



## ***Dog Walker***

Karen Spafford-Fitz

Reading level: 2.6

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AR Quiz # 106544

### **Book Summary**

Turk needs cash but he doesn't like working, so getting a job is out of the question. Then he makes a discovery: girls love dogs. Turk's friends will do anything to meet girls. Turk starts a dog-walking business. His friends walk the dogs and Turk collects half the money. In an attempt to impress dog-loving Carly, Turk brags about his business in front of the school tough guy, Chuck. When Chuck learns the true nature of Turk's business and wants in on the action, Turk worries that he will lose his business and Carly's respect.

### **Author Biography**

**Karen Spafford-Fitz** discovered how well dogs attract people when she and her husband got their first dog. People often stopped to swap stories about the special dogs in their lives. *Dog Walker* is Karen's first published novel. Karen lives with her family in Edmonton, Alberta.

**Connecting to the Text***Theme*

1. Theme, the broad idea of the story, can sometimes be revealed in the lessons learned by the characters. In *Dog Walker*, one of the themes is Turk's attitude toward the dogs, which changes as he learns to look at them as cherished pets rather than just a means to collecting cash and meeting girls. As a class, discuss the following:
  - ◆ When Turk first meets Loretta's dog Gretzky, he describes Gretzky as "a yapping coffee-colored hairball" (ch. 1) and he says he might like dogs, "but only at a distance" (ch. 1). Later, he comes to appreciate pet-owners' relationships with their dogs in a meaningful way. Why did he change his mind?
  - ◆ How do Turk's actions illustrate his change of heart? Give examples from *Dog Walker*.
2. Ask students to choose one topic from the list below and write two journal paragraphs that answer the questions.
  - ◆ Has there been a time when you experienced a similar change of heart? Perhaps it was something you didn't think about much, or even disliked, that suddenly became very important and your feelings about it changed. What brought about the change? Did your behavior change too?
  - ◆ The way that Carly feels about Buddy has a big impact on Turk. Buddy "helped see her through a bad time" and Buddy was "special" to her (ch. 7). Have you had a pet that was really important to you? What made them so special?
  - ◆ Think of something that you became emotionally attached to because it helped you through difficult times (for example, a friend, a pet, a special book, journal, musical instrument, place, club, toy, etc.). What makes those things so special to you?

**Connecting to the Curriculum***Language Arts*

1. In *Dog Walker*, Mrs. Turkington sometimes reads parenting magazines for advice on her relationship with her teenage son, Turk. Turk often imagines what the articles' titles and themes might be:
  - What Your Teen is Really Feeling
  - Supporting Your Child's Interests
  - Enjoying Quality Family Time Together
  - Getting Your Teen to Open Up to You
  - Learning to Meet Your Teen Halfway

- ♦ Challenge students to write a short magazine article based on one of these titles. You may wish to bring in an assortment of parenting magazines so that students can look at the articles and the way the magazines are laid out. Students may choose to write from the point of view of a teenager or an adult. Students' articles should offer practical advice with clear examples. Prompts to students might be:
    - How can you tell what your teen is really feeling? Provide a list of telltale signs or examples. What does sign each mean? How will you organize them?
    - How can you support your child's interests? Give "how to" and "how not to" examples.
    - What are some ways that your family can enjoy quality time together? Give examples. Can this sometimes be a challenge? Why? How can you overcome these challenges?
    - How can you get your teen to open up to you? Give examples. How will you know if what you're doing is working?
    - What are the steps in meeting your teen halfway? Give examples of situations where parents and teens might not always agree and for each example, provide suggestion to help parents meet their teens halfway.
  - ♦ Ask students to work together to create a parenting magazine which showcases their articles. Ideas for content could include: a cover with issue number and date; a table of contents; advertising; an introduction written by the editor; contests; pictures, diagrams or charts to go with the articles; and filler such as side bar quotations, fast facts, FAQs, recipes, and so forth. Have a selection of magazines available for students to examine. Designate responsibilities to individuals or small groups, including the roles of editor, photographer/illustrator, proofreader, layout expert, advertising specialist and production workers.
 

**Option:** Ask students if they would like to photocopy/publish the magazine and give their parents, counselors or PTA members a copy.
2. In *Dog Walker*, Turk and his friends are introduced to a wide variety of dog breeds, including basset hound, black Labrador, cockapoo, dalmatian, husky, German shepherd, golden retriever, Great Dane and yellow Labrador.
- ♦ Working independently, research one of these dog breeds or another breed of the student's choice. Be sure to answer the following questions:
    - What is the color and size of the dog?
    - Do they have any special skills? (sense of smell; strength; skills in seeking, retrieving or protecting; ability to swim, etc.)
    - Does this breed have any special needs?
    - What kind of owner lifestyle would best suit this breed? (For example, a Labrador or golden retriever would be best suited to a family who loves outdoor activities and exercising.)

- Ask students to write a short report on the breed they have chosen. Reports should answer the questions above. Encourage students to include pictures or illustrations.
- ◆ The American Kennel Club organizes all dogs into eight groups: sporting, hound, working, terrier, toy, non-sporting, herding and miscellaneous class. Research these classifications. What is the difference between them? Into which group would the dog breeds Turk and his friends worked with fit?

**Option:** Ask a volunteer or worker at your local Humane Society or Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) to visit your class and give a presentation on pet care and responsible pet ownership.

**Vocabulary**

As a class work through the following list of words and terms used in *Dog Walker*. Ask students to provide a clear definition for each word.

boss	customer	hire	profits
business idea	draw up a schedule	manager	staff
business people	employees	meeting	
(client) list	hard worker	post ads	

**Dog Walker Word Search Answer Key**

g	b	s	b	m	n	i	c	l	i	e	n	t	t	n	e	s	h	d	o	n	q	x
e	n	p	y	a	l	u	e	p	o	i	u	e	t	r	e	e	p	w	q	a	m	b
s	z	l	c	n	e	n	m	l	k	j	h	n	v	c	e	i	p	e	o	e	i	f
u	i	a	m	a	d	e	t	x	e	j	e	v	v	u	l	p	s	a	e	x	s	o
u	y	n	v	g	c	s	s	t	w	m	h	p	e	e	i	l	d	t	m	v	e	p
q	r	s	t	e	b	c	a	t	e	y	u	c	n	m	j	l	i	e	e	t	h	e
g	b	s	b	r	m	i	e	s	w	k	j	v	t	p	h	n	e	w	a	j	y	r
e	w	q	g	h	u	k	i	p	x	i	u	p	u	l	g	m	e	d	e	a	s	a
s	z	x	c	v	i	t	m	l	k	i	h	l	r	o	w	e	f	f	a	t	s	t
s	w	w	d	h	r	y	u	m	p	t	c	r	e	y	d	e	g	h	l	k	w	i
e	y	g	n	e	g	p	r	o	f	i	t	s	y	e	b	l	i	i	k	v	o	o
n	i	o	v	d	f	v	c	s	a	k	s	c	h	e	d	u	l	e	h	j	r	n
i	w	d	g	h	j	k	l	p	o	i	u	e	j	r	e	e	e	w	i	a	k	r
s	a	x	n	c	v	w	d	o	r	e	y	o	l	p	m	e	r	t	z	u	e	x
u	w	h	i	r	i	n	g	m	p	t	c	r	e	m	o	t	s	u	c	p	r	t
b	y	e	v	t	e	x	a	l	k	j	h	y	u	b	r	l	i	i	m	v	e	z

customer	hiring	schedule	client	business	manager
employee	plan	operation	profits	employer	
advertisement	venture	worker	meeting	staff	

**Dog Walker Word Search**

g	b	s	b	m	n	i	c	l	i	e	n	t	t	n	e	s	h	d	o	n	q	x
e	n	p	y	a	l	u	e	p	o	i	u	e	t	r	e	e	p	w	q	a	m	b
s	z	l	c	n	e	n	m	l	k	j	h	n	v	c	e	i	p	e	o	e	i	f
u	i	a	m	a	d	e	t	x	e	j	e	v	v	u	l	p	s	a	e	x	s	o
u	y	n	v	g	c	s	s	t	w	m	h	p	e	e	i	l	d	t	m	v	e	p
q	r	s	t	e	b	c	a	t	e	y	u	c	n	m	j	l	i	e	e	t	h	e
g	b	s	b	r	m	i	e	s	w	k	j	v	t	p	h	n	e	w	a	j	y	r
e	w	q	g	h	u	k	i	p	x	i	u	p	u	l	g	m	e	d	e	a	s	a
s	z	x	c	v	i	t	m	l	k	i	h	l	r	o	w	e	f	f	a	t	s	t
s	w	w	d	h	r	y	u	m	p	t	c	r	e	y	d	e	g	h	l	k	w	i
e	y	g	n	e	g	p	r	o	f	i	t	s	y	e	b	l	i	i	k	v	o	o
n	i	o	v	d	f	v	c	s	a	k	s	c	h	e	d	u	l	e	h	j	r	n
i	w	d	g	h	j	k	l	p	o	i	u	e	j	r	e	e	e	w	i	a	k	r
s	a	x	n	c	v	w	d	o	r	e	y	o	l	p	m	e	r	t	z	u	e	x
u	w	h	i	r	i	n	g	m	p	t	c	r	e	m	o	t	s	u	c	p	r	t
b	y	e	v	t	e	x	a	l	k	j	h	y	u	b	r	l	i	i	m	v	e	z

customer      hiring      schedule      client      business      manager  
 employee      plan      operation      profits      employer  
 advertisement      venture      worker      meeting      staff

## Connecting to the Students—Ideas for Exploration

### 1. Business Planning

- ◆ Brainstorm ideas for businesses students could start on their own. Ideas might be dog-walking, babysitting, lawn mowing, garden watering, shopping, snow shoveling or car washing. Students will complete this exercise on their own but will likely incorporate others (such as their staff) into their plans.
- ◆ Brainstorm ideas for the steps involved in starting and developing a business. Have one or two students act as scribes, recording the ideas on the board or a flipchart. Then organize the steps into a logical series. Prompts for brainstorming might include:
  - What is the goal of your business? (your business concept)
  - Conduct market research. Is there a need for the service you're offering?
  - Is there any competition? Are there others already doing what you're doing?
  - Are there initial set-up costs? What supplies will you need?
  - Do you need permission from anyone to run your business?
  - Are there safety concerns to address? Are there any risks involved?
  - How much time will you need to run your business on an ongoing basis?
  - Will you need employees? How will you find and assess them?
  - Advertising your business (how will you advertise? where? how often?)
  - Networking with friends, family and neighbors (can you find clients this way?)
  - How will you know if your business is successful?
- ◆ Ask students to work independently to write a simple business plan that incorporates the steps you have determined as a large group. Each step within the business plan should be listed with an accompanying paragraph that describes how their business will follow each step. Business plans should have a neat, organized, professional presentation. If possible, allow students to use presentation software such as PowerPoint. Encourage students to present their business plans to the class, reminding them that in the business world, an entrepreneur would likely have to present his/her business plan in front of a group (for example, to a local Chamber of Commerce, bankers, business networking organizations, etc.). Students may wish to dress in clothing they would wear for a business meeting or presentation.

**Option:** You may wish to bring one or more local business people into the class to talk about how they started and developed their business. If possible, allow time for students to ask questions or time for students to share their own business plans and get feedback from business professionals.

2. In *Dog Walker*, Turk and Carly take part in a charity fundraiser which supports their local Humane Society. A Humane Society, like a SPCA, protects animals and works to prevent cruelty to animals.
  - ◆ Research the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA, founded in New York in 1866) or the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA, founded in England in 1824). Ask students to write a short report that describes how these organizations influenced laws involving animal cruelty. How did public attitudes toward animals change because of their work? What are some of the things they did to protect animals in those early days?
  - ◆ Engage students in debates on topics to do with animal rights. Topics could include: animal testing in laboratories; animal furs as fashion; horse or dog racing; and sport hunting. As a class, briefly discuss these topics, encouraging students to look at each from different points of view.
3. The charity fundraiser Turk and Carly join is called “Pets in the Park.” In this fundraiser, participants collect funds from friends and family who sponsor them to run five miles with their dogs. The money collected goes to support the Humane Society. As a class, commit to taking part in a similar fundraiser. Talk about what charity you might support. One idea could be to raise funds for books for your classroom.
  - ◆ Brainstorm ideas for the steps involved in putting together this class fundraiser. Have one or two students act as scribes, recording the ideas on the board or a flipchart. Then, as a group, organize the steps into a logical series. Prompts for brainstorming might include:
    - What charity will your fundraiser support? It could be an established charitable organization (the Humane Society or SPCA) or it could support your school or classroom (buying new books for the school library or for your classroom).
    - What activity will students participate in to raise funds? (walking, running, skating, reading, etc.)
    - Do you need any special permission to take part in this activity?
    - Determine how students will raise the money and how much money your goal will be.
    - Design a pledge form for your activity. What information must it include? (name of pledge, amount they commit to, the student’s name, etc.)
    - What is your time-line? When will you start and finish?
    - How will you gather your pledges? How will you advertise your activity?
    - Who will act as treasurer to record and safely store the money collected by the students?
  - ◆ Proceed with the fundraising activity. When the activity is complete, be sure to publicly recognize the students’ success. For example, if students decided to collect funds to buy a new DVD player for the classroom, take an afternoon to enjoy a movie and popcorn together.

**Web Resources**

[www.akc.org](http://www.akc.org)

[www.ckc.ca/en](http://www.ckc.ca/en)

[www.ja.org](http://www.ja.org)

[www.hsus.org](http://www.hsus.org)

[www.aspca.org](http://www.aspca.org)

[www.rspca.org.uk](http://www.rspca.org.uk)