# Teaching with *Helper Hounds*: *Spooky Helps Danny Tell the Truth*

PREVIEW THE BOOK

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

Engage Prior Knowledge: Ask students to share what they know about courts and trials. Give students some background about the court system and how it works. Define words such as *courtroom*, *lawyer*, and *witness*.

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 that have helped other people in real life or in books, television, or film.
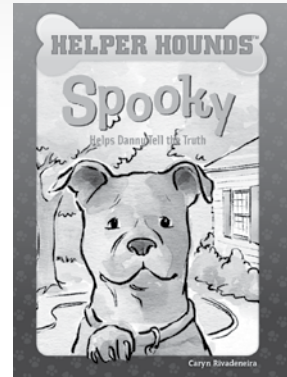
Lexile: 640   GRL: TK
Words: 7,622

BEFORE EACH CHAPTER

Vocabulary: Preview the following vocabulary words. Allow students to share their understanding of the words. Then, provide them with the actual definition. As you come across each word in the text, pause to reflect on the context clues that help explain the term's meaning. Encourage students to think of one or more synonyms for each word.

Chapter 1: *wriggled, sleek, astronomer, moxie, testify*

Chapter 2: *recognize, panic, familiar*

Chapter 3: *prejudice, obedience, remarkable, excels, legacy*

Chapter 4: *snout, flexibility, rhythm, coattail, corridor*

Chapter 5: *shrugged, barriers, glimpses, whiff, jitters*

Chapter 6: *longingly, defendant, jury, bailiff, trial*

Chapter 7: *ornate, scent, bucking, bronco*

Chapter 8: *officially, ceremony, duty*

Predict: Ask students to explore the illustrations and 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? What do we learn about Spooky in the chapter? What words would you use to describe her?

Chapter 2: Why do you think Officer Torres shoots Spooky? What feelings lead him to do so? How do you think he feels afterwards at the vet's office?

Chapter 3: Why does Professor Lester believe that Spooky would make a good Helper Hound? What qualities does Spooky have that make her feel that way?

Chapter 4: How do you think Danny is feeling when it is time to go meet Judge Mathers? What details from the chapter tell you that? Can you think of a time in your own life when you felt the same way?

Chapter 5: How does Spooky help Danny to feel less nervous? What are some things *you* do to calm down when you are nervous?

Chapter 6: What was the author's purpose for writing this chapter? What do we learn about Judge Mathers and about what Danny will have to do in the courtroom?

Chapter 7: Officer Torres calls Spooky a hero. Why does he feel that way? What qualities or actions do you think make a person or animal a hero? What other characters from the book do you think are heroes?

Chapter 8: Which character from this chapter goes through the biggest change? How does he or she change? Is it a good change or a bad change?

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, ask students to identify any characters that acted brave. Have them write down **who** the character is and **how** he or she acted brave. Challenge students to imagine what the character may have done differently if he or she *hadn't* acted brave.

REFLECTION

Theme: Explain that one theme of the book is *honesty*. Ask students to explain what it means to be honest. List the characters in the book and have students give an example of a time each character was honest.

Have students read "Spooky's Life Rules" (pp. 58-59) and "Officer Torres' Life Rules" (p. 60). Review each tip and have students find evidence in the text that Danny has mastered it. Then have students choose one of the tips and write or draw evidence that they have mastered it.

Compare and Contrast: Review the terms fact and myth. Have students read "Fun Facts About American Staffordshire terriers" (pp. 61-63). Based on what they've read, have students copy the following sentences into the appropriate column on the "Fact vs. Myth" worksheet.

1. They are very strong
2. They are sweet and affectionate.
3. They are aggressive and dangerous.
4. In the past they were trained to help hunters and work on farms.
5. They are the same as pit bulls.
6. They like to fight with bears and other dogs.
7. They make great friends and protectors.

Fact vs. Myth

Directions: Read the seven sentences about American Staffordshire terriers under "Compare and Contrast" on the previous page. Then rewrite them in the correct column below. As a bonus, add your own fact and myth about Staffies!

FACTS	MYTHS