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Activity Guide

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The Stray Dog

ABOUT THE STORY

When a family goes to a park to have a picnic, they find a stray dog. The two children play with him all afternoon, but the family leaves him at the park because they think he might have an owner. All week, they can't stop thinking about him, and when they return to the park on Saturday, what they find will surprise readers as much as the family.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR/ ILLUSTRATOR

Marc Simont has illustrated many prize-winning picture books including *The Happy Day*; *A Tree is Nice*, and *The Philharmonic Gets Dressed*. *The Stray Dog*, which was awarded a Caldecott Honor, is based on a story a friend told him about how she adopted her dog. Mr. Simont lives in Connecticut with his wife, two dogs, and a cat.

INTRODUCING THE STORY

Ask children if any of them have a dog. Have them describe how they got their dogs: at a pound, found on a street, from a breeder, at a store. Then explain that the book they will read is about a stray dog and the family that finds him.

READING ACTIVITIES

Comprehension/Thinking Skills

- "What do the children teach Willie?"
- "Why doesn't the family take Willie home?"
- "Why do you think the family worries about Willie during the week?"
(Draw conclusions)
- "Why do you think the family returns to the same park for the second picnic?" (Draw conclusions)
- "How do you think Willie feels at the end of the story?" (Analyze)

Vocabulary

Write these sentences on the chalkboard. Have children choose the correct word to finish each sentence.

scruffy belong warden stray neighborhood

1. A dog wandered into our _____.
2. The dog did not seem to _____ to anyone.
3. The dog was very dirty and _____.
4. She had no collar and seemed to be a _____.
5. We were afraid the _____ would take the dog away.

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Science: Breeds of Dog

Have children decide which breed of dog they would most like to have, if they were given a choice. Help them look in books about dogs or in an encyclopedia to find out about the breed they have chosen. They can write a brief description of the dog's characteristics and habits. Then have them share what they learn with the rest of the class.

Art: Lost Dog Poster

If Willie had had an owner, the owner might have a poster advertising his loss. Have children work in small groups to make a poster showing Willie, the lost dog. Their poster should have a picture of Willie and information about how to return Willie to his owner.

Social Studies: Dogs at Work

Explain to children that many dogs actually have jobs, such as police dogs or Seeing Eye dog. Help children look in books that describe the jobs dogs can do. Working in small groups, children can find out about one job for dogs and can write a brief description of the job. Groups can share their descriptions.

Language Arts: Picture Captions

In the middle of the book, there are two pages showing the family thinking about Willie during the week. Ask children to write captions telling what happens to each family member when he or she thinks about Willie.

INTERNET ACTIVITY

Before you send children to do research using any of the keywords listed below, you may wish to try them yourself to be sure the sites are suitable.

Dog Training

The children in the story teach Willie to sit. Have children use the Internet to find out how to teach dogs to do other things. Each child can pick one skill to find out about. Using the keywords "dog training", have children find instructions on how to teach a dog the skill they have chosen. They can take brief notes on the instructions. Then have children put their instructions into a dog-training pamphlet.