

The Wounded Wolf

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A wounded wolf climbs Toklat Ridge, a massive spine of rock and ice. As he limps, dawn strikes the ridge and lights it up with sparks and stars. Roko, the wounded wolf, blinks in the ice fire, then stops to rest and watch his pack run the thawing Arctic valley.

They plunge and turn. They fight the mighty caribou that struck young Roko with his hoof and wounded him. He jumped between the beast and Kiglo, leader of the Toklat pack. Young Roko spun and fell. Hooves, paws, and teeth roared over him. And then his pack and the beast were gone.

Gravely injured, Roko pulls himself toward the shelter rock. Weakness overcomes him. He stops. He and his pack are thin and hungry. This is the season of starvation. . . .

Young Roko glances down the valley. He droops his head and stiffens his tail to signal to his pack that he is badly hurt. Winds wail. A frigid blast picks up long shawls of snow and drapes them between young Roko and his pack. And so his message is not read.



A nearby raven sees Roko's signal and calls out that something is dying. Soon Roko is followed by a group of hungry ravens.



Roko snarls and hurries toward the shelter rock. A cloud of snow envelops him. He limps in blinding whiteness now.

Vocabulary Development

massive (MAS iv) *adj.* huge; large and impressive

gravely (GRAYV lee) *adv.* badly

wail (wayl) *v.* make a loud crying sound

shawls (shawlz) *n.* capelike cloths

TAKE NOTES

Activate Prior Knowledge

What have you heard or read about wolves? Give two details below.

Short Story

The **setting** of a story is the time and place in which the action happens. Circle the words in the first paragraph that give details about the setting.

Short Story

An **external conflict** is a struggle between a character and something outside that character, such as another character or nature. What is Roko's conflict at the start of the story?

Reading Check

Underline the name of Kiglo's pack.

TAKE NOTES

Short Story

The **conflict** is growing in the story. Read the first bracketed paragraph. What is the **internal conflict** that Roko faces?

Read Fluently

A *compound verb* is two actions performed by the same subject in a sentence. *The boy ran and jumped on his bike.* *Ran* and *jumped* are the verbs. Circle the compound verbs in the second bracketed paragraph.

Short Story

A **character's motives** are the reasons for his or her actions. Why are the animals following Roko?

Short Story

The **theme** of a story can be found by noticing how a character deals with a situation. How does Roko react to the ravens, fox, and owl?

A ghostly presence flits around. "Hahahahahahaha," the white fox states—death is coming to the Ridge. Roko smells the fox tagging at his heels.

The cloud whirls off. Two golden eyes look up at Roko. The snowy owl has heard the ravens and joined the deathwatch.

◆ ◆ ◆

The ravens, fox, and owl are joined by a grizzly bear. The animals follow Roko as he struggles up Toklat Ridge. As Roko becomes weaker, the other animals grow bold and move in closer.

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Roko stops; his breath comes hard. A raven alights upon his back and picks the open wound. Roko snaps. The raven flies and circles back. The white fox nips at Roko's toes. The snowy owl inches closer. The grizzly bear, still dulled by sleep, stumbles onto Toklat Ridge.

Only yards from the shelter rock, Roko falls. Instantly the ravens mob him. They scream and peck and stab at his eyes. The white fox leaps upon his wound. The snowy owl sits and waits.

Young Roko struggles to his feet. He bites the ravens. Snaps the fox. And lunges at the stoic owl. He turns and warns the grizzly bear. Then he bursts into a run and falls against the shelter rock. The wounded wolf wedges down between the rock and barren ground. Now protected on three sides, he turns and faces all his foes.

The ravens step a few feet closer. The fox slides toward him on his belly. The snowy owl blinks and waits, and on the ridge rim roars the hungry grizzly bear.

Vocabulary Development

alights (uh LYTS) *v.* lands

stoic (STO ik) *adj.* showing no reaction to good or bad events; calm and unaffected by hardship

barren (BAR en) *adj.* empty

Roko growls.

The sun comes up. Far across the Toklat Valley, Roko hears his pack's "hunt's end" song. The music wails and sobs, wilder than the bleating wind. The hunt song ends. Next comes the roll call. Each member of the Toklat pack barks to say that he is home and well.

"Kiglo here," Roko hears his leader bark. There is a pause. It is young Roko's turn. He cannot lift his head to answer. The pack is silent. The leader starts the count once more. "Kiglo here."—A pause. Roko cannot answer.



Soon Kiglo hears the ravens' death song. He knows that Roko is dying.



The hours pass. The wind slams snow on Toklat Ridge. Massive clouds blot out the sun. In their gloom Roko sees the deathwatch move in closer. Suddenly he hears the musk-oxen thundering into their circle. The ice cracks as the grizzly leaves. The ravens burst into the air. The white fox runs. The snowy owl flaps to the top of the shelter rock. And Kiglo rounds the knoll.

In his mouth he carries meat. He drops it close to Roko's head and wags his tail excitedly. Roko licks Kiglo's chin to honor him. Then Kiglo puts his mouth around Roko's nose. This gesture says "I am your leader." . . .

The wounded wolf wags his tail. Kiglo trots away.

Already Roko's wound feels better. . . .



Kiglo continues to bring food to Roko. Each day, Roko grows stronger.



One dawn he moves his wounded leg. He stretches it and pulls himself into the sunlight.

Short Story

The **climax** is the high point of a story, when the end of the story becomes clear. Read the bracketed passage. What is becoming clear about Roko?

Short Story

Characterization is the way that the author develops characters. What does Kiglo do to Roko's nose?

Underline the words that tell the meaning of the gesture.

Reading Check

Why do the wolves in the pack answer roll call? Circle the answer.

Vocabulary Development

knoll (nohl) *n.* hill

TAKE NOTES

Short Story

The **plot** of a short story has a **resolution**. This is the part of the story that tells how the problem is solved. How is Roko's problem solved?

Stop to Reflect

Why do you think Kiglo repeats his roll call?

Reading Check

What call comes before the roll call? Underline the answer.

He walks—he romps. He runs in circles. He leaps and plays with chunks of ice. Suddenly he stops. The “hunt’s end” song rings out. Next comes the roll call.

“Kiglo here.”

“Roko here,” he barks out strongly.

The pack is silent.

“Kiglo here,” the leader repeats.

“Roko here.”

Across the distance comes the sound of whoops and yipes and barks and howls. They fill the dawn with celebration. And Roko prances down the Ridge.

Short Stories

1. **Analyze:** What does Roko do to try to save himself?

2. **Infer:** Wolves live in packs. Kiglo tries to help Roko, his packmate. What does Kiglo’s behavior show about how wolves take care of pack members?

3. The **conflict** is the problem a character faces. What is the main conflict in “The Wounded Wolf”? Explain.

4. The **setting** is where and when a story takes place. Fill in the chart below to describe the setting of the story. Write a detail in the first column that helps you picture the setting. Then, tell what that detail means to the struggle for survival. Finally, explain in the third column why the setting is important to the story.

What It Says	What It Means	Why It Is Important