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# Lesson Plan: The Taming of the Wild Heart

**A Comparative Study of Identity, Society, and Transformation in *Bisclavret* and *White Fang***

## Materials Needed

- Copies of Marie de France's *Bisclavret* (a modern translation is fine) and Jack London's *White Fang* (or relevant excerpts).
- Notebook or digital document for notes.
- Pen or pencil.
- Large sheet of paper or whiteboard for a Venn diagram (or a digital equivalent).
- Optional: Art supplies (drawing paper, colored pencils, digital art tablet) for the final project.

## Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- Analyze and compare the central themes of "wildness vs. civilization" and "loyalty vs. betrayal" in two distinct literary forms and time periods.
- Evaluate how societal expectations and personal relationships shape the identity of the protagonists.
- Synthesize your analysis by creating an original piece that reimagines these themes in a modern context.

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## Part 1: The Hook - The Secret Self (15 minutes)

Let's start with a thought experiment. Imagine a highly respected public figure—a brilliant scientist, a beloved artist, or a successful CEO. Now, imagine they have a secret, a hidden part of their nature that society would consider monstrous or "wild."

### Discussion Prompts:

- What would that "wild" side look like in a modern person? (It doesn't have to be a literal transformation.)
- What would cause them to "transform" or let this side show? Stress? Anger? Or is it something they can't control?
- How would society react if their secret was exposed? Would they be forgiven or cast out? What would it take for them to be accepted again?

## Part 2: Textual Deep Dive - Character on Trial (45 minutes)

Now, let's apply that thinking to our two main characters, Bisclavret and White Fang. Both are caught between two worlds. We're going to put their key transformation moments "on trial" to understand their motivations and the forces acting upon them.

### Case File #1: Bisclavret, the Noble Werewolf

We'll focus on two key moments: when his wife betrays him, and when he is restored to human form by the king.

- **The Betrayal:** Why does Bisclavret's wife betray him? Is her fear justified? In the world of the story, is her action a greater "monstrosity" than his werewolf nature? Defend your answer.
- **The Redemption:** The king shows Bisclavret mercy and compassion even when he is a wolf. Why? What does this say about the medieval code of loyalty and nobility?
- **Character Core:** When Bisclavret is a wolf, does he retain his human mind and noble character? Find a passage from the text to support your idea.

## Case File #2: White Fang, the Wolf-Dog

We'll focus on his time with Beauty Smith versus his time with Weedon Scott.

- **The "Making" of a Monster:** How does Beauty Smith's cruelty shape White Fang's nature? Is White Fang inherently "bad," or is he a product of his environment?
- **The "Taming" by Love:** Weedon Scott "tames" White Fang not with force, but with patience and affection. Why is this method successful? What does it teach White Fang about the "civilized" world (the world of men)?
- **Character Core:** White Fang is born in the wild. Does he ever fully lose his wild instincts, even with Scott? Find a passage to support your view.

## Part 3: Synthesis - The Duality Diagram (20 minutes)

On your large paper or whiteboard, draw a large Venn diagram with two overlapping circles. Label one circle "Bisclavret" and the other "White Fang."

Your goal is to fill the diagram with concepts, not just plot points. Think about the bigger ideas we've discussed.

- **In the "Bisclavret" circle:** Note ideas unique to him. (e.g., Fear of the unknown, Courtly society, Betrayal by a spouse, Innate nobility).
- **In the "White Fang" circle:** Note ideas unique to him. (e.g., The law of the wild, Cruelty vs. kindness, Learning to love, Nature vs. Nurture).
- **In the overlapping section:** This is the most important part! What do they share? (e.g., Dual nature, Judged by appearance, Experience profound loyalty, Transformation, Depend on the trust of a "master"/king, Outsiders seeking acceptance).

After filling it out, discuss: What is the most surprising connection you found between a 12th-century knight and a Klondike wolf-dog?

## Part 4: Creative Culmination - Your Modern Legend (Project Assignment)

Your task is to create a piece that explores the themes we've discussed. You are not retelling these stories; you are creating something new inspired by them. Choose **one** of the following options:

1. **Short Story (2-4 pages):** Write a story about a modern character who lives a double life, balancing their "civilized" self with a "wild" alter-ego. This could be metaphorical (a quiet accountant who is a secret storm-chaser) or fantastical (a teen who physically transforms under a specific trigger). Explore a moment of betrayal or acceptance.
2. **Script Scene (2-3 pages):** Write a pivotal scene for a movie or TV show. The scene must feature two characters: one who has a "beastly" secret, and another who has just discovered it. Focus on the dialogue. Will it be a moment of violent rejection like Bisclavret's wife, or a moment of quiet understanding like with Weedon Scott?
3. **Graphic Novel Concept (1 page of art + 1 page of explanation):** Design a main character who embodies the wild/civilized conflict. Create a one-page comic that shows their "transformation" (literal or metaphorical). On a separate page, write a brief synopsis of their

story, explaining how it explores themes of loyalty, identity, and societal judgment, drawing direct inspiration from both *Bisclavret* and *White Fang*.

### Part 5: Reflection & Wrap-Up (10 minutes)

Let's close by thinking about the big picture.

- Marie de France and Jack London wrote centuries apart in vastly different worlds. Why do you think this theme of the "beast within" is so timeless?
- Which character do you think had the more difficult journey of balancing their two natures? Why?
- What do these stories ultimately say about what it means to be "human" or "civilized"? Is it about how you are born, or how you are treated?

### Assessment Rubric for Creative Project

| Category               | Excellent (A)                                                                                                                                           | Proficient (B)                                                                                                            | Needs Improvement (C)                                                                                                       |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Thematic Connection    | The project masterfully and creatively integrates core themes (duality, loyalty, societal judgment) from both <i>Bisclavret</i> and <i>White Fang</i> . | The project clearly connects to themes from at least one of the texts, with some connection to the second.                | The project's connection to the source texts' themes is unclear or superficial.                                             |
| Character Development  | The protagonist is compelling and their internal conflict between their "wild" and "civilized" selves is nuanced and central to the piece.              | The protagonist shows a clear internal conflict, but it could be explored with more depth.                                | The protagonist's internal conflict is not well-defined or is secondary to the plot.                                        |
| Creativity & Execution | The chosen format is executed with a high degree of originality, skill, and effort. The voice is unique and engaging.                                   | The project is complete and well-executed, fulfilling the requirements of the chosen format in a clear and effective way. | The project is incomplete or does not fully meet the requirements of the chosen format. More attention to detail is needed. |