

CHILDREN MAKE TERRIBLE PETS

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by Peter Brown

Themes: Responsibility, Pets, Family, Humor

Ages: 4 - 8; Grades: PreK - 3

Running time: 8 minutes

SUMMARY

Lucy the bear discovers the cutest little boy in the forest where she lives. She rushes home to ask her mom if she can keep him. "Children make terrible pets," her mother warns, but she relents as long as Lucy agrees to be responsible for him. Lucy names her new pet "Squeaker" (the only sound he makes), and they begin to do everything together. But as Squeaker starts destroying furniture and refuses to be potty trained, Lucy finds that pet ownership isn't all she thought it would be. Then one day, Squeaker goes missing and Lucy follows his trail through the forest. When she finds him, she discovers that perhaps all found creatures aren't meant to be pets.

OBJECTIVES

- Students will identify animals that make good pets and animals that don't.
- Students will identify ways that people need to take care of their pets.
- Students will make text-to-self connections.
- Students will evaluate the pros and cons of owning a pet.

BEFORE VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Teach students how to do a survey about pets that their classmates have. Since some students will be pre-literate, create a chart that students use can use easily. For example, list every student's name in the first column. Then, make three more columns. At the top of the first, put the number zero or draw a picture of a child with no pets. For the second column draw a picture of a child with one pet. Above the third column draw a picture of a child with a two pets (or more). Have students ask the other children in the class how many pets they have. For each person they ask, the students should make a check mark in the appropriate column.

Then, teach the students how to compile the data by counting the check marks in each column. Create a class graph entitled, "Pets in Our Class," using either a bar graph.

Discuss pet ownership with students. Guiding questions:

- What do pets need?
- What do we have to remember when we care for our pets?
- Can any animal be a pet? Why not?
- What are some animals that would not make good pets?

Scribe students' answers onto chart paper. Use pictures or sketches to augment their answers. Then, supply students with old magazines. Have them cut out pictures of animals that would make good pets, and those that wouldn't. Make a t-chart labeled "Pets" and "Not Pets". Have students paste their cutout photographs in the appropriate sections of the chart. Tell students that they will be watching a movie about a girl who finds a pet that she wants to keep. Warn them, however, that the characters are a little different than they may expect!

AFTER VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Discuss the ending of the movie. Guiding questions:

- Where did Lucy find Squeaker?
- Why do you think that Squeaker "didn't seem like a pet anymore" when Lucy found him?
- What did Lucy decide to do when she found Squeaker?
- How do you think that Lucy felt at the end of the story? What in the text makes you think that?
- How did Lucy change from the beginning of the movie to the end? What made her change?

Use students' responses to these questions to guide them through making text-to-self connections. Explain that when we think about how we might feel in the same situations as the characters in our stories, we can understand better how characters feel and why they think and do certain things. Encourage students to talk about how they might feel if they had to give up a loved pet. Ask if any of them has experienced this before. Extend the discussion by encouraging students to make connections to other experiences that Lucy had with Squeaker.

Talk about the last scene in the movie, where Lucy sees an elephant. Ask students: "What do you think will happen next?" Using students' ideas and words, craft a shared writing piece that tells about Lucy's next adventure with her new pet. After the story is written, post a large copy in the room for students to practice reading for fluency. Rewrite individual copies, leaving room for illustrations. This could be a center for students to practice rereading again and illustrating.

Revisit the discussion about pet ownership with students. Brainstorm with students about the pros and cons of owning pets. Scribe students' ideas on a t-chart. Guiding questions:

- What are some reasons that people like having pets?
- How can pets make a person's life better?
- What are some of the bad things about owning pets?
- How can pets make a person's life harder?

Ask students to study the pros and cons list that they just made. Encourage them to make a decision about whether or not they would like a pet, and the reasons for their decision. Give them time to share their thoughts with each other.

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