



## GELERT THE WOLFHOUND

1 Gelert the wolfhound was only a puppy when he was given to Llywelyn the Great, Prince of Wales. The scruffy little bundle followed Llywelyn wherever he went, sniffing and whimpering at the prince's boots. There was so much energy in the little puppy that he had to grow bigger and bigger just to contain it all. By the time young Gelert was up to Llywelyn's waist, he had become the leader of the prince's hunting pack. His was the keenest nose, being able to sniff out a stag from several kilometres away, and his long legs could even outrun a horse. However, the main reason for Gelert's leadership was his fierce loyalty.

2 Every night at the dinner table, Gelert sat next to his master, patiently waiting for him to finish

eating. After dinner, Gelert lazed in front of one of the many large fireplaces within Llywelyn's castle. When at his happiest, Gelert's pink tongue lolled out from between his fangs, giving the wolfhound a very silly grin.

3 After a few years, Prince Llywelyn had a son by the name of Gruffudd. From the moment of his birth, Gelert stood by the child's side. As Gruffudd grew into a toddler, he started to display the strength and courage of his father, playfully wrestling with Gelert. It was quite a common sight to see Gelert parading about the castle, the tiny Gruffudd being dragged along as he ferociously gripped the dog's tail.

4 When Gruffudd was about a year old, Llywelyn began to take his young family away on hunting trips. To accommodate his wife and child, Llywelyn built several hunting lodges, scattered all over the nearby mountains of Snowdonia. This way they were able to spend their nights in a nice, warm shelter, despite being out in the middle of nowhere. Gelert, who staunchly refused to leave young Gruffudd's side, stayed in the lodge whenever Llywelyn went out hunting. There was no choice but for the prince to find a new leader for his wolfhound pack, it being obvious to everyone that Gelert was now the official Royal Bodyguard.

5 On one particular morning, Llywelyn took his wife out to hunt with him. As everyone prepared the horses and other wolfhounds, Llywelyn knelt down beside Gelert. "Take care of my son, old friend. You're the only one I trust to do this. I'll make sure to bring a nice hunk of stag meat for you, boy."

6 A few hours later, Gelert's nose began to twitch. A new smell was in the air — a sour smell that gave Gelert the sensation of fear, old blood and hunger. It was the scent of a wolf. He could see it, a gigantic black beast with a long snout covered in scars. The wolf's eyes were two brown slits, tinged with the madness of starvation. Goopy strands of saliva oozed from between its sharp, dirty fangs. Faithful to his duty, Gelert gave a warning bark. The wolf stopped still, the hair on its back rising to make it look even bigger. Gelert barked again. The wolf blinked its eyes, as if it didn't even care. It could smell Gruffudd, and it was very, very hungry.

7 Even though the wolf was bigger, Gelert bared his fangs and made the meanest, loudest growl he could. The wolf howled in return and charged at Gelert. In a crash of fury and fur, the two canine warriors fought one another. Teeth clamped down on soft flesh, claws swiped at snouts and tails flicked in eyes. Gelert felt the strength in the wolf's jaws as it bit down on his leg, but the love he had

for his master was stronger. Using all his might, he managed to knock the wolf off its feet. They rolled, one large heap of dog, straight into the lodge and crashed into Gruffudd's cot. The toddler cried out as he fell onto the floor, buried beneath his many blankets.

8 The sound of Gruffudd's cry lifted Gelert up. He had to protect his young charge, no matter what the cost. Growling evilly, the filthy predator attempted to lunge over Gelert to get at the child. With a heroic bark, Gelert blocked the wolf and dug his fangs deep into the monster's neck. The wolf shook violently, trying to get away, but Gelert held on tightly. Eventually the wolf's struggle stopped. Panting, Gelert let go of the wolf's neck. He nuzzled the child, still wrapped in the blankets, just to make sure he was alive. Unfortunately, he couldn't put Gruffudd back into his cot with his paws. Wearily, Gelert limped outside and collapsed in front of the lodge to wait for his master's return.

9 Llywelyn was the first to arrive back at the lodge. He called out to his beloved dog, looking forward to the sight of Gelert bounding towards him in excitement. There was no answer. Llywelyn drew his sword and quickly ran to the entrance. He found Gelert there, breathing heavily. Something was wrong. Bright red blood was gelling on Gelert's snout; thick blobs of it were slowly dripping from his fangs. Llywelyn's heart began to pound. He looked into the lodge. There was his son's cot, knocked over onto the floor, with his blankets strewn all around it. And some of those blankets had blood on them.

10 "NO! You miserable, horrible wretch! How could you betray my love like this? He was my son, and you ... you ..." Llywelyn's face creased in fury; he could not bring himself to say what had happened.

In anger and sadness, Llywelyn took his sword and thrust it into Gelert's side. Shocked, the wolfhound

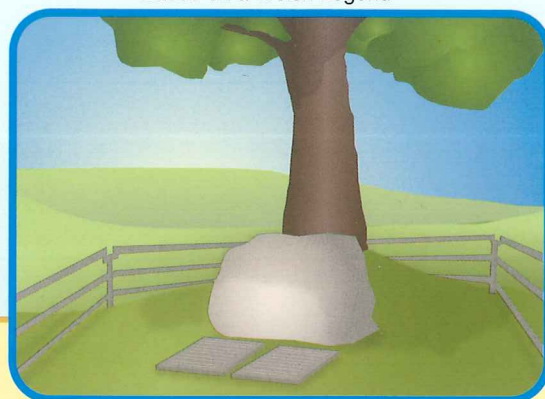
let out a loud wail. Llywelyn fell backwards onto the ground. The wail echoed around the mountains; the sound of a broken heart. Hot tears smudged Llywelyn's vision, but through them he could see something strange inside the lodge. He crawled inside and found the dead body of the wolf. Just at that moment Gruffudd, hidden beneath his blankets, gave a cry in response to Gelert's howl. Suddenly Llywelyn realised what had happened.

11 Running back outside, he cradled his faithful friend's head in his lap. The last of brave Gelert's blood was puddling onto the dirt, but the wolfhound was able to turn his eyes up to his master. "I'm so sorry, friend," Llewelyn sobbed.

With his life fading away quickly, the only thing Gelert could do was weakly lick his master's wrist. It was his way of saying, "I forgive you."

12 Llywelyn and the rest of his castle were devastated by the death of Gelert. To honour the brave wolfhound's sacrifice, Llywelyn had a large tomb built near the hunting lodge where he died. Years passed, Gruffudd became prince; followed by his own son Llywelyn the Last, and soon the life of Gelert the wolfhound became the material of legends. A town was built at the site where Gelert died, called Beddgelert, which means "Gelert's Grave". At its very edge, still visited by tourists today, stands the mound that a man left to commemorate the noble life of his truest friend.

Based on a Welsh Legend



## Questions

- 1 It was most important for Llewellyn's pack leader to be
  - a a fast runner.
  - b a keen sniffer.
  - c a loyal friend.
- 2 How did the young Gruffudd display the strength and courage of his father?
  - a by hunting stag
  - b by killing wolves
  - c by wrestling Gelert
- 3 Why didn't Gelert go out hunting with Llewellyn?
  - a He was too old.
  - b He could smell a wolf.
  - c He wanted to protect Gruffudd.
- 4 Who were the "canine warriors"?
  - a Gelert and the wolf
  - b Llewellyn and Gruffudd
  - c Llewellyn's wolfhounds
- 5 What made Llewellyn realise that Gelert was still loyal to him?
  - a Gelert's heartbroken wail
  - b Gruffudd's cry
  - c Llewellyn's pounding heart
- 6 What would be a good moral for this story?
  - a Don't bite the hand that feeds you.
  - b Only the good die young.
  - c Looks can be deceiving.

## Vocabulary

Find words in the text that match the meanings below. The word is in the section shown in brackets.

- 7 Fiercely and wildly (3)
- 8 Spread out (4)
- 9 Fell down from exhaustion (8)
- 10 Dog's teeth (8)
- 11 To honour the memory of (12)

## Grammar

Find an **adjective** (a word to describe a noun) in these sentences.

- 12 The scruffy bundle followed Llywelyn.
- 13 They were able to spend their nights in a warm shelter.
- 14 Buried beneath his many blankets.
- 15 He had to protect his young charge.

## Back To The Text...

- 16 In section 8 the word *filthy* is used as
  - a a noun.
  - b an adjective.
- 17 In section 6, what phrase tells us that the wolf had fought other battles?
  - a long snout covered in scars
  - b it was very, very hungry
- 18 Writers often use descriptive language to engage the reader. Which of the following, from section 10, are very descriptive?
  - a the wolf's eyes were two brown slits
  - b the wolf blinked its eyes

## Sequencing

Look back through the card to find what happened first. Choose **a** or **b**.

- 19
  - a Gelert was born.
  - b Gruffudd was born.
- 20
  - a Gelert would go hunting with Llywelyn.
  - b Gelert would drag Gruffudd around the castle.
- 21
  - a Gelert grabbed the wolf by the throat.
  - b The wolf bit Gelert on the leg.

## Think About This

- 22 The illustration on the front of the card is described in section
  - a five.
  - b six.
  - c seven.
  - d eight.
- 23 The word *staunchly* in section 4 is best replaced with
  - a stupidly.
  - b resolutely.
  - c quickly.

## Challenge Option

Writing: Write a different ending to this text.

