

The Wolf by Joseph Smith.  
Jonathan Cape 2008.

Joseph Smith was inspired to write *The Wolf*, his first novel, by Barry Lopez' great work *Of Wolves and Men* which he read as a child. I also read Lopez' book and have been fascinated by and drawn to wolves ever since. A quick perusal of a good book store will reveal many books about wolves, and many works of fiction in which they appear.

In *The Wolf*, Joseph Smith gets into the mind of his subject and becomes the wolf, a hungry, desperate animal enduring a heavy winter whose situation becomes steadily worse.

During the course of this short book, the eponymous wolf is kicked by a prey animal he fails to catch, led on and then betrayed (or is he) by a fox, shot at by a man, and then trapped deep in a cave with an injured swan.

Smith's writing is spare but wholly convincing, and the reader quickly forgets that this is a story and believes that they are inside the mind of a majestic but humbled beast. The book is illustrated with some wonderful, poignant woodcuts which serve further to engage the reader with the story.

My only regret is that *The Wolf* was not twice the length, but I revelled in every one of its 152 pages.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh