

# Teaching with *Helper Hounds*: *Brisket Helps Miryam with Online Learning*

## Connection to Standards

Students will describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.3)

## Preview the Book

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

## Engage Prior Knowledge:

Ask students to think about their experiences with online learning during the pandemic. Invite students to share with the class what online learning was like for them. What did they like and dislike about it? In what ways was it different from in-person learning? What are some of the biggest difficulties they faced? Ask students to keep these experiences in mind as they read the book. (If students have never experienced online learning, ask them to imagine what it would be like.)

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 words. Ask students to attempt to define the words in their own terms, then provide them with the actual definition. As you come across each word 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 *squat* as “to bend your knees and lower your body so that you are close to your heels,” while the definition of *squat* in the context of the book is “short and thick.” Challenge students to write a new sentence using one vocabulary word from each chapter.

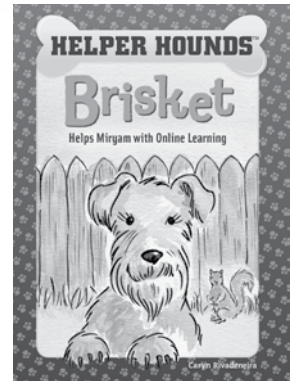
**Chapter 1:** *rudder, precise, obedience, bickered, pandemic*

**Chapter 2:** *squat, saddle, boundless, kennel, brisket*

**Chapter 3:** *scrambled, companion, selective*

**Chapter 4:** *zip, transfer*

**Chapter 5:** *adjusted, concentrate*



Lexile: 600 Words: 6,082

**Chapter 6:** *windmills, skitted, slumped*

**Chapter 7:** *lecture, crunched, distractions*

**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 words would you use to describe Brisket? Use evidence from the chapter to support your answer.
- Chapter 2: Did Brisket's original family take care of him properly? Why or why not? How do you think Brisket felt when he ended up at the RSPCA?
- Chapter 3: What is it about Luke that makes Brisket like him right away? Have you ever decided you liked someone as soon as you met them? What was it about them that gave you a good first impression?
- Chapter 4: Why does Tuttle think Brisket would make a good Helper Hound?
- Chapter 5: What do we learn about Miryam in this chapter? What new things do we learn about Brisket?
- Chapter 6: What problem do we learn Miryam is having? How can Brisket help her with this problem?
- Chapter 7: What are some techniques Miryam learns in this chapter to help her stay focused during online learning? How do these techniques help her to free Brisket from the slide? Do you ever have trouble staying focused?

## 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 them list any details they learn about the characters.

## Reflection

**Persuasive Writing:** Have students read “Fun Facts About Lakeland Terriers” (pp. 60-63). Based on what they’ve read, have students raise their hands to contribute to a master list of facts about Lakeland Terriers. Have students read the list over and consider what type of family might be best for a Lakeland Terrier, such as one that spends a lot of time outdoors.

**Theme:** Explain that one theme of the book is focus. Tell students that focus is being able to pay attention to something specific. Explain that it can be hard to stay focused on something when there are a lot of distractions.

Have students read “Brisket’s Tips for Focusing (on Online Learning)” (pp. 62-63). Review each tip and have students find evidence in the text that Miryam has—or has not—followed it. Then have students use what they learned to complete the “Fixes for Better Focus” worksheet.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Fixes for Better Focus

Dylan is having trouble with online learning. He finds it hard to pay attention to his teacher and to stay focused in class.

Read the story about Dylan's school day below. When you see something that might make it hard for him to focus, underline it. In the blanks below the story, write what Dylan could do differently in order to focus better. The first one has been completed for you!

Dylan sits down to start online school. He puts his handheld video game system on his desk next to his computer. The TV in the room is tuned to his favorite channel. He tries to focus on his teacher, but he keeps getting distracted.

After social studies and science, Dylan's class gets a 30-minute break. Dylan stays in his seat for the entire break and visits some websites. When break is over, he tries to log into art class, but realizes he is supposed to be in music instead. He can't find his recorder, so he ends up being 10 minutes late for class.

After lunch, Dylan has math. It's his least favorite subject. Being in math class for a whole hour feels impossible. Dylan's teacher scolds him several times for getting out of his seat.

By the end of the day, Dylan's eyes hurt and he has a headache. He is very sleepy. Tomorrow, he will do it all over again.

1. Dylan should not have video games or toys at his workspace.

2. \_\_\_\_\_  
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3. \_\_\_\_\_  
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4. \_\_\_\_\_  
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5. \_\_\_\_\_  
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6. \_\_\_\_\_  
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