



(CHRONICLES OF ANCIENT DARKNESS) MICHELLE PAVER

A BOY. A WOLF. A LEGEND FOR ALL TIME.

Thousands of years ago in a world of myth, menace, natural magic and danger all around, one lonely hero Torak must begin a terrifying quest to save the world as he knows it, his only companion a wolf cub of three months old.

TEACHERS' NOTES

The Chronicles of Ancient Darkness series is suitable for children in Upper Key Stage 2 or Key Stage 3 (9–13 years). The first book in the series, *Wolf Brother*, works well as an independent text-based unit or can be used in contrast to other books of the quest genre. These lesson ideas and the Survival Guide classroom resource are designed to use alongside *Wolf Brother* without breaking the flow of the story.

The lesson ideas provide opportunities to develop an understanding of this genre, explore how an author builds tension, creates realistic settings and develops rounded characters. The Survival Guide is designed to print out for each pupil to use and add information to whilst reading the story.

SYNOPSIS

Imagine that the land is one dark forest. Its people are hunter-gatherers. They know every tree and herb and they know how to survive in a time of enchantment and powerful magic. Until an ambitious and malevolent force conjures a demon: a demon so evil that it can be contained only in the body of a ferocious bear that will slay everything it sees, a demon determined to destroy the world.

Only one boy can stop it – 12-year-old Torak, who has seen his father murdered by the bear. With his dying breath, Torak's father tells his son of the burden that is his. Torak is an unwilling hero. He is scared and trusts no one. His only companion is a wolf cub only three moons old, whom he seems to understand better than any human.

Theirs is a terrifying quest in a world of wolves, tree spirits and Hidden People, a world in which trusting a friend means risking your life.



MEET THE AUTHOR



Born in Malawi to a Belgian mother and a father who ran the tiny *Nyasaland Times*, Michelle Paver moved to the UK when she was three. She was brought up in Wimbledon and went on to study Biochemistry at Oxford. On leaving university, Michelle was already in the grip of the writing bug; 'I knew I wanted to write, but I didn't think I'd be able to make a living at it, so I looked around for a day job: something that would pay the bills while giving me time to write. Like an idiot, I chose the Law'.

But Michelle never lost the nagging desire to be a writer and in 1997 she gave up the City to follow her long-held dream of becoming a writer. Successfully published as an adult author, with three books to her name, in 2003 Michelle started work on an idea for a series of six books that had been brewing ever since childhood. Set in prehistoric hunter-gatherer times, the stories revolve around a boy and his wolf companion fighting for survival and unleashing a powerful magic. In her own words: 'The Chronicles of Ancient Darkness is my way of achieving what I used to dream about when I was ten years old: to run with the wild wolves in the prehistoric forest.'

Always fascinated with how people lived in the distant past and in trying to understand how hunter-gatherers think, Michelle has been guided by anthropology: not only that of the Inuit and the Native American peoples, but also the Ainu of Japan and the Sami of Lapland; the San, the Eboe and the Kwaio of Africa, and the Aborigines of Australia. And ever the intrepid traveller, Michelle does extensive research for the books. For *Wolf Brother*, she rode a total of 300 miles in the forests of north-eastern Finland and northern Lapland, sleeping on reindeer skins, eating elk heart and forest berries and peering into the mouth of a very large brown bear just to find out what colour it was (a dark greyish purple)!

LESSON IDEAS

1. Setting the Scene:

- Read chapter 1. Discuss where and when the class thinks the book is set? What have they read so far that backs up their ideas?
- Explain that although Michelle Paver made up the ancient world of *Wolf Brother* it has some basis in real life. She did lots of research and borrowed ideas from more recent traditional cultures to help portray the setting.
- Children work in groups to research a different traditional culture and then present their findings to the rest of the class. Children can research the same peoples as Michelle Paver, such as the San of Africa, the Ainu of Japan, the Sami of Lapland, the Inuit people of North America, and tribes from South America.



- Children put together a presentation addressing the following questions: where do the different peoples live and how are they adapted to their environment? What shelters do they build? What clothes do they wear? What weapons do they use? What food do they eat? What are their religious beliefs and traditions?

2. Torak's Dilemma:

- Read chapter 2 in class. Discuss, what would you do if you were in Torak's position? What do you think he will do?
- Choose one pupil to be Torak while the rest of the class form two lines and create a tunnel.
- Ask the pupil to walk slowly down the tunnel while the children on either side give their advice. This drama technique is often known as conscious alley.

3. Mapping the Quest:

- Read chapter 3. Ask the class to predict the type of story they think this is going to be? Does it remind them of any other books or films they have seen? Perhaps other quests such as *Lord of the Rings*, *Star Wars*, or the *Chronicles of Narnia*.
- Introduce the Survival Guide resource. Print a copy of the booklet for each pupil to use while reading the story.
- Using the map provided, children can begin to mark Torak's route through the forest. This can be added to as you read the book.
- There are five main settings in the story: the Raven camp, the Wide Water, the Ice River, the Cave and the Deep Forest. Ask children to predict some of the key features, nouns and adjectives they would expect to find when the writer describes the area.
- When reading these sections, pupils compare their predictions with the descriptions in the text.
- As you read about each place, ask children to add notes around the map in the Survival Guide that would help identify the area.

4. Forest Medicine:

- Read chapter 4. Then look at Forest Medicine (page 1) in the Survival Guide.
- Explain that many of the medicines we use come from natural ingredients. Even today, scientists are discovering the medicinal benefits of plants from traditional peoples.
- In groups, ask children to look back through the chapters to find out how Torak uses the medicines and to deduce what the benefits might be (for instance chapter 1, page 2, talks about yarrow leaves and chapter 4, page 26, mentions birch bark and willow bark).
- Share children's thoughts about the different medicines.
- Ask children to research further the medicines and find out more about their benefits and appearance.
- Discuss findings and note down the key information in the Survival Guide.



Background Information:

Yarrow leaves: Yarrow is a flowering plant known as 'little feather', because of the shape of the leaves. The plant has a long history as a powerful 'healing herb': fresh leaves of the yarrow plant were applied to wounds to stop bleeding, fight fevers, treat gastrointestinal conditions and improve circulation.

Birch bark: Birch bark or *Birch Bast* is the bark of the Paper Birch or White Birch tree. Since prehistoric times, its strong, water-resistant and cardboard-like bark has made it a valuable building, crafting and writing material as it can be easily cut, bent and sewn.

Willow bark: The willow family includes a number of different species of deciduous trees and shrubs. The leaves are typically elongated but may also be round to oval. Willow bark is used to ease pain and reduce fever and inflammation. However, studies have identified several other components of willow bark that have antioxidant, fever-reducing, antiseptic and immune-boosting properties. It contains salicin, which is a chemical similar to aspirin.

5a. Forest Animals – Research:

- Read chapter 5. Look at Forest Animals (page 2) in the Survival Guide.
- Explain that most of the animals Torak comes across still live in certain forests around the world. However, some animals mentioned in the book are now extinct such as the Auroch.
- Allow children some time to research the animals from the list and make notes. Ask children to find out about the animals' appearance, habitat and use to humans. Encourage children to include things learned from reading *Wolf Brother*.
- Compare the class research and add key findings to the Survival Guide.

5b. Forest Animals:

- After researching, children should know what the forest animals look like. However you might like to find some images for children to look at during this activity.
- Explain to the class that they are going to create a cave painting of one of the animals Torak has encountered.
- Look at images of cave paintings and the style of the front cover.
- Explain that cave paintings are sometimes carved into rock or made from naturally found materials such as earth and plants.
- Either on brown paper or sandpaper sketch an outline of a chosen animal.
- Use oil pastels in earth colours to fill the inside of the image. You may like to be adventurous and make your own materials using soil and lard!

Background Information: The Auroch was the ancestor of the domestic cow, a type of huge wild cow that inhabited Europe, Asia and North Africa. It survived in Europe until 1627. Children can still enjoy finding out about these animals and it allows the possibility to discuss reasons why animals become extinct.



6. Wolf Talk:

- Read chapter 6. Look at the Glossary (page 3) in the Survival Guide. Ask children to suggest the English meanings for the 'Wolf Talk' words listed.
- Discuss why they think the author has used these words: what is the effect for the reader?
- Ask children to add some more 'Wolf Talk' words on the sheet with the English meaning.
- They could then enjoy making up their own 'Wolf Talk' words that rely on a more literal description of an object. For example, Sky Fire = Sun.

7. Writing a Scene:

- Read chapter 7. Ask children to describe how Wolf might feel when he first sees the captors and then when he is put in a bag.
- Ask children for adjectives that describe how he might feel.
- Ask children to suggest ideas for how he would know what is happening even though he is in a bag. What might he hear or smell?
- Explain that children are going to re-write the scene but from Wolf's perspective.
- Children can use some of the words from the Glossary in their Survival Guide.

8. Drawing a Scene:

- Before reading chapter 8 ensure each pupil has paper and a pencil.
- Explain that in this chapter they are going to find out what the Raven Camp looks like. They must listen very carefully and draw a picture of the camp as the teacher reads the description. Make sure children are clear it is just a sketch and they are not expected to include everything.
- When pupils are clear on the task start reading slowly as they draw the setting.
- After reading the chapter you may want to give children time to finish off their drawings or stop and have a look at some of the pictures.

9. The Prophecy:

- Read chapter 9. Turn to the page titled The Prophecy (page 4) in the Survival Guide.
- Ask children to write in the prophecy from the text (page 66) in the space provided.
- Ask children what they think the prophecy could mean.
- Children discuss their ideas and note their predictions in the space below.

Following Chapters:

- Whilst reading the last chapters of the novel, ask children to think about questions Torak might have. Children can predict the answers and then refer back to their suggestions as the writer reveals more. Discuss how this works to build tension and keep the reader's interest.
- Also consider which questions Michelle Paver leaves unanswered to be explored in the later books of The Chronicles of Ancient Darkness.
- Children can add more animals or medicines to their lists in the Survival Guide.



- Write the second part of the prophecy revealed on page 102 in the Survival Guide. Then discuss if they have changed their ideas about the prophecy and what they think this new section might mean.

USEFUL LINKS

- Find out more about Michelle at www.michellepaver.com
- Join the clan and talk to thousands of other readers at www.torak.info
- For information about visiting the UK Wolf Conservation Trust and to become a member, go to www.ukwolf.org

READING LIST

Introducing The Chronicles of Ancient Darkness:

<i>Wolf Brother</i>	9781842551318
<i>Spirit Walker</i>	9781842551134
<i>Soul Eater</i>	9781842551141
<i>Outcast</i>	9781842551158
<i>Oath Breaker</i>	9781842551165
<i>Ghost Hunter</i>	9781842551172

Also available in audio CD, read by Sir Ian McKellen

<i>Wolf Brother</i>	9780752868035
<i>Spirit Walker</i>	9780752872827
<i>Soul Eater</i>	9780752875040
<i>Outcast</i>	9780752885438
<i>Oath Breaker</i>	9780752897769
<i>Ghost Hunter</i>	9781409104858

The Chronicles of Ancient Darkness

Boxed Set	9781444001402
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And also available in eBook:

<i>Wolf Brother</i>	9781842557433
<i>Spirit Walker</i>	9781842557440
<i>Soul Eater</i>	9781842557457
<i>Outcast</i>	9781842557464
<i>Oath Breaker</i>	9781842557471
<i>Ghost Hunter</i>	9781842557488

