Teaching with *Helper Hounds:* Sparky Helps Mary Make New Friends

PREVIEW THE BOOK

Introduction: Read the title of the book and display the cover. Ask students to guess who Sparky and Mary are and to consider what the story will be about.

Engage Prior Knowledge:

Have students think of a time they made new friends. Have students share the emotions they felt during this experience, such as excitement or nervousness. Encourage students to consider whether making friends is easy or hard and why.

Lexile: 650   GRL: TBD

Have students share what they know about dogs. Ask them to describe how dogs make them feel, and whether they can think of a time a dog helped them. Students can also consider whether they know of dogs who have helped other people, whether in real life or in books, television, or film.

BEFORE EACH CHAPTER

Vocabulary: Preview the following vocabulary terms. Have students define the terms in their own words and use them in a meaningful sentence. As you come across each term in the chapter, have students pause and consider whether the author uses it in the same way that they understand it. (For example, students might define *rounding up* as "estimating a number"; the author uses *rounding up* in the context of gathering sheep.) Have students explore the relationship between their understanding of the word and how the author uses the word in the text.

- Chapter 1: *snout, tufts, mission*
- Chapter 2: *rounding up, purebred, mutt, possums, obedience, brawn, kennel*
- Chapter 3: *business, trotted, drive, flexibility*
- Chapter 4: *jitters, professor, good measure, official*
- Chapter 5: *hygiene, canine*
- Chapter 6: *anxiety, panting, slinked, impressions, sifted*
- Chapter 7: *considerate, snag, professional, sap*
- Chapter 8: *pranced, glory, clamped*

Predict: Allow students to explore the illustrations. Ask students to predict what the chapter will be about. Have students support their predictions with evidence from the illustrations and what they read in previous chapters.

DURING READING

Making Connections: Ask students the following questions while reading:

- Chapter 1: Who is narrating the story? Why is Sparky excited? How do you feel when you are able to help people?

- Chapter 2: How do you think Sparky is feeling as he moves from home to home? Are there situations when people might feel this way, too?

- Chapter 3: Why do you think Tasha chose Sparky over the other dogs in the shelter? Have you ever picked out a pet? What made you decide which pet you wanted to adopt?

- Chapter 4: Why does Tasha cry after she puts the old name tag in her drawer? Who do you think Noser was? Do you know how Tasha is feeling? Why?

- Chapter 5: How do you think the cat feels when she sees Sparky? What are some examples you know of dogs and cats interacting with each other? Do they ever get along?

- Chapter 6: How does Sparky help Mary? Is there a pet or person who helps you the same way?

- Chapter 7: Why is Mary sad? Have you read other stories or seen movies where the character misses someone? What made those characters feel better?

- Chapter 8: Are you surprised that Sparky and Custard became friends? Are you surprised that Mary quickly made new friends? Why?

AFTER EACH CHAPTER

Summarizing: Ask students to summarize each chapter after reading. Encourage students to use the Somebody-Wanted-But-So method:

- Somebody: Who is the chapter mostly about?

- Wanted: What does this character want?

- But: What problem does the character have?

- So: How does the character solve the problem?

Characterization: After each chapter, have students identify any new characters that were introduced. Have students use the "Character Graphic Organizer" to consider what the characters said and did. Then, based on these clues, students should choose a word from the Character Traits word bank that describes each character.

REFLECTION

Theme: Explain that one theme of the book is *friendship*. Ask students to explain what it means to be someone's friend. Then, work with students to brainstorm a list of traits that describe a friend. For each trait, have students explain whether or not Sparky shows this trait, and why.

Have students read "Sparkplug's 7 Tried-and-True Tricks for Making Friends" (pp. 58–62). Review each trick and have students find evidence in the text that Sparky has mastered it. Then ask students to write or draw evidence that they have also mastered this trick. If students don't think that they have, ask them to write or draw what they can do to practice.

Compare and Contrast: Review the terms *compare* and *contrast*. Have students read "Fun Facts About Border Collies and Bernese Mountain Dogs" (pp. 63–64). Then, help students complete a Venn diagram that compares and contrasts these two breeds. Ask students to circle or highlight which traits belong to Sparky.

Character Graphic Organizer

Directions: Write one thing <u>two characters</u> in *Helper Hounds: Sparky Helps Mary Make New Friends* said and did. Then, choose at least one trait from the Character Traits word bank to describe the character.

Character Traits			
nice	sad	brave	reliable
caring	lonely	fearful	energetic
mean	calm	funny	happy
selfish	friendly	shy	playful

Character #1 Name:

One thing this character says is...	One thing this character does is...

Character Trait:

Character #2 Name:

One thing this character says is...	One thing this character does is...

Character Trait: