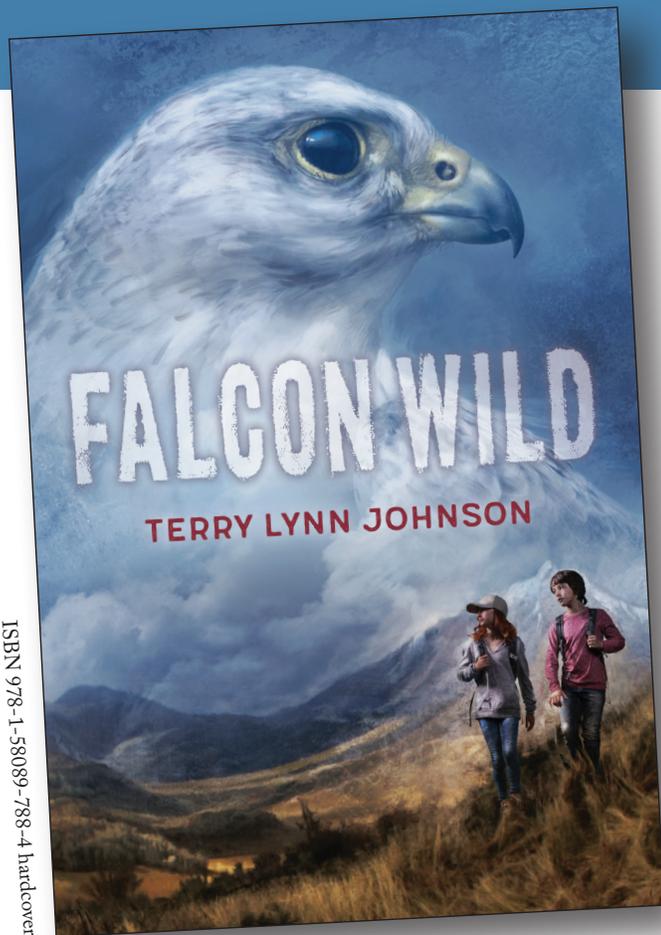


# CURRICULUM GUIDE



## FALCON WILD

By **Terry Lynn Johnson**

*A Junior Library Guild Selection*

**T**HIRTEEN-YEAR-OLD KARMA is lost in the backcountry of Montana with her falcon, Stark, and a runaway boy named Cooper. She's desperate to find help for her little brother and injured dad, who is trapped in the van after a terrible accident on a back road.

Karma wouldn't be in this predicament if her parents hadn't insisted on returning Stark to the bird's original owner. Life at her father's bird sanctuary—and Karma's dreams of becoming an apprentice falconer—will never be the same now that she has to give Stark back. Lost in the wild, her

bond with the tamed falcon only grows stronger. All the while, Cooper gets his own lessons on how to trust in newfound friendship.

Both Karma's and Cooper's mettle is tested by mountain terrain, wild animals, severe weather, injury, and their own waning hope as this edge-of-your-seat survival and adventure story vividly portrays the special bonds that can form between humans and animals.



“Riveting action and harrowing experiences keep readers on the edge as the kids and falcon race to get back to Karma's father and brother before it's too late. . . . An exhilarating survivalist adventure.”

—*Booklist*

“This book is an adventurous coming-of-age tale with a rich and beautiful natural setting.”

—*School Library Journal*

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The Common Core State Standards addressed by the discussion questions and activities in this guide are noted throughout. For more information on the Common Core, visit [corestandards.org](http://corestandards.org).

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

All discussion questions are aligned with [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.1](#)

- The story opens with Karma sharing her falcon, Stark, with an eighth-grade biology class that is visiting the Birds of Prey Education Center. What is Karma's reaction to her peers in the audience? What happens to Karma as a result of her distraction?
- Karma's parents and her aunt confer about what to do with Stark. What decision do they make about the falcon? What reasons do they give for their decision?
- Karma will be going to a regular school in the fall instead of participating in home schooling. As part of this transition, Karma longs for real friendships and sleepovers with peers even though she's overheard her father describe her as "better with birds than with people." How do Karma's goals in life reflect her love of birds?
- As Karma, her brother, and dad begin their drive to Canada, they meet a teenage boy at a gas station. What does the teenage boy want from the family and why does Karma feel compelled to grant his request?
- Karma's dad trusts the GPS as the family heads down a dirt road in their van. What happens as a result of taking this route? How does Karma respond to the situation?
- Karma has some outdoor survival skills that come in handy as she sets off to find the highway. She is not prepared though for the deep crevice that appears in her path. Describe what happens to Karma as she slides into the crevice along with rolling rocks and debris.
- Two welcome surprises join Karma as she sits helpless in the dark abyss. Who arrives and brings comfort to Karma? Who arrives with a plan to help free Karma from the crevice? How are these two welcome surprises connected to one another?
- When Karma and Cooper meet again face to face at the bottom of the crevice, she has an unusual way of greeting him. What does Karma do and why do you think she reacts to Cooper in this way?
- Cooper is just as amazed as Karma that there is a skeleton in the crevice. What does he do with the skeleton before he and Karma climb out of the abyss? What does his action reveal about his character?
- Cooper and Karma face many challenges as they try to find the highway together. A lack of food and water affect their ability to keep moving. How does Stark help Cooper and Karma get food to eat? How does Karma store water for them to drink as they travel?
- Cooper reveals that he has a knife. How does he use the knife in anger? How does he use the knife to help with his and Karma's survival in the wilderness?
- Karma has an additional challenge in the wilderness due to the injury inflicted by Stark at the beginning of the story. Why is Karma's injury a serious matter in the out of doors?

- As Karma and Cooper work their way through the wilderness, Cooper begins to reveal a bit more about his past and the reasons for his behavior. Describe what situations in his life led to him running away from home.
- As exciting as it is for Karma and Cooper to finally have food, the food has attracted a dangerous, unwanted visitor. What appears from between the trees and how do Karma and Cooper deal with this life threatening turn of events?
- Karma and Cooper experience the extreme swing of conditions as they struggle to survive in the wilderness. Thirst and a continuous need for water give way to too much water and cold as Karma and Cooper end up in a river. What items help Karma and Cooper survive the effects of being in the river?
- Karma and Cooper share more information about their lives as they huddle in a small alcove in the rocks to stay out of the wind, rain, and hail. Cooper tells Karma, “. . . I’ve never met anyone as wild about birds as you. You’re falcon wild.” What information about her life does Karma share with Cooper that confirms his observation about her love of birds?
- The new friendship between Karma and Cooper is tested once again when Karma has to jump across another crevice. What information does Cooper share that tests his friendship with Karma? How does Cooper react to Karma’s unsuccessful jump across the crevice?
- To their dismay, Karma and Cooper discover that they have been walking in a circle and they find themselves back at the van without having summoned help. What steps has Gavin taken to keep himself and his father alive while Karma was out looking for help?
- Karma grapples with who is at fault for their accident. As Cooper walks away from the van to find the dirt bike, Karma says to him, “Here’s your do-over.” What does she mean by that?
- At one point in the story, Karma tells Cooper, “I guess we all get new futures. It’s up to us to decide what to do with them.” After the rescue from the accident scene, what does the future hold for Karma and Cooper?



**TERRY LYNN JOHNSON** has worked as a Conservation Officer in northern Ontario for almost twenty years. She treks, canoes, and camps in the Canadian wilderness enforcing fish and game laws—often alone for extended periods of time. An expert survivalist, she enjoys bringing the thrill of survival in the wild to young readers through her many books, including *Ice Dogs*, an ABA Best Children’s Book of 2014. Learn more about her adventures and books at [terrylynnjohnson.com](http://terrylynnjohnson.com).

The discussion questions and activities in this guide were created by Leigh Courtney, Ph.D. She teaches in the Global Education program at a public school in San Diego, California. She holds both masters’ and doctoral degrees in education, with an emphasis on curriculum and instruction.

# ACTIVITIES

## THE ABCs OF FALCONRY

Falconry has a language specific to the caring and training of these birds of prey. Look through the novel to locate key terms in falconry, such as *lure*, *feak*, *accipiter*, *talons*. List the words in alphabetical order and write definitions for each to create a glossary of falconry terms.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.4](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.4](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.4](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.4](#)

## BIRDS OF PREY

Karma's family runs the Birds of Prey Education Center where birds such as falcons, hawks, eagles, and owls are cared for and trained. Choose one type of bird of prey to research. Find information about the bird's size and color, the special features that enable it to hunt, its breeding habits, and training regimen. Organize the facts you discover about your selected bird into an informational report.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.2](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.2](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.2](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.2](#)

## EXTRA! EXTRA! READ ALL ABOUT IT!

Karma is shocked to discover a skeleton at the bottom of the crevice she falls into when trying to find help for her injured family. After the family's rescue from their accident, Karma learns the identity of the skeleton. Use information from the story to create a newspaper article that describes the mystery behind the skeleton and its discovery. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.3](#)

## CHARTING A FRIENDSHIP

Karma and Cooper go through many ups and downs during their short friendship in the wild. Design a double timeline for these two characters. One timeline should list the dangerous events they encountered in the wild in the order in which they happened. The other parallel timeline should list the state of the friendship between Karma and Cooper during each challenge they face.

[CCSS: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.1](#);  
[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.3](#)

## ON BEING WEIRD

Karma is much more comfortable with birds than with people. Homeschooling hasn't given her much experience interacting with her peers. She longs to connect and make friends, but is plagued with insecurity about how to go about it. Karma's early attempts to make friends with kids who don't share her love of birds have left her feeling that she is weird and awkward. The novel ends with this statement, "Being weird is much better when there's someone to be weird with." Write a persuasive piece with this quote as your opinion. Support the opinion with reasons and examples from the story.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.1](#)

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

# PACKING FOR SURVIVAL

Karma brought her backpack on the road trip to Canada with her father and brother, but she wasn't anticipating that she would depend on its contents to help her survive in the wild. Think about what Karma had in her backpack that proved to be key to her survival and imagine what else she could have packed that would have been helpful. List the items Karma could have used in her ideal survival backpack. Include a reason why each item should be included.

CCSS: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.1

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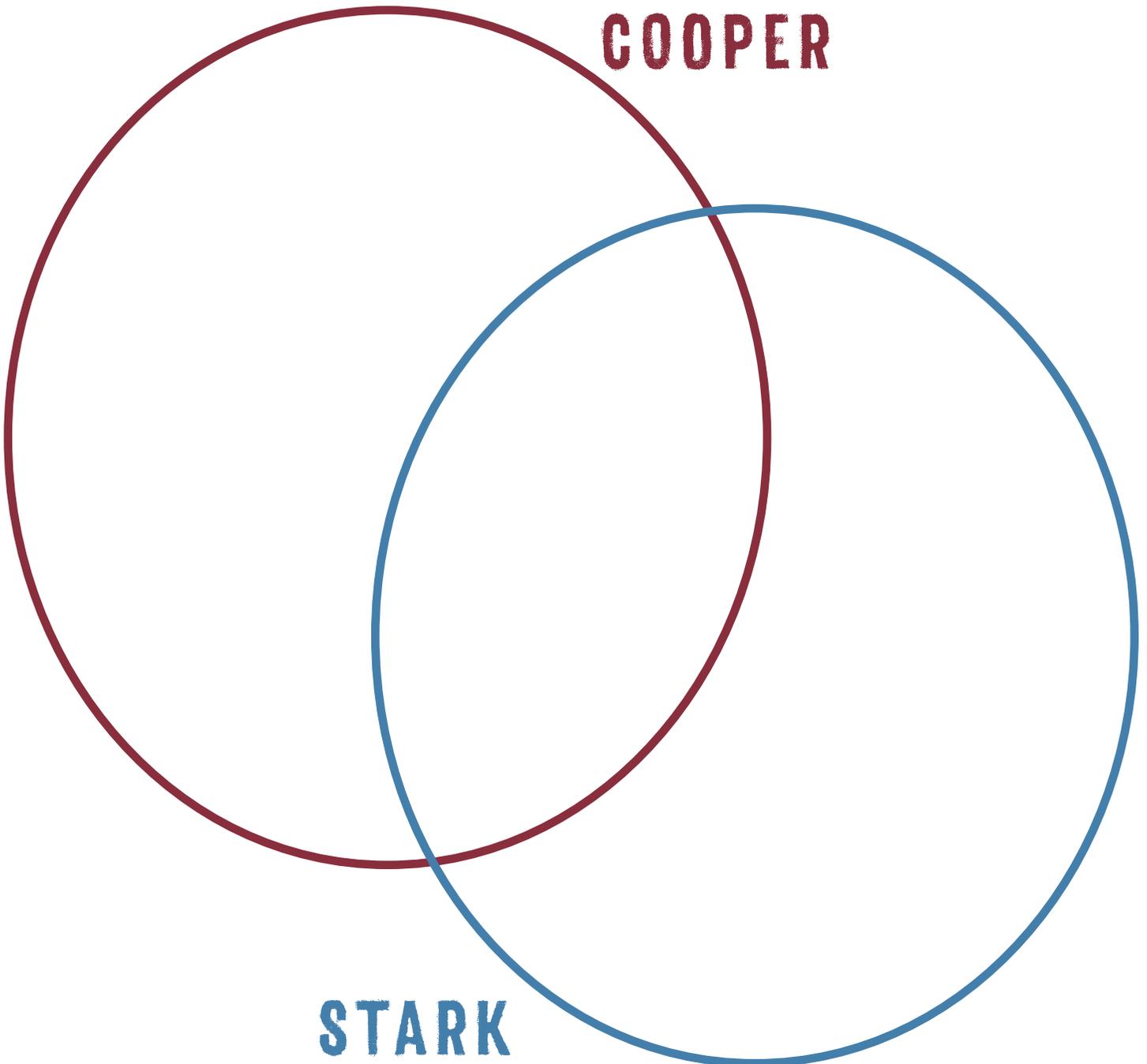
# COMPARING CHARACTERS

Karma compares Cooper to a bird almost from the beginning of their interactions: “I feel strange, as if he were a wounded bird that needed help, but we set him free too soon.” Use the Venn diagram to compare Cooper and Stark the falcon. Think about how these two characters are similar and different in terms of their behavior. List phrases to describe how Cooper and Stark are alike and different from one another. [CCSS: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.1](#);

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.3](#);

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.3](#)

**COOPER**



**STARK**