



Ruckus

Laurie Elmquist

Illustrated by David Parkins

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About the Book

Reece's new dog, Ruckus, tears through life like a Tyrannosaurus rex. He bites everything that moves. It's hard to get dressed in the morning when he's yanking at everyone's socks and shirts. He also likes to eat things. When Mom's diamond earrings go missing, it sends the family into a tailspin. What happens when a dog swallows something like that? Reece is about to find out. The puppy was Dad's idea, to make things easier through the divorce, but Ruckus is not easy. Mom's patience is running out. But how can they give up on him? He's family. And if there's one thing about families, it's that they stretch but don't break.

Ruckus is the second Orca Echoes title featuring Reece Hansen and his family.

About the Author

Laurie Elmquist holds an MA in Literature and Creative Writing from the University of Windsor in Ontario. She enjoys writing for kids and is the author of *Beach Baby*, *Forest Baby* and *Where's Burgess?* *Ruckus* was inspired by the author's experiences with her own Jack Russell puppy. Laurie teaches at Camosun College in Victoria, British Columbia, and is an online instructor with the University of Calgary in Alberta. For more information, visit laurieelmquist.com.

About the Writing

Ten-year-old Reece is going through the finalization of his parents' divorce. During this time in his life, Laurie wanted to give him two things: a visit from Dad and a puppy. She wanted readers to get a chance to meet Reece's father, who is away a lot of the time fighting forest fires. It was Dad's idea to give Reece the puppy, but when he comes to visit, even he has to admit that Ruckus is a lot of trouble. In writing the book, Laurie researched the Jack Russell breed, forest firefighting, the recycling industry and agility classes for dogs. The episode about Ruckus swallowing diamond earrings is based on a true experience the author had with her puppy.

Teaching Ideas—Curriculum Connections

Prereading Idea

Reece is part of a family going through a divorce. Sometimes he wishes his dad lived in the same city. Do you have a similar experience of going through your parents' divorce? Are there things that helped you get through it, such as a dog or a close friend?

Classroom Discussion Questions

1. How many of you have a pet at home? What does it mean in terms of chores? What's the best thing about having a pet? What's the worst?
2. Both Reece's parents have important jobs that help the environment. What are their jobs? Some cities have banned the use of plastic straws and plastic shopping bags. Do you have any suggestions for reducing plastic use?
3. Reece's sister, Hazel, wants a tattoo, but Mom says she's not old enough. Are there things you want but are not quite old enough to have? What would you like to be able to do, if you could?
4. Pets make us laugh with the goofy things they do. What does Ruckus do to make us laugh at him? Has your pet ever done anything that made you laugh or surprised you in some way?
5. If you were to give Reece advice about training his dog, what would you tell him?
6. How does Ruckus help take Reece's mind off his parents' divorce?

Suggested Activities

- **Research:** (1) Ruckus goes to dog agility classes—basically a school for dogs. What do dogs learn to do in these classes? (2) Reece's mother is very concerned about the plastics ending up in the ocean. Investigate this environmental problem and some of the solutions people are coming up with. (3) Reece's father is a firefighter. Find out about recent forest fires and the technology used to fight them.
- **Make Comics:** Fold a piece of paper into six squares. Each of these squares is a panel in which you tell part of a story. In your one-page comic, retell the tale of Ruckus chasing after a rat on the neighbor's property. This comic is an *adaptation*, meaning you take a scene in a published book and adapt it to comic form. If you'd like to create your own story, do another six-panel comic and this time tell the story of your own pet getting into mischief.
- **Create a Collage:** Draw a big thought bubble that takes up a whole sheet of paper. A thought bubble looks like a big cloud with smaller bubbles beneath it. Now imagine all the things that go through your pet's mind during a day. Find magazine pictures that illustrate these things, cut them out and paste them inside the bubble. Sure, you could put a big picture of a steak for a dog, but you don't have to stick to what is real. Maybe your dog imagines surfing the waves, or your cat imagines living in a palace.

- **Write a Story:** Compose a story in which the main character has one major problem. They are afraid of the dark, or very shy or clumsy or forgetful, or have trouble doing their math, or can't dance, or can't see. Now give this character an animal sidekick who helps them work through this problem.
- **Write a Letter:** Reece's best friend is Aaron. Write an invitation to Aaron requesting his presence at Ruckus's graduation from agility school. Try to use formal language, as if it is a momentous occasion. Include details of where and when this ceremony will take place. Will Aaron be able to wear his usual bathrobe? Should he bring a present or perhaps a donation to an animal shelter?

Other Titles of Interest

Birdie for Now. Jean Little. Orca Book Publishers, 2002.

I, Cosmo. Carlie Sorosiak. Walker Books US, 2019.

The Super Duper Dog Park. Aron Nels Steinke. Blue Apple Books, 2011.

Trash Talk. Michelle Mulder. Orca Books Publishers, 2015.

Zooapalooza in the Park. Lauren L. Wohl. Persnickety Press, 2019.

Other Books by the Author from Orca Book Publishers

Beach Baby

Forest Baby

Where's Burgess? (first in the Reece Hansen series)

Reviews

Ruckus

“Readers will be surprised what the Jack Russell catches and how it all plays out. This book manages to take on the serious topics of parental separation and divorce, raising and training puppies, and making sense of changes in life. Lending itself to being read aloud quite well, this title could provide a good basis for a discussion on these complex issues.”

—*School Library Connection*

“Elmquist keeps the story real: Reece's parents aren't likely to reunite, but he begins to develop some understanding of their individual needs, and Ruckus is given an outlet for his boundless energy, making for an optimistic conclusion. Parkins' detailed illustrations are particularly attractive and break up the brief chapters, making this an inviting read for those newly transitioned to chapter books.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*