



Any Pet Will Do Nancy Shouse

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Consider the following question as you read *Any Pet Will Do*:

Why is getting a pet so important to Jeremy?

Author

Nancy Shouse wrote *Any Pet Will Do* as a tribute to her dying guinea pig, Rex, and to all the pets she's enjoyed over the years. The novel was written one magical summer while most of her family was away for ten weeks taking part in History Television's "Quest for the Sea," a reality show depicting life in an isolated fishing outpost in 1937. Nancy lives in St. John's, Newfoundland, where, she says, "Rumor has it that some mighty creative juices blow in off the Atlantic Ocean mingled with the drizzle and fog."

Story

"Four years ago when Jeremy Jeffers turned five, he made an awful discovery: Not one of his little collection of stuffed animals magically sprang to life at night. Instead of romping around the house, messing up the sofa cushions and making sticky jam sandwiches, Tough Ted and the rest of the gang stayed in tangled clumps on the bedroom floor—not stirring, not breathing, and certainly not having any fun! From that moment on, Jeremy set his heart on getting a real live animal. Now Jeremy was nine and he had waited long enough. It was time to convince his parents."

Jeremy longs for a pet, but he doesn't know what kind of pet to get. When his parents agree that he can start a pet-sitting business in order to try out a variety of species, Jeremy has no idea what adventures are in store for him. Pet after pet is eliminated from his "to get" list. In the end, not a single animal seems suited, that is until a favorite relative comes up with a surprising solution.

Curricular Integration

Language Arts

- Many similes, metaphors and idioms have animal names in them. For example: “as sly as a fox,” “as strong as an ox,” “a frog in my throat” and “let the cat out of the bag.” Have students find others and illustrate their two meanings, literal and figurative.
- Divide your students into groups of four to six and have them make up their own similes, metaphors and idioms that make use of the animals mentioned in *Any Pet Will Do* along with what they mean. Share with the others and see if they can guess the meanings.
- Have students bring in a stuffed animal to use as the main character in a story. They may work alone or in a group to construct a story about an adventure their animal has.
- Have students prepare a debate where they will decide which type of animal would make the best pet. Use Jeremy’s pet selections as a guide. You may have students refer to the specific parts of *Any Pet Will Do* that talk about the particular pet they have chosen.
- Pet interviews: Have students use their own pet to interview. (If they don’t have one they can choose one they might like to have.) Either brainstorm questions for the interview as if they were interviewing a person, or leave it to the students to come up with their own questions. Some suggested questions are: How do you feel about your name? What is your favorite food? Who is your best friend? Include a picture of the pet with the interview.

Social Studies

- Simon Jackson and Jane Goodall are two people who have come to the aid of wild animals on our planet. Jackson’s cause is the White Spirit or Kermode bear and Goodall’s is the chimpanzee. Find out more about these two animals such as where they live, the state of their survival and how they can be helped. Research both Simon Jackson and Jane Goodall to find out why they are dedicating their lives to the welfare of these animals. What

lessons can you learn that might be helpful to you as a pet owner now or in the future? (*BC IRP Connection: Social Studies—Global Environment*).

- Find out the difference between animals and creatures listed as endangered and those listed as threatened. Select the top ten in each category and place them on a world map according to their common habitat or find out more about the animals that live in your area.

Personal Planning

- Jeremy writes an ad for his pet-sitting job (page 3). Have students revise his ad to make it more interesting and informative. Have them read their revisions as if they were speaking to a prospective client.
- Invite students to bring pet photos from home. They could bring photos of relatives' or friends' pets if they do not have their own. Use the photos to create a bulletin board display about the types of pets children have. Include tips on responsible pet care.
- Invite someone from your local SPCA or other pet rescue organization to talk about how they care for animals. Have them discuss the different jobs available at their facility, both paying and volunteer that students may be interested in doing when they are older. As a followup, have students create informational posters and donate them to the organization to display. (*BC IRP Connection: Personal Planning—Career Development*).
- Invite someone from a local pet therapy program to talk about how animals can improve the quality of life for seniors and others in care homes. Connect this with how the pet owners in *Any Pet Will Do* are so much in love with their pets. Make a list of how pets enrich our lives.

Science

- Locate a list of your local or national endangered, threatened and at risk animals. Have students compare the numbers on each list and find out what is being done to help protect a specific animal.

- List and classify the pets that Jeremy looks after in *Any Pet Will Do* according to the types of animals they are.
- Using a site such as Howstuffworks.com, have students find out what causes different kinds of allergies.
- Sphynx cats for example may be suitable for people with allergies because they are hairless. Find other animals that do not cause or irritate allergies and share the information with the class. Once they have an understanding of allergies, have students do a survey in your class or school to see how many students have allergies of some kind.
- Our immune system is an important system in that it helps protect us from germs and other invaders. Have students research the ways in which our immune systems protect us.

Art

- Using the pet-sitting information on page 3 of *Any Pet Will Do* have students create a small poster using a word processing program. Have them explore different fonts and layouts as they construct it.
- Choose one of the animals mentioned in *Any Pet Will Do* to use as a model for a still-life drawing. Pictures to copy may be found in library books or from photos students might bring from home. Actual pet models might be a choice, but individual teacher discretion is required here.
- Boo Boo the snake is not one of the main characters but would make an interesting model. Using clay or plasticene construct a model of what you think he might look like. Students may research different types of snakes to use as a guide or just create one from their imagination.
- Have students create packaging and advertising for the pet cookie activity explained below.

Mathematics

- Pets can be connected to the real world through recipes. Create a pet cookie using a variety of animal cookie cutters and a basic pet cookie recipe. Write out an existing recipe or create an original one.
- Do a class survey to find out the kinds of pets your students own. Once you have the results have students graph them using a variety of formats, ie. bar, line, pie. Then do another survey where students choose their ideal pet and graph those results as well. Display on a bulletin board. These activities would be ideal to do in the computer lab! (*BC IRP Connection: Mathematics—Statistics and Probability*).
- Have students create Math word problems at their level that reflect what they have learned through reading *Any Pet Will Do*.

Drama

- Using the story about stuffed animals from above or another script, create a series of short vignettes in which the animals come to life and reflect on a situation of some kind.
- Using parts from *Any Pet Will Do*, have groups of students act out a response. For example: “Jeremy looked more closely and knew he had some serious explaining to do. Every single knob was etched with tiny teeth marks,” (page 24). “They watched in horror as every last flake tumbled out of the can and sank effortlessly to the bottom, (page 33). “First thing the next morning, Jeremy crept down to the basement to check on things. When he peeked into the bathroom, sweat beads the size of raisins popped out all over his head,” (page 55).

Suggested Resources

Fiction

Bauer, Marion Dane. *Runt*.

Bradford, Karleen. *You Can't Rush a Cat*. (making friends)

Citra, Becky. *Dog Days*.

Dalton, Shiela. *Doggerel*.

Ghent, Natale. *Piper*.

Harris, Dorothy Joan. *A Very Unusual Dog*.

Harrison, Troon. *Aaron's Awful Allergies*.

Jam, Teddy. *ttuM*. (stray dog)

Keats, Ezra Jack. *Pet Show*.

King-Smith, Dick. *The Stray* (stray old woman finds a home), *I Love Guinea Pigs*.

Lee, Chinlun. *Good Dog, Paw!*

Lester, Helen. *Score One for the Sloths*.

Little, Jean. *Birdie for Now*.

Moore, Inga. *Six Dinner Sid*.

Nielsen-Fernlund, Susan. *Hank and Fergus*.

Rosen, Michael and Jonathan Langley. *Snore: A Noisy Night for Nosy Dog*.

Polacco, Patricia. *John Phillip Duck*. (Pets, belonging)

Simmie, Lois. *Mister Got to go, Mister Got to go and Arnie*.

Smith, Nicole. *Cody the Allergic Cow, Allie the Allergic Elephant*.

Wayne, Susanne Santoro. *Petropolis*.

Wilson, Eric. *Underdog*.

Whelan, Gloria. *Silver*. (animal survival)

Woods, Shirley. *Tooga*. (coming of age)

Nonfiction

(Dewey Decimal Classification numbers appear in parentheses where applicable.)

Amato, Carol A. *Backyard Pets: Activities for Exploring Wildlife Close to Home*. (508).

Canfield, Jack (ed.). *Chicken Soup for the Pet Lover's Soul*. (158.1).

Graham-Barber, Lynda. *Spy Hops and Belly Flops: Curious Behaviors of Woodland Animals*. (591.73).

Hopkins, Lee Bennett. *A Pet for Me Poems*. (811.54).

Kohl, MaryAnn F. and Kim Solga. *Discovering Great Artists*. (709.2).

Organ, Betty. *My Newfoundland and Labrador Counting Book*. (636.7).

Patent, Dorothy Hinshaw. *Garden of the Spirit Bear: Life in the Great Northern Rainforest*. (599.78).

Priddy, Roger. *ABC of Jobs People Do*. (331.7).

Royston, Angela. *Why do my Eyes Itch? and Other Questions About Allergies*. (616.97).

Silverstein, Alan. *Pocket Pets*. (636).

Smolinski, Jill. *50 Nifty Super Animal Origami Crafts*. (745.5).

Online

“The Jane Goodall Institute” www.janegoodall.org/

“PBS Simon Jackson” www.pbs.org/kcet/globaltribe/voices/voi_jackson.html

“Care for Animals—Kid’s Corner”
www.avma.org/careforanimals/kidscorner/default.asp

“ASPCA” www.aspca.org/site/PageServer

“World Wildlife Fund” www.worldwildlife.org/

“Species Fact Sheets” www.kidsplanet.org/factsheets/map.html

“Animal Info—Information on Endangered Mammals” www.animalinfo.org/

“Edhelper Crossword Puzzler Maker” www.edhelper.com/crossword.htm

“The Humane Society of the United States” www.hsus.org/pets/pet_care/

“Good Character” www.goodcharacter.com/pp/responsibility.html

“Inventions Made by Kids” inventors.about.com/od/kidinventions/

“Kids Health for Kids Learning About Allergies”
kidshealth.org/kid/health_problems/allergy/allergies.html

“Children Around the World”
school.discovery.com/lessonplans/programs/peoplearoundtheworld/

“How Stuff Works—Allergies” health.howstuffworks.com/allergy.htm

“Ryan’s Well Foundation” www.ryanswell.ca/

BC IRP Connections Gr. 2-6

Language Arts: working together, building community, communicate ideas and information

Social Studies: community, rights and responsibilities, human rights, mapping skills

Science: animal classification, problem solving, finding explanations, conducting investigations

Mathematics: connecting math to real life situations, statistics and probability

Visual Arts: development and design strategies

Drama: exploration and imagination

A Few Words From the Author

Dear Readers,

Writing *Any Pet Will Do* was so much fun that I was a teeny bit sad when Jeremy finally found the perfect pet and the story had to end. I was going to miss sitting at the computer, wondering what kooky neighbor would ring his doorbell next. That’s the thing about writing; it’s full of surprises. And you don’t even need a big idea to get started, just one little crumb. You’ll be amazed at what spills out on the page.

As I say at the end of the book, all of the pets that Jeremy cares for, with the exception of the snake, are based on those I have owned. People often ask which pet has been my favorite and considering all the animals I’ve had, you’d think I might have to ponder that awhile, hum and haw, chew my bottom lip... but no, I can answer in the blink of an eye. It was Vincent.

Vincent was a tubby orange fur ball who appeared on my kitchen window ledge one summer. I wasn’t looking for another cat (I already had three) but this mangy creature seemed to have other ideas. I think he was searching for the perfect home. Nobody came forward to claim him, which didn’t surprise

me considering his condition: matted fur, scars and scabs, tattered ears and a stubby, broken tail.

The big mystery was how an abandoned cat could be so monstrously fat! Maybe he was an exceptional mouser.

Anyway, Vincent balanced on that window ledge for a week, observing. He watched me bake bread and burn toast. He glared down at my three cats and they glared back up at him. He glanced admiringly at the food dish on the floor and licked his lips. He craned his neck to glimpse the sun streaming in on the comfy couch in the living room. Finally, it was all too much.

Vincent made his move.

He jumped from the window ledge to the counter, from the counter to the food dish, and then, after inhaling every trace of Kitty Kibble, made straight for the living room to bask in the sunbeam. Cat #4 had officially moved in.

Now, many years later, I am cat-less (Sigh! One child has a cat allergy.), but I haven't forgotten old Vinnie. Hint: you may have guessed that Duffer, the cat in my book, bears a striking resemblance to you-know-who!

By the way—in case you are wondering—I still have no idea where Boo Boo is hiding in chapter eight...He may be coiled up in the Christmas tinsel or snoozing under a heap of dirty socks. I tried to weasel it out of him but he wouldn't confess. Sometimes snakes like to keep secrets, too!

Best Wishes,
Nancy Shouse