



Dog Days **Becky Citra**

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Story

Brady is a dreadful card player and he doesn't like dogs. His mother has moved him across the country to be near his grandfather who insists on playing (and winning) endless games of Crazy Eights and whose ornery, ancient dog makes Brady's life miserable. Abra, next door, is nice to him, but she dresses like a witch and she's a girl. The only way that Brady can see to make real friends in his new home is to enter the upcoming dog show, but how is he going to do that without a dog?

Author

Becky Citra lives in a tiny community called Bridge Lake in British Columbia. She is the author of the Max and Ellie series—*Ellie's New Home*, *The Freezing Moon*, *Danger at the Landings* and *Runaway*—pioneer stories set in early nineteenth century Ontario. The fifth book in the series, *Strawberry Moon*, is due out in the spring of 2005. Becky writes with humour and insight whether she is writing about the past or present. Unlike her character Brady in *Dog Days*, she has no trouble getting along with animals. After all, she has six horses, a dog and a cat to look after!

The Ideas

- Interview a grandparent or older person about some of their interests or hobbies.
- Pretend you are Brady and write a letter to your friends in the city, Jason and Thomas, about your efforts to train Grit.
- Make an illustrated list of your Pet Peeves.
- Discuss the title. Find other expressions with cat or dog in them: cat's got your tongue, it's raining cats and dogs. Illustrate them in a funny way.
- Write an adventure about Brady and his new puppy.
- Research dog breeds. Make a *Guinness Book of Records*: oldest breed, heaviest breed, smallest breed...
- Rewrite a scene from the book from a different point of view, a training session from Grit's point of view, or a card game from Gramps point of view, for example.

- Try to teach your dog or a friend's dog a trick. Keep a journal of your results.
- Interview a dog trainer or arrange to attend a session at a dog obedience school.
- At the beginning of *Dog Days*, Brady is not happy about the changes in his life. Before you read beyond chapter one, write a list of predictions for that might happen to make Brady happier.
- See if you can find out where the name True Grit comes from.
- Before you read beyond chapter two, write a paragraph or two or a whole story about why Desert Racer is kept in a locked garage and why Brady didn't know anything about it.
- Imagine that Abra's and Julia's moms have a conversation after they leave Gramp's house. What might they say to one another? Write and perform their conversation.
- Hold a mock dog show in your classroom or a mock circus where all the tricks are performed by pretend dogs or other pretend animals. Include Log the dog.
- Read other books about training dogs, *Mine for Keeps* and *Birdie for Now* by Jean Little, for example. Compare and contrast with *Dog Days*.
- Brady tries some odd strategies for training Grit. Do some research on training dogs and write about how you would train a dog in preparation for a dog show.
- What other animals can be trained? Choose one and research how that animal is trained, parrots for example.
- Brady is an unusual book character in that he does not want a dog, at least not at the beginning of the book. Search the library for picture books and novels about kids who desperately want a dog. Read as many as you can and share them with your class. Dayal Kaur Khalsa's *I Want a Dog* is one example.
- Other great books about dogs include *Love That Dog* by Sharon Creech, *Because of Winn-Dixie* by Kate DiCamillo, *Shiloh* by Phyllis Reynolds and *Lassie, Come Home* by Eric Knight.

Dog Books Recommended by Becky Citra

A Boy in the Doghouse by Betsy Duffey

Big Red by Jim Kjelgaard

Where the Red Fern Grows by Wilson Rawls

Lost and Found and *Different Dragons* by Jean Little

Beautiful Joe by Marshall Saunders

Strider by Beverly Cleary (sequel to *Dear Mr. Henshaw*)

Souder by William Armstrong

Call of the Wild by Jack London

Upchuck and the Rotten Willy by Bill Wallace

A Dog Came Too by Ainslie Manson

A Few Words From the Author

Dear Reader,

Dog Days was a lot of fun to write. I think that's because dogs have always been an important part of my life.

I grew up with a black cocker spaniel called Sparky and a terrier called Angus. Right now I have a springer spaniel called Robin. I love on a ranch, and a ranch dog must be well trained. Robin has had to learn three really important rules:

1. Don't chase the tractor!
2. Don't dig holes in the vegetable garden!
3. Don't grab the horses tails!

She also had to learn to come right away when she is called and to respect all the wild animals—including deer, moose, coyotes, foxes, marmots and bears—that live on our ranch. Did you know that it is against the law for a dog to chase a deer? Sometimes we hear wolves howling at night and Robin gets very excited. I think she hopes they are coming to play with her!

Robin went to obedience school to learn how to be a good ranch dog. Her favourite thing about school was meeting all the other dogs. Robin's best friend is a golden retriever called Tucker. Tucker is a lot like Cool It. He is big, lovable, friendly, and not very well trained! Robin also loved a part of the training called agility training. That's when the dogs learn how

to run through tunnels, walk across teeter-totters and jump over hurdles. It's like a giant obstacle course.

I have two jobs. I am an author and a teacher. I get lots of ideas for my books from the kids in my class. The idea for *Dog Days* came from a school pet show. One boy worried and worried because he didn't have a pet. Then he came up with the great idea of Log the Dog. There were lots of interesting pets at that show, including a rooster, a llama and a pig. But I thought Log the Dog was the best, and I knew that one day I would write about him in a book!

I hope you have fun reading *Dog Days*!

From,

Becky Citra