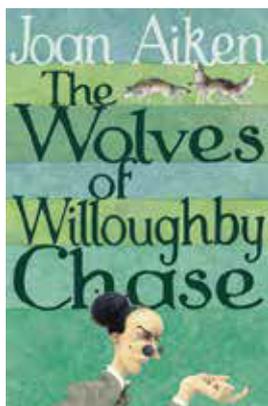


# Pie Corbett's Reading Spine

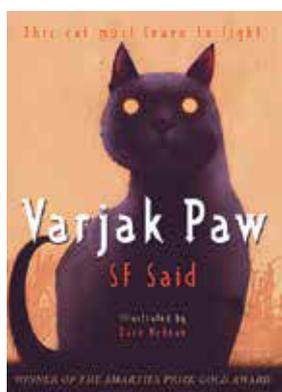
It was only when I had made my list for Year 5 that I realised how animals feature heavily – cats, wolves and foxes! These are romping reads as well as stories that touch deeply. I have listed them in a suggested order that leads towards what I would say is the greatest novel ever written for children.



## The Wolves of Willoughby Chase

Joan Aiken (Red Fox)

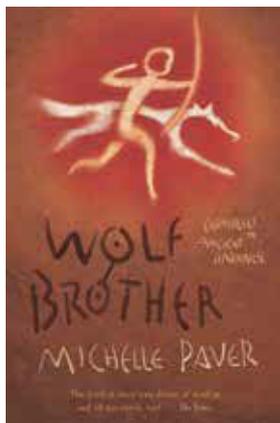
There are 12 novels in this series (the 'Wolves Chronicles') and 'The Wolves' is the first, set in Joan Aiken's own historical world (1832) where wolves have travelled through the Channel Tunnel! Begin by researching some information about wolves. There is a good film that can be used to compare with the book (though it has a PG certificate so get parental permission). Try reading the book chapter-by-chapter and watching the film alongside, section-by-section. With the class list difficult vocabulary for discussion and create a glossary of historical terms. At the end, discuss what should happen to Miss Slighcarp and Mr Grimshaw. Check out Joan Aiken's website where you can download a bookmark for the book. (<http://www.joanaiken.com/pages/books.html>)



## Varjak Paw READ & RESPOND

SF Said (Random House)

After reading the book, ask children to paint dark city landscapes and skylines. Then together draw role-on-the-wall for Varjak, collecting clues and quotes about his developing character. Ask: *Why is Varjak rejected and yet why does he return?* Explain the difference between Varjak, the Elder Paw and the other cats. Can the children contrast the inside of the house with outside in the city? Together invent a 'Jalal tale' and explain 'the way'. Invite the children to write a night adventure for Varjak – for example, a story in which he nearly gets caught by Sally Bones. Encourage them to write a sequel adventure and then read *The Outlaw Varjak Paw* (Random House).



## Wolf Brother

Michelle Paver (Orion)

Before reading draw a map and during the story, mark where events occur. With the class make a list of the words or phrases that Wolf uses instead of human terms and give their definitions, such as *'Tall Tailless, Bright White Eye, thundering Wet'*. Encourage them to try inventing other phrases for everyday things and try writing a scene from the book from Wolf's viewpoint using his language. The story is set 6,000 years ago and imagines what life might have been like. Together describe the main settings – the Raven camp, the ice river, the wide water, the cave and the forest. Draw and discuss as a class the significance of the main events – Torak's father's death, meeting Wolf, fighting Hord, discovering the prophecy and defeating the bear. Compare this book to other 'quests' – typical characters, events and plot patterns.