

Teaching with *Helper Hounds*: *Louis Helps Ajani Fight Racism*

Connection to Standards

Students will ask and answer questions about key details in a text.
(CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.1)

Preview the Book

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

Engage Prior Knowledge:

Have students think of a time that they or someone they know was bullied. Have students consider whether this person was bullied for being “different” in some way. Invite them to share what they did, or could have done, to help stop the bullying.

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. Allow students to share their understanding of the words, then provide them with a definition. As you come across each word in the text, have students identify the context clues that help them figure out the word’s meaning. Challenge students to think of synonyms for each word.

Chapter 1: *double-take, snout, standards, assume, quirk*

Chapter 2: *wandering, fend, burrs, hoisting*

Chapter 3: *woozy, glimpse, lavender, foster, obedience*

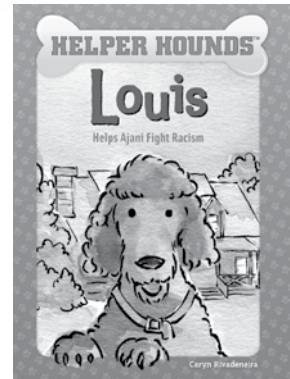
Chapter 4: *flunked, ace, citizen, transformation, regal*

Chapter 5: *issue, crouched, wriggled, handy, unity*

Chapter 6: *rabies, shuddered, brindle, vicious, distracted*

Chapter 7: *budge, shrugged*

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.



Lexile: 610 Words: 6,460

During Reading

Craft and Structure: Ask students the following questions while reading:

- Chapter 1: Who is narrating the story? What do we learn about Louis in this chapter? What words would you use to describe him?
- Chapter 2: What do you think it was like for Louis to live with his first family? In what ways did that experience make him stronger?
- Chapter 3: How do you think Louis feels when Lisa and Doe bring him home? What are some things he learns from Vincent that might ultimately help him become a better Helper Hound?
- Chapter 4: What was the author’s purpose for writing this chapter? What do we learn about the steps a dog needs to take to become a Helper Hound? Do you think it’s easy or hard for a dog to become one?
- Chapter 5: Who is Ajani? Who is Brett? What problem is Ajani having with Brett?
- Chapter 6: What assumptions do the students make about Louis and Vincent when they see their pictures? Are they correct? Have you ever “judged a book by its cover” and turned out to be wrong? How can Lisa’s showing the class the photos of Louis and Vincent help combat racism?
- Chapter 7: How does working together to save Louis help Ajani and Brett become friends? Do you think Brett has changed by the end of the book? If so, how? Do you think all people can 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, have students identify any characters that made an assumption about a different character or had someone make an assumption about them. Have students write down who, what, where, when, why, and how: **who** the characters were, **what** the assumption was, **where** and **when** the assumption was made, **why** the assumption was made, and how the assumption made the victim feel. Then have students determine whether each character was correct in their assumption and if not, how they were proven wrong.

Reflection

Theme: Explain that a major theme of the book is racism. Tell students that racism is when people are treated differently or poorly because of their race, or when people believe that some races are better than others. Allow students to share whether they or someone they know was ever a victim of racism, and how it made them/the victim feel.

Persuasive: Have students read “Louis’s Tips for Overcoming Racism” (pp. 58-60). Review each tip and have students find evidence in the text that a character or characters have followed it. Then have students write a paragraph describing something they do to help fight racism.

Fact vs. Opinion: Write the words *fact* and *opinion* on the board. Explain to students that a fact is something that is true, while an opinion is someone’s beliefs or feelings about something. Have students read “Fun Facts About Standard Poodles” (pp. 61-64). Then have them use what they’ve learned to complete the “Fact vs. Opinion” worksheet.

Name _____

Fact vs. Opinion

Read the following 8 sentences about Standard Poodles. In the blank before each sentence, write an F if the sentence is a fact and an O if it's an opinion. For numbers 9 and 10, write your own fact and opinion about Poodles.

- _____ 1. Poodles are great swimmers.
- _____ 2. Poodles have very thick and curly fur.
- _____ 3. Poodles are very cute dogs.
- _____ 4. There are three varieties of Poodles.
- _____ 5. Poodles are a lot of fun to play with.
- _____ 6. Poodles look better when they get haircuts.
- _____ 7. Poodles are originally from Germany.
- _____ 8. Poodles are great at obedience and learning tricks.
- _____ 9. _____
- _____ 10. _____