

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Grades
3-7

A SPIRIT ANIMALS

A GUIDE TO THE
NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING SERIES



SCHOLASTIC

Meets Common Core State Standards—SEE INSIDE

From the publisher of *The 39 Clues™* and *Infinity Ring™*,
a new multiplatform fantasy adventure—with many themes
and learning opportunities to explore.

Read the Books

Four children—two boys and two girls—in four different continents all undergo the same ritual. When they drink magic Nectar, flashes of light erupt, and from them emerge the unmistakable shapes of incredible beasts—a wolf, a leopard, a panda, a falcon. Suddenly the paths of these children—and the world—have been changed forever.

Enter the world of Erdas, where every child who comes of age must discover if he or she has a spirit animal. If so, a rare bond forms between human and beast that bestows great power to both. A dark force has risen from distant and long-forgotten lands, and has begun an onslaught that will ravage the world. Now the fate of Erdas has fallen on the shoulders of four young strangers...and on your young readers.

Seven books are planned—the more books in the series your students read, the more proficient problem-solvers they will become.



Unlock the Game

After reading the books, students can go to scholastic.com/spiritanimals and enter the code found in each book to add it to their account, then customize their own hero, choose

their spirit animal, and go on quests to save the world of Erdas. They can interact with other readers on special age-appropriate and fully-monitored Message Boards.

Taking part in the game provides the perfect chance to integrate reading and the exciting world that technology offers—a key requirement of the Common Core standards.

About this Guide and the Common Core State Standards

The compelling plots and the four young main characters in the Spirit Animals series will capture the interest of readers in grades 3-7. While we focus here on correlations to the Common Core State Standards in Grades 4-5, the equivalent standards in other grades may equally be referenced. The discussion and activities are layered to accommodate the learning needs of most students.

The Thematic and Curriculum Connections in this guide call upon students to be careful readers without jeopardizing the pleasure they gain from reading. It is best to allow students to read the entire novel before engaging in a detailed study of the work. They should come away from the novel unit with a clear understanding of how literature can open readers' minds to think about larger issues in life.

Throughout this guide we note wherever an activity helps students toward achieving specific Common Core standards. See the section "Common Core State Standards Referenced in This Guide" at the end of this guide for more information.

Meet the Authors



Photo Credit: Angela Liddle

BRANDON MULL
#1 *New York Times* bestselling author of the Fablehaven and Beyonders series

Spirit Animals Book 1:
Wild Born
HC: 978-0-545-52243-4 • \$12.99
RLB: 978-0-545-59971-9 • \$16.99
EBK: 978-0-545-52255-7 • \$12.99



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SHANNON HALE
New York Times bestselling author of *The Goose Girl*, *Rapunzel's Revenge*, and Newbery Honor winner *Princess Academy*

Spirit Animals Book 4
(July 2014)
HC: 978-0-545-52246-5 • \$12.99
RLB: 978-0-545-59974-0 • \$16.99
EBK: 978-0-545-52258-8 • \$12.99



Photo Credit: Edward Stiefvater

MAGGIE STIEFVATER
#1 *New York Times* bestselling author of the Shiver Trilogy, *The Scorpio Races*, and the Raven Cycle

Spirit Animals Book 2: Hunted
(January 7, 2014)
HC: 978-0-545-52244-1 • \$12.99
RLB: 978-0-545-59972-6 • \$16.99
EBK: 978-0-545-52256-4 • \$12.99



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TUI T. SUTHERLAND
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Spirit Animals Book 5
(October 2014)
HC: 978-0-545-52247-2 • \$12.99
RLB: 978-0-545-59973-3 • \$16.99
EBK: 978-0-545-59975-7 • \$12.99



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GARTH NIX & SEAN WILLIAMS
Sean Williams is the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of *Twinmaker* and the *Troubletwisters* series (with Garth Nix)

Garth Nix is the *New York Times* bestselling author of the *Abhorsen Trilogy*, *The Seventh Tower* series, and *The Keys to the Kingdom* series

Spirit Animals Book 3
(April 2014)
HC: 978-0-545-52245-8 • \$12.99
RLB: 978-0-545-59973-3 • \$16.99
EBK: 978-0-545-52257-1 • \$12.99



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ELIOT SCHREFER
National Book Award Finalist author of *Endangered*

Spirit Animals Book 6
(January 2015)
HC: 978-0-545-52248-9 • \$12.99
RLB: 978-0-545-59976-4 • \$16.99
EBK: 978-0-545-52260-1 • \$12.99



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MARIE LU
New York Times bestselling author of the *LEGEND* trilogy

Spirit Animals Book 7
(April 2015)
HC: 978-0-545-53521-2 • \$12.99
RLB: 978-0-545-59977-1 • \$16.99
EBK: 978-0-545-53522-9 • \$12.99

All books also available as Scholastic Audiobooks

Pre-reading Activity

Ask students to define fantasy. Then review the elements of fantasy:

- Characters have special powers
- A plot filled with action and many twists and turns
- Good versus evil as a common theme
- Set in an imaginary world
- Animals sometimes act like people
- Someone or something must be saved
- Magic is used to resolve the conflict

Divide the class into small groups and ask them to chart the elements of fantasy in books they may already be familiar with, such as *Alice in Wonderland* and *The Wizard of Oz*. Allow time for each group to share their thoughts.

Correlates to Common Core Standards in Reading Literature—Integration of Knowledge & Ideas RL. 4-5.9; Speaking & Listening—Comprehension & Collaboration SL. 4-5.1, SL. 4-5.3.

Thematic Connections

Coming of Age

Explain the term coming of age. How does the Nectar Ceremony in *Wild Born* signify coming of age for eleven-year-olds in the kingdom of Erdas? Why are Conor, Abeke, Meilin, and Rollan surprised when they call a spirit animal? Discuss why Rollan didn't participate in the rite when he should have. Why is Conor so insecure about the ceremony? Explain Abeke's father's reaction when she calls Uraza, the great leopard, as her spirit animal. The four main characters have come of age, but they must still grow up. Which character grows the most?

In *Hunted*, the children continue to grow. How does the quest to find Rulfuss to obtain the Iron Boar cause them to make grown-up decisions? How do they sometimes face grown-up consequences?

Family

Contrast the families of Conor, Abeke, Meilin, and Rollan. Which character has the toughest time leaving home? They experience different degrees of homesickness. Cite passages from the novel that reveal just how much each character misses their family or village. Discuss the role of women in Abeke's and Meilin's family. How do Abeke and Meilin defy the traditional female role? Explain what Shane means when he says to Abeke, "Those of us with heavy burdens find family where we can" (p. 60). Debate whether the four main characters and their spirit animals become a family. Ask students to cite passages from the novel to support their thoughts.

In *Hunted*, Conor receives a letter from his mother, and Meilin sees the face of her father in one of the orbs. How does this tug at their hearts and cause them to rethink their decisions to continue the quest with the Greencloaks?



Thematic Connections (continued)

Fear/Courage

Each character experiences fear at some point in both novels. Compare and contrast the way they deal with fear. Which character is the most unprepared to face fear? Discuss the relationship between fear and courage. How do the spirit animals give the characters courage? What do Conor, Abeke, Meilin, and Rollan learn about courage when they encounter Arax and Rumfuss?

Sacrifice

In *Wild Born*, what do the four main characters sacrifice when they call their spirit animals? What do they gain? Explain what their families sacrifice when the children are turned over to the Greencloaks. What are Monte and Barlow's view of the Nectar Ceremony? Explain what Barlow means when he says, "The Greencloaks are too quick to sacrifice too much" (p. 149).

Good versus Evil

There is good and evil in most works of fantasy. Identify the good and evil characters in *Wild Born* and *Hunted*. Zerif is called "the Jackal." How does the name symbolize evil? Discuss how long it takes for the four main characters to distinguish between good and evil in *Wild Born*. Cite specific passages from the novel that reveal when each character recognizes evil. The end of the novel foreshadows a later adventure in the series that involves Gerathon. Debate whether this will be a good or evil character.

In *Hunted*, explain the symbolism of the black cat on the flag at Trunswick Castle. How does Conor's experience with the Trunswicks help him identify the evil they are about to encounter? Lord MacDonnell is both a good and evil character. How is Rollan quick to see his evil side?

Trust

Ask students to define trust. In *Wild Born*, why doesn't Meilin trust Rollan? How is trust essential to the relationship between the four main characters and their spirit animals? Describe the journey of each character as they strive to form a bond with their animal. Which character is the first to earn the trust of their spirit animal? Why must trust occur before the spirit animal becomes dormant?

In *Hunted*, Finn explains to the children, "Trust must be practiced" (p. 85). Explain how the quest to find Rumfuss gives them opportunities to practice trust? It takes teamwork to complete the quest. How must the children learn to trust before they can become a team? At what point do they become a team? Describe the broken link in the team at the end of the novel.

Responsibility

Explain the responsibility that the Greencloaks place on Conor, Abeke, Meilin, and Rollan in both novels. Discuss how each character responds to such responsibility. In *Wild Born*, Rollan considers leaving the castle. How does Conor help him reconsider his decision? What is the role of Briggan, Uraza, Jhi, and Essix in helping the children accept responsibility? Discuss how Meilin proves her worth to the group. How is the land of Erdas depending on them? What happens if they fail?

Debate whether Conor makes a responsible decision in *Hunted* when he gives the talisman to Dawson Trunswick.



Thematic Connections (continued)

Loyalty

In *Wild Born*, Conor and Meilin are loyal to the Greencloaks and take the vows. Explain why Meilin is more comfortable with the Greencloaks than she is among her own people in Zhong. How is Meilin's loyalty tested in *Hunted*? Discuss how it's loyalty that causes her to make the decision to go home at the end of the novel.

Discuss why Rollan is reluctant to join the Greencloaks. Debate whether his life as an orphan might have contributed to his lack of trust or loyalty to anyone.

Throughout most of *Wild Born*, Abeke is loyal to the enemies of the Greencloaks. Why? What does she believe about the Greencloaks? What causes her to switch loyalties at the end? What is Rollan's opinion of Abeke when she finally pledges herself to the Greencloaks? In *Hunted*, Meilin continues to question Abeke's loyalties. At what point do the two girls begin to understand the true meaning of loyalty to one another? How might Abeke question Meilin's loyalty at the end of the novel?

Power

In *Wild Born*, why does Meilin's father think that the Greencloaks have too much power? Explain what Rollan means when he says, "People with authority tended to abuse it" (p. 69). How does this view of power cause him to doubt the motives of the Greencloaks? Explain how the following metaphor relates to power: "Greencloaks' expectations were his (Rollan's) chains" (p. 76). Discuss the power of the talismans of the Great Beasts. How is that power the root of the conflict?

In *Hunted*, Devin Trunswick drinks from the Bile. Contrast the power of the Bile to that of the Nectar. How does the Bile give Devin a false sense of power? How long does it take him to realize that he is powerless? Devin's father, the earl, makes a deal through his youngest son Dawson, to obtain the Iron Boar. Debate whether the talisman might restore power to Trunswick Castle.

Correlates to Common Core Standards in Reading Literature—Key Ideas & Details RL.4-5.1, RL. 4-5.2, RL. 4-5.3; Speaking & Listening—Comprehension & Collaboration SL. 4-5.1, SL.4-5.3.



Curriculum Connections

Language Arts

Ask students to take another look at the "Pre-reading Activity" that identifies the elements of fantasy. Then have them write a short article for a fantasy magazine that explains why *Spirit Animals: Wild Born* fits the genre. Instruct them to use specific quotes from the book to support their points. Encourage peer editing for clarity, spelling and grammar.

Correlates to Common Core Standards in Reading Literature—Key Ideas & Details RL.4-5.1, RL.4-5.2, RL. 4-5.3; Writing—Text Types & Purposes W. 4-5.2, Production & Distribution of Writing W. 4-5.4, W.4-5.5.

The authors use similes to create certain images. For example, in *Wild Born*, "It (Briggan) sat, like a trained dog yielding to its master" (p. 11). Have students find other similes in the novels. Then have them write a simile that best describes the relationship between Conor and Briggan, Abeke and Uraza, Meilin and Jhi, and Rollan and Essix at the end of *Wild Born*, and Finn's and Lord Donnell's relationships with their spirit animals at the end of *Hunted*.

Correlates to Common Core Standards in Language—Vocabulary Acquisition and Use L.4-5.5.

Social Studies

Discuss what students know and understand about coming of age in their own culture or community. Then instruct them to use books in the library or sites on the Internet to find out about coming of age traditions in other cultures and religions. Consider the following questions: What is the age at which a person comes of age? Is there a formal ceremony? Are there special foods, dress, etc. for the event? What rights are gained once a person comes of age? Then have students borrow ideas from at least three different cultures and design their own coming of age ceremony. Have them design a program for the event. Include a paragraph that explains their coming of age ritual, including ideas they used from other cultures.

Correlates to Common Core Standards in Writing—Text Types & Purposes W. 4-5.3, Research to Build and Present Knowledge W. 4-5.7.

Curriculum Connections (continued)

Science

Have students use books in the library or sites on the Internet to research the characteristics of at least four animals in the following groups: Reptiles, Birds, Mammals, and Amphibians. Have them select their spirit animal from the ones researched. Ask them to write a paragraph that explains the special qualities of their chosen spirit animal. Share with the class.

Correlates to Common Core Standards in Writing—Text Types & Purposes W. 4-5.3, Research to Build and Present Knowledge W. 4-5.7, W.4-5.9.

Science/Language Arts

Encourage readers to get involved in the Spirit Animals adventure by exploring the game that parallels the book: scholastic.com/spiritanimals. Ask them to select an available spirit animal. What quest do they accomplish with the help of their spirit animal? Write about this quest as an additional episode in the book. Include a beginning, middle, and an end. Have readers share their quest with the class.

Correlates to Common Core Standards in Reading Literature—Integration of Knowledge and Ideas RL. 4-5.7; Writing—Text Types & Purposes W.4-5.3; Speaking & Listening—Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas SL. 4-5.4.

Drama

Divide the class into four groups and assign each group one of the first four chapters of *Wild Born* to develop as a one-act play set in the twenty-first century. How does a contemporary setting change the tone of the event? Have the groups tape their performance and share with the entire school via the campus television network. Use appropriate graphics to announce the play.

Ask students to plan a good-bye ceremony for Finn. Prepare and deliver a speech for each of the four children. Consider what they learned from Finn and the lessons they will take forward. Include a dance from the spirit animals.

Correlates with Common Core Standards in Reading Literature—Integration of Knowledge and Ideas RL. 4-5.7; Writing—Text Types & Purposes W. 4-5.3; Speaking & Listening—Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas SL. 4-5.5, 4-5.6.

Language Arts/Visual Arts

Legends are larger-than-life stories that are handed down through generations. Have students locate and read a legend. How is the main character revealed? The Devourer is a legendary villain in Erdas whose spirit animal is a crocodile. Ask students to write and illustrate a picture book about the Devourer. Encourage them to consider the following: What colors make the Devourer look fierce? How does a double-page spread create the illusion of “larger than life?” What do bold lines communicate to a reader?

Correlates to Common Core Standards in Writing—Text Types & Purposes W. 4-5.3, Production and Distribution of Writing W.4-5.4.

Vocabulary/Use of Language

Encourage students to jot down unfamiliar words and try to define them, taking clues from the context. Then have them look up the meaning of each word in a dictionary. How well did they do?

Such words in *Wild Born* may include: *intervene* (p. 3), *assemblage* (p. 5), *intimidating* (p. 6), *impassive* (p. 7), *conical* (p. 15), *desolate* (p. 17), *confounded* (p. 22), *allure* (p. 25), *augment* (p. 30), *empathy* (p. 39), *vigilant* (p. 43), *solace* (p. 60), *remorse* (p. 75), *compromised* (p. 81), *covertly* (p. 82), *agility* (p. 93), *authentic* (p. 96), *melodious* (p. 107), *inscrutable* (p. 115), *precipice* (p. 149), and *treachery* (p. 191).

Such words in *Hunted* may include: *arrogant* (p. 1), *incarcerated* (p. 40), *valiant* (p. 52), *antidote* (p. 52), *chasm* (p. 57), *contempt* (p. 76), *demure* (p. 68), *imperious* (p. 78), *insinuation* (p. 85), *indolent* (p. 97), *cacophony* (p. 107), *fallible* (p. 140), *ferocity* (p. 177), and *emissary* (p. 180).

Correlates to Common Core Standards in Language—Vocabulary Acquisition and Use L. 4-5.4.



Common Core State Standards Referenced in This Guide

Reading Literature

Key Ideas and Details

RL. 4-5.1—Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

RL. 4-5.2—Determine a theme of a story from details in the text; summarize the text.

RL. 4-5.3—Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story, drawing on specific details in the text; compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story, drawing on specific details in the text.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

RL. 4-5.7—Make connections between the text of a story and an oral presentation of the text, identifying where each version reflects specific descriptions and directions in the text.

RL.4-5.9—Compare and contrast the treatment of similar themes and topics and patterns of events in stories.

Writing

Text Types and Purposes

W. 4-5.2—Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

W. 4-5.3—Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

Production and Distribution of Writing

W. 4-5.4—Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task.

W. 4-5.5—With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing.

Research to Build and Present Knowledge

W. 4-5.7—Conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.

W.4-5.9—Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Speaking and Listening

Comprehension and Collaboration

SL. 4-5.1—Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led), building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

SL.4-5.3—Identify the reasons and evidence a speaker provides to support particular points.

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

SL. 4-5.4—Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience in an organized manner, using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes; speak clearly at an understandable pace.

SL. 4-5.5—Add audio recordings and visual displays to presentation when appropriate to enhance the development of main ideas or themes.

SL. 4-5.6—Differentiate between contexts that call for formal English and situations where informal discourse is appropriate.

Language

Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

L. 4-5.4—Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words.

L. 4-5.5—Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.



Enter the world of Erdas and discover your spirit animal and join the adventure in the online game: scholastic.com/SpiritAnimals



Are you ready to save the world? Join the hunt for the 39 Clues in the bestselling book series and online at the website: scholastic.com/39Clues



History is broken! Join the quest to save history with the Infinity Ring book series and online / mobile app game: scholastic.com/InfinityRing