



Inquire to Learn!

There are many ways in which *Sirko and the Wolf/Welcome to Ukraine* can be used as a base for Inquiry Learning. This is just one suggestion.

Session 1

Using the Big Book, share-read *Sirko and the Wolf*, stopping at natural points for discussion. Draw on the students' prior knowledge of Ukrainian/European folk tales, dogs and wolves, farming life, friendship, and rewards.

Possible Starter Questions for Discussion

Ukrainian/European Folk Tales: *What is the purpose of folk tales?* As a class, discuss that folk tales were created both to entertain and to teach moral lessons, or right from wrong. Like other folk tales, Ukrainian stories are designed to teach positive behaviours. They often contain messages about loving one's family and homeland and being honest, generous, and kind. In Ukrainian and other folk tales from Europe, a good, kind, brave, and honest person, or animal, will always overcome the obstacles before them.

Dogs and Wolves: *How are dogs and wolves often portrayed in folk tales?* Discuss that dogs are symbols of faithfulness and introduce the proverb *A dog is a man's (person's) best friend*, which refers to the long history of dogs living closely with people and being loyal, hard-working companions. Discuss that wolves are usually the "bad guys" or villains of a story and are often cunning and deceitful. Wolves were traditionally seen as predators across Europe, where they were known to kill livestock, such as sheep, and people. This is the basis of how they became the villains of many folk tales.

Farming Life: *How are dogs on farms different to pet dogs?* Discuss with the students that farm dogs are working dogs that have a job to do. They are well looked after, but they are often not given the same status or privileges as pet dogs. In the past, farm dogs were used to guard sheep and other livestock from predators such as wolves. They were also used to keep livestock in a certain area that probably would not have been fenced and to move livestock from one area to another. Today, dogs are still an important part of farming life. They are used for everything from sheep mustering, particularly in hilly high country, to bringing in the cows for milking.

Friendship: *What does it mean to be a friend?* Lead a discussion around traits of friendship, such as looking after each other, kindness, and loyalty.

Rewards: *What is a reward?* If necessary, define a reward as something given in recognition of service, effort, or achievement. Ask, *Are people (or animals) always rewarded for doing something good? Why/why not?*

Text and Illustration Based Inquiry Questions

Cover: Look at the cover and ask, *What are the animals doing?* (Sharing a piece of meat in secret.) *Who do you think Sirko is?* (a sheepdog) *What do you think this story will be about?* (friendship)
Read the byline and point out that *Sirko and the Wolf* is a folk tale from Ukraine.

Sirko and the Wolf/ Welcome to Ukraine

Teacher's Notes continued

PP. 2–3: Revisit the text and illustration and ask, *What relationship does Sirko have with his family?* (He is a working dog.) *What do you think Viktor most appreciates about Sirko?* (That he does his job well.) Point out the highly decorative style of illustration and share with the students that this illustrator and style were chosen to bring a flavour of Ukrainian art and culture to the book.

PP. 4–5: Revisit the illustration and note that Sirko has a prime spot on the mat in front of the fire. Ask, *What does this tell us about how Sirko is treated?* (He is treated well.) *Who is going to be a new focus of family life?* (the baby) Revisit the text and ask, *Why does Hanna whisper to Viktor rather than talk openly?* (Because she feels guilty and she doesn't want Sirko to hear her.) *Why will they not be able to keep Sirko if he cannot work?* (Because they will need to replace Sirko with another working dog and they already have the new baby, who is an extra mouth to feed.)

PP. 6–7: Revisit the text and illustration and ask, *Do you think Viktor is doing the right thing? Does he have a choice? Why/why not?*

PP. 8–9: Review the first sentence and ask, *What does it mean to feel sorry for oneself?* Discuss that feeling sorry for oneself means to be focused on one's own unhappiness. Ask, *Do you feel sorry for Sirko? Why/why not?* Review the rest of the text and draw the students' attention to the following sentence: *He knew what it was like to live all on his own.* Point out that the wolf is showing empathy and define empathy as the ability to understand and share the feelings of another.

PP. 10–11: Review the text and illustration and ask the students to predict what they think might be going to happen.

PP. 12–13: Review the first paragraph and ask, *Which word lets us know that the wolf does not want to harm the baby?* (carefully) Continue reading and then ask, *What has Sirko pretended to be?* (a hero) Ask the students to predict the actions of Viktor and Hanna.

PP. 14–15: Review the text and illustration and ask, *What are dumplings?* Tell the students that different cultures have different kinds of dumplings, but Ukrainian dumplings are made from dough wrapped around a filling, such as potato and cheese, and cooked in boiling water. *Why did Viktor give Sirko the biggest helping of dumplings?* (As a reward for rescuing the baby from the wolf.) Ask, *Is it always important to repay a favour? Why/why not?*

PP. 16–17: Review the text and illustration and ask, *Do you think the wolf was expecting Sirko to repay his kindness? Why/why not? How do you think the wolf is feeling?*

PP. 18–19: Revisit the first two sentences and ask, *Why do you think the wolf was confused?* (He has never been shown kindness before and he doesn't know what Sirko's plan is.) Continue reading and ask, *How do you think the wolf is feeling now?* (surprised, happy) *How would the people feel if they knew there was a wolf under the table?* (scared)

PP. 20–21: Revisit the text and invite the students to join in with the happy howls of the wolf. Ask, *Why do the villagers think that the wolf should be killed?* (Because they are scared that he will attack them. They do not know that wolves only attack if they are hungry and that this wolf is not hungry as he has already eaten.)

PP. 22–23: Revisit the text and illustration and ask, *What has Sirko done?* (He has pretended to attack the wolf so that Viktor doesn't need to. In pulling the wolf outside he is protecting him from being harmed.) *Why did Sirko do this?* (Because the wolf is his friend. Sirko is showing loyalty to the wolf.)

P. 24: Review the text and ask, *Why is Sirko thought to be a hero?* (Because Viktor and Hanna believe that he saved their baby from the wolf during harvest and the villagers believe that he saved them all from the wolf at the party.) Discuss that Sirko and the wolf are both heroes for being good friends to the other. Being thought of as a hero does not make Sirko happy, but the home comforts that it brings does!

Sirko and the Wolf/ Welcome to Ukraine

Teacher's Notes continued

Further Discussion and Inquiry Extension

Share-read other folk tales from Ukraine about wolves or dogs, such as *The Wolf and the Kids*, *How the Dog Found Himself a Master*, *The Iron Wolf*, *Why the Stork Eats Frogs* and *the Wolf Hunts Sheep*, *Sister Fox* and *Brother Wolf*.

Explore the shared history of dogs and wolves. How did wolves become “dogs”? How long have dogs been living with humans? How did there get to be so many different breeds of dog?

Research to find out some of the many different ways in which dogs help people. There are rescue dogs, guide dogs, mobility assistance dogs, hearing dogs, therapy dogs, herding dogs, sled dogs, hunting dogs, guard dogs, detection dogs, tracking dogs, and police dogs.

Invite the students to explore the history of dogs in New Zealand or Australia, particularly working dogs. Look at how dogs have been portrayed and honoured, such as the bronze statue of a NZ Collie sheepdog on the shore of Lake Tekapo to recognize the importance of the sheepdog to the lives of Mackenzie Country residents. Challenge the students to find as many dog sculptures around NZ as they can – Methven, Hindon, Roxburgh, Feilding, Hunterville, Lyttelton, Wellington Central, Napier, Hamilton, Katikati, Hastings, Christchurch, Tauranga, Gisborne, Dunedin, Rotorua, Te Aroha, Mania, and Tirau (sheepdog building) are all places to look into. Look also at the character of Dog in Murray Ball’s “Footroot Flats”.

For Australia, research the “Dog on the Tuckerbox” monument in NSW and the associated poem and song. Challenge the students to find out more about the dog memorials in Bonalbo, Brisbane, Melbourne, Canberra, Casterton, Dampier, Dingo, Mosman, Surfers Paradise, Toowoomba, Whyalla Stuart, Palm Beach, Sydney, Muswellbrook, Gunnedah, Cleveland, Corryong, Ardlethan, and Ballarat.

As a class, create and illustrate a storyboard of the sequence of events in *Sirko and the Wolf* e.g.

1. Sirko has a happy life.
2. Sirko is too old to work and is sent away.
3. Sirko meets the wolf and they become friends.
4. The wolf “steals” the baby and Sirko rescues her.
5. Viktor and Hanna reward Sirko.
6. Sirko brings the wolf to the party and feeds him.
7. The wolf howls.
8. Sirko “fights” the wolf.
9. Sirko is a hero.

Divide the class into pairs or groups of three. Have each group illustrate one event. Connect the illustrations with arrows.

Challenge the students to choose a traditional tale that features a wolf as the villain, such as *The Three Little Pigs* or *Red Riding Hood*, and rewrite the story so that the wolf is the hero.

As a class, do an animal study on wolves. What are the different kinds of wolves? Where do they live? What do they eat? What else can you learn about wolves?

Session 2

Using the Big Book, share-read *Welcome to Ukraine*, stopping at natural points for discussion. Draw on the students’ prior knowledge of Ukraine and Ukrainian culture, farming, cultural symbols, traditional dance, and national foods.

Possible Starter Questions for Discussion and Inquiry

Ukrainian Greeting: Does anyone know how to

greet someone in Ukrainian? It is pryvit. This is an informal greeting which is the same as saying hi.

Cover and Contents Page: Look at the cover of *Welcome to Ukraine* and discuss that the photo is of a windmill in a field of wheat. Ask, *Why do you think this image was chosen to represent Ukraine?* Tell the students that wheat is very important to life in Ukraine

Sirko and the Wolf/ Welcome to Ukraine

Teacher's Notes continued

and that in the past farmers took their wheat to small local windmills to be ground into flour. Windmills were also used for powering sawmills, paper mills, hammermills, and windpumps. The local windmill also served as a meeting place where farmers could catch up on local news and events. Today an image of a windmill in a field of wheat still represents Ukrainian culture.

Location of Ukraine/Geography: Reread the first sentence on P. 1 of *Welcome to Ukraine* and ask, *What is Europe?* If necessary, define Europe as a continent (one of the seven great landmasses on Earth). Tell the students that there are 50 countries in Europe, and Ukraine is the largest in terms of size. In terms of population, Ukraine is the sixth-largest European nation. Ukraine is about two times bigger than New Zealand, but with a population of 44 million it has eleven times the number of people. If any of the students come from Ukraine or have visited it, invite them to share their experiences.

Ukrainian Culture: Ask, *What do Ukrainians value?* (tradition and family) Share with the students that grandparents in Ukraine are important members of the family. Look at the traditional embroidered shirts worn in the photos throughout *Welcome to Ukraine* and reread the captions on P. 5 and P. 6 concerning clothing.

Farming: *What crop is Ukraine famous for?* (wheat) Reread P. 1 of *Welcome to Ukraine* and review the students' understanding that wheat is milled to make flour, which is made into bread. Point out the word *exports* in the caption and, if necessary, define it as sending goods to another country for sale. Share with the students that Ukraine is one of the most fertile regions in the world. Refer to the text on P. 5 about Ukrainian farmers being welcomed to Canada and building strong communities there.

Cultural Symbols: Refer to the photo of the pysanky egg on the contents page of *Welcome to Ukraine*, the photo essay on PP. 2–3, and the photo and caption on P. 5. Ask, *What is a pysanky egg?* (A Ukrainian Easter egg decorated with wax and

dyes.) *What is a cultural symbol?* Share with the students that a cultural symbol is an object that represents a culture or people. It may be a symbol of their beliefs or it may just hold meaning within the culture. Ask, *How are pysanky eggs cultural symbols of Ukraine?* (Pysanky eggs have been made in Ukraine since ancient times and pre-date Christianity. They are strongly associated with Ukraine and are an important symbol from the international level (see P. 5) right down to the local level, with each region and village having their own methods and techniques for making pysanky. There are also many traditional beliefs about pysanky.)

Traditional Dance: *Why do Ukrainians around the world enjoy traditional dance?* (To keep their culture alive or to keep in touch with their culture.) *How can traditional art forms such as dance and music reinforce culture?* (By learning traditional music and dance people can connect with their home culture and country. By performing traditional music and dance they can share their culture with others.)

National Foods: Reread the caption on borscht on P. 6 of *Welcome to Ukraine* and P. 8. Ask, *Is food an important aspect of culture? Why/why not? What are some national foods of New Zealand?* (Answers will vary, but could include: hāngi, boil-up, kumara, pavlova, kiwifruit, fish and chips, Anzac biscuits.)

Further Discussion and Inquiry Extension

Ukraine exports wheat, sugar beets, sunflowers, and corn. What does New Zealand export? What does Australia export? Challenge the students to find out.

Decorate your own simple pysanky eggs with wax or masking tape and dyes. There are many guides and patterns on the Internet.

Listen to Ukrainian folk music on YouTube. Some interesting instruments are used in Ukrainian music. Research to find out about them.

Sirko and the Wolf/ Welcome to Ukraine

Teacher's Notes continued

Watch performances of Ukrainian folk dance on YouTube. It may be possible to learn some simple folk dance steps.

Using the world's largest pysanky egg as inspiration (P. 5), invite the students to design a symbol to represent their town/city. What does the symbol say about their town/city?

Challenge the students to learn simple embroidery and design and sew a personal motif.

As a class, research and plan a travel itinerary of places to visit in Ukraine. Suggestions include: Microminiature Museum (Kiev, P. 7), St Sophia's Cathedral (Kiev, P. 7), The Caves of Kiev – A Sacred Monastery (Kiev), State Museum of Toys (Kiev), Museum of Folk Architecture and Rural Life (L'viv), Khotyn Fortress (Khotyn), Children Railway Stations with trains operated by children (all major cities).