GHOST DOG

^{By}Claire Barker ^{Illustrated} Ross Collins

TEACHING RESOURCES FOR KNITBONE PEPPER GHOST DOG BEST FRIENDS FOREVER

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Best Friends Forever

Winnie and her beloved dog, Knitbone Pepper, live at tumbledown Starcross Hall. They've sworn to be best friends forever, but forever is an awfully long time. When the unthinkable finally happens and Knitbone reaches the end of his days, Winnie feels like a lost soul...and she's not the only one.

Having expected to go to Heaven, Knitbone is confused to wake up the next morning inside Winnie's wardrobe. The good news is that he feels young and fit again. The bad news is that, no matter how hard he tries to get her attention, Winnie can't see him anymore. This can only mean only one thing:

Dead + still here = Ghost

Fed up and lonely, Knitbone receives a surprise letter. It's from SOS; Starcross Hall's resident gaggle of friendly animal spirits, inviting him to join their bonkers, biscuit-loving gang. Pepper pets from different centuries, they take him under their wing and help him get used to life after death.

But when disaster unexpectedly befalls the house, can the ghosts rise to the occasion and save Starcross? Perhaps most importantly of all, will Knitbone ever be reunited with Winne, the person he loves the most?

A spirited tale of hope, humour and happy endings for imaginative young animal lovers.



TEACHERS' RESOURCES

This pack includes comprehension questions, talking points and a range of fun creative activities and writing tasks related to the book.

AUTHOR AND ILLUSTRATOR RESEARCH:

• To watch a video of Claire Barker talking about the inspirations behind the series, visit https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Ogozoufpro

• Look at the author's website www.clairebarkerauthor.com. Can you find a photograph of the real dog that inspired Knitbone Pepper and find out his name? Clue: look at *About* and then *Questions* and *Answers* webpages.

• Can you list three jobs Claire did before she became an author?

• What is the illustrator of Knitbone Pepper called? Can you find a picture of him at the back of the book?

• How many books are there in the Knitbone Pepper Ghost Dog series?



Chapter 1

DOG-GONE



COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1.Knitbone shares the same last name as the Peppers. What does this tell us about their relationship?

2. Why does Knitbone think that the vet is 'nice'?

3. Knitbone Pepper sometimes gets the wrong end of the stick. What has he misunderstood here?

The Peppers sat in a small, sad circle, passing around tissues, wiping their eyes and blowing their noses – so much so that Knitbone hoped they weren't coming down with something.

- 4. Can you list the names of all the members of the Pepper family?
- 5. Does Winnie love Knitbone? How do we know?
- 6. Does Knitbone Pepper realize he is a ghost straight away?
- 7. What makes him finally understand that he has become a ghost?
- 8. Can you explain what the author is trying to show us here, without directly telling us?

He licked her cheek. Normally her face tasted of peppermint toothpaste or bubblegum, but today she tasted different: strange and salty.

TALKING POINT

Do you think Knitbone feels better or worse now that he is a ghost? Can you find evidence for this? What do you think might be the bad and good points of being a ghost? Discuss this with the class.

WRITING EXERCISES

They had made a promise to be BFFs: Best Friends Forever. Like tea and toast, fish and chips, strawberries and cream; Winnie and Knitbone were made for each other.

The author shows us that Knitbone and Winnie are the perfect pair by listing other things that go well together. Can you think of five more pairs like this and write them down?

2. Imagine you are sitting inside a wardrobe/cupboard. Is it tidy or is it crowded? Use your senses to describe what it looks, sounds, feels and smells like.

3.

Dead + still here = Ghost

Normally numbers are used in calculations, but Knitbone (who isn't very good at maths) uses words instead. These sums help him to get his thoughts in order.

Can you calculate a simple word sum? For example:

- Jam + bread = sandwich
- Hammer + thumb = ouch
- ⁴ "Winnie, it's me vitamin D! Geddit? D for Dog? Ha ha! No? Oh. Come on. If you get up now there will be time to play a game before the school bus comes. I want to have a go at 'Jump the Piano' because, guess what? I'm feeling much better today..."

Jumping over a piano would be very difficult in real life, don't you think? Luckily in a fictional world anything can happen, but that doesn't mean there shouldn't be rules. What do you think the rules should be for the Jump the Piano game? Can you invent them and create a piece of instructional writing? Think about things like:

- Number of players
- If trampolines are allowed
- Run up distance
- Actions that would result in disqualification

Maybe put in a safety feature like a mattress and extra points if someone is playing a tune at the same time. Let your imagination leap as high as it can!





Imagine you are the illustrator. Take this piece of text from the story and draw Knitbone from your own imagination. Close your eyes. Can you see him in your mind? This is what an illustrator has to do.

...a knee-high dog with wonky ears and toffee-coloured, scrubbing-brush fur. He was wearing a pirate hat, perched at a cheeky angle. This dog certainly wasn't a pedigree, more of a doggy jumble, but his eyes twinkled like the brightest stars. "Ooh, look," Knitbone woofed cheerfully. "It's me!"

USBORNE

YOUR ILLUSTRATION HERE!



Chapter 2

THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- 1. How long have there been Peppers at Starcross Hall?
- 2. Give an example from the text that shows us that Starcross Hall is a restful place.
- 3. What do Lord and Lady Pepper (Winnie's parents) collect?
- 4. Starcross Hall is a fun place to be. Can you list some of the fun things that happen there?
- 5. Why does Lady Pepper think that puppy Knitbone might be a "disgusting, mutant slug"?
- 6. Why did Lord and Lady Pepper choose the name Knitbone for their new puppy?
- 7. But his favourite Pepper was undoubtedly Winnie. He'd taken care of her since she was a baby; picking up things that she dropped from her high chair and keeping her face clean of sticky things like ice cream and ketchup. She rode on his back and he lay on her lap.

Do you think a dog would make a good childminder? How do you think Knitbone kept baby Winnie's face clean?

TALKING POINTS

1. What do you think the phrase poor as poets means? How can the Peppers be lords and ladies, but be poor? Why do you think this might be?

2. Why do you think that glue doesn't stick to the inside of the bottle? Try and figure it out as a group. Then google it to see if you are right.

WRITING EXERCISES

Starcross Hall is a very old house where hardly anything changes. Time almost seems to stand still. Here the house is described as if it were a creature asleep.

The house snuggled into the surrounding countryside, undisturbed by the modern world, fast asleep and dreaming of times past. Birds nested in the eaves and shiny green ivy threaded its way through the patched roof.

1. Describe your own home. What does it look like from the outside? Does it have a chimney? What colour is the front door? Think about how your home makes you feel. Don't forget to mention what you think is the most special thing about it.

2. A jungle explorer stumbles across the Starcross abandoned "bramble-tangled" garden. Write a diary entry telling us about the exciting discoveries he makes in it, for example a rare beetle or a suit of armour.

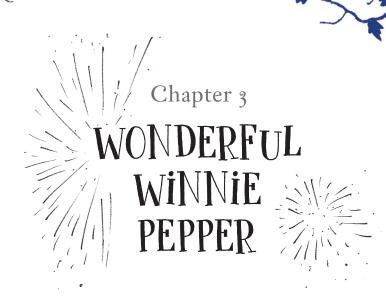
3. Imagine you are taking part in the Starcross Helter-Skelter championships. Write a poem describing how it feels to slide from top to bottom and win first prize. Try to use onomatopoeia in your poem with words like woosh, swish, zoom and rush.

4. Knitbone is found beneath a plant as a puppy. Choose a plant and figure out what size animal might be able to hide beneath it. If it's a daisy then it might be a ladybird. If it's a tree, then it could be a giraffe! Find two different sized plants and choose two different animals to fit beneath them. Then draw them, label and compare.

CREATIVE EXERCISE

Imagine you are a hat collector just like the Peppers. Draw a big hat on a piece of card and then decorate it with sequins, ribbons, feathers and buttons. Create a class display, just like the Peppers would!





COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- 1. What does Knitbone mean when he describes himself as looking like an astronaut on page 31?
- 2. Where does Knitbone wait for Winnie all day, and why?
- 3. How do we know that Winnie is a kind person? Give examples.
- 4. Why doesn't Winnie talk to her mum and dad about how she is feeling?
- 5. What does the postman suggest Winnie should do to feel better?

TALKING POINTS

1. Knitbone had been the one who Winnie turned to when she felt sad. His warm fur and understanding expression made everything better.

Can you think of a time when an animal made you feel better?

2. What does time heals everything mean? Can you think of any example where this has worked for you or where it hasn't yet?

3. What does this illustration tell us about Winnie and Knitbone's feelings? What might they be thinking?



WRITING EXERCISES

Winnie is very good at turning problems into opportunities. She tends to see the best in things.

When Lord Pepper got tangled in the curtains and pulled an antique curtain pole down, snapping it in two, Winnie announced it was time for a sword fight. They had a marvellous time, duelling all afternoon with sticks and cushions.

Write your own story about Winnie turning a bad situation into something wonderful.



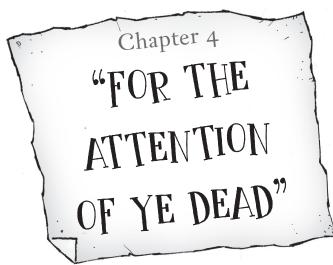
CREATIVE EXERCISES

1. Winnie marched down the lane, head down, plaits flip-flapping in the wind, completely unaware of the ghost dog plodding sadly at her heel.

Read this sentence aloud and look at the accompanying illustration again. If you were a film director what sort of music would you use for this scene? Cheerful? Loud? Sad? What sort of instruments might be played? Can you create a piece of music for it as a group?

2. Draw a map of Starcross including the route to the bus stop. Mark where Knitbone waits all day.

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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- 1. Who and what is Floppy Bernard?
- 2. What does SOS stand for in the book?
- 3. What was Knitbone scared of when he was alive?
- 4. What sort of biscuits does Knitbone have to take to the meeting?
- 5. What is Stage One Denial?
- 6. What is the special name for animal ghosts in the story?

TALKING POINTS

- 1. Do you think a ghost should be frightened of anything?
- 2. What are ghosts normally like in stories? How are the members of SOS different to this?

3. The gang are called SOS (Spirits Of Starcross). SOS also means 'help' in Morse Code. Do you

think the author did this deliberately? If so, why?

WRITING TASK

Pretend you are an animal ghost that has been invited to a ghost party. Write a diary entry all about it, including things like games, food, presents and fancy outfits. Don't forget to mention some of the other ghostly guests!

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CREATIVE EXERCISE

In the book the ghosts eat ginger biscuits. Later in the story we learn that no other biscuit makes a ghost feel more alive. Chocolate biscuits make them sleepy and pink wafers make them extremely naughty. In book two we learn that shortbread makes ghosts cry. Can you create a list of other biscuit types and invent the effects they might have?



EXTRA CREATIVE EXERCISES FOR LATER CHAPTERS

1. CREATE A TIMELINE OF BRITISH HISTORY

Where do the different Beloveds and Starcross belong on it?

Clues:

- Starcross is 904 years old
- Valentine is a medieval hare
- Gabriel is a goose from the time of the English Civil War
- Orlando is an Elizabethan monkey
- Martin is a hamster that was alive during the Second World War

2. CREATE A MATCHBOX BOOK

- Take a 3 cm wide x 26 cm long strip of paper.
- Fold it into 8 sections (fold in half, in half again, in half again)
- Shorten the whole book into 8 tiny parts with just a few words (e.g. *Knitbone becomes a ghost, Winnie is sad, Knitbone meets SOS* etc).
- Draw tiny pictures to illustrate it.

Soon you will have a little book that fits into a matchbox. Draw a tiny cover and stick it on the top. Hooray! This can be the first book in a matchbox library.

3. BECOME A PERSONAL FITNESS TRAINER FOR GHOSTS

"EXERCISE AND ATTACK: If disaster strikes, a ghost must be fighting fit and ready for battle. Top-notch haunting calls for top-notch fitness. Remember, an unfit ghost is unfit for purpose, like a chocolate saucepan or a jelly spade."





Create a PE session for ghosts with at least four different types of exercise, like squats and jogging. Maybe give the exercises special ghostly names like Spooky Starjumps! Go out into the playground and try it out on your friends.

4. WRITE A STONKING STINK RECIPE

If you were going to make a Stonking Stink, what disgusting smells would you put in it? Make a list and create a truly disgusting recipe that is most definitely not Heaven scent.

5. ART HISTORY

• Vincent Van Fluff is inspired by a very famous artist. See if you can find out who this is.

• Paint a field of sunflowers. Then draw a picture of Gabriel the ghost goose on a piece of tracing paper, cut him out and stick him into your sunflower picture. You should be able to see through him, to the sunflowers beneath, just like a 'real' ghost.



6. FUNNY INSTRUCTIONAL WRITING

Knitbone Pepper contains instructional sheets, texts, newspaper cuttings, guidebooks, letters and invitations.

Can you design a weekly timetable with silly activities and hobbies on it for the ghosts to complete? For example:

Orlando	Tuesday	Polishing ze spoonz
Martin	Wednesday	Eating gingernuts
Valentine	Thursday	Hare brushing

Try to make it as funny and inventive as you can!

WRITE A LETTER TO THE AUTHOR

Why not send a bundle of class letters? Tell Claire what you enjoyed about the story, or maybe tell her about a story of your own. Here is a link to the address: https://clairebarkerauthor.com/ contact/

Keep an eye on the postbox because you never know...you might just get a letter in return!

TO SEE ALL OF THE BOOKS IN THE KNITBONE PEPPER GHOST DOG SERIES AND FOR SIMILAR ACTIVITIES FOR LEARNING PLEASE VISIT USBORNE.COM

