to_best_friend.pdf)