

## Title, Author, Copyright Date and Publisher

*A Dog's Life*  
Ann M. Martin  
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## About the Author

Ann M. Martin was born and raised in Princeton, New Jersey. She went to Smith College to become a teacher and later an editor and writer. Ann has won many awards including 2003 Newberry Honor Book, 2003 ALA Notable Children's Book, Publishers Weekly Best Book of the Year, Children's Magazine Best Book of the Year and American Bookseller Pick of the Lists just to name a few.

Her book *A Dog's Life* was not based off of any particular situation. She says she writes many books based on personal experiences and memories. This book has been nominated for the Young Hoosier Book Award. If you would like to know more about Ann M. Martin you can visit her website at [www.scholastic.com/annmartin/about/](http://www.scholastic.com/annmartin/about/)

## Annotation

Squirrel was born in a wheelbarrow, in a shed on the Merrion's lawn. She and her brother, Bone, were taught to hunt, hide and fear humans. After their mother leaves and never returns Bone and Squirrel leave the comfort of their shed to wander into the great unknown.

After walking and wandering, Bone and Squirrel are found by George and Marcy. A couple who think they want dogs but after an eventful night George drives them to the mall and throw them out the window. Here Bone is taken home by someone and Squirrel is left all alone.

After a while Squirrel finds Moon, a small dog, who becomes Squirrel's companion. Squirrel and Moon have many adventures from fighting with vicious hungry stray dogs to living in a town. Soon Moon is accidentally killed and Squirrel is injured.

Squirrel is then cleaned up and nursed back to health. She then is adopted by a family but at the end of the summer they leave Squirrel alone, again. After wandering for many years Squirrel is found by Susan, an elderly woman who thinks she doesn't need a dog. Soon they both figure out they need each other.

*A Dog's Life* is an insightful look into the life a stray dog would lead. It is a story of the way humans are and how dogs react to humans. Anyone who has ever wondered what dogs are thinking should read this book.

## Genre

Animals and Nature

## Point of View

First person

## Theme

The theme of this book is to always have hope that life will bring better things.

The title means that this is the story about the life of a dog told by a dog.

## Conflict

Internal Squirrel is lonely and doesn't like being alone and doesn't trust anyone.

External Squirrel has to fight for food, water, and to stay alive.

## Conflict Resolution

Internal Squirrel has Bone then Moon and finally trusts a human and has Susan

External Squirrel always survives; she finds food, water and the will to fight.

## Characters

Squirrel A medium sized stray dog

Mother Squirrel's mother

Bone Squirrel's brother, he is smaller than Squirrel but not much

Moon Squirrel's companion after Bone leaves, she is smaller than Squirrel

Matthias The Merrion's middle son who is gentle and takes care of Bone and Squirrel

George and Marcy Bone and Squirrel's first owner's, they are loving but incapable of taking care of dogs

Merrion's The family that owns the shed and yard where Squirrel is born

Becker's The family that adopts Squirrel for a summer and names her Daisy

Susan An elderly lady who adopts Squirrel and names her Addie

## Setting

Different towns and woods in America

## Interest/ Reading Level

Third Grade through Sixth Grade

## Book talk

Have you ever wondered what your dog was thinking when he tilts his head and gives you that look? I am sure many people have wondered that same thing, or thought; "If my dog could talk I wonder what he would say?" Well, this is the book for people who wonder what dogs are thinking. In the book *A Dog's Life* a stray dog named Squirrel takes the reader on a journey through the life and thoughts of a dog. Squirrel gives her readers just a glimpse into why dogs growl at approaching people, why they are protective of their food, and why they even pee on the carpet! If you would like to know some of what your dog is thinking this is the book for you.

## Discussion Questions

### Chapters

- |    |   |   |
|----|---|---|
| 1. | Pre-Reading<br>Post-Reading               | Have you ever wondered what dogs are thinking?<br>What is important to a dog?   |
| 2. | Pre-Reading<br>Post-Reading               | By looking at the title of this chapter what do you think this chapter will be about?<br>Where did mother decide to have her puppies? |
| 3. | Pre-Reading<br>Post-Reading               | What do you think the puppies will be like?<br>Who is Mine and what is she like?  |
| 4. | Pre-Reading<br>Post-Reading               | Do you think the puppies should worry about Mine?<br>What happened to Mine? What happened to Mother?                                  |
| 5. | Pre-Reading<br>Post-Reading               | What do you think will happen to Squirrel and Bone?<br>Describe Matthias.   |
| 6. | Pre-Reading<br>Post-Reading               | Where do you think Squirrel and Bone are going?<br>How are George and Marcy alike and how are they different?                         |
| 7. | Pre-Reading<br>and Marcy?<br>Post-Reading | How do you think Squirrel and Bone will do being pets to George<br>How did Squirrel and Bone do as pets, living inside a house?       |
| 8. | Pre-Reading<br>Post-Reading               | What do you think George is going to do with Squirrel and Bone?<br>What does Squirrel do for dinner?                                  |

9. Pre-Reading Post-Reading What do you think Squirrel is going to do without Bone? Describe Squirrel's new friend?
10. Pre-Reading Post-Reading Do you think Squirrel and Moon will stay by the mall? What did Squirrel and Moon find that was so wonderful? Did Squirrel and Moon stay by the Mall? Why?
11. Pre-Reading Post-Reading What do think will happen to Squirrel and Moon now that they are not by the mall? Describe the dogs that Squirrel and Moon met? What happened when they met these other dogs?
12. Pre-Reading Post-Reading Do you think Squirrel and Moon will be alright? Was Moon as bad of a hunter as Squirrel thought? Why?
13. Pre-Reading Post-Reading Where do you think Squirrel and Moon will go now? Where do Squirrel and Moon decide to stay? What is this place like?
14. Pre-Reading Post-Reading Do you think Squirrel and Moon will stay in town? Why do you think the ladies did what they did? Who were the people in the van?
15. Pre-Reading Post-Reading Do you think if Squirrel and Moon had stayed in town the van people would have caught them too? What happened to Squirrel and Moon? Why?
16. Pre-Reading Post-Reading What do you think will happen to Squirrel and Moon? Why do the Becker's keep calling Squirrel a summer dog? What do the Becker's name Squirrel?
17. Pre-Reading Post-Reading How do you think Squirrel will do being a pet? Where did the Becker's go? Why did they leave Squirrel?
18. Pre-Reading Post-Reading Do you think the Becker's will come back for Squirrel? Where does Squirrel spend the winter?
19. Pre-Reading Post-Reading Do you think Squirrel will find Bone? Did Squirrel find Bone? What happens to Squirrel over time?
20. Pre-Reading Post-Reading What do you think will happen to Squirrel now that so much time has passes? Why do you think Squirrel decided to trust the old woman?
21. Pre-Reading Post-Reading Do you think Squirrel will stay with the old woman? What is the old woman's name? What does she name Squirrel?

22. Pre-Reading Why do you think the old woman kept Squirrel?  
Post-Reading What does Susan and Addie do the next day?
23. Pre-Reading Do you think Squirrel is happy with Susan?  
Post-Reading Why does Mrs. Oliver tell Susan to get rid of Addie?
24. Pre-Reading Do you think Susan will keep Addie?  
Post-Reading Why do Susan and Addie need each other?

### Language

Peony	any of various plants or shrubs, having large, showy flowers, page 25
Den	the shelter of a wild animal page 24
Entwined	to wrap with, about, around, or together page 27
Foraging	looking for food by hunting, fishing, or gathering plants page 36
Ventured	to make or embark upon a venture; dare to go page 36
Rivulets	a small stream; streamlet; brook page 65
Hackles	to make someone angry page 77
Rheumy	pertaining to, causing, full of, or affected with sickness page 79
Scrapes	a difference of opinion, fight, or quarrel; scrap page 117
Gnawed	to bite or chew on, especially persistently page 133

### Indiana Academic Standards

Third Grade	English/ Language Arts	3.1; 3.2; 3.3
Forth Grade	English/ Language Arts	4.1; 4.2; 4.3
Fifth Grade	English/ Language Arts	5.1; 5.2; 5.3
Sixth Grade	English/ Language Arts	6.1; 6.2; 6.3

### Anticipation Statements

True	False	Questions
		All stray dogs are mean.
		Dogs like being alone.
		Dogs love humans and to be around them.
		All people love dogs.
		Dogs are not smart

### Read Aloud

Page 77 this is the part where Squirrel and Moon run into other dogs

Page 109 this is the part where Squirrel loses her companion Moon

If you like *A Dog's Life*, you'll love *Shiloh* by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor or *Souder* by William H. Armstrong.

## Across the Curriculum

**Language Arts** After reading *A Dog's Life* students could pick an animal and write a narrative about that animal's life in the perspective of that animal.

**Life Skills** After reading *A Dog's Life* students could go on a field trip to an animal shelter and volunteer for a day. Students could help with stray dogs and learn a little more about the life they lead.

## Book Activities

After reading *A Dog's Life* students could pick a scene from the story and complete a shoebox diorama depicting that scene of the story. After the diorama is finished student can right a paragraph about the scene they chose and why they chose it.

### Standards Covered:

Third Grade	English/ Language Arts	3.3.3; 3.5.5; 3.7.5; 3.7.6; 3.7.8
Forth Grade	English/ Language Arts	4.2.8; 4.4.2; 4.7.2; 4.7.9; 4.7.17
Fifth Grade	English/ Language Arts	5.3.2; 5.4.11; 5.7.0; 5.7.4; 5.7.6
Sixth Grade	English/ Language Arts	6.5.7; 6.2.3; 6.7.5; 6.7.10; 6.7.17

After reading *A Dog's Life* students are assigned to create a cereal box report. They are to get a cereal box and each side has different aspects of the story. The front: A cover for the book including title and author, side: characters and descriptions, other side: setting, back: summary of the story. Teachers should also grade for neatness and creativity. When cereal box reports are turned in each student can give a short presentation about their book using their cereal box report.

### Standards Covered:

Third Grade	English/ Language Arts	3.2.9; 3.2.4; 3.3.3; 3.6.1; 3.5.5
Forth Grade	English/ Language Arts	4.2.8; 4.2.9; 4.3.2; 4.4.2; 4.6.1
Fifth Grade	English/ Language Arts	5.3.2; 5.3.3; 5.3.8; 5.4.11; 5.4.5
Sixth Grade	English/ Language Arts	6.5.7; 6.5.6; 6.2.3; 6.2.4; 6.3.9

## Bibliography

<http://www.scholastic.com/annmartin/about/>

<http://dictionary.reference.com>

Michelle Craft

[michelle.craft@ftcsc.k12.in.us](mailto:michelle.craft@ftcsc.k12.in.us)

Edgewood Intermediate School