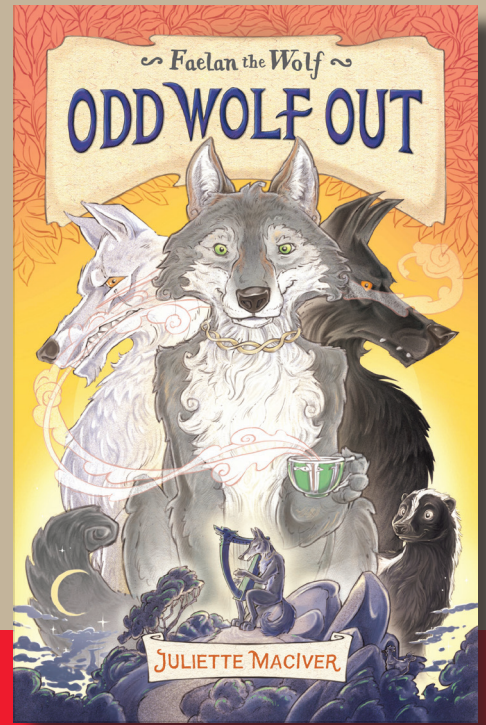


Faelan the Wolf

Odd Wolf Out (Book 1)

By Juliette MacIver



• Reading • Writing • Social Studies • Music • Art

Synopsis

In the time-honoured tradition of anthropomorphic fantasy books such as *Watership Down*, *The Dunston Chronicles* and *Redwall*, Faelan is a story that centres on a pack of wolves, but pitched at ages 8-12.

Faelan is a little different from the rest of the pack. For one thing, he's a vegetarian with a love of music and human things. He keeps a harp hidden, which his mother had taught him to play – it's his guilty pleasure. His best friend is a skunk named Flora, much to the other wolves' disgust.

Faelan believes he is an orphan; his father died when he was born, and his mother was killed in an accident. However, Tala, the daughter of the Pack Leader, lets slip to Faelan that his father is still alive, and that he was banished from the pack. Tala's father Bardolph is in failing health and her brother Weylin, a jumped-up, cocky young wolf who is Faelan's sworn enemy, is preparing to take over the pack. And when he does, he's made it quite clear that Faelan will not be welcome. Tala is determined that Weylin should not rule.

Across the other side of the stream that splits the valley down the middle is territory belonging to Varg, a rogue white wolf. His pack controls that area, but Varg believes he should own the whole valley. Tala wants to try and negotiate a peaceful settlement with Varg, and also to find the Sacred Moonstone that she lost while in his territory.

When the wolf pack comes together to honour Mother Moon for the Full Moon Howling, Faelan always slips away to play his harp. And on one such night, he detects someone/something singing along, and the lyrics appear to be about finding freedom for "my birds." The mystery singer turns out to be a hen from the nearby poultry farm, where there is a huge barn full of caged hens.

Later, Faelan goes to find the hen, called Avian, and gets trapped in the barn when the gun-toting farmer comes with his hunting dogs. Avian's quick-thinking helps him escape, but Faelan is chased by the dogs and nearly killed. Then Tala tells him she wants him to accompany her to the meeting with Varg. And Granny Beowolf, the Seer of the Pack, tells Faelan about a three-part prophecy that is written in the stars. Faelan doesn't understand it but Granny tells him the first two parts of the prophecy and says the third part is not yet clear to her. She also tells him that a star-message becomes clear in good time to the one for whom it is meant. The book ends with the scene being set for more adventures ahead. Written with humour and lots of drama and well-rounded animal characters.

About the Author

Juliette MacIver is an award-winning children's picture book author of many children's titles such as the wonderful Marmaduke Duck series, *Henry Bob Bobbalich*, *Grasshoppers Dance*, and most recently, *Duck Goes Meow*. She has twice won the picture book category for the New Zealand Book Awards for Children and Young Adults and in 2023, she received international recognition in the form of a prestigious White Raven. She is the six-time recipient of the Storylines Notable Book Award and has received multiple nominations for NZ, Australian and US children's book awards.

Juliette has a Masters Linguistics, and a Diploma in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages. She lives near Wellington with her husband and four children.



teacher toolkit

 SCHOLASTIC

Writing Style

Faelan the Wolf: Odd Wolf Out is the first of three books in a fantasy series written for the 9+ age group. The author has written the story in the third person past tense. Faelan is the main character. As an outcast of his wolf pack, he gives us an in-depth look into how being different presents him with daily challenges. Although there are also daily rewards. After all, most of the time he gets to live life on his own terms. The author explores the themes of friendship, identity, belonging, perseverance, social pressures, acceptance and tolerance.

The book begins with a brief explanation on page 1 about why Faelan feels different and a sense of foreboding that sets the tone for the 20 adventure-packed chapters. The author has also provided a helpful pronunciation guide on page 11. The illustrator's hand-drawn map on pages 8–9 helps the reader visualise the Wolfdom and the land beyond. The book is divided into chapters, with each chapter beginning with a delightful black-and-white illustration done in an ancient Gaelic style.

The author has a lovely lyrical way with words and her highly descriptive sentences bring the many dramatic scenes to life. Her playful use of language and humour is evident with characters such as Flora, whose spoonerisms result in some funny mixes and mash-ups. The author ends the first book in the trilogy at a point that hooks in the readers and leaves them wondering if Faelan will make sense of Granny Beowulf's three-part prophecy, and how fire, which wolves normally fear, will aid this gentle and not-so-brave wolf.

Shared Learning and Discussion Points

Proficient readers always ask and answer questions about the characters and events in a book to help them make sense of what they are reading. They constantly make predictions, inferences and connections. During the shared sessions, use all or some of the questions below to help promote discussion. Encourage the students to draw on their own experiences and prior knowledge.

ASK YOUR STUDENTS:

Look at the front cover and read the blurb on the back cover. Then read the text on page 1.

- Why would being the odd one out be a problem for a wolf?
- Have you ever felt like the odd one out at school? How did that make you feel?
- What illustration clues on the back cover reveal that Faelan is a vegetarian?
- How would being a vegetarian wolf affect Faelan's daily life?
- Why might the future leader of the wolf pack despise Faelan?

COMPREHENSION:

- Look at the map on pages 8–9. Read the map labels. What did you find out about where Faelan lives? Why do you think he lives alone? (pp.8–9)
- How are the author's pronunciation guide and meaning of the name Faelan helpful? (p.11)
- Wolves communicate with their bodies. How did Tala and Faelan communicate fear with their bodies while they were territory-marking? (p.13)
- How do you know that Varg and his pack are Tala and Faelan's enemies? (p.13)
- A moonstone is a semi-precious stone with a pearly sheen. Why might Faelan have gasped when he saw Tala wearing the Moonstone? (p.14)
- What is a 'mouflon'? Look it up in the dictionary or online if you are unsure. (p.14)
- How do you know that Tala is a more dominant wolf than Faelan? Find clues in the text to support your answer. (pp.14–15)
- A wolf pack lives in a specific area called a territory. It claims it by marking it with scent. Why did Faelan hate going on scent-marking missions? (p.16)
- What does the phrase 'stopped in his tracks' mean? Why did Faelan do that when Tala mentioned his father? (p.17)
- The last line on page 17 has the word 'banished'. What does it mean? Look it up in the dictionary or online. What other words could the author have used that have the same meaning (synonyms)? Use a thesaurus to help you. Why might a wolf be banished from the pack? (p.17)
- Bardolph is getting old. How does that influence his decision to tell Tala that Faelan's father had been banished? (p.18)
- Why did Faelan keep his voice neutral when he spoke about Weylin? (p.19)
- Why does Tala want her pack to be united? (p.19)
- Why would Varg's pack never dispute the boundary while Bardolph was alive? (p.20)



- Tala says that her brother would make a terrible pack leader. Why did she feel bad about saying that? How does it feel when being honest hurts someone's feelings? (p.21)
- What thoughts and feelings might have been going through Faelan's mind when Tala told him that his father was still alive? Why do you think the author finished the chapter like that? (p.21)
- The author described the black wolf's deep growl as 'like the rumble of an avalanche'. This is a simile, which is a comparison of one thing with another using the words 'like' or 'as'. What other similes could describe the deep growl? (p.23)
- Why did the author put the words in the last paragraph on page 23 in italics? (p.23)
- Why did Faelan like the idea that he would be remembered as the wolf who died trying to save Tala? (p.24)
- Flora is a skunk and is Faelan's friend. Why did Tala give Faelan a disgusted look when he talked about Flora? (p.26)
- When Tala told Weylin about the black wolf's attack, Weylin stammered, or spoke hesitantly. What does that tell you about Weylin's personality? (p.28)
- What other name could the author have given the Gathering Stone? (p.28)
- What phrases on page 29 does the author use to show that Weylin might be out of his depth? (p.29)
- What does the word 'defected' mean? How would having a defected wolf from Varg's pack be helpful to Faelan's pack? (p.30)
- Did Blaez know about Faelan's history before this meeting? How do you know that? (p.31)
- The word 'Flora' means 'flower' in Latin. Why is it funny naming a skunk after a flower? (p.32)
- Why did Bardolph's expression change to an incredulous stare when Faelan asked if he could eat beans? (p.33)
- Why do you think Bardolph compared Faelan to his mother? (pp.33-34)
- Faelan ran with his tail between his legs when Bardolph told him that he didn't belong in the pack. What does this suggest about how Faelan was feeling? (p.34)
- Why mightn't the smallest wolf pups consider Faelan and his ramshackle hut ridiculous? (p.37)
- Faelan honoured his mother's memory every Full Moon night by playing his harp. Why would playing on that night of the month be sensible? (p.44)
- During each month, the moon goes through different phases. Which phase was Faelan referring to when he talked about Mother Moon's Death Night? If you need help, this is covered more fully on pages 88-89. (p.46)
- Faelan and Ralph have been playmates since they were pups. What do the two wolves have in common? (p.50)
- What did Faelan appreciate about Ralph? (pp.51-52)
- Bardolph allowed Faelan to live in his own hut despite what he and the wolf pack felt about it. What does this tell you about what kind of leader Bardolph is? (pp.55-56)
- Tala is afraid of the fire in the hut because wolves see smoke and fire as a threat and avoid it. How come Faelan isn't frightened of fire? (pp.56-57)
- Why did Bardolph talk about Faelan's father when he was feverish but not the next morning? (pp.58-59)
- What were three things that made Faelan and Tala suspect that Varg might be Faelan's father? (pp.60-61)
- Why did Tala want to take Faelan to her meeting with Varg? (p.63)
- How did the knowledge that he might be Varg's son change how Faelan interacted with Weylin? (p.67)
- What did Weylin imply when he squawked 'No son of a murderer!?' (p.72)
- What made Granny Beowulf un wolfish? Why did the wolf pack tolerate Granny Beowulf's interest in herbs and healing? (pp.73-74)
- Bardolph's den was located near the top of a knoll and Ralph's family's den was at the base of the hillock. What does this tell you about the wolf pack's social order, or hierarchy? (p.75)
- Why did the young wolves greet Faelan warmly and interact with him so naturally? (p.76)
- Vigolfry told the pups off for hanging around with Faelan. As a result, Faelan felt a surge of shame. What does this tell you about what kind of wolf Vigolfry is? Why should Vigolfry have felt ashamed instead? (p.81)
- Why might finding food through the cold winter months be difficult for Faelan? (p.83)
- Why do you think Faelan had faith in Granny Beowulf's healing herbs, unlike most of the other wolves? (p.85)
- What did Granny Beowulf mean when she said that Faelan had 'the ability to see with an open heart'? (p.87)
- The singing creature sang with great passion. What do you think her words '*And hurrah, my birds, for freedom!*' might mean? (p.92)
- How was Faelan feeling on his walk home after the singing creature slipped away? Why might patience and gentleness win over the creature's trust? (p.94)
- Why do you think Seffine, Ralph and Luna needed Faelan's help regarding their find in the secret clearing? (pp.98-99)



- The chicken escaped the hunting wolves. What does this tell you about what kind of chicken she is? (p.103)
- Why didn't Seffine, Ralph and Luna believe at first that Faelan was going to have a secret meeting with Varg? (p.106)
- The word 'Avian' in the chapter heading means 'having to do with birds'. What do you think Faelan is going to do next? (p.111)
- How might Faelan have felt when he realised that he didn't have the ability to track the chicken's scent like the other wolves did? (p.112)
- Why might the other wolves have been proud of how Faelan made his way from the river to the great red barn? (p.113)
- The author has used two similes to describe the word 'soft'. What other similes could she have used instead? (p.114)
- Does Avian think that she is smarter than Faelan? Why? (p.117)
- When the farm dogs first started barking, they could smell Faelan. What could Faelan do to disguise his scent? Turn to pages 122–123 to compare your ideas with what the author wrote. (pp.121–123)
- What can you tell about the farmer and his chicken business from the author's descriptions? Find text that supports your answers. (pp.122–125)
- The word *splat* is a word that has a similar meaning to its sound. It is an example of onomatopoeia. What other onomatopoeic words could the author have used to describe the egg splatting in the farmer's eye? (p.128)
- How did Avian's idea to use the eggs as weapons help Faelan escape from the barn? (pp.130–131)
- How will Flora's life change once Bardolph dies? (p.135)
- Chapter 16 is entitled 'A Better Idea'. Faelan thinks that he might have a better idea when Tala suggests that he joins her when she meets up with Varg. What might that idea be? (p.143)
- Were you surprised to learn that the flowery embroidered curtains were Weylin's creations and not Tala's work? Why? (pp.144–145)
- What do you imagine when you read Weylin talking about the Land of Spirits? It isn't located on the map on pages 8–9, so what does that tell you? (p.151)
- The author uses alliteration for emphasis in the last paragraph of the chapter on page 154. Alliteration is when two or more words that start with the same letter sound are used in a sentence for effect. How did the author convey that Tala was angry? (p.154)
- Avian thinks that Flora comes to visit Faelan with 'reckless abandon', which means 'in a wild and reckless way'. She also believes that it's a foolhardy risk to do so. What do you think the word 'foolhardy' means? (p.157)
- If something happened to Avian, how would that affect the other chickens back at the barn? (p.158)
- How does an animal's instinct help it to survive? (p.159)
- The enslaved chickens have lost their courage and spirit. How does this affect their ability to escape from the barn? (p.163)
- Who do you think Avian's mother originally wanted to shelter in the extension of the cage? (p.164)
- What safe haven has all the things that Avian has been looking for so that her chicken friends can live in safety? (pp.167–168)
- What do you think the chapter heading 'A Star Prophecy' means? Look up the word 'prophecy' in the dictionary or online if you need to.
- Granny Beowulf can read messages in the stars and foretell certain things. Why might Granny want to talk to Faelan? (p.171)
- Faelan trusted Granny Beowulf. How did that help him know that all was going to be well on his journey? (p.172)



Activities

ACTIVITY 1: HUNTER OR GATHERER?

The members of the wolf pack are hunters. As a group, they hunt for prey and eat meat, much to the horror of Faelan. On the other hand, Faelan is a vegetarian. He prefers to tend his garden and grow vegetables, cook bean stew, drink peppermint tea and forage for items with which to decorate his ramshackle hut, much to the disgust of the wolf pack! Faelan is an outcast. He lives alone, some distance from the Wolf Village. Imagine that Faelan wanted to leave the territory for good, but he had to replace his position in the pack. Write a job advertisement that will attract a suitable wolf replacement. Catch the applicant's attention with a punchy heading and introduction. Then use clear, concise language that lists what the role involves, the characteristics that the successful applicant might have and even some of the challenges of the job. You can choose to write the job advertisement to attract a hunter like the other members of the wolf pack or to attract a gatherer like Faelan.

ACTIVITY 2: A WAY WITH WORDS

The author has a wonderful way of writing. Throughout the book, she embellishes the story with figurative language, which helps to build mood and imagery. Writers use imagery so that the readers build a vivid mental picture in their minds. Figurative language is when words mean something different to their literal meaning. Similes and idioms are examples of figurative language. The author of this book also coins, or makes up, words and phrases for everyday things or events. For example, she calls spring the Day of the First Buds. She also refers to the new moon (a phase when the moon appears dark in the night sky) as Mother Moon's Death Night. Make up phrases that describe each of the four seasons and several of the different phases of the moon, such as the new moon, full moon and waning crescent.

ACTIVITY 3: GROGS IN YOUR FARDEN!

Flora was Faelan's unlikely little friend – a skunk with a slight speech problem. The poor creature often mixed up the beginnings of her words, known as spoonerisms. Sometimes Faelan had trouble following along with what she was saying. For example, she asked him if he had any grogs in his farden (frogs in his garden). Thankfully, both Flora and Faelan were very accepting of each other's quirky personalities and minor imperfections. Write a conversation between the two of them about the singing chicken coming into Faelan's garden to veal his stegetables (steal his vegetables). Have fun with the words and let your imaginations run wild!

ACTIVITY 4: MAPPING THE TERRITORY

Read the text in the first paragraph on page 140. The author talks about the forest, fields, farms, bridges, the town, River Fluvin, the Lockjaw Mountains and the Watching Boulder. She describes where each of those landmarks or natural features are found. Compare the illustrator's hand-drawn map on pages 8–9 with the author's text. Look at how the illustrator has interpreted the author's directions. Now, work in pairs. Ask your students to choose a layout they know well, perhaps their bedroom, garden or house, and draw their own map of it. Then write a description of this layout and swap it with your partner (just the words, not the diagram). Interpret each other's brief and draw the plan according to their description. See how different your maps turn out!

ACTIVITY 5: FROM BROOD TO MOOD

The author gives us a vivid image of what the Slave Barn is like. The name alone is a clue! It is a huge building with no windows and no lights in which one thousand and eight chickens are locked up in row upon row of tiny wire cages, which rise right up to the roof. The chickens have no grass to run on and no dirt to scratch in. Imagine that Avian escaped from the Slave Barn and could plan her dream henhouse with you as the interior designer and architect. Design a mood board, which is an inspiration board that conveys your design styles, ideas and feelings. Think about the materials, textures, colours, furniture and overall theme of the henhouse. Make notes and labels on your mood board to reveal your inspiration and thought processes. Remember to keep your client (Avian) in mind. Think about what a chicken would want in a dream henhouse, for example, a fancy ramp, windows with good ventilation, a luxury sun conservatory and verandah, a wolf-proof secluded garden and so on. You can do your mood board by hand as a collage or use free mood board templates online.

ACTIVITY 6: MOON MUSIC

Music is a huge part of Faelan's life. He believes that the sound of the harp is the most beautiful sound in the world. Playing his harp transports him to a different world and helps him stay connected with his dead mother, who taught him how to play. Write another song verse that he could have sung to his friend Avian when he was trying to catch her attention at the Slave Barn. Song verses usually rhyme. Some of the most popular rhyming schemes in song writing are A-A-B-B and A-B-A-B.

Written by Janine Scott



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