

GOODNIGHT SILVER

by **ABI ELPHINSTONE**

illustrated by **Olivia Lomenech Gill**

Notes for Teachers & Librarians

Age 8+

INTRODUCTION

In ***Goodnight Silver*** by Abi Elphinstone, Emmy's encounter with a snow leopard cub opens the door to an adventure filled with wild animals, mysterious spirits and hidden magic. The story invites readers to explore both the world around them and the feelings within: what happens when we lose hope, learn to trust others or discover something worth protecting?

These resources combine discussion, geography, close reading and creative activities. Readers will investigate the cover, explore real Mongolia and the Altai Mountains, track the magic of the wild as they read and consider how the author brings together real landscapes and fantastical worlds.

- ★ Themes explored in the book:
- ★ Hope and pessimism
- ★ Grief and loss
- ★ Friendship and trust
- ★ Courage and self-belief
- ★ Compassion for animals
- ★ The natural world
- ★ Magic and belief

Teacher note: The story includes the loss of Emmy's baby brother. Keep discussions focused on the characters, allowing children to explore feelings without asking them to share personal experiences of bereavement.



BEFORE READING

1. Cover detectives

Look closely at the front cover before reading the blurb.

- ★ What do you notice first? How has the illustrator made it stand out?
- ★ What clues can you find about the setting? Look at the landscape, colours, weather and light.
- ★ Which details suggest adventure? Does anything suggest magic?
- ★ What does the word goodnight make you think of? What might Silver refer to?
- ★ What questions does the cover make you want to ask?



2. Exploring the Setting: Mongolia and the Altai Mountains

Before entering the story's magical world, explore some real places connected to its setting.

The Altai Mountains extend across parts of Mongolia, Russia, China and Kazakhstan. The Mongolian Altai lie in western Mongolia. This mountain system crosses national borders: it is not contained within a single country.

The Altai Mountains are also an important home for Mongolia's snow leopards. Scientists studying these elusive animals have identified the range as a stronghold for their populations.

Become geographical detectives

Use an atlas or digital map, photographs and information sources selected by your teacher.

1. Find Mongolia on a world map. Label its two neighbouring countries, Russia and China, and its capital, Ulaanbaatar.
2. Locate the Altai Mountains. Shade the area they cover rather than marking them with a single dot.
3. Compare a photograph of the Mongolian Altai with one of Ulaanbaatar. What differences and similarities can you spot? What do the photographs tell you about the different places you can find in Mongolia?

Create a Real Mongolia explorer card containing:

- ★ A small, labelled map.
- ★ Three facts you have checked.
- ★ Two questions you would like to investigate.
- ★ One prediction about how a mountain setting could shape an adventure.

Write down where you found your facts. Keep your card beside you as you read: which discoveries help you picture the story?

Optional discovery: What is a ger?

A ger is a traditional portable home with a wooden framework and coverings that include felt and canvas. Its construction involves skills such as woodwork, sewing and felt-making. Explore photographs and discuss how its design allows it to be taken apart and reassembled.



3. Pack an explorer's rucksack

Imagine you are preparing for a journey through a cold, mountainous landscape.

Draw a rucksack and fill it with:

- ★ Three practical objects.
- ★ One object that would bring you comfort.
- ★ One imaginary object with a magical power.

Label each item and explain how it could help you. Use something you discovered about the Altai Mountains to explain one of your practical choices.

Compare your choices with a partner. Which item would be hardest to leave behind?

DURING READING

1. Tracking the Magic of the Wild

The wild is full of animals, mysterious places, spirits and signs of magic. As you read, track what you discover and look for connections between them.

WILDLIFE Which animals do you encounter? What do they do, feel or sense?

SPIRITS Which spirits do you meet? What do you discover about them?

WILD PLACES Which real and magical landscapes do you explore? What makes them special?

SIGNS & MAGIC What strange signs, clues or magical events do you notice?

Add words, sketches, questions or short quotations as you read.

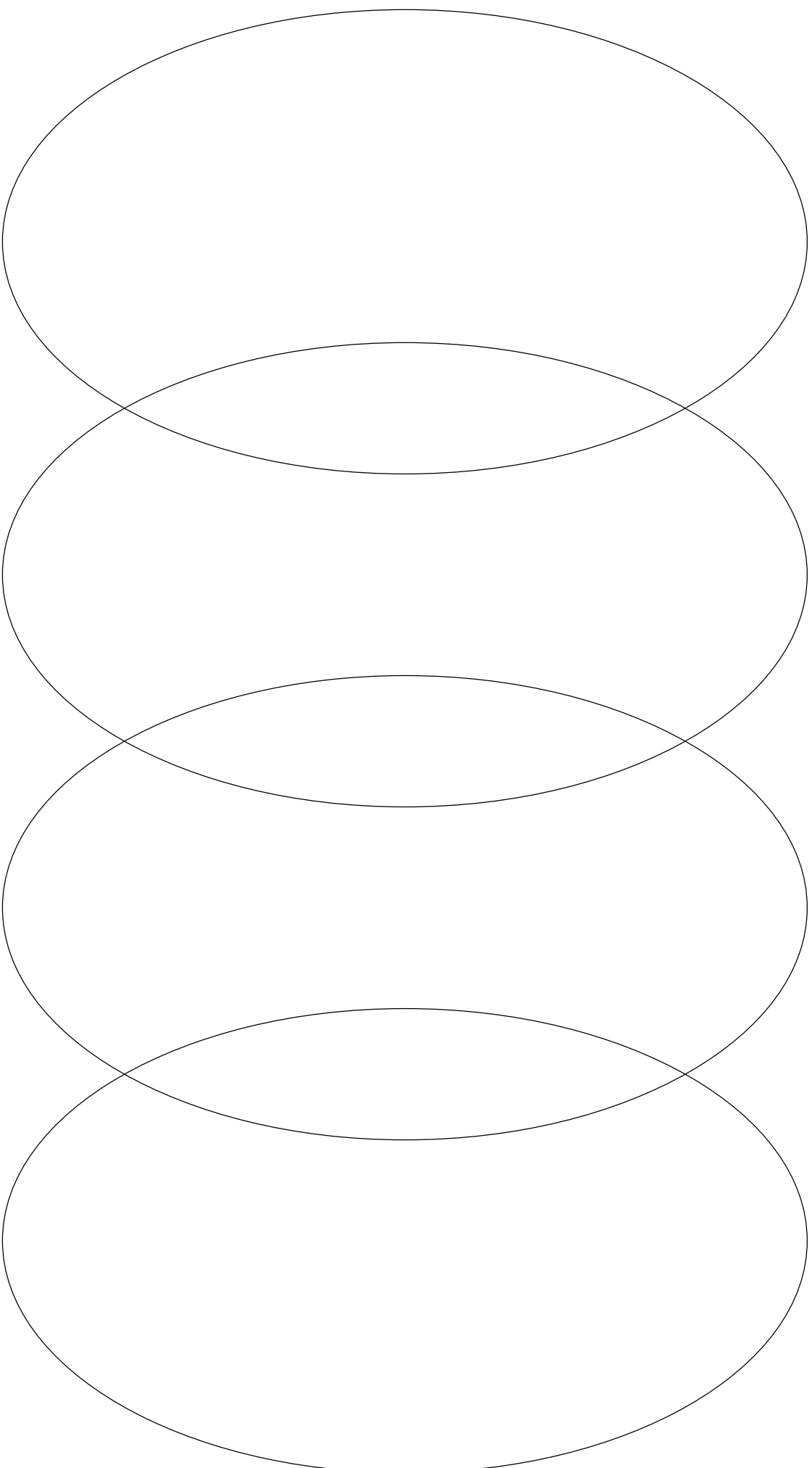


WILDLIFE

SPIRITS

WILD PLACES

SIGNS & MAGIC



Create a Class Display

Turn *Tracking the Magic of the Wild* into a shared classroom display. Create four large, overlapping circles for Wildlife, Spirits, Wild Places and Signs & Magic.

As you read, add discoveries using sticky notes, drawings, quotations and questions. Place discoveries in the overlaps when they connect to more than one part of the wild, or use string to link them.

Keep adding to the display as the story unfolds. At the end, step back and consider:

What does your display reveal about the connections between the natural world and magic in *Goodnight Silver*?

2. Reading Questions

1. What are your first impressions of Emmy? Choose something she says or does that shows what she is like. What would you like to understand about her?
2. After Chapter Four, how does learning about Emmy's loss help you understand her feelings and behaviour? Revisit an earlier moment: do you see it differently now?
3. In Chapter Five, Emmy describes a pessimist as someone "clinging on to a very steep cliff". What does this image suggest about how she feels? How does Tuli see things differently?
4. Batba believes that "the magic of the wild trusts you". What might being trusted mean to Emmy? What has Emmy already done to help others, even when she doubts herself?
5. Batba describes a place "where wild animals live in peace". Why might animals need a place like this? What do the characters' actions towards animals tell us about them?
6. How does the danger facing Whisperfell change the story? Compare this fantastical setting with the real landscapes you researched. Why might both places be worth protecting?
7. Find a moment when a character accepts help, offers help or finds it difficult to trust someone. What happens? Do you think accepting help can take courage?
8. Tuli says, "Magic is full of secrets". Choose a discovery about the story's spirits or magic. Does it answer one of your questions, create a new mystery or do both? What do the characters do when they don't know what will happen?



9. Choose a difficult decision one of the characters has had to make. What do they want? What are they afraid of? What else do they think about when making their choice? How does their decision show compassion, courage or friendship?
10. What has Emmy learned about hope, loss and living fully by the end of her adventure?

3. Extract focus: Understanding Emmy

Read the extract from Chapter Five, pages 74–75, when Emmy meets Tuli.

Note: In Chapter Four, we learn about the loss of Emmy’s baby brother. Read her conversation with Tuli with this knowledge in mind.

Read and discuss

1. Emmy describes herself as a pessimist. What does this mean? Explain in your own words.
2. Why might Tuli’s hopefulness irritate Emmy? Look closely at “ridiculously hopeful”.
3. How might losing her baby brother help us understand why Emmy expects things to go wrong?
4. Emmy compares being a pessimist to clinging to a cliff. What does this image tell us about how she feels inside? Is she simply being negative, or might there be more behind it?
5. Could expecting the worst be Emmy’s way of protecting herself from being disappointed again? What evidence from the story supports your ideas?
6. What might Tuli understand differently about Emmy if he knew what she had been through?

Activity: Emmy – Inside and Out

Draw an outline of Emmy to explore the difference between what she shows other people and what she might be feeling.

Outside the outline: What others see and hear

Add three details from the extract showing how Emmy speaks or behaves. Beside each one, explain what someone meeting her for the first time might think about her.

Inside the outline: What others might not see



Add thoughts and feelings that might help explain her behaviour. Think about:

- ★ What has happened to her?
- ★ What might she be afraid of?
- ★ What might she need from other people?
- ★ What might she still hope for, even if she does not say it?

Finish with a short character portrait:

“At first, Emmy might seem... However, when we learn... Her description of... suggests... To understand her, we need to...”

Keep your portrait and look at it again later. What would you add or change as you get to know Emmy better?

AFTER READING

Creative Activities

Choose one or more of these activities to reflect on the story as a whole.

1. What Does Hope Look Like?

At the beginning of the story, Emmy sees herself as a pessimist. By the end, she tells Silver that he has taught her to hope.

Create a symbol of hope inspired by the story. It might be an object, animal, colour, landscape or image from the book, or a symbol of your own.

Draw your symbol and add a short explanation:

“I chose _____ as a symbol of hope because...”

Include one moment from the story that supports your choice.

2. Whisperfell: Damage and Recovery

Think about how Whisperfell changes when its magic is threatened: the river fades, the forest becomes a wasteland and Goldtimber begins to die. Then revisit the moment when the magic returns.

Divide a page in two and draw Whisperfell in danger on one side and Whisperfell restored on the other.

Around your pictures, add words and phrases from the story that



capture the contrast.

What might the story be suggesting about what happens when the natural world is harmed?

3. Protecting the Wild

Silver belongs in the wild, even though Emmy loves him and finds it painful to let him go.

Create a small Protect the Wild poster inspired by *Goodnight Silver*.

Include:

- ★ one message about why wild animals need protecting;
- ★ one thing people can do to help wildlife;
- ★ an image or slogan that will make people stop and think.

Finish with one sentence explaining something the story has made you think about differently.

4. A Web of Friendship and Trust

Emmy could not have completed her journey alone.

Write Emmy in the centre of a page and place Silver, Tuli and Batba around her. Join each character to Emmy with a line.

On each line, write something that relationship gives Emmy, such as hope, trust, courage, understanding, companionship or belief. Add a moment from the story as evidence.

5. Through Silver's Eyes

Choose one important scene involving Silver and retell it briefly from the snow leopard cub's point of view.

You could choose his journey through Whisperfell, a dangerous encounter with Darkfur, the moment he senses something Emmy cannot, or his reunion with his mother.

Remember: Silver cannot explain events as Emmy would. Instead, imagine what he might see, hear, smell, sense and feel.

Alternative: Sketch Silver in a style inspired by the book's illustrations. Around your drawing, add words and phrases showing what he might be sensing at one important moment.

