

Belle's Challenge

Teacher's Activity Book



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INTRODUCTION

This activity book complements *Belle's Challenge*, a novel written from a dog's point of view, which empowers children ages 8-12 to face the challenges brought on by moving to new places, meeting new people, jealousy, and dealing with bullies.

The activities and discussion questions provide thought provoking opportunities for children to interact with their parents, teachers, classmates, and friends about issues raised in the novel. They provide ways to foster understanding and develop tools that can help people make positive changes at a personal and community level. Parents, teachers and other youth leaders will find practical tools for helping children overcome the impact of negative behaviors that, if left unchanged, could create lifelong scars.

The activities and discussion questions can be used as enrichment exercises in the classroom or home school setting, in small counseling group discussions, around the dinner table, in youth gatherings at houses of worship, and among youth related civic organizations that promote community involvement.

About the Book:

Belle's Challenge
by Connie Gotsch
Illustrated by: John Cogan
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Moving to New Mexico is quite a shock for Belle and her owner, Darcy Simmons; so very different from their home in Illinois. But Darcy and Belle quickly make new friends in their neighbors Susan and her Airedale Terrier, Jazzy. Life would be great in their new home, if it wasn't for the dog-hating girl across the way, Emily Robinson. If that wasn't bad enough for Belle, there's no agility club in town and Darcy starts training her and Buster to become therapy dogs, whatever that is.

Learning to be a therapy dog for Belle is so different than becoming a great agility dog, especially when she doesn't understand the importance. Buster seems to be a natural at it, and that irritates Belle even more. When Emily falsely accuses Belle of biting her, Belle's life takes a turn for the worse. Can Belle overcome the challenges of being a good therapy dog, while handling the meanness she and Darcy face from Emily?

Chapter 1

Just No Fun

1. Have you, a family member or friend ever been car sick? If so, what happened?
2. If you could invent a way to successfully keep people from getting car sick, what would your invention look like and how would it operate?
3. Have you ever had to move to another school, city or state? If so, what did you learn from that experience?
4. Buster told Belle to think of something nice to help her forget how bad her belly felt. What do you do to take your mind off of feeling sick, and how well does it work?
5. What would you miss the most if you had to move away?
6. Darcy hoped her new school would have a soccer team and a chorus. If you had to move, what would you like your new school to have?
7. Darcy's mom and dad were teasing Darcy when they told her that New Mexico looks like Mars and that she could ask Martians on lamp posts in Roswell what Mars looks like. How do the adults who live in your house tease you? How do you know they're teasing?
8. Belle's sensitive nose lets her tell how people feel by the way they smell. How do you tell how people feel?



Activity:

Imagine that your family or someone you know is going to make a long trip to a new place. Make an activity book with at least seven activities in that could help to keep their minds pleasantly occupied on the trip. Make a copy of your activity book and share it with someone who really is going on a long trip.

Chapter 2

A Warning

1. When Belle jumped out of the car, she smelled a wonderful odor. What scents have you smelled that make you feel good? Why do they made you feel so good?
2. Katherine liked Buster as soon as she saw the dog. How did she act that made Buster know she liked him?
3. Katherine's big sister, Emily, wanted Katherine to stay away from the dogs. Have you ever had someone tell you to stop doing something you enjoyed doing? What did you want to do when they told you that?
4. Buster makes friends quickly, and he doesn't let Emily's rude behavior bother him. He just trots away. What if you were in Buster's place? How would you have reacted to Emily's rudeness?
5. Emily was afraid of dogs and acted like she hated them. Why do you think people who are afraid of an animal or another person sometimes act like they hate them?
6. If you were moving to a new place, how would you like the neighbors to greet you? If they acted like Mrs. Robinson, how would that make you feel? What could Mrs. Robinson have done to make her new neighbors feel more welcome?
7. Belle saw Darcy give Susan a sizing up look. When you meet someone new, how do you size them up? How do you know when other people are sizing you up?
8. Jazzy and Belle were proud of how well their people played soccer. If you had a dog, what would your pet be proud of about you and your family?
9. There are strict rules about when dogs can be outside in Darcy's new town. If you were going to create pet rules for your town, what would the rules say about dogs being outside?

Activity:

Pretend you are a welcoming committee for new people coming into your town. Create a list of all the gifts you would bring them and the things you would tell them to make them feel welcome.

Chapter 3

Tryouts

1. Belle felt like the area for agility in her yard was too small. She wished it could be much larger. Have you ever felt like you didn't have enough room to do something you wanted to? If so, how did you handle the situation?

2. Darcy understood how cramped Belle felt in the narrow enclosure. How does it make you feel when someone understands what you're going through? Tell about a time when someone helped you or you helped someone else by understanding.

3. When Emily told Darcy, "You better be good, honey, if you want to make our team," she didn't use the word "honey" in a nice way. She was trying to put Darcy down and make her feel scared. Why do you think Emily talked that way to Darcy?

4. When Emily sprained her ankle and couldn't play, how do you think Emily felt? How do you think Darcy felt when Emily got hurt?

5. Emily falsely accused Darcy's parents of bribing the coach to put Darcy on the team. If someone accused you of something that wasn't true, how would you feel?

6. When Emily made that false accusation, Susan defended Darcy by telling her that Darcy won the position on the team fair and square. Have you ever had a friend stand up for you? How did it make you feel? If you ever stood up for someone else, how did the person react to your support?

7. Emily's dad is the mayor, and she uses his title to make people feel like she's powerful. Does Emily really feel powerful? Explain your answer.

8. Susan tells Darcy that Emily makes up lies about people she's afraid of. Spreading lies about other people is one way of being a bully. If you know someone is spreading lies about someone else, what are some good ways to stop those lies from spreading?



Activity:

Play detective for a whole week. Every time someone tells you that someone else did or said something and you wonder if it's true, go to the person who is supposed to have said or done it and ask if really happened. One of the best ways to stop someone who spreads false rumors is to check out the story yourself so you don't pass on information that isn't true.

Chapter 4

A Lucky Encounter

1. When you get really hot, what do you like to drink? Why is it important to drink plenty of fluids when you're out in the sun?
2. Even though Emily has been mean to her, Darcy hopes Emily didn't break her ankle. What does that tell you about what kind of person Darcy is?
3. Darcy's dad tells her there are big mouths in every town, and Darcy decides she can ignore Emily. Belle doesn't think ignoring Emily is a good idea. What do you think Belle has detected with her nose that tells her Emily is trouble?
4. Darcy's mom couldn't find a job as a counselor, so she decided to apply for a job as a library aide. Have you ever had to do something you didn't want to do because it was the only choice available? How did it work out?
5. When Darcy, Belle and Buster walked with Susan and Jazzy along the irrigation ditch bank, they found out that the townspeople were friendly and cared about them. How do you know when someone is being friendly and caring to you?
6. Buster disobeyed Darcy by jumping into the ditch. He didn't think there was any danger. Do you think that was a smart thing for Buster to do? If you ever did something that the person in charge told you not to do, what happened?
7. Darcy tried to catch Buster as the current carried him under a bridge, but she couldn't do it. How do you think that made Darcy feel? Do you think Buster was scared? How do you know?
8. When Darcy first met Mrs. Merriwether by the irrigation ditch, why do you think she was so embarrassed? Have your pets ever embarrassed you?

Activity:

Take a survey of your neighborhood to find out how safe it is. Draw a map of the houses, sidewalks, trees, streams, whatever is in your neighborhood. Rate each area according to safety. Choose a number or letter system that works for you. For example, 1 could be safe, 2 could be use caution, 3 could be a little dangerous, and 4 could be very dangerous. Make your map available to anyone in the neighborhood who wants one.



Chapter 5

Near Miss and Ice Cream

1. Darcy acted brave, but she was afraid to attend her new school for the first time. How did you feel the first time you went to a new school? What helped you adjust?
2. Jazzy knew how to open a door handle with her nose. What things can your pets do?
3. Belle wondered if she should be obedient and stay home so Margaret wouldn't worry about her and Buster. She decided it was more important to be with Darcy in case the girl needed her. Have you ever done something you knew was against the rules because someone you cared about needed you? If so, what happened?
4. Katherine hates to read. How do you feel about reading? What makes you feel that way?
5. Emily made fun of Darcy when she asked, "Can you sing any better than you can play soccer, Darcy?" Making fun of someone is one way of bullying them. How do you think Darcy felt? If someone made fun of you, how would you feel and what would you do?
6. Jazzy puts up with Susan's screechy voice because she loves Susan. Are there people in your life who put up with things that aren't perfect about you because they love you? Do you think that's a good idea? Who or why not?
7. Jazzy is street wise. She knows what to do to keep from getting caught by the dog catcher. Do you have friends who are street wise? If so, what do you think made them learn to be street wise?
8. Josie in the ice cream shop was kind to Jazzy, Belle and Buster and didn't turn them over to the dog catcher. She thought her sister-in-law, Mrs. Robinson, should pay more attention to her own children than try to round up loose dogs. Do you think Josie did the right thing by protecting the dogs? Explain.
9. Jazzy invites Belle and Buster to go with her to steal meat from a restaurant kitchen. Belle and Buster know that stealing is wrong, so they decide not to go with Jazzy. Have you ever had a friend invite you to go with them and do something that you knew was wrong? How did you respond?
10. Emily called Darcy a bad name in music class. How do you think Darcy felt? Have you ever felt like calling someone a bad name? Explain.

Activity:

Hold a singing contest among your friends or your family members. Choose a familiar song. Write new words to the song that tell the story about a time you went on an adventure to help someone. If you never had an experience like that, use your imagination. Give everyone an award for their song. Choose award names such as most original, funniest, best words, scariest, or most likely to get you in trouble.

Chapter 6 Challenges

1. When Margaret told Darcy she got the job as a library aide, how do you think she felt about the new job? How would you feel if that happened to you?
2. When Darcy learns that Susan is going to do a social studies project that involves Jazzy helping kids learn to read, she thinks doing a project like that would be a good way to keep Belle out of trouble. Have you ever had someone suggest that you get involved in a project to keep you busy? Do you think it would be fun to be volunteered for a project? Why or why not?
3. Belle wasn't sure she would be able to stay as calm as a therapy dog had to be. Is staying calm a challenge for you? If so, what makes it hard to stay calm? How could you help someone who has trouble staying calm?
4. Katherine isn't afraid of dogs because her dad told her she doesn't have to fear them. Have you ever stopped being afraid of something because of what your parents told you? If so, how did your life change?
5. Even when he doesn't like to do something, Buster manages to have fun at it. Do you know people like that? If so, how does it feel to be around them?
6. Guadalupe calls Buster a clown and says he'll be great with kids. This makes Belle feel a little sad. Even though Guadalupe thought Belle did a good job, she didn't compliment Belle like she'd complimented Buster. Have you ever felt jealous or sad when a friend got more attention than you or when they did something with more flare than you? If so, how did that change the way you felt about the activity or about your friend?
7. Some of the things in the test Belle took to be a therapy dog frightened her and made her a little mad. She got through the test by thinking of similar things she'd faced and by telling herself that Darcy wouldn't expose her to people who would hurt her. When you take a test that makes you a little scared or upset, what do you do or think that helps you get through it?
8. If you were someone's pet, would you like to be a therapy dog? Why or why not?



Activity:

Find out if your community or a town nearby has a therapy dog program. Learn more about it, and share the information with your teacher. Ask your teacher to help you arrange for someone from the therapy dog program to speak to your class or, even better, to your whole school.

Chapter 7

New Skills

1. Buster suggested that if they panted at the ice cream shop, Josie might give them some ice cream. Have you ever acted a certain way in hopes that someone would give you something? What ways of acting work best to get you what you want?
2. When Emily claimed that the dogs couldn't be in a restaurant, Margaret smiled at her and politely replied that there was nothing illegal with them being outside the restaurant. Do you think it was hard for Margaret to stay calm when she responded to Emily? What are some good ways to respond when people claim you're not allowed to do something that you know is okay to do?
3. Emily falsely accused Belle and Buster of snapping at her the day she sprained her ankle. Darcy didn't let Emily get away with the lie. What would you do if someone falsely accused you or your pets of doing something?
4. Buster snatched the cookie Josie offered him out of her hand, but Belle took the cookie more carefully with a doggie thank you. When Josie congratulated Belle for having such good manners, Belle looked down her nose at Buster. Why do you think Belle acted that way toward Buster? How do you feel when people look down their noses at you?
5. Josie thinks that Katherine might read better with the help of a therapy dog. It would give Katherine good discipline and support. Belle knows that without discipline she couldn't have learned to be a good agility dog. How does discipline help you perform better? What are some of the best ways you have learned to discipline yourself?
6. It took Belle a little while, but she finally figured out that Darcy wanted her to place her paw on the book when Darcy tapped. How do you feel when you master a new skill?
7. It took Buster longer to learn to put his paw on the book when Darcy tapped. He learned the skill because Belle told him what to do. Darcy gave him three liver flavored treats for learning the skill, but she'd only been giving Belle two treats. Why do you think Darcy gave Buster more treats? How do you feel when someone else gets a better reward than you for doing the same thing?
8. Belle figured out the commands Darcy gave to both dogs faster than Buster did. But at the end of the training session, Darcy gave Buster a compliment that made Belle feel like her accomplishments weren't being noticed. Did Darcy really leave Belle out, or was Belle just letting her feelings get hurt? What did Darcy tell Belle that Belle could have taken as a compliment?

Activity:

See if you can train your pet to do a trick. You will have to repeat a simple direction lots of times and provide treats every time your pet performs the trick. Have lots of patience with your animal. When you succeed in teaching your pet the trick, have your animal perform it for the entire family. Then think of another trick you'd like to teach your pet and ask your family to help you with the training.

Chapter 8

Emily Strikes Back

1. Belle found herself in a new place at the library with new people and new smells. She wasn't sure what it would be like. If you had been there, what could you have done to help Belle feel welcome?
2. When Belle discovered that Jazzy already knew the paw on the book trick, she felt a little jealous. What things make you feel jealous?
3. Katherine thought Belle wasn't very friendly because she didn't bounce around like Buster. Belle wished Katherine would understand that she was friendly. Have people ever gotten the wrong idea about you? If so, what did you do to help them see what you're really like?
4. When Katherine had trouble sounding out a word, Buster nuzzled her and wagged his tail. Belle gave her a whiskers kiss. What do you do to encourage other people when they're having a hard time? How do other people encourage you?
5. Emily didn't want Katherine to be around the therapy dogs at the library. When she discovered that Katherine had gotten help from the dogs anyway, Emily became angry. She said mean things to Darcy, stomped on Buster's tail, and kicked at Belle. Then she told a lie by saying that Belle snapped at her. What do you think Emily's consequences should be for behaving like a bully? What mean things have you seen bullies do?
6. When Emily continued to falsely accuse Belle of biting, lots of people who saw what really happened stood up for Belle. Emily got back at them by saying her father was going to cut the dog therapy program. How hard is it to stand up for other people when you know there could be consequences?
7. Darcy thinks it's her fault that things got out of control at the library because she stood up for her dogs. When Emily called them filthy and biters, Darcy said her dogs were probably cleaner than Emily and that they didn't bite. Do you think Darcy could have handled the situation better? If so, how?
8. Susan tells Darcy that Emily is targeting her. How would you feel if you knew that someone was out to get you? Who could you call on for help?

Activity:

You will need the cooperation of your teacher and classmates for this activity. Ask your teacher to invite an expert on handling bullies to come to your class and talk about what to do when people bully others. For the next week, everywhere you and your classmates go, practice the things the expert taught you so that you can help stop bullying. Afterwards, have a class discussion about what techniques worked best.



Chapter 9

Buster Speaks His Mind

1. When Belle's mind buzzes with activity and she can't stop its chattering, she licks her paws. What do you do when your mind chatters?

2. Buster tells Belle exactly what he thinks about her poor behavior. He said things that Belle needed to hear, but she didn't want to listen. Do you have a friend who tells you the truth even when you don't want to hear it? Is a friend like that valuable? Why or why not?

3. Belle got so upset at the library that she didn't notice when Katherine's scent changed from scared to happier. What clues do you miss when you let yourself get upset?

4. Belle feels happy when she does agility. What activity lifts your spirits?

5. When Belle's back legs nicked the edge of the hoop she was jumping through, she immediately jumped through the hoop again. The second time she did it perfectly. When you don't do something right the first time, do you give up, or do you try again right away? Which feels better – giving up or trying again? Explain.

6. When Darcy was working with her dogs on agility in the yard, Emily asked what she was doing. Darcy ignored her, so Emily threw stones at them. They hit Belle as she jumped through the hoop and made her fall. If people threw stones at your school or house, what would happen to them? Why is it dangerous to throw stones?

7. After the stone throwing incident, Margaret and Darcy talked about things that Darcy could have done differently. In the process, they came up with ideas for solutions that Darcy hadn't thought of before. Who helps you talk over problems? What's one good solution you've come up with after you talked over a problem with someone who cared?

8. Darcy thinks if she had never tried out for chorus or soccer, she wouldn't have problems with Emily. Margaret assured her that Emily's problems had nothing to do with Darcy's choices. Why do you think people try to blame themselves for things that aren't their fault?



Activity:

Think about a problem that you have. Talk over the problem with a friend or with someone in your family. See how many ideas you can come up with that could solve the problem in a good way. Try out one of the best solutions and see how it works. Then if some of your friends are having a problem, offer to help them talk it over and see how many positive solutions you find together. After your friends try out one of the solutions, discuss how it worked. If it was a success, share some yummy snacks with your friends to celebrate.

Chapter 10

Tough Decision

1. When Susan saw Emily, she invited her to help them wash the dogs. Emily refused. She told them the therapy dog program would be gone by Christmas, because the city council thought it was a waste of money. What could Darcy and Susan do to find out if what Emily said is really true?
2. In the library, Belle tries to be like Buster, but she can't. She doesn't have the same kind of personality. Is it smart for Belle to try to act just like Buster? Why or why not?
3. When Katherine comes to the library to read, Belle is the only one available to be her therapy dog. She's afraid Katherine might hurt her, but Katherine is gentle. Have you ever thought someone might be mean to you, but they turned out to be nice? How did that change the way you felt about that person?
4. Josie's kind smell makes Belle feel homesick for Auntie Ellen, Painter and Misty. Have you ever felt homesick? When was the last time you felt that way? What helped you feel less homesick?
5. When Belle nuzzled Katherine's hand, it made Katherine feel less scared about reading. What do people do that helps you feel less scared?
6. Even when Belle's mind wandered, the fact that she was beside Katherine helped the girl feel safe and comfortable while she read. Have you ever helped someone by just being there? Has someone helped you by just being with you? Explain.
7. When the mayor told Katherine and others at the library that the reading program would probably end because the city couldn't afford it, Katherine felt upset. When she tried to argue with her father, he was not pleased. What did Katherine do to show she was upset, and how did her father's face reflect his feelings?
8. Josie encouraged Katherine to enter the storytelling festival and talk about her Great Aunt Katherine Wright. When Katherine asked Belle to listen to her story, Belle showed her support by pressing her nose against Katherine's wrist. How do you show other people that you will support them? Why do you think the dogs' help was important to Katherine?

Activity:

Think about someone in your family history who has done something important. Find out more about the person by talking with family members. Then write a story explaining who the person was and how their accomplishments made a difference in others' lives. Then tell the story to your family.

Chapter 11

Searching and Trying

1. When Darcy learns that she and her mom will join others at the city council meeting to ask that the reading therapy dog program be extended, she tells Belle, "If the program gets cut, I don't think it will break your heart." Belle feels bad, because she thinks Darcy is disappointed in her. Have you ever felt bad because you thought someone was disappointed in you? Were they really disappointed? Explain.

2. Belle didn't enjoy the reading therapy dog program and didn't think she was good at it, but she tried to participate because it meant so much to Darcy. Have you ever tried to do something you didn't enjoy and weren't very good at? If so, what happened?

3. Do you think some people are better suited for certain activities than others? Why or why not?

4. When Mrs. Robinson's best friend repeats the false rumor that a reading therapy dog bit a child in the library, Belle blames herself because of the way she acted when Emily kicked her. Have you ever thought if you acted a different way you could have stopped something bad from happening even if it wasn't your fault? Why do you think some people try to take the blame when it wasn't their fault?

5. Belle tried to flop down like Buster did when they demonstrated how the reading therapy dog program worked, but she fell instead. Why do you think she tried to imitate Buster? Which is smarter, imitating someone or acting like yourself? Explain.

6. When Belle heard the mayor talk about a motion at the city council meeting, she thought they were supposed to move. So she stood up. Darcy had to tell her to sit down. Have you ever done something because you misunderstood what someone said? If so, what happened?

7. How hard do you think it was for Councilwoman Sawyer to vote yes to continuing the reading program when she knew the mayor didn't want it? Have you ever felt so strongly about something that you stood up for it even when the person in charge was opposed to it? If so, what happened and how did you feel about what you did?

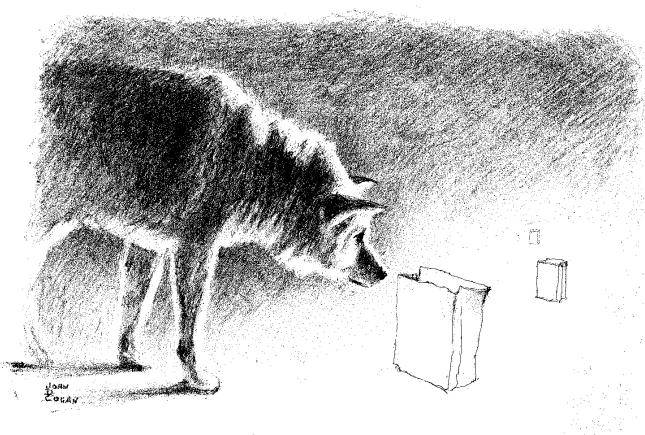
8. Josie thinks that the mayor doesn't want to keep the Reading Education Assistance Dog program because he's stubborn. Do you think she's right? What other reason could the mayor have for not wanting to keep the program?

Activity:

Think of an important program that you would like your city to adopt. Find out more about the program and about how it would meet the needs of people in your community. Ask your teacher if you can present the idea to your classmates. If they think it would be a great program for your city, ask your teacher to help you make a presentation about it to your city council. Tell your parents about what you are doing and see if they will go to the city council meeting with you.

Chapter 12

A Lesson



1. Luminarias looked like stars to Darcy. They reminded Belle of barbecue fires. A luminaria is a paper bag partly filled with sand that holds a small candle. How many different ways can you describe luminarias?
2. When Darcy and Emily sang together, their voices didn't blend well. How hard do you think it would be to sing a duet with someone if your voices are very different? Would it be hard to do a class project with someone when your work and study styles were different? Why or why not?
3. How do you know Darcy was trying to make the duet sound better?
4. How do you think Mrs. Merriwether felt after Emily tried to make Darcy look bad when they sang the duet? If you were the teacher, how would you have handled the situation?
5. When Emily deliberately tried to sing off key to make Darcy look bad, Buster helped Belle understand that she'd been acting in a similar way about the dog therapy reading program. How hard do you think it was for Belle to admit she'd been acting a lot like Emily? Have you ever had a poor attitude about something? If so, who helped you realize you had a poor attitude, and what did you do to change?
6. When you can't do something the same way other people can, does it mean you're not good at doing it, or does it mean that you can learn to be good at it in a different way? How hard would it be to do something in a way that's different from everyone else? Explain.
7. Why do you think Belle is lucky to have a friend like Buster, who gives her good advice?

Activity:

If your family likes to sing, chose a few songs and ask them to practice the songs with you. If no one in your family sings, find some friends who like to sing and have them practice the songs with you. When you have the songs well learned, stand out in front of your house and sing to people as they walk by. Notice the different kinds of reactions you get. If you get lots of good responses, ask your parents if you can sing your songs to people in old folks' homes or at your church or special events. Spend a few minutes telling them how you learned to cooperate on the project even though you're all different.

Chapter 13

Another Try

1. Has anyone ever made you feel uncomfortable being in your own back yard? If that were to happen, how could you solve the problem in a nice way?

2. Mrs. Merriwether didn't let Emily lead the alto section after she sang off key on purpose at the concert to confuse Darcy. Darcy worried that Emily would take it out on her during soccer season. If you could give Darcy some suggestions, what would you tell her to do?

3. Belle and Buster helped Katherine practice her story for the storytelling festival. Have you ever helped a friend or has someone helped you when you practiced doing something scary? Explain.

4. In Katherine's story, her dad's great aunt gave a piggy bank to Johnny Eaton and told him to put the pennies in it, and the dollars would take care of themselves. What do you think she meant by that? Do you think it's good advice? Why or why not?

5. When Mrs. Robinson tried to pull Katherine away from the dogs, they tried to act sweet and cute so Katherine could stay. When Buster pawed Mrs. Robinson's knee, the woman yelled "Stop," and shoved Buster. Why do you think she acted that way? How do you think Buster felt about being pushed? What would you do if someone pushed you?

6. How do you think Katherine felt when her mother tried to take her away from her human and dog friends? If you were Katherine, how would you have reacted?

7. Mrs. Robinson doesn't think dogs should be trusted because a dog once bit her. Do you think she's right not to trust dogs anymore? Why or why not?

8. When Mrs. Robinson claimed that Darcy provoked Emily into throwing stones at her earlier, Katherine told her mom that wasn't true. How hard do you think it was for Katherine to tell the truth? How hard is it for you to tell the truth when an adult doesn't have the facts right?

9. When Katherine came over to their yard and Belle was helping her practice for the storytelling festival, Belle realized she did her best when she acted like herself and listened so she would know what Katherine needed. Why do you think it's important to pay attention and act like yourself instead of somebody else?

Activity:

Make a list of all the good qualities you have. If you have trouble thinking of many, ask your family and friends for help. Number each quality. You may be surprised to discover you have more good qualities than you thought you had. Choose two or three of those qualities that best define who you are. Now write down two or three qualities that best define a friend of yours. Are they the same as yours or different? Draw a design that illustrates your best qualities. Draw another design that illustrates your friend's best qualities. Let the designs remind you that you both have wonderful qualities that make you unique and special, and it's okay to be just the way you are.

Chapter 14 Progress?

1. Buster and Belle identified people by their scents such as snapdragons and lightning. What scents would you give some people you know if you could smell as well as a dog? Why would you choose those scents?
2. Belle had to learn to pay attention so she could pick up the emotions of the children who read to her. Then she would know how to respond to them. At first Belle forgot to pay attention. Is it sometimes hard for you to pay attention? What do you do to stay focused?
3. Aunt Josie helped Katherine research her story for the storytelling festival. They went to the museum and the bank and talked to old people who knew Katherine's dad's great aunt. If you were going to tell a story about one of your relatives, which relative would you tell a story about? Where would you go to research the story?
4. Belle tried to show Katherine how much she liked her story. That made Katherine feel more confident, and she was able to continue telling her story. What do people do to make you feel more confident? How do you encourage people?
5. How hard do you think it was for Katherine to tell her story when her father and sister came to the library? How do you feel when someone walks in and finds you practicing something important?
6. Belle didn't want to be a helper to the kids who came into the library until she smelled Katherine coming. Why do you think she was excited to see Katherine? How excited do you think Katherine was to see Belle?
7. In Katherine's story, she told about how Johnny Eaton's father opened an account at the local bank and how Great Aunt Katherine gave Johnny a piggy bank to save his money. Do you have a piggy bank or a bank account? Why do you think it's important to save money?



Activity:

Spend one day seeing how well you can pay attention to other people so you know how they are feeling. Then react to them in a way that will help them know you care. At the end of the day, ask yourself how you felt and how people responded to you. Try the experiment for a few more days. Notice how much easier it becomes to pay attention when you practice.

Chapter 15

On Stage

1. Belle feels proud when she hears Mr. Robinson say how much Katherine's reading has improved . Have you ever helped someone and felt proud when you saw them improve? Have you ever made other people proud when they helped you to improve? Explain.

2. When Mr. Robinson and his wife are talking, Mr. Robinson reveals that his wife has a phobia about dogs. Do you know someone who has a phobia, a huge fear, about something? If so, how does it affect the way they act?

3. When Mr. Robinson tells his wife that there's no shame in getting counseling and that they should take Emily to someone who can help her, do you think he's right? What do you think a counselor does? Have you or someone you know ever gone to a counselor? If so, how did it help?

4. How do you think Mrs. Robinson felt after Mr. Robinson told her to let Josey continue taking Katherine to the library for the Reading Education Assistance Dogs program?

5. When Emily accused Belle of sneezing all over her calf and claimed that Belle bit her earlier, Susan called her a baby and said Emily knew that Belle didn't really bite her. How do you think Emily felt when Susan told her that? Could Susan have said it in a different way to get her point across?

6. When Katherine started to tell her story and got scared, Buster and Belle raced up and stood beside her. Katherine was able to keep telling her story then. After awhile, she let go of Buster, but she kept holding on to Belle. Why do you think she held on to Belle instead of Buster? How do you think that made Belle feel?

7. When Katherine heard her mother say, "Andrew," and heard her father tell her mom, "Shh," how hard do you think it was for Katherine to stay focused on her story? How much do you think Belle helped her by standing beside her and letting Katherine touch her neck?

8. Even though Belle helped Katherine a lot, when Katherine used several hand motions that made Belle duck, Belle wanted to give up therapy work. Do you think Belle still felt that way by the end of Katherine's story? Why or why not?

Activity:

If your family has a family reunion or a big get together during the holidays, suggest that you have a storytelling festival as part of that event. Have people volunteer to interview certain people in your family and write a story about the people they interview. Pose for a huge family picture after the storytelling festival. Put everyone who told a story in the front row, and have them stand beside the person whose story they told.

Chapter 16

Showdown

1. Belle thought Emily smelled like rotten potatoes when she told a lie. Can you tell when someone is telling a lie? If so, how?
2. When Emily falsely accused Belle of biting her, Susan stood up for Belle and told what really happened. How do you think that made Belle feel? How would you feel if someone stood up for you?
3. Belle remembered that long ago she had bit Uncle Jim and almost nipped Darcy in her sleep. These are secrets she doesn't want people to know. How do you think people would have reacted if they had known these secrets about Belle?
4. When Katherine calls her sister, Emily, the biggest jerk on the planet, Emily grabs for Katherine, who pushes her away. Katherine loses her footing and tumbles into the water. Do you think Emily meant for Katherine to fall into the water? Why or why not?
5. Jazzy doesn't like Mrs. Robinson, but she pulls her free from the brush in the river when Mrs. Robinson needs help. How hard do you think it was for Jazzy to swallow her dislike and save Mrs. Robinson? How hard do you think it was for Mrs. Robinson to accept being saved by a dog? Explain.
6. Buster tries to save Emily, but Emily is so scared she won't let go of Buster. That makes it harder for Buster to save her. Have you ever been so scared that you made it harder for others to help you? If so, tell what happened.
7. Belle didn't want to get wet, and she didn't want to jump in the water to save Katherine. But when she thought of how brave Katherine had been when she told her story on stage and how thankful Katherine had been for Belle's help, Belle knew she had to jump in the water and save her. Have you ever not wanted to do something but changed your mind? What made you change your mind?
8. When Emily finally admitted that Belle never bit her, did that make you feel any different about Emily? Why or why not?
9. When Darcy told Belle she wouldn't have to be a therapy dog any more, Belle felt like a giant garbage pile had fallen off her back. She realized it was okay to not be good at something. Do you think it's okay to not be good at something? Why or why not?

Activity:

Take a survey of everyone in your class or in your family. Ask them to tell you one way they helped someone else in need. Make a list of what each person did. Then create a certificate that recognizes each person for what they did. Get your friends or your brothers or sisters to help you make the certificates. At a special time in your classroom or at home, award the certificates to everyone. Talk about how you can recognize other people for the good things they do.