

Educator Discussion Guide

Ferals

By Jacob Grey

Louisiana Young Readers' Choice Nominee 2018

Grade 6-8

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ABOUT THE BOOK

Caw can't remember life before the crows. Since he was five, he has lived with three crows in an abandoned park in Blackstone. He scours the city, dumpster diving for food and other necessities. From the park Caw can see the prison warden's house. Caw longingly watches the everyday goings on of the family, wondering what it would be like. One night, three convicts escape the prison. Caw, drawn to the chaos of hunting the escapees, finds himself saving the warden and the warden's daughter, Lydia. Regretfully, the convicts escape. Lydia and Caw partner up to track down the convicts and find out about Caw's past. They run into a raggedy homeless man, Crumb, who can speak to pigeons. Crumb tells Caw that he is a feral, someone who can communicate and control animals. He also tells Caw that there are evil ferals, ones gathering together to destroy the town. Caw and the rest of the gang must band together to defeat the evil and save the town. This fast-paced fantasy is sure to thrill readers.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

There is little known about Jacob Grey. The first and second books of the Ferals trilogy were published in 2016, and the third was published in 2017. What we do know is that he lives in the United States and has a love of animals. You can find out about Jacob Grey on the HarperCollins Publishing website.

Biographical information taken from the author's website at

<https://www.harpercollins.com/cr-112694/jacob-grey>

Accessed 3 August 2017.

OTHER TITLES IN SERIES

Ferals #2: The Swarm Descends (2016)

Ferals #3: The White Widow's Revenge (2017)

PREREADING ACTIVITY

Animal Characteristics

Ask your student what their favorite animals are and to think of what characteristics those animals possess. Use these characteristics as an exercise in simile and metaphor: sly as a fox, slow as a turtle, etc. Have students share the traits of their favorite animals with the class along with the simile and metaphor examples they've created. This is an excellent introduction to the concept of personification.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Analyze the cover of the book. How does it hint at the content of the story? What does each element tell you?
2. Why does Caw avoid other humans? Use evidence from the text to support the answer.
3. Despite everything, Caw becomes friends with Lydia. How does this relationship effect Caw?
4. What do crows symbolize? Why is it significant to the story?
5. Caw discovers that he has many abilities as a feral. If you were a feral, what animal would you be able to communicate with and what would be your abilities?
6. What happened during the Dark Summer? How do the good ferals and the bad ferals differ?
7. How does Caw's dream change after he meets Crumb?
8. How does Caw's relationship with his three crows change after he finds out about ferals and his parents?
9. What was Caw surprised to find out at the meeting with the other ferals?
10. "A wordless summons seemed to beckon Caw, calling him toward the top of the stairs"(pg.151). What was calling to Caw? Why?
11. Why did Lydia jump through the portal to the land of the dead?
12. When Caw travels to the land of the dead, he meets his parents. What was keeping them from vanishing?
13. Caw had always felt abandoned by his parents. How does his encounter with them in the land of the dead change his feelings?
14. People tend to look like their pets. How are the descriptions of the ferals' appearances similar to what animals they are linked to?
15. At the end of the book, what is it that Caw brushes out of Lydia hair? How does he react to it and why?

CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

Art:

The Spinning Man had created his own symbol in the story. Have the students pick an animal and create their own symbols incorporating their animals. Have students present their seals to the class and explain why they used certain elements in their seal and what the parts of the seal mean.

Language Arts:

- Animals often have special symbolism in literature. Create a list of the different animals in *Ferals* and try to identify what they could symbolize in the story. Who are the “good” and “bad” animals, do these animals match common positive or connotations, how or why?
- Discuss the different types of conflict present in *Ferals*. The following link includes a graphic organizer for students to complete with supporting evidence from the text:
<https://www.themailbox.com/storage/microsites/images/2015/G3-6-Ferals.pdf>

Science:

Ferals takes place in an urban/suburban setting. This setting determines what animals are in the area and, therefore, what animals are present in the book. Discuss with the class how a different environment or ecosystem would affect the type of animals in the area. For more information on ecosystems, see: <https://educators.brainpop.com/bp-topic/ecosystems/>

Vocabulary:

Arachnid	Abandon
Coincidence	Feral
Symbol	Sacrifice
Revenge	Transformation
Associate	Connection
Expose	Disintegrate

RELATED WEBSITES

Class Acts

<https://www.themailbox.com/storage/microsites/images/2015/G3-6-Ferals.pdf>

PDF from HarperCollins Publishing of a language arts activity.

Ferals

<https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/jacob-grey/ferals/>

Review of the book from Kirkus reviews.