

Ideas and Activities to Use with *Perfect Pet*

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Ideas and Activities
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The Perfect Pet

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Themes: pets, persuasion, writing

Before Reading:

1. Tell the students the title of the story without showing the cover. Have them predict what the story will be about. Will it be fiction or nonfiction (with younger students you might use the terms real and make believe.)
2. Now show the cover and see if they want to change their predictions. If so, why? What clues did they find in the cover illustration?
3. Have students think about a pet they have or have known. Tell them to think of three things about this pet that were special, funny, or they loved about it. Wait about a minute and then instruct them to turn and talk.
4. Ask students if they know what persuasion is. See if the group can come up with a definition. If they use the word convince, then ask how you convince someone. Try to explain the difference between pleading or begging and persuading. With persuasion, you have counter arguments.

During Reading:

5. After reading the second page, ask the students, “What does the author mean by “prickly sense of humor?” What is a challenge? Why would snuggling be a bit of a challenge? What do you think Elizabeth’s plan might be?
6. Page with Element of Surprise: Make sure students see the illustration. Ask, “Why is Elizabeth doing this?”
7. After reading “Scratch the horse,” ask what that means. Then see if the students think Elizabeth is trying to persuade. Point out her arguments vs. her parents counter arguments.
8. After the page beginning with “I could take it for walks,” show the illustration. Ask the students if it shows what is really happening. Help younger students to realize that this is what Elizabeth is imagining. Clues: “Father spit shaving cream” and “Mother grabbed a towel.” What does “forget Fido” mean?
9. Page with “Go for Broke.” What does this mean? Have students predict what will happen next.

Re-reading:

10. To emphasize the persuasion process, make a chart showing the following:

Pet Wanted	Elizabeth’s Arguments For	Parents’ Arguments Against

11. Go through the story and find three phrases that mean to give up that idea. Talk about the literal meaning of the three phrases. (Scratch the horse. Forget Fido. Cross of kitty.)

After Reading:

12. Read *Earrings* by Judith Viorst. This is a mixture of persuasion and begging. Instruct students to give a thumbs up when the narrator is persuading and a thumbs down when she is begging. Discuss the difference.
13. Read *I Wanna Iguana* by Kaufman. Point out how the boy tries to persuade his mom by mentioning things that he thinks she will like or sympathize with while the mother proposes counter arguments. This is a good example of persuasive writing as it is not just a one-sided argument for something. After discussing this story, let the students think of a pet or toy they want. Have them list all the important points about having this. Then have them make another list with reasons that parents might not want them to have it. Write some notes back and forth between themselves and their parents. You may want to share some of the other books about persuasion. Variation 1: Let students pair up. One can be the student and the other can take the role of one of the parents. Have them go back and forth with arguments for and counter arguments against. Variation 2: Pair up younger and older students. Have the younger students give one reason why they should have something. Send it to their older partner who gives a counter argument and sends it back. Do this several times.
14. Talk about the different pets some of the students have. Then let them choose either the **My Pet** page or the **About My Pet** page to draw or write about their pet or a pet they would like to have.
15. Read *Wanted: The Perfect Pet* by Robertson that tells about a boy not getting the pet he asked for. Compare this with *Not Norman* by Bennett. Use the **Comparison of Two Stories** page. In the book, *I Want a Dog!* by Bansch and *The Birthday Pet* by Javernick, the pet problem is solved a different way.
Variation 1: Let students write **A Classified Ad** for a pet similar to the one in “Wanted.”
Variation 2: Have students to work together to chart what the boy wanted and what the duck wanted. Then think about what they like for a pet and what their pet wants for an owner. They can use the **Wanted** page to record their ideas.
16. Ask students to imagine that Elizabeth took Doug to school with her one day. What might happen? What kinds of things might Doug do? Will he cause trouble for Elizabeth? Have students write down some of ideas and then share them with a partner. Write the story together.
17. Read *Pet Show* by Keats. What if Elizabeth entered Doug in the pet show? What prize might he have won? Try to make it different from the ones in the book. Use the **Pet Show Winner** page for students to design a ribbon for Doug (or make their own).
18. Have students select an animal other than a cat or dog that they think would make a good pet. It might be one they have or one they are just interested in. Let them do some research to find out about this animal and how to care for it. Let them write an informational article about this particular pet. You may want to share two books by Jean Craighead George: *How to Talk to Your Cat and How to Talk to Your Dog*. Variation for older students: After gathering facts about an animal, let students take photos of themselves pretending to hold, pet, lead, etc. their animals. Then they can draw the animals—similar to the illustrations in George’s books.
19. Talk about diaries and journals. What if their pets kept diaries? What would they write about? What secrets would they tell and what opinions would they have about their owners? Share one of the books by Cronin (*Diary of a Worm, Diary of a Spider, Diary of a Fly*) or *Diary of a Wombat* by French. Have the students write from their pets’ points of view.
20. Share the book, *So What’s it Like to Be a Cat?* By Kuskin. Let one student pretend to be a particular pet and let the other student ask interview questions. Then they can switch roles. Some may want to perform for the class.
21. Ask the students, “Have you ever really, really wanted something (like a toy) and when you finally got it, things didn’t work out the way you thought they would? Read *My Penguin Osbert* by Kimmel. Have the students write about what really happened (if it did) or what might happen if they would get something unusual (that maybe older siblings or friends have that they aren’t quite

ready for). Or, they might write about getting an unusual pet such as a wild, prehistoric, or imaginary animal (like Pegasus).

22. Read the book written about second graders as they debated about whether people should have pets (*Should We Have Pets?*). Let the class choose a topic and explore the pros and cons.
23. Do pets have to be animals? Read *Plantzilla* by Nolen and remind them of Carolyn. Let each student choose something that is not an animal (plant, rock, toy) and write about how they would treat it like a pet. They can then list the advantages and disadvantages of having this rather than an animal for a pet using the **Non-Animal Pet T-Chart**. Students may want to work together.
24. What problems do some pets cause? Read *Chewy Louie* by Schneider. Think of a bad habit, besides chewing) that your pet has (or an imaginary pet might have such as a dragon blowing fire). Have student pair up to help each other. One can state something like, “Our pet leaves a trail of hair behind him.” His partner can help him try to exaggerate it by suggesting that in order to walk down the hall they all have to carry brooms to push the hair out of the way. Then the first student can think of another problem with the hair and together they can exaggerate the problem. After thinking of several things, then the partners can switch roles to work with the other student’s pet problem. After they have brainstormed ideas, then each can write a story using hyperbole or exaggeration.
25. Let students share their pets’ names with a partner. They can talk about how they named their pet and why it was given that name. For imaginary pets, think of a name and why. Then students can create posters about their pets. It should have a picture of their pet with the name and information about the name underneath. These can be posted. Share the book, *Just Dog* by Oram.
26. Share the book *Martha Speaks* by Meddaugh. If your pet ate alphabet soup, what would it say? Use the **Cartoon Time** page to show what you think might happen.
27. Next, share the book *Martha Calling* by Meddaugh. Ask students to think of what might happen if their pet learned to use the telephone. Use the **Comic Strip** template for them to tell the story.
28. Read *Animalogies* written by fourth graders (or use the **copy of the text** in this packet). Talk about what makes an analogy. See if students can think of more examples.
29. Introduce or review similes. Read the book, *My Dog is as Smelly as Dirty Socks*, or use some of the similes in the example called “**My Dog Kaj**.” See if the students can come up with a list of others about pets or animals.
30. After reading the book, *The Animal in Me is Very Plain to See* by Tye, let students write similes about themselves comparing themselves to different animals (including birds and insects). If you don’t have the book, the **text is reprinted in this packet**. They can also write an ode (or poem) about their pet and try to include some similes. Share **Ode to Doug** on the same page.
31. Read *Help Me, Mr. Mutt: Expert Answers for Dogs with People Problems* by Stevens and Crummel. Ask students, “What would your pet (or an imaginary pet) complain about?” Let them write a letter from a pet to Mr. Mutt. When they finish, have them exchange letters with someone else and write advice as if they were Mr. Mutt. A related book that could be used instead is *Letters From a Desperate Dog* by Christelow.
32. The readers theater script for *The Perfect Pet* available on the ORA website: oregonread.org/RT. Other scripts are available so that some students can do this one and others can present another.
33. Visit the author’s website: margiepalatini.com. She has written many delightful books that play with language. Two have been nominated in past years: *Earthquack* and *Bad Boys*. Many of her books have allusions to fairy tales/nursery rhymes or are fractured fairy tales. Her website has activities and RT scripts for many of her books. See **Character Traits for Elizabeth**.
34. Bruce Whatley doesn’t have his own website, but you can find information about him on the Harper Collins website: www.harpercollins.com/authors/12885/Bruce_Whatley/index.aspx. His book, *Wait No Paint* (a humorous retell of the Three Little Pigs) was the winner in 2006 with 8,310 votes.

The Perfect Pet Related Books

Pets:

The Birthday Pet by Ellen Javernick, ill Kevin O'Malley
The Boy Who Was Followed Home by Margaret Mahy, Ill Steven Kellogg
Chewy Louie by Howie Schneider
The Great Gracie Chase: Stop That Dog! by Cynthia Rylant, Ill Mark Teague
How to Talk to Your Cat by Jean Craighead George, Ill Paul Meisel
How to Talk to Your Dog by Jean Craighead George, Ill Sue Truesdell
Just Dog by Hiawyn Oram , Illustrated by Lisa Flather
Martha Calling by Susan Meddaugh
Martha Speaks by Susan Meddaugh
My Penguin Osbert by Elizabeth Cody Kimmel, Illustrated by H. B. Lewis
Not Norman: A Goldfish Story by Kellyt Bennett, Ill Noah Z. Jones
Nutik, the Wolf Pup by Jean Craighead George, ill Ted Rand
Pet Show by Ezra Jack Keats
A Pup Just For Me by Dorothea P. Seeber, Illustrated by Ed Young
So, What's it Like to be a Cat? by Karla Kuskin, Ill Betsy Lewin
Speak: Children's Book Illustrators Brag About Their Dogs by Children's book illustrators
The Tarantula in My Purse and 172 Other Wild Pets by Jean Craighead George (chapter – older readers)
Wanted: The Perfect Pet by Fiona Robertson

Persuasion:

Best Pet of All, The by David LaRochelle, ill Hanako Wakiyama
Can I Keep Him? by Steven Kellogg
Earrings by Judith Viorst, ill
I Wanna Iguana by Karen Kaufman Orloff, Ill David Catrow
I Want a Dog! by Helga Bansch
I Want a Pet by Lauren Child
The Pigeon Wants a Puppy! by Mo Wilems
Plantzilla by Jerdine Nolen, Ill David Catrow
Should We Have Pets? A Persuasive Text by Sylvia Lollis (with Joyce Hogan and her second grade class)

Language and Writing Examples:

The Animal in Me is Very Plain to See by Laurie C. Tye with photos by Thomas D. Mangelsen
Animalogies: A Collection of Animal Analogies by Fourth-grade Students
Crazy Like a Fox: A Simile Story by Loreen Leedy
Diary of a Fly by Doreen Cronin, Illustrated by Harry Bliss
Diary of a Spider by Doreen Cronin, Illustrated by Harry Bliss
Diary of a Wombat by Jackie French, Illustrated by Bruce Whatley
Diary of a Worm by Doreen Cronin, Illustrated by Harry Bliss
Help Me, Mr. Mutt: Expert Answers for Dogs with People Problems by Janet Stevens and Susan Crummel Stevens, ill Janet Stevens
Letters From a Desperate Dog by Eileen Christelow
My Dog is as Smelly as Dirty Socks by Hanoch Piven
There's a Frog in My Throat by Loreen Leedy and Pat Street, ill Loreen Leedy

Books by Margie Palatini:

Bedhead – ill Jack E. Davis
Bad Boys – ill Henry Cole
Earthquack – ill Barry Moser

Books by Bruce Whatley:

Wait! No Paint!
Cowboy Pirate
The Great Texas Hamster Drive by Eric A. Kimmel