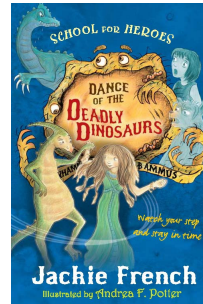
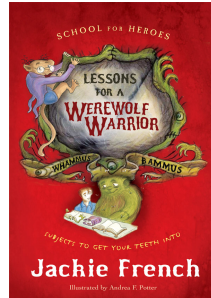




The *School for Heroes* series by Jackie French

Reading Group Notes by Pam Saunders



Book 1 - *Lessons for a Werewolf Warrior* (ISBN 9780207200762)

Book 2 – *Dance of the Deadly Dinosaurs* (ISBN 9780732285425)

Summary

Lessons for a Werewolf Warrior

Boojum Bark (Boo), the main character in the *School for Heroes* series, is decidedly not a puppy, although he *is* cute. He's a werewolf and can change into human form, although he's happier with four legs and fangs.

When the evil Greedle kidnaps Boo's Mum — creator of the Best Icecream in the Universes — and takes her through a wormhole to the Ghastly Otherwhen, the Werewolf General decides Boo may be a potential Hero.

Leaving his hometown of Sleepy Whiskers via one of the wormholes connecting the universes, Boo becomes a student at the School for Heroes, which is precariously perched on the side of a volcano, and run by a mottley bunch of superannuated heroes, from the headmaster Dr Mussels, a small but deadly monkey, to Ms Punch, ghost and school librarian.

Boo meets his classmates — the loyal Zombie, Mug; the beautiful Princess Princess Caresse Sunbeam Von Pewke, (who is indeed a Princess); Yesterday, quietly hiding a deadly secret; and Squeak, a mouse. The students learn how to *Wham* and *Bam!*, and use their unusual and unique skills to overcome the Greedle and become friends.

Dance of the Deadly Dinosaurs

The adventures continue in Book Two of the *School for Heroes* series, and the friendship between Boo and his fellow students strengthens as they develop a cunning plan to get to the Ghastly Otherwhen and save Boo's mum. The inhabitants of the Ghastly Otherwhen are under hypnosis, little knowing the Greedle and his bogeys are controlling their very existence.

Boo and his friends will need all the help they can get, including a troupe of dinosaurs disguised as dancing poodles, and some unexpected heroics from Princess Princess, who is changed forever in a completely unexpected way.

Section A: General Questions for Discussion

1. Before reading the books, look at the covers. (Images above).

What are your first impressions of these books? How does the style of the illustrator contribute to these impressions? If you were using one word to describe each of the characters, what would that be? Where do you think the book might be set? In a real place? An imaginary place? What clues does the cover provide?

2. What do you already know about Werewolves and Zombies? Do the illustrations through the book reinforce your existing thoughts?
3. Boojum Bark is introduced in Chapters 1 and 2. What is he like? Is he 'sweet' as Ms Shaggy calls him? Is he helpful and clever? Does he deserve to go to the School for Heroes?
4. How successful do you think the naming of the characters is in reflecting their characteristics. If you had to give a one-word description for each character, what would it be?
5. There are numerous opportunities offered by this series to study aspects of the true nature of friendship.
 - Reflect on Yesterday's relationship with the dinosaurs. Why is she willing to stay a slave to be with them?
 - At the conclusion of this book, Lottie tells Boo, her mistake is '*I should have come with friends*'. Why do you think she says this?
 - Discuss how Princess Princess changes through Book Two. How does she eventually show elements of being a true Hero and friend?
 - What does Princess Princess feel about becoming a Zombie. What type of Zombie might she be?
6. Boo is polite and has good manners, for a werewolf '*... it was just plain good manners to sniff another wolf's bum*' pg 7.

- What are manners and etiquette and why do we have them? Do you have some manners or rules in your classroom? Do manners vary? Does any character in the book have bad manners?
 - Although, Boo is a werewolf, like a dog he greets people and learns about them by smelling them. How do we as humans greet people and learn about them?
7. Explore the expression '*Don't judge a book by its cover*' in relation to the various characters in the book. Many of the characters we would not find attractive but their personality and attitudes are the opposite of what we expect.
- Discuss first impressions by looking at Boo's initial reaction to other characters in the book (Princess Princess, Yesterday, Mug etc). For example, Boo seems to be overwhelmed by Princess Princess's good looks (pg 102) and confidence. Is his first impression of her correct? Is the author trying to tell us something about how we see people? What about the Werewolf General, who looks and acts as we expect?
 - The General suggests Boo must first appear at the school in human form, pg 135. Do you think Yesterday, Princess Princess or Mug have treated him differently if he had been human first?
8. After you finish the book/s, have another look at the cover. Now you know the story, can you identify the characters?
9. Can you now answer the questions posed by the publisher on the back cover?

Section B: Classroom Activities

The following activities are suggested for class groups, mainly in Grade 6 – Year 8.

1. Drama

- Enact a short *Wham! Bam! Pow! Zoom!* ing demonstration. Incorporate this into a promotion for the School for Heroes, which may be found on YouTube (assuming the other universes have YouTube). Alternatively, using a comic book style, design a poster to promote the School for Heroes, remembering to include the school motto.
- Re-enact a scene from the Giant Rabbit adventure in Chapter 20 and 21.

2. Design

- Design a 'Shop Shut' sign for the Best Ice-cream in the Universes Shop to explain why it had to close. Include details about who to contact and where.
- Design the cover for the *Sleepy Whiskers Cook Book*.

- Create an advertisement to encourage the Giant Rabbits to keep eating the grass. What are the benefits? Where is the best grass found? (Chapter 20 – 21)
- Design and illustrate Yesterday's Dress for the Dance (Chapter 1, pg 9)

3. Spelling of Plurals and other word play

- Words ending in 'o' preceded by a constant usually add 'es' to form the plural, e.g. Heroes, volcanoes (exceptions: pianos, solos, Eskimos).
- Nouns ending in 'f' change the 'f' to a 'v' before adding 'es' to form plural e.g. werewolf – werewolves, leaf – leaves (exceptions: dwarf, roofs, chiefs).
- Discuss the other words from the book that are spelt (pronounced?) in a unique way e.g. Ttttrollllllls, Ffleas.
- Dr VB Mussells, the Principal, makes jokes based on double meanings (e.g. muscles/mussels). List the words he uses in his jokes, do you know any similar jokes? Research joke books in library and find some jokes Dr VB Mussells would like. What do you think VB stands for?
- Study the characters and names of locations used in the book. What do their names tell you about them? E.g. Mr Bigpaws, Dahlia the Dazzler, Rest in Pieces.

4. Poetry

- The Greedle speaks in rhyme; make a list of rhyming words. Write something for the Greedle to use when he is under pressure and can't think? What other sorts of rhymes do the Greedle's poems remind you of? (e.g. hip hop, limericks.)

5. Review Writing

- Imagine you are a food critic and have been asked to visit the Best Ice-cream Shop in the Universes. Write a review. including your favourite flavour ice-cream. Comment on the service. Alternatively, write a customer 'rave' for the Ice-cream's Shop's website.

6. Art Response

- Make a mobile of the flying pigs, photograph your mobile and send to the author (via her website).

7. Food Response

- The Greedle likes any food, so long as it's the 'best in the Universes'. Make a list of your own favourites, and compare them with other students. Are there any in common?

- There are many unusual foods mentioned in the series, most not very appealing to human taste. Try making the recipe for Tentacle Muffins, on pg 142, by substituting the Bogey Tentacles with half a cup of shredded coconut.

8. Personal Response

- Think about the following questions in your own time. You don't have to share this with anyone, but may like to write notes or make drawings in response.
- How do you think you would have reacted to Princess Princess and Yesterday on first meeting them?
- Who would you like to take on a journey, if you were going to the Ghastly Otherwhen.
- Do you think you judge people by what they wear?

9. Author Research

- Jackie French is one of Australia's most prolific authors. Use the library catalogue to find how many other books written by Jackie your school or public library holds. Are they all novels? Does Jackie write non-fiction/information books?
- Look for an image of Jackie on the internet? Do you think she could be Boo's Mum? Does Jackie have her own website? And has she ever made icecream?

About the Author



Jackie French lives in Braidwood in the Araluen Valley, near Canberra, NSW, and has published well over 100 books, for readers of all ages, and in all genres, being perhaps best-known for her historical fiction. Her book, *Hitler's Daughter*, was awarded the CBCA Younger Readers' Award in 2000 and the WOW! Award in the UK in 2001.

Her internationally bestselling picture book *Diary of a Wombat* was named an Honour book in the 2003 CBCA Awards and ABA Book of the Year, and was followed by several more in the Shaggy Gully series, the most recent being *Baby Wombat's Week* featuring Mothball's stropopy son. Jackie's non-fiction title, *To the Moon and Back*, co-written with Bryan Sullivan, won the CBCA's Eve Pownall Award for Information Books in 2005.