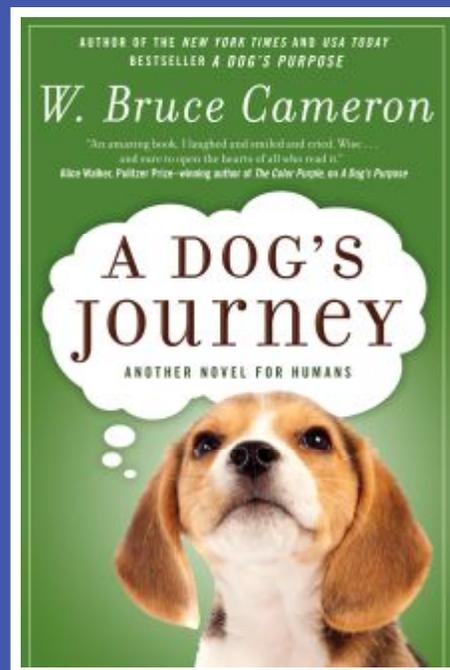
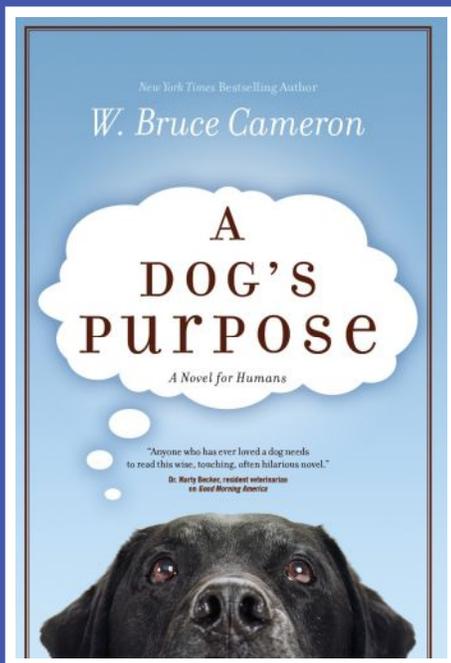


# A DOG'S PURPOSE

# A DOG'S JOURNEY



A STUDY GUIDE FOR INTERMEDIATE AND  
SECONDARY GRADES



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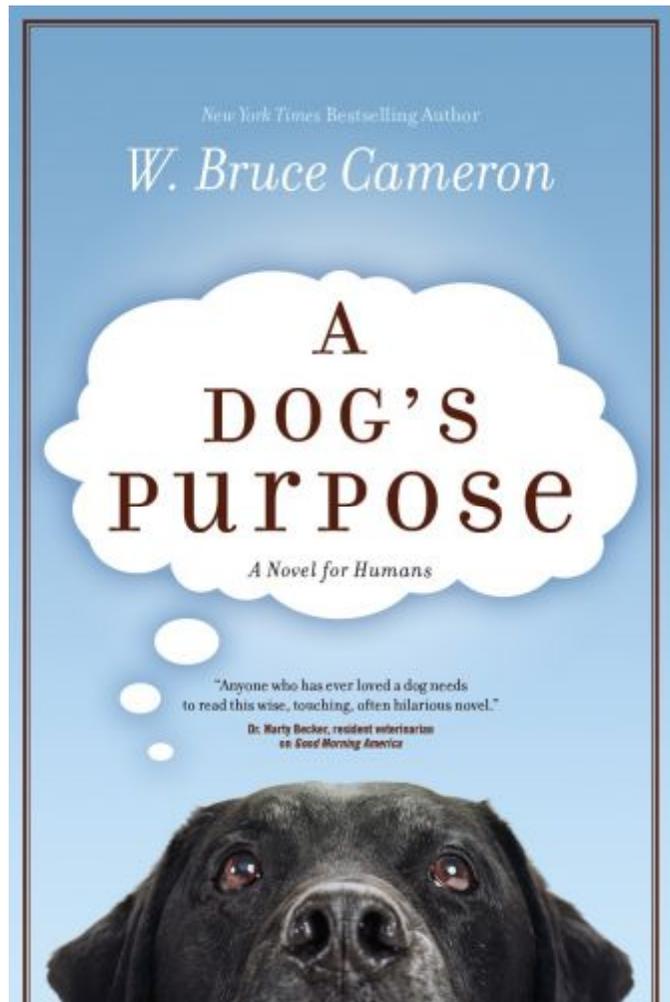
## How to Use This Study Guide

In a perfect world, teachers would have *A Dog's Purpose—A Novel for Humans*, and *A Dog's Journey—Another Novel for Humans*, in the classroom. The compare and contrast opportunities, the continuance of the plot line, the exposition to explain the allusions in *A Dog's Journey*, and the ultimate resolution of these two novels, would be ideal. Teachers do not always have the luxury or time for teaching two novels back-to-back by the same author, much less the same subject. Having said that, it is important to note that these two novels are significantly different, and reading *A Dog's Journey* without its predecessor is acceptable. While *A Dog's Purpose* helps students look forward to goals and objectives they want to achieve, *A Dog's Journey* is more reflective; at the end of one's life, what have we learned?

As a note on Lexile Scores, there are some novels that can be taught at several ages and are appropriate to do so. Both of these novels can be taught in this manner. Therefore, we have separated the middle school content from the high school content. We have provided teachers with a formidable vocabulary list so that teachers may choose which diction is applicable to their classroom curriculum. We have also noted teaching opportunities in the text for a richer understanding of themes. For the younger students, there is the plot line, how it unfolds, and the figurative language, the characterization of the dogs and protagonist/antagonists, and the prediction of events. For high school students, the novel provides them with opportunities to share complex ideas; to analyze the author's diction choices; to identify and analyze the shifts in the plot line, the predictability and the surprises, and to question how conflicts in relationships change our lives. A text does not have to be complex to produce intellectual discussions, especially on themes that relate to all humankind.

The use of Socratic Seminar would be especially appealing to any teacher using this book. There are student experiences that will be relevant when discussing this book. As teachers, be prepared to tread carefully and with forethought. A study guide should aid teachers with the busy work: creating a vocabulary list, identifying the specific themes, coordinating the reading with grammar instruction, and creating assessments to evaluate the learning. We have done this for you, to give you more time to read the book more than once. With each reading, you will discover treasures worth discussing in class.

Above all, this book is a model of creative writing. When you discuss the craft of writing, refer to Cameron's prolific use of adverbs. Point out his ability to begin and end a chapter with suspense. Cameron's characterization of both animals and humans is uncanny; there are no flat characters in his novels. His eagerness to provide us with round characters helps us empathize with them all. As always, Cameron's constructs purposeful dialogue. It is as real as if we are in the room with his characters. We often discuss an author's purpose or attitude towards his work. Cameron exposes our vulnerabilities with compassion and humor. This novel, *A Dog's Journey*, is a gift. You give your students a luminous and positive experience when you use this book in the classroom. We wish you well with this exploration and thank you for being part of the students' journeys, as well.



“An amazing book. I laughed and smiled and cried. Wise... and sure to open the hearts of all who read it.

-**Alice Walker**, Pulitzer Prize winning author of *The Color Purple*

“I loved the book and I could not put it down. It really made me think about the purpose of life. At the end, I cried.”

-**Temple Grandin**, NY Times bestselling author of *Animals in Translation*

## How My Writing Career Went to the Dogs

My mother is fond of telling a story about visiting my kindergarten class and being advised that during story time, the children preferred that I be the only person telling stories.

I preferred the same thing.

The other kids probably had stories of getting a haircut or a pair of roller skates, but mine were likely filled with fire-breathing monsters and kindergarten children saving the planet. For as long as I could remember, my brain has served up a constant supply of internal movies, of stories flowing into my head in a steady stream. Opening my mouth to let the stories out was as natural and necessary an impulse as sitting down with pencil and paper would prove to be as I got older.

Technology changes - I went from pencil to typewriter to word processor to computer - but my impulses never have. My head is full of stories, and I want to tell them.

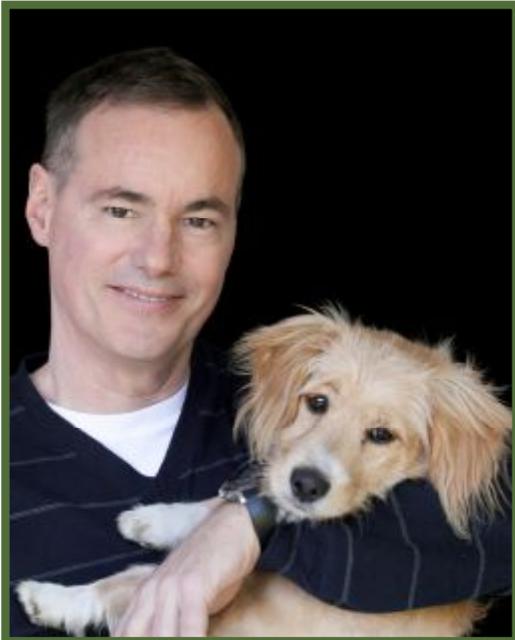
One December afternoon I was driving with my fiancé and long time writing partner to visit family in Northern California. I was behind the wheel and the steady pulse of the dotted yellow centerline coming at me on the pavement put me into a relaxed, almost hypnotic state. A new story started in my head, a story about a dog that grew to understand he had a purpose too important to be fulfilled in just one lifetime.

The entire narrative - the characters the dog would meet, the lessons it would learn the challenges it would overcome - flashed into my brain as if I were downloading it from some central story server.

We stopped for coffee, and when my partner came back with her latte, I said, "Sit

down; I want to tell you a story." I wound up talking for an hour and a half, straight through, picking my way unerringly through the plot points. When I finished, my partner looked at me with tears in her eyes and said, "You've got to write that book."

*A Dog's Purpose* came to me the way the best ideas often do: a piece, complete and whole, with little repair needed. Writing this book has been one of the great creative experiences of my life.



W. Bruce Cameron  
Marina del Ray, California

## Author's Purpose

**"Just about everything I know about dogs, I have been taught by dogs..."**

**-W. Bruce Cameron**

It is no coincidence that many of Cameron's pet names appear in his novel. Cameron states that Bailey is a "combination of all the retrievers I have ever owned: their propensity for snacking, their adoration for their owners, and how they can sense the excitement and nervousness emitting from others."

While Bailey's return to Earth as different dogs appears to be a result of reincarnation, Cameron does not adhere to either Buddhism or Hinduism as a model for this spiritual journey. "If you notice," Cameron points out, "there is a great deal of time that has passed between Ellie's death and her return to earth as Buddy, which suggests a richer spiritual experience other than being reborn immediately."

In a *Dog's Purpose—A Novel for Humans*, Cameron makes his own rules. "I hope the reader can tell that each dog wants to be in a loving relationship with a human being. All of Bailey's experiences will enable him to not only find Ethan, but to save him." Each experience the dogs share give them the tools needed to bring Ethan and Hannah together again. Cameron enthuses, "We see the sadness wafting off of Ethan, like the sadness that came from Jakob. The dog does not realize that Ethan is an old man and incapable of having a child. Buddy knows that Jakob had a sadness that was fixed with a new relationship and the birth of a baby; Buddy is acutely aware of Ethan's sadness and wants him to have the same things."

This is not a novel about how animals serve humans. Ellie knows her job is to do what she is told, and that makes her happy to some extent, but she also feels something is missing in her relationship with Jakob. Bear tries to follow Victor because he wants to be a "good dog." In both instances, the dog is searching for his or her role, or purpose. Whether by Intelligent Design or not, Bailey learns from his past lives that in order to save Ethan, he has to be brought into a family.

## Point of View

The unique quality of the narrative of this story is that it is told from the dog's point of view. For this reason, Cameron is vague about specific time and setting. "There are some textual clues, but it is ambiguous for a reason. A dog does not have a sense of the year or the setting of a story. A dog sees the terrain, but doesn't draw conclusions about where he might be on a map."

Cameron makes a reference to Ethan and his family watching the moon landing in one scene, where Bailey is jazzed up by the sense of fear and excitement. Years later, two men make a subtle reference to Y2K. It is up to the reader to do the math. The reader may picture the Southwest in Cameron's description of the dried cracked earth, or the appearance of canals and bi-lingual characters, but the states' names are rarely mentioned.

Humor is also used effectively as a result of the dog's point of view. According to Bailey, Smokey the cat is the "instigator" in some of the trouble he finds himself in. When Bailey is punished for the disordered kitchen, he looks with glum distaste at Smokey and thinks, "Smokey, you are a bad cat, a bad, bad cat." In Bailey's view, neither the cats, ducks or horses have any real value to the family, but he does acknowledge a hierarchy and is satisfied when he knows his place within it.

## An Approach to *A Dog's Purpose*

As a teacher, this book offers a variety of "teachable moments;" students can identify and analyze the point of view, make predictions based on contextual clues, recognize the use of foreshadowing, make inferences based on real-world context and relevance, and identify and discuss literary elements that include: theme, setting, tone, and character analysis.

This work of fiction pairs well with non-fiction as well as other fictional material. It serves as a jump-off point for reflective and persuasive papers. Students can discuss and research man's relationships to animals; the empathy men can feel for vulnerability in other species; how we use animals to manage our lives, and how we judge our own lives and "purpose." In addition, there is an opportunity to reflect and speculate on the author's purpose for choosing the different breeds of dogs to serve different purposes in the book.

This study guide will also offer student questions which allow the reader to compare *A Dog's Purpose—A Novel for Humans* to *A Dog's Journey—Another Novel for Humans*. These can be found after each chapter summary.

## Vocabulary by Chapter

*Teachers: Only you know your students. The vocabulary chosen for the three categories are based on frequency of use only. Some middle school students can understand and use vocabulary from the advanced list. Likewise, English language learners in a high school setting may be more comfortable with the middle school list. The more familiar you are with your students' Lexile scores, the more confident you will be with assigning vocabulary words. Research asserts that students will retain more vocabulary words learned in context of a particular reading that they would as isolated lists of words.*

### **Chapter One**

Middle School	High School	Advanced
Acrid Beseech Compelled Cowering Descent Dimwits Radiated Relentless Lingering Tottered Instinctively Fathom Timid Lolling	Despaired Skittish Grudgingly Heeded Crooned Mottled Culvert Seethed Shambled Emulated Inedible Evaded	Savoring Plummeted Jauntily Melee Wafted Obtrusive Menacingly

**Chapter Two**

Middle School	High School	Advanced
Perimeter Rambunctious Resignation Sparse Surly Emerged Cowered Weathered Senora Exotic Milling Rigid Deflated Intervals	Succulent Jounce Rapt Ceased Rheumy Submission Economica Deliriously Pursued Stealthily Baffled Slunk	Beguiled Circumnavigation

**Chapter Three**

Middle School	High School	Advanced
Gesture Trough Gnarly Dumbfounded Vigorously Traumatizing	Intoxicating Compelled Enlivened Seethed Cowed Compulsion Unreceptive Berth Tantalizing Enviously Hunkered Humility (humiliation)	Inertly Groveled Subserviently Contemptuously Furtively Redolent Indignity

**Chapter Four**

Middle School	High School	Advanced
Resigned Scavenge Urgency Tension Lunged Savage Conferring Dignity Infraction	Fray Intimidating Emitted Preoccupied Dismissively Vying Disorienting Encasing	Industriously Acceding Intrusive Oppressive Arrayed Placate

**Chapter Five**

Middle School	High School	Advanced
Abruptly Ajar Instinctively Bleary Delirious	Distress Implications Intently Menacing Manipulate Brood	Disillusionment Spindly Methodically Inexplicable Distended Clamber

**Chapter Six**

Middle School	High School	Advanced
Berserk Adoration	Heedless Vestiges Pungent	Submission Baleful

**Chapter Seven**

Middle School	High School	Advanced
Barred Intolerably Smugly Predicament Pursuit Crossly Accusation	Intrigued Haughtiness Manic Snide Unrestrained Relentless Laden Gratifying	Disgorged Provocative

**Chapter Eight**

Middle School	High School	Advanced
Venom Pungent Tentative (tentatively) Apprehensively Pursuit (pursued) Encountered	Emanating Agitated Astringent Plaintive Obligation Extravagantly Concoctions	Indignity Consigned Ignominy

**Chapter Nine**

Middle School	High School	Advanced
Comprehension Intolerable Disdain Accessible	Daft Dissipated Unrestrained Reacquaint Unceremoniously Feigned Impassively	Enterprising Languidly

**Chapter Ten**

Middle School	High School	Advanced
Reluctance Reacquainting Accompany Bearings Gesturing Navigate Solemnly Debated	Gingerly Envy Aerodynamic Roused	Emulated

**Chapter Eleven**

Middle School	High School	Advanced
Hoisting Fatigue Gnarly Carcass Edible	Haughtily Ruefully Lethargic Sullen Apathy Ebbing	Obliterate

**Chapter Twelve**

Middle School	High School
Somber Alertly Loathsome Initial Abandonment Fury Restlessness	Exuberant

**Chapter Thirteen**

Middle School	High School	Advanced
Inedible Dread Enforce Tension Involuntarily Emerged	Excavated Enhance Circuit Content	Stealthily

**Chapter Fourteen**

Middle School	High School	Advanced
Alertly Blankly Aroma Propelled Initially Audible Fury Staggered Intensity	Subdued Dejectedly Luring Oblivious Piercing Instinctively Retreat	Emanating Galvanized Acrid

**Chapter Fifteen**

Middle School	High School	Advanced
Abruptly Probed Arson (arsonist)	Accelerant Cordoned Dispel	Compelled

**Chapter Sixteen**

Middle School
Bewilderment Maddening Inclined Suspicious

**Chapter Seventeen**

Middle School	High School	Advanced
Affectionately Strained Feeble	Tenuous Betrayal Utter Catastrophic Pronounced Yearning Resentment Ecstatic	Infuriatingly

**Chapter Eighteen**

Middle School	High School
Dominate Tinged	Tantalized Immersed Motley Turmoil Evolved

**Chapter Nineteen**

Middle School	High School	Advanced
Coursing Marveled Urgency	Foraging Reminiscent Adoration Gait Surveillance	Audacious Perfunctory

**Chapter Twenty**

Middle School	High School
Primal Unclenching Gingerly Anguish Smugly	Fetid Elation Cunning Enticed

**Chapter Twenty-One**

Middle School	High School	Advanced
Sauntered Burdened Encountered Tolerated Enclosure	Imminent Resign Lurking Sympathetically Unauthorized	Insubstantial

**Chapter Twenty-Two**

Middle School	High School	Advanced
Barreled Fate Grappling Regret Unreliable Encrusted	Anticipation Resolve Recoiled Blundered Agitated	Rapport

**Chapter Twenty-Three**

Middle School	High School	Advanced
Hoisted	Virtually	Reverberated

**Chapter Twenty-Four**

Middle School	High School
Timid Reassurance Linger Loftily Assurance	Unabashed Disconcerting Expanse

**Chapter Twenty-Five**

Middle School	High School	Advanced
Heedless Scant Bellowed Brute Straining Churning Taut Affection	Accelerating Hilarity Unrestrained Pondered Gingerly	Inextricably

**Chapter Twenty-Six**

Middle School	High School
Mellow Justify Frankly Rummaged Eviction	Incomprehensible Passively Furtive

**Chapter Twenty-Seven**

Middle School	High School	Advanced
Accompanied Raged Gestures	Intimidating Aimlessly	Malevolence

**Chapter Twenty-Eight**

Middle School	High School	Advanced
Trotting Adrift Destiny Halting Vegetation Illuminate Feral	Hobbled Redolent Deliberate Ambled Riveted Alter	Receptive Sated Vile

**Chapter Twenty-Nine**

Middle School	High School	Advanced
Beacon Foliage Ally Baying Veered	Timbre Accusation Validating Rebuke	Adroitly

**Chapter Thirty**

Middle School	High School
Laboriously Restrain Astounded Mystified Retired	Probing Dubiously Unfathomable

**Chapter Thirty-One**

Middle School	High School
Burrowed	Substantial Oblivious

**Chapter Thirty-Two**

Middle School	High School
Anxiety	Serene Contentment Impending Conviction

## Chapter Summaries

### **Chapters One – Three**

In chapter 1, the main character uses his senses to describe his environment, including other canine family members and people. He realizes his sibling named, "Hungry" dies as the litter is captured by mankind in a truck. "Sister," another sibling, escapes. The dogs are taken to a new location called the "Yard." A mastiff is sensed as "Top Dog" among many other male dogs. The main character is given the name "Toby" and he befriends another canine named "Coco." As the mother of the litter is successful at unlatching a gate, mother and Toby escape. Senora catches Toby and he returns to the "Yard." Sister returns later looking thinner with a visible scar. Toby and the other males go to a clinic to get neutered.

### **Chapters Four – Six**

A new dog, named Spike, enters the "Yard" and Toby senses a mean demeanor. This canine has been raised to fight. Toby gets into a fight with Spike (trying to defend Sister) and ends up with a wounded leg. Men arrive and confiscate the dogs and take them to a shelter. Toby is then re-born as a golden retriever puppy. As he observes the other puppies in the puppy mill, he wonders what his purpose is. Using prior knowledge, he escapes by pawing and chewing at the latch. A man picks him up, but the man leaves him in his truck and the puppy suffers from heat exhaustion. A woman notices the puppy, throws a rock through the truck window and takes him home. He is introduced to Ethan, her son. Ethan names him Bailey and the two fall in love with each other as Bailey gets used to his new home.

### **Chapters Seven – Nine**

Bailey is sent to the garage while Ethan attends school. After several trials, Bailey finally learns how to use the "doggy door." When he is separated from Ethan at night, he cries his despair. After that, Bailey is able to sleep with the boy unless the parents argue. It is then that the reader knows Ethan's parents yell at each other fairly often. Ethan meets a new boy in the neighborhood named Todd, but Bailey distrusts Todd. Bailey learns through experience to stay away from Todd. He adjusts to Ethan's neighborhood and as the seasons unfold, he is introduced to the "Farm" at the onset of summer. The Farm is where Ethan's grandparents live. Ethan goes fishing, drops his pole in the lake and dives for it. Bailey dives down and brings Ethan to the surface. Ethan realizes that Bailey is 'saving' him even though Ethan knows how to swim. Bailey and Ethan continue to play the 'saving' game. (This act of 'saving' will play a role later in the book.) Ethan and Bailey return home and Ethan starts school again. While Ethan is

at school, the cat, Smokey, climbs on the counters and drops food from the cupboard. Bailey eats the food and catches the blame when Ethan and his mother return home.

### **Chapters Ten – Twelve**

Bailey notices that Ethan does not spend time with Todd. Most of the children in the neighborhood exclude him. When Bailey senses that Todd is standing outside of Ethan's fence, he barks a warning. Back at the farm for the summer, Ethan designs the "flip" (something like a flat football and a Frisbee combined) and Bailey learns to retrieve it, even though he doesn't find the "flip" to be amusing. Ethan is left home alone on the farm overnight and decides to go on a journey with Flare, the horse. Flare gets spooked by a snake and takes off, leaving Ethan and Bailey behind. The two get lost and spend two nights alone in the wilderness. Bailey senses Ethan's anxiety and fear and stays by his side. A man on a search team eventually finds them. Ethan meets a girl named Hannah and Bailey immediately likes her. When they return to Ethan's home, Bailey plays with "Marshmallow," his favorite dog in the neighborhood. When the children search for the dog, Bailey smells her scent on Todd's clothes. He roughly pushes Bailey away and Marshmallow is never found. Time is spent with go-cart making while Bailey tries to understand the purpose of it all. On the day of the race, Bailey jumps on the back of Ethan's go-cart, which pushes him ahead of Todd's go-cart resulting in a victory. A fight breaks out, but is stopped by peer pressure and shouts of "No." Later that evening, a rock is thrown through the window of Ethan's home and Bailey senses Todd's smell all over the rock on the floor.

### **Chapters Thirteen – Fifteen**

Smokey, the cat, dies. Ethan plays football after school and summers are spent at home mowing lawns instead of living with grandpa and grandma at the farm. Ethan starts driving and takes Bailey along with him. Ethan visits the farm after two absent summers and rediscovers Hannah. In the fall, Hannah visits Ethan at his high school football game and runs into Todd. Todd claims that Ethan is now a couple with another girl named Michele. Ethan explains to Hannah that the comment was not true. Bailey finds a piece of meat in the yard with a strong bitter taste on it and decides not to eat it after sensing Todd's smell all over it. During the next winter, Hannah visits. Ethan and Hannah go sledding. Todd shows up to pick up his sister and Ethan corners Todd with his lie. Ethan expresses his dislike toward Todd for lying. Ethan, in his parting remarks, tells Todd that the reason he doesn't have any friends is for doing "stupid things." Todd is so filled with conflict and emotion that Bailey can sense the intensity, much like heat, coming off of him. Later, Bailey witnesses Todd setting fire to Ethan's home. Bailey tries to save Ethan, but is overwhelmed by the raging heat.

Ethan's mother and father escape through the back door, but Ethan must jump from his bedroom window. Ethan is hospitalized for days with burns and an injured leg. Because Bailey attacks Todd and bites his leg, Todd leaves a trail of blood to his home. The police are able to track down Todd because of Bailey and Todd confesses to the crime.

### **Chapters Sixteen – Seventeen**

Ethan comes home from the hospital using crutches and then eventually a cane. The family moves back into their reconstructed home and Ethan goes back to school. The next summer is spent at the Farm and Ethan reunites with Hannah. Ethan spends early mornings delivering newspapers and tells Bailey he has lost his football scholarship due to Todd. Ethan completes his final year of high school in the town where grandma and grandpa live and then heads off to college. Ethan's mother and father have separated and another man named "Rick" starts to spend time with them. Hannah and Ethan break up when Ethan discovers Hannah has met another boy. Bailey can sense the pain Ethan feels, not only from the injury that changed his future, but because he misses Hannah. Bailey begins to show signs of aging and pain. He makes many visits to the vet. Bailey has adjusted to his life at the farm and accepts that the boy is gone for much of the time. Ethan is called home from college and Bailey is so relieved to see him, just before he is put to sleep.

### **Chapters Eighteen – Twenty**

Bailey is reborn as a puppy once again. Jakob is now the owner of Ellie, (formerly Bailey). Ellie realizes she is now a female German shepherd. She has clear memories of what life was like as Toby as well as Bailey. Ellie learns commands such as: "Drop, Stay, Find, Come, and Show Me." Ellie soon realizes she is a working dog for Jakob, a police officer. She learns that her mission as Ellie is to Find and Save people, similar to when she played Rescue with Ethan. Ellie uses her sense of smell to track down a missing elderly woman and a kidnapped girl. Unfortunately, during the rescue of the girl, Jakob is shot and injured. Ellie wonders and waits for Jakob to return to the police station.

### **Chapters Twenty-One – Twenty-Three**

Ellie moves in with Maya and the two start running together as Maya trains for certification. Maya struggles with the running aspect of the training but eventually passes the physical. She begins a relationship with a man named Al and Ellie continues to Find lost people on command. Maya takes Ellie on a helicopter ride to rescue people trapped in rubbish due to an earthquake in Equador. While insisting on rescuing a woman, Ellie is exposed to chemicals and badly burns her nose. She is treated at a vet, but later Maya realizes she has lost her sense of smell. Ellie loses her search and rescue certification.

### **Chapters Twenty-Four – Twenty-Five**

Maya and Al get married and Ellie is the ring bearer. Ellie retires as a search and rescue dog and lives with the newly married couple. Maya and Ellie visit schools and nursing homes while working for a community outreach program. Eventually, they revisit with Jakob at his daughter's school and Ellie senses much joy from Jakob now that he has a family. A missing boy gives Ellie a purpose to "Find" one final time. The boy disappears as a thunderstorm develops and he is found in a sewer surrounded by raging waters. Ellie dives after the boy and uses all her power and might to swim and search for the boy. She remembers her purpose to "Save" Ethan in the pond and senses this is her purpose once again. Ellie is able to track the boy's scent in the water, clench onto his hood, and hang on to him until they reach open waters. Both the boy and Ellie are pulled out by human rescue and Ellie recovers at the vet. Al and Maya bring a new baby to the household named Gabriella. Ellie recognizes the signs of aging through her aches and pains and knows her time is limited. She reflects upon her purposes as a dog for her different owners and is ready for peace. Ellie is put to sleep.

### **Chapters Twenty-Six – Twenty-Eight**

Surprisingly, a puppy is reborn. This time, due to previous life experiences, this puppy does not display much energy. He prefers to be left alone. He is the last puppy of the litter to be adopted due to his lack of energy. A young man who gives the puppy to his girlfriend as a gift finally adopts him. The girl's name is Wendi and she names him "Bear." However, Wendi receives an eviction notice for keeping a dog at an apartment and has no choice but to give the three-month-old black lab to her mother. Bear now spends most of his days and nights hooked to a chain in a backyard. A nice woman feeds him meat and water through a hole in the fence. A police officer shows up and Wendi's mother, Lisa, receives a \$50.00 fine. Victor, the man who lives with Lisa, is outraged. Victor puts Bear in his car trunk and drives him out to the country where he abandons the dog. Bear wanders around fields and streams looking for familiar scents. He eventually picks up a scent and follows it to a town. A woman at the dog park with a

dog named "Carly" seems to have faint scents of Hannah, which gives Bear hope of finding Ethan.

### **Chapters Twenty-Nine – Thirty**

Bear wanders the park, hiding from threatening humans, but playing with willful dogs. Food is found in the garbage containers, and dead animals along the roadside. When uniformed humans with a noose show up, Bear uses his prior knowledge and hides. He eventually finds himself in a neighborhood where he senses the donkey's scent from the Farm. Bear follows the donkey's scent to the farm and finds an old man sitting in a chair. The old man is Ethan.

Bear continues to bark and demand attention until Ethan finally opens the door. After greeting Ethan with much attention, Bear is put back outside. Bear continues to bark and is finally rewarded with lasagna from Ethan, even though he is not invited to sleep inside. A policeman shows up with a noose and Bear wants to please his boy so he cooperates and jumps into the truck. He barely escapes being adopted by a family when Ethan shows up with a change of heart. Bear is overjoyed to go back home with Ethan and is now called, "Buddy." Buddy explores the house and picks up on the scent of the flip in a closet.

### **Chapters Thirty-One – Thirty-Two**

Buddy senses the sadness in Ethan and begins to reflect upon his purposes while serving as different breeds with different owners. He realizes that his purpose was not just to *find*, but to *save*. He must Save Ethan by bringing him happiness, the kind of happiness a family brought Jakob. Buddy decides to track down the dog Carly since she carries the scent of Hannah. He takes off towards the park and follows Carly and her woman home. A woman with white hair gets out of the car. The woman is Hannah; Buddy's plan worked! Hannah (now a widow) and Ethan reunite and get married. Buddy serves as the ring bearer once again. They live on the farm and enjoy Hannah's grandchildren. Ethan is now known as "Granddaddy." Buddy has now served his purpose, which was to Save Ethan. Ethan is happy. One day, when Hannah is gone, Buddy senses danger within Ethan's body. Ethan shows signs of weakness, dozes off and awakes to Buddy, but Ethan now calls him Bailey. Buddy is happy that Ethan remembers him as Bailey and retrieves the flip from a closet. Ethan struggles, but throws the flip out the window and Bailey (Buddy) retrieves it to please his boy.

Unfortunately, Ethan's condition worsens and Ethan passes away with Bailey (Buddy) nestled in his lap. Buddy is content because he knows he has served his purpose by making his boy happy.

## Suggested Chapter Questions

### Chapters One - Three

Grades 6-8

1. Who is telling the story and why is this unique?
2. What is a feral dog?
3. Give 3 examples when the puppies' mother shows that she is fearful of humans. (Contextual Evidence)
4. What clues do we have of the setting of this story?

Grades 10-11

1. How is the last sentence of chapter one an example of foreshadowing?
2. Why do you think the men show Hungry's body to the mother?
3. Have students start a chronological timeline to track the puppy's life – and as the puppy is reincarnated, pick up the timeline in the other lives. Using contextual evidence, find clues to the different dates and cultural and geographical allusions in the text so student can plot the geographic locations in the story as well.

Grades 11-12 (*Upper classes may still use the questions from the other grade levels, but discussions should include extending the lesson and using critical thinking. Agree to disagree in debates about the treatment of animals.*)

1. Why has the puppy's relationship changed with his mother when they get to the Yard?
2. Why is it necessary to spay and neuter pets? Should this be a public concern? Should the government support animal control operations? (Persuasive written responses)

### Chapters Four – Seven

Grades 6-8

1. How did Toby's mother show him how to escape?
2. How do the dogs know that Spike is in charge?
3. How does Toby get injured?
4. Why do you think Toby didn't escape when he had the chance?
5. What is euthanasia?
6. Why does Toby think his new name is "Fella?"
7. How does Ethan choose the name "Bailey?"

### Grades 9-10

1. How do dogs position themselves in packs? How does one dog exert control over the other dogs?
2. What does Senora mean when she says, "There are no bad dogs, Bobby, just bad people,"? (p.45) Do you believe this is true?
3. Why is Toby euthanized?
4. How long can a dog survive in a closed truck in the heat? What happens to their bodies? (Research and share)
5. Class discussion: Should people be fined and/or arrested for animal neglect?
6. Why does Bailey follow Todd and what do you think will happen? (Prediction)

### Grades 11-12

1. Have student do a mini-research project on animal behavior that can explain the pack's behavior both in and out of the Yard. How and why do dogs assert their dominance?
2. Compare and Contrast: Students can read *Call of the Wild* by Jack London and compare the dogs' behaviors and the humans' behaviors.
3. What happens to dogs when they don't live with people?
4. What was Spike's "black energy?" (p. 48)
5. What was is that gave Toby a purpose?
6. How are Todd and Spike similar?
7. How can dogs "sense" emotions from people?

## **Chapters Eight – Nine**

### Grades 6-8

1. What does Bailey think of Smokey? How does the author use humor to explain Bailey's feelings for the cat?
2. What do you think is wrong with Todd and why does his sister save Bailey? (Critical Thinking)
3. In chapters eight and nine, Bailey dives after Ethan to save him. Why is this typical for a golden retriever? Research "Golden Retrievers" and have students explain the original purpose for this breed of dog.

### Grades 9-10

1. The author gives Bailey "voice" in chapter nine. Find the contextual evidence to support this and provide examples.
2. What do you think Todd was up to when he took Bailey?
3. Have students create an "Animal Service Chart." Break the students up into pairs and have students research different breeds and how they service humans.
4. Why is it "instinctive" to save the boy when he goes into the water?

### Grades 11-12

1. Have each student select a breed of dog to research. Students can use technology to create a Prezi where they show the origin of their breeds and all the characteristics of their chosen breeds.
2. Have students share any anecdotes they may have on unique animal behavior.
3. Why is Todd talking to himself and what was he thinking? (P. 86)
4. Why were the kids shrieking on the bus? (Inference) (P.93)

## **Chapters Ten – Twelve**

### Grades 6-8

1. In chapter ten, the author hints at the time/setting. What historical event provides a clue?
2. Why do guns make Bailey nervous? (P. 110)
3. What is the name of the girl Bailey meets at the farm and how does he act around her?
4. What does Bailey feel about other animals – skunk, cat, horse, ducks?
5. How do Bailey and Ethan get lost? What could Ethan have done differently to avoid getting lost?
6. How long can a person survive without water? (Research)
7. Why do you think the children are uneasy around Todd? Why do you think he picks on dogs?

### Grades 9-10

1. Have students find the historical reference that marks the chronological time of the story AND the location of the farm.

2. Ethan meets a girl named Hannah. Have the students predict whether she will be a significant character in the book. Why or why not? (Predict)
3. How does Bailey demonstrate his love for the boy when they get lost?
4. Identify three distinct feelings the boy has that Bailey can sense. Use contextual evidence to support the answers.
5. What do you think happened to Marshmallow? (Inference)
6. How do the children stand up to Drake? (P. 129)
7. Why does Todd throw a rock through Ethan's window?

#### Grades 11-12

1. Students use allusions to pinpoint date and setting of the story.
2. Have student work in groups to take a brief survival quiz. What is important to do when you get lost in the woods?
3. How could Bailey sense Ethan's "defeat" when he is lost?
4. What "mood" does Bailey sense in the children when Todd is around?
5. Class Discussion: Do the students believe that people can be "evil" or do they believe all behavior stems from a biological imbalance? Have them discuss in class.
6. What do the students think has happened to Marshmallow and what does this tell us about Todd?

### **Chapters Thirteen – Fifteen**

#### Grades 6-8

1. What happens to Smokey? How does Bailey feel about it?
2. Ethan's summer activity has changed. List 3 activities Ethan is now doing that indicate time has passed and summer is over. (Contextual Support)
3. What event leads to Todd leaving a piece of poisoned meat for Bailey?
4. Why does Todd lie to Hannah?
5. How does Bailey become a hero?
6. What evidence leads the police to Todd?

#### Grades 9-10

1. Explain how the author implies little purpose for the cat. Use an example from the text.
2. Why do you think Todd wants to poison Bailey?
3. Why doesn't Bailey eat the poisoned meat?
4. How does Ethan confront Todd about his lies to Hannah? Why does Hannah think Ethan has gone too far in what he says to Todd?

5. What does the dog sense in Todd? What can you predict he will do?
6. Share any anecdotes about pets saving people's lives. How does Bailey save Ethan's family?
7. Why are Ethan's football dreams probably over?

#### Grades 11-12

1. There has been research on sociopaths and their treatment of animals. In a Socratic Seminar, discuss if you believe Todd's behaviors share those of other criminals.
2. Discuss the evidence that lead to Todd's arrest.
3. Predict what will happen to Ethan's football career.

### **Chapters Sixteen - Seventeen**

#### Grades 6-8

1. The author uses the words, "early morning car rides." What type of job does Ethan have?
2. What college is Ethan going to? What state is it in? (Research)
3. How does Bailey feel when he is left behind when Ethan goes to college?
4. What does Ethan's mom throw into the lake and what does it mean?
5. What clues does the author give that indicate Bailey is dying?
6. The "nice man" makes a comment to Bailey when he is dying. This is the first time the author implies Bailey's purpose in the story. What is it?

#### Grades 10-11

1. How can we infer that Ethan's mom and dad's marriage is in trouble? (P.165)
2. Does it surprise you that Bailey dreams about the boy? Why or why not?
3. Why does Bailey sense there is tension when they take him to the vet to put him down?
4. The vet seems to know what Bailey is thinking. Why is that? (P. 177)

#### Grades 11-12

1. Class discussion: Do dogs dream? Yes or no? How can we tell?
2. Just as a wedding ring is symbolic, so is throwing it into a lake. What do you think it symbolizes for Ethan's mom?
3. What does Bailey think of when he is dying? What are his emotions? Compare/contrast the way people and animals approach death.

## **Chapters Eighteen – Twenty**

### Grades 6-8

1. What is Bailey reborn as? What kind of demands does she learn?
2. What clues do we have that Jakob is suffering emotionally? Be sure to cite clues with quotation marks and page numbers.
3. In chapter eighteen, an era is referenced. What is it?
4. What is Ellie's new purpose?
5. After reading chapter nineteen, what can you predict will happen to the missing girl?

### Chapters 9-10

1. What can of dog is Ellie and what are other ways this breed is used?
2. What "tests" does Jakob give to the puppies and what is he trying to evaluate?
3. How does Ellie discover her purpose?
4. What is Jakob's internal conflict? (Surmise)
5. What allusion is made that gives us the year and setting?

### Grades 11-12

1. Some dogs are working dogs. Research what this means and why it is important for dogs to work if their breed requires it?
2. Research how dogs are trained for K-9 units. Have students share out.
3. How does Ellie react to the urgency of finding the girl?

## **Chapters Twenty-One – Twenty-Three**

### Grades 6-8

1. Who are the new cats in Ellie's life and what is her reaction to them?
2. What challenge is Ellie helping Maya with?
3. When Maya wants to quit, what does Ellie do that takes away her sadness? (P.218)
4. What does Jakob tell Maya when she tells him that she is thinking of quitting? Do you think he is too hard on her? Why or why not?
5. How does Ellie help after the earthquake? Why is Ellie so down in this job?

6. What happens to Ellie's nose? What do you think will happen to Ellie's job as a result? (prediction)

#### Grades 9-10

1. What does Jakob tell Maya to motivate her?
2. How do we know that Al likes Maya?
3. How is Ellie rewarded for her work?
4. Why does Ellie think of Maya when she realizes that Maya loves her?
5. How does Ellie's bravery cause her to lose her work?

#### Grades 11-12

1. Have students respond to Ellie thinking: "Dogs are not allowed to choose where they live; my fate would be decided by people."
2. How do you think Jakob's depression affects his life?
3. Have students reflect on the reward Ellie receives for finding people. Is it enough? What does it tell us about dogs?
4. What causes Ellie's nose to burn and why don't you think that deters her from finding a living person after the earthquake?

### **Chapters Twenty-Four – Twenty-Five**

#### Grades 6-8

1. What is Ellie's "job" at Al's and Ellie's wedding?
2. What does Jakob mean when he tells Maya, "A dog like Ellie needs to work"? (P. 243)
3. What is Ellie's new purpose?
4. Explain why the author says, "...if it wasn't for Ellie, Alyssa would never have been born."
5. How does Ellie save Geoffrey?
6. How does Ellie know that her life is ending and how does she feel about it?

#### Grades 9-10

1. How does Jakob's new life change him? What do you think Ellie learns from that?
2. Why do you think the author gives Ellie one more chance to "Find" in chapter twenty-four?

3. How are dogs used in community outreach programs? (Research and share in class)
4. What are the challenges in saving Geoffrey?
5. How does the author hint at Ellie's past lives living as Bailey and Toby? List at least 3 hints and their page numbers.
6. What does Ellie mean when she says, "now I knew why these creatures, these human beings, had so fascinated me from the moment I saw them... it was because my fate was so inextricably linked with theirs"?

#### Grades 11-12

1. Why is it important that Ellie has another chance to "Find?"
2. What are the three life lessons that Ellie learned in her role as three different dogs?
3. How does the author describe death? What is the metaphor he uses? Discuss how this influences the telling of the story.

### **Chapters Twenty-Six – Twenty-Eight**

#### Grades 6-8

1. How does the dog sense the disappointment in the Colonel?
2. What kind of dog has Ellie become?
3. Why is Toby/Bailey/Ellie so confused to be alive again?
4. List at least 2 reasons why Wendi should not be a dog owner.
5. What is the dog's new identity?
6. Why did Victor remind Bear of Todd?
7. Describe his new living conditions with Wendi's mother and why it is considered animal abuse.
8. Why does Bear feel he has no purpose when he is left to roam?
9. What example of foreshadowing do we have at the end of chapter two?

#### Grades 9-10

1. Why is it wrong to get a dog if you have no means to take care of one?
2. What do you think the author's point of view is about dumping dogs?
3. (Research) Why is it wrong to dump domesticated dogs in the wild? What would be a better alternative?
4. What do you predict will happen at the beginning of chapter twenty-eight?
5. How had playing "Find" all those years help Bear figure out where he is?
6. Why is Bear so attracted to the man who owns Leo?
7. What is the best sense to use for memory?

Grades 11-12

1. How is the line, "I had no purpose, no destiny, no hope" an example of parallelism?
2. Based on Bear's past lives, how does it help him find the farm?
3. What is Bear's renewed purpose at the end of chapter twenty-eight? What do you predict will happen?

**Chapter Twenty-Nine – Thirty**

Grades 6-8

1. Why is darkness an ally for Bear?
2. Why did Bear feel such a joy when he comes across a large white trailer?
3. At the end of chapter twenty-nine, Bear finds Ethan. Explain how the passage of time is evident.
4. Why do you think Ethan changes his mind about adopting Bear?
5. How does Bear try to communicate with Ethan?
6. How does he get his new name, "Buddy?"

Grades 9 – 10

1. Using the math about the donkey, can you guess Ethan's current age?
2. Why does Bear feel like a bad dog in the park?
3. Who do you think the pregnant girl is?
4. Why do you think Ethan calls animal control to take Bear and why does he go get him?
5. What does Buddy discover in Ethan's home?

Grades 11-12

1. Describe how the author builds suspense when Bear tracks down Ethan.
2. What type of animals does Bear compete with for food? What is your textual evidence?
3. How can we account for the passage of time when Bear finds Ethan? Can you guess Ethan's current age and how did you deduce it?
4. What do you predict will be significant about Buddy finding the flip?

**Chapter Thirty-One – Thirty-Two**

Grades 6-8

1. Buddy senses a sadness in Ethan that he once perceived in Jakob. Explain how this sadness is similar in both owners.
2. What is Buddy's new purpose as it pertains to Ethan?
3. Who does the lady in the park turn out to be?
4. How does Buddy "save" Ethan?
5. What happens to Ethan at the end of the novel?
6. Did this novel make you feel any differently about dogs? Why or why not?

#### Grades 9-10

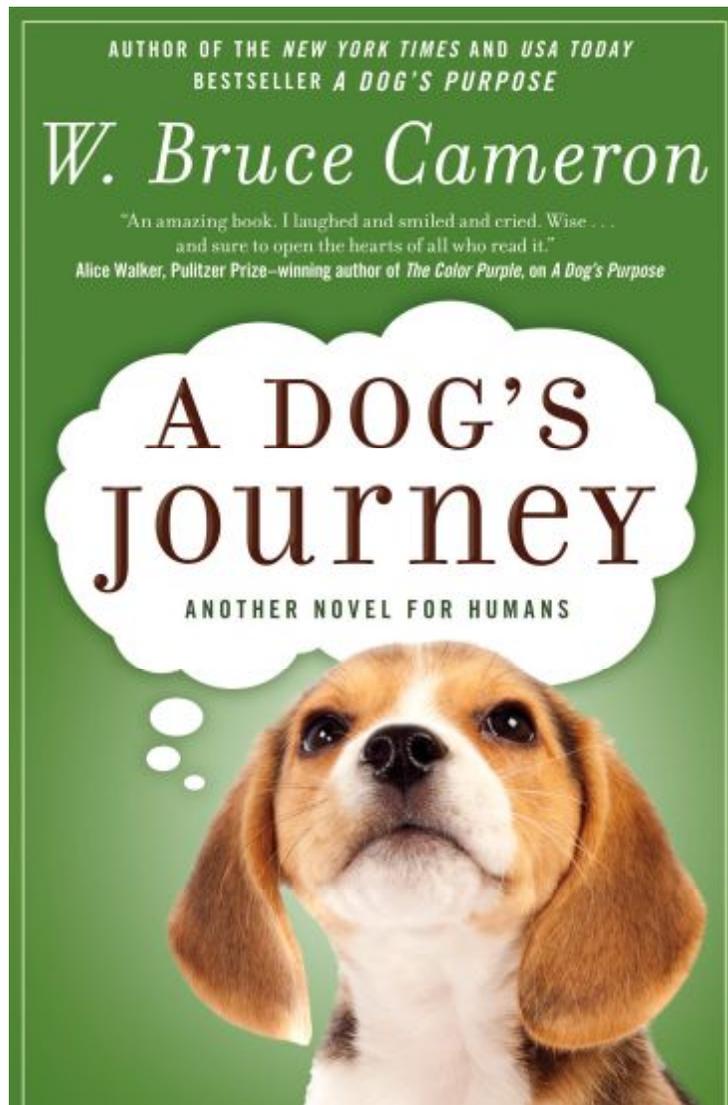
1. How does Buddy work to get Ethan and Hannah back together?
2. When Ethan is happy again, do you think Buddy is satisfied? Why or why not?
3. How can a dog sense if someone is having a stroke? (Research)
4. When Ethan calls Buddy "Bailey," do you think he knows that Buddy is Bailey? Why or why not?
5. Do you think this story is worth sharing? Why or why not?
6. Have students go to [adogspurpose.com](http://adogspurpose.com) and watch the book trailer. Have them use computers and moviemaker or similar software to create their own book trailers. Have them review the book as well.

#### Grades 11-12

1. How can we tell the passage of time once Hannah and Ethan are back together?
2. What was Buddy's purpose?
3. Do you believe that Bailey/Buddy's trek back to Ethan resulted from coincidences or divine intervention? Discuss and write your opinions in a persuasive essay.
4. Does Ethan actually recognize Bailey in the end, or is he simply going back in time because of his stroke?
5. Do you know what to do if someone is having a stroke? (Research)
6. What does Ethan mean when he says, "Life is what happens when you're making other plans"? Who said this line and why would Ethan quote him?
7. How does Buddy "rescue" Ethan?
8. Would you recommend this book? Why or why not?
9. Students can take this opportunity to choose an issue that they select from the book.

### Chart of Dog Names and Breeds in *A Dog's Purpose*

Owner	Dog's Name	Breed	Chapters
Senora	Toby	Male Mixed Breed	1 through 4
Ethan	Bailey (Fella short-term)	Male Golden Retriever	(5) 6 through 7
Jakob & Maya	Ellie	Female German shepherd	18 through 25
Wendi & Lisa	Bear	Male Black Labrador	26 through 29
Ethan	Buddy	Male Black Labrador	30 through 33



## **An Approach to *A Dog's Journey***

There are many teachable moments in *A Dog's Journey*. Because a "journey" is used as a metaphor for a lifetime, author W. Bruce Cameron ventures into the fragile discussion of what happens when people leave this earth. The protagonist in this story, C. J., suffers from a common female disorder as an adolescent: an eating disorder. She endures hardships that are associated with her lack of self-esteem, and she suffers, sometimes of her own doing, from several medical problems. The end of life theme is persistent in this novel and would be an incredible opportunity to have these critical discussions with students. Younger students may not know about hospices, dialysis, cancer, etc. but these realities are or will be present in their lives at some time. Education equals information and learning. The mere idea of mortality is often lost on teens, but this novel proposes that they all have choices in life. At times we learn better if we can see things from the end.

## Vocabulary by Chapter

*Teachers: Only you know your students. The vocabulary chosen for the three categories are based on frequency of use only. Some middle school students can understand and use vocabulary from the advanced list. Likewise, English language learners in a high school setting may be more comfortable with the middle school list. The more familiar you are with your students' Lexile scores, the more confident you will be with assigning vocabulary words. Research asserts that students will retain more vocabulary words learned in context of a particular reading that they would as isolated lists of words.*

### **Chapters One – Three**

Middle School	High School	Advanced
Soothed Teetered Invaded Metallic Gloom Frantic Tumors Murmured Mournful Disoriented Amputation	Tinged Inevitable Descended Persistent Agitation Absently Remorseful Threshold Lavished Vividly Receded Dense	Underlying Blearily Tantalizing Scornfully Shied Morsels Wretched Lurch Pungent Muster Dimming

**Chapters Four — Eight**

Middle School	High School	Advanced
Resolve	Bleary	Intimidated
Conviction	Dissolving	Ushered
Consciously	Submissively	Dander
Distressed	Anguished	Probed
Euthanize	Mystified	Emitting
Smitten	Wistful	Goaded
Insisted	Aggravated	Affiliated
Karma	Abruptly	Nimble
Enclosure	Pathetic	Disquieting
Vibration	Relevant	Discard
Hissed	Aggressively	Cringed
Whoosh	Citation	Liable
Lush	Commissioner	Inclination
Initial	Slumped	Darkening
Abandoned	Summons	Imply
Vaccinated	Chipped	Delinquency
Alertly	Negligent	
Despised	Complex	

**Chapters Nine – Ten**

Middle School	High School	Advanced
Collapsed	Sprawled	Assessing
Gawky	Devoted	Esophagus
Nudge	Probation	Wafting
Settlement	Felon	Perfunctory
Translated	Nunnery	Permeated
Auditions	Enthusiastically	Tentatively
Casting	Muffled	Groped
Relieved	Magnified	Lingered
Clenched	Indistinct	Fruitlessly
Muzzle	Contracted	
Sternly	Expelled	
	Foreshadowing	
	Hustled	
	Gestapo	

**Chapters Eleven – Twenty**

Middle School	High School	Advanced
Assumed	Lapse	Pomp
Exception	Cringed	Languidly
Resemblance	Postpartum	Pondered
Detect	Interjected	Dispatched
Diagnosis	Effective	Draping
Specimens	Resume	Grant
Fragrant	Technically	Blissful
Judgment	Methodology	Dissipating
Maternity	Arsenal	Reeked
Curfew	Obliterating	Breach
Consulted	Provisions	Rooting
Trust	Edible	Prickling
Welfare	Delirious	Brim
Custody	Drenching	Harem
Tension	Bared	Deductible
Rigid	Assaulted	Faltered
Hesitantly	Yearned	Inoculate
Commitment	Summon	Induction
Insomnia	Emerged	Inciting
Enraged	Incensed	Din
Hostility	Unnerving	Unadulterated
Traction	Cowering	Impound
Redundant	Accustomed	Foreclosure
Dutifully	Fatigue	Looming
Aggression	Contemplated	Disdainfully
Salivate	Cowered	Affords
Paralyzed	Frolicking	Luxuriate
Jolt	Oppress	Beseechingly
Submitting	Stimulus	Striding
Dominance	Resolution	Socialization
Canine	Abreast	Taut
Reflected	Astoundingly	Pungent
Pursued	Waive	Residual
Burrowed	Raked	Seeped
Tolerate	Strode	Forgo
Percussion		
Posed		

**Chapters Twenty-one – Twenty-two**

Middle School	High School	Advanced
Retraced Confide Sarcasm Departure Distress Agitation	Distracted Straying Mill Dawned Compelling Mandatory Funneled Enticing Perpetually	Recession Baffling Psychotherapy Unimpeded Torsion Splayed Recesses

**Chapters Twenty-Three – Twenty-five**

Middle School	High School	Advanced
Extended Feeble Regarded Vague Episode Comprehend Liberties Investment Bitterly	Arching Indulgent Expectantly Detached Shuddering Disorienting Raspy Intermingled Mortgage Distinguished	Nimble Crooned Ushered Unreconciled Cooed Disconcerting Testily Emphatically Wry

**Chapters Twenty-Six – Twenty-eight**

Middle School	High School	Advanced
Resolved Strained Gait Envious Detour Boycott Regret Adoration Cadaver Detect Flaring	Manic Boisterous Pondered Forlorn Oblivious Amino acids Wailed Regiment Disdainfully Rampant Smugly	Dialysis Venture Droning Milled Prospect Diuretics Fretfully Lingered Enfeebling Searing

**Chapters Twenty-Nine – Thirty**

Middle School	High School	Advanced
Ailing Hyper Infectious Reserved Composure Transplant Modeled Reinforced Spawn Insight Acidity Blurting Prolong Obligations Slack	Discern Communal Hospice Succession Barreled Alzheimer's Psychologist Cumulative Chronic Sentiment Consultant Insight Blustery Assurance Ensuring	Vaguely Fray Protocol Lucid Therapy Acute Narcissist Psychoanalysis Immunosuppressant Exhalations Scuttled Debilitated Frothy Luminance

## Chapter Summaries

### **Chapters One – Three**

The novel opens with a first-person narrative from Buddy, an old black dog that once belonged to a man named Ethan. Buddy is reflecting on his life as a dog and believes that he has achieved his purpose in life — to love his past owner, Ethan. He sits on a dock overlooking a pond at Ethan's family farm. A toddler named Clarity and her irresponsible mother named Gloria are visiting. Gloria was once married to Ethan and Hannah's son, Henry. While Gloria is sunbathing, Clarity falls into the lake. Buddy saves her, but Gloria, who has not seen anything, accuses him of actually pushing her into the lake. Buddy believes he is supposed to protect Clarity. It is obvious that Gloria does not like dogs and tries to separate her child from Buddy when she can, even locking him in the basement when Hannah leaves the house. In the first chapter, Buddy tastes something metallic in his mouth. This foreshadows the beginning of the end for Buddy.

In chapter two, Buddy comes to Clarity's rescue again when she wanders into a horse's stall and almost gets trampled. Again, Gloria blames the dog, but Hannah knows that Buddy saved the little girl. Clarity responds with delight when she sees the dog. Hannah broaches the subject of leaving Clarity with her so that Gloria can pursue her singing career, but Gloria perceives it as a deception to allow her ex-husband to stop child support payments. In a huff, she leaves the farm with Clarity. Buddy starts to feel real pain when he moves, although he tries to reassure Hannah that he is okay. She has noticed his altered gait. A trip to the vet shows that Buddy has cancer. As the chapter progresses, his pain worsens and Hannah is forced to put him to sleep. At the end of chapter three, he feels peace and warmth as he closes his eyes.

### **Chapters Four – Nine**

Buddy wakes as a small dark puppy. The mother is a poodle, but she has had two sires, so he is a "mutt." A man, wife, and a boy named Johnny live in the house where the puppy lives with other puppies in a box. It is discovered that Johnny is allergic to the puppy and his brother, so they are given away. A woman named Jennifer has to hand feed the puppy, and the puppy discovers that it has been reincarnated as a female dog. One day a boy and girl come to look at them and the puppy realizes the teenage girl is Clarity. The puppy has been named Molly, and Molly frantically cries for Clarity, but to no avail. She leaves with the boy and the brother of Molly, named Rocky. It is obvious that Jennifer is fostering Molly when another dog comes there to live named Daisy. Molly cries until Clarity returns. "C.J." as her friend Trent calls her, takes Molly home with her, but she does so with secrecy. She tries to hide Molly from her mother, Gloria.

Molly discovers a few things about Clarity. Clarity weighs herself obsessively and binges and purges when she eats. The mother is still self-absorbed and does not seem to care what her daughter does. Molly misses school and eventually a truant officer comes to the house. Molly is discovered and Gloria orders the dog removed. Molly holds her ground and blackmails her mother. She vows to tell the juvenile court about Gloria's negligent treatment of C.J. unless Gloria allows Molly to stay. C.J. wins the battle, but Molly is conscious of a darkening Gloria that stares at the puppy from the shadows of the hall. There is a foreboding tone of dread in the way Gloria treats the puppy.

Molly gets to know C.J. and her friend Trent the best. While they lightly flirt, Molly plays with her sibling, Rocky, whom Trent has taken home to live. While C.J. is gone one day, Gloria feeds the dog some cheese with poison in it. At the end of chapter nine, Molly cannot move and C.J. is screaming her name as she races for the vet.

### **Chapters Ten – Fifteen**

Molly survives the poisoning and Gloria takes C.J. on a cruise, perhaps out of guilt. C.J. leaves Molly with Trent while she is gone. When C.J. returns, Molly gets used to a routine of staying in the basement all day without her. As long as C.J. returns, Molly is okay, although she is lonely and scared of Gloria. A boy named Shane talks C.J. into giving him a key to the high school. Molly has access to the art class. Shane says he wants to steal a test, but in fact commits vandalism and theft. The police quickly discover C.J.'s involvement and come to her home to arrest her. When she is taken away, Molly is left in the basement alone and afraid. She howls her discontent.

In chapter eleven, we read of Molly's distress. By day she lies in the grass and hungers for food. Gloria does not feed her. In fact, when Gloria stares at Molly through the glass doors, Molly feels like a "bad dog." Trent visits and saves Molly from Gloria. When C.J. returns home, we find out that she has been suspended for a semester from school. Her mother introduces her to a new "friend" named Rick and tries to assert some control over C.J. Gloria tells her to get rid of the dog or give up her car and credit cards. C.J. will not budge. She runs away to a friend's house named Emily and takes Molly with her. After a brief length of time, Gloria comes to bid C.J.'s return, not out of motherly affection, but because it "looks bad" for her to live with other people.

As part of her sentence, C.J. has to complete community service and spends it with a woman named Andi. Andi trains dogs to detect cancer in people. Molly watches as one of her dogs crosses its legs when a person with cancer talks to it. Molly can smell the metallic tang in the patient with cancer and mimics the reaction of the other dog by lying down and crossing her forepaws. Andi is delighted to discover that Molly is able to detect cancer in patients and can signal it.

Also in this chapter, Gloria decides to have a Christmas party and invites her friends. At the party, a woman talks to Molly and Molly signals that she has cancer. C.J. takes the woman aside and gives her the bad news.

When the woman leaves the house crying, Gloria is livid that C.J. has ruined her party. C.J. goes to her room and her mother's boyfriend attempts to molest her. Molly protects her and bites the man. After another shouting match between mother and daughter, Gloria waits for C.J. to leave and then coaxes Molly into a car. She deserts her at a rescue center. Because Molly is chipped, she doesn't have long to wait before C.J. comes for her, but the realization that Molly is not safe in the house with Gloria convinces C.J. that she needs to run away from home.

### **Chapters Sixteen – Eighteen**

C.J. takes Molly to California with her, only to feel the fear and desperation of a young girl without a job or education in a scary world. Men try to lure C.J. into dangerous situations; a man breaks into her car, and the police take C.J. in as a runaway. While C.J. is in detention, Molly is sent to an animal shelter and joins the other dogs in wailing their distress. Gloria breaks down and pays for their return, but when C.J. returns she finds out that her home is in foreclosure. Apparently C.J.'s father, Henry, had died in a plane accident and received a settlement for a great deal of money. That money was put in a trust for Clarity to receive when she was older. When C.J. suggests that Gloria "dip into the trust" for financial help, she discovers that Gloria has already helped herself and spent all the money. C.J. is devastated; the money was supposed to be there for college. As she speeds away from her home, she sees her old boyfriend, Shane, in her rearview mirror. She tries to outrun him, but he pursues her. At the climax of the chapter, a car hits C.J. and everything turns upside down. Molly drifts away and realizes her purpose has been to take care of C.J. Molly does not survive the car crash.

### **Chapters Nineteen – Twenty-three**

A shift in the story has Molly reincarnated into a small Yorkie named Max. Although Max is living with women, he growls at most people. His only thought is to get back with his "girl" and protect her. Max proves that he is unadoptable until one day when he spots a girl walking down a street with a large dog. When her scent makes it to Max, he realizes it is C.J. and cries and cries for her attention. Max risks his life when he escapes from his yard and chases C.J. across busy streets and into a building. When he lunges at her with delight, she is in an elevator, and for a moment it looks as if his leash will be his demise. It gets caught in the elevator door. The near death experience brings the two together, so C.J. adopts little Max and takes him home. It is there that Max learns the identity of two other animals living with C.J.: Sneakers, a cat, and Duke, a Great Dane that C.J. is dog sitting. With intense delight, Max discovers that Trent is still a friend to C.J. and comes to visit. With all other people, Max is compelled to grow in order to show he is fiercely protective of C.J. With Trent he shows nothing but happiness, which both confuses and pleases C.J. As time passes, a man named Barry

comes home to the apartment C.J. has been living in and is unhappy to see that his Great Dane is subservient to a little dog.

He fires C.J. as his dog sitter and she is forced to find a small apartment for Sneakers and Max. She is heart-broken to leave Duke, and Duke is equally upset. Since his owner has been gone, Duke has come to believe that C.J. is his owner. Max recognizes a shift in C.J.'s mood. She becomes more and more depressed. Through a series of experiences, it is obvious that C.J. cannot get a break. She cannot make enough money as a dog walker to sustain herself, and her relationship with a married man ends roughly. She finds out that Trent is going to get married to someone else, and she slips further into depression. She cannot afford her rent and is forced to move out of her apartment. With no job opportunities, she gives Sneakers to a neighbor and asks Trent to take Max. Max can feel the sadness flowing through her. When C.J. leaves, Trent says, "I don't like this. I don't like it at all." Although C.J. has said that she was going on a trip to see her mother, there is a sense of finality in her behavior. There is foreshadowing of something desperate about to happen at the end of chapter twenty-four.

### **Chapters Twenty-four – Twenty-five**

In the next transition, Max finds himself living in a larger place with Trent; a woman named Annie visits with a yellow lab named Harvey. Max is confused by the turn of events. He does not know where Sneakers is, nor does he know where C.J. is. He senses sadness in Trent that further confuses him. One day Max is taken in a crate to a hospital. It is here that we find C.J., very ill, lying in a bed. We surmise that C.J. made an attempt to kill herself and it made her extremely ill. While Trent treats her with care and respect, the same is not said of her mother Gloria, who comes to visit C.J. in the hospital and adds to her stress. When Gloria announces that C.J. will come to live with her, Trent steps in and tells C.J. that she has the choice and the power to make her own decisions. C.J. chooses to live with Trent. Trent has broken off his engagement and there is hope that the two of them will fall in love. It is apparent that Trent has always had a romantic longing for C.J. At the end of chapter twenty-five, a twist occurs in the story. As Trent bends over to feed Max one day, Max smells the same metallic odor that came from the cancer patients. He signals, to no avail. C.J. is not home from the hospital yet, and Trent does not know about the signal for cancer. Only the reader knows.

### **Chapters Twenty-six – Twenty-eight**

When C.J. comes home from the hospital, she is extremely weak and frail. Trent cares for her and tries to raise her spirits by bringing Duke for a visit. He even finds her grandmother's farm and takes C.J. to see her relatives. A reunion proves to be just what C.J. needs and she is reunited with Hannah. She meets her other relatives from her

deceased father's side of the family and it brings her great pleasure. We also discover that C.J. has nearly destroyed her kidneys and needs dialysis. When they are returning from the trip to the farm, C.J. reacts to Trent's kindness with tenderness and love. They confess their love for each other and Max relates seeing the family from the farm again at their wedding.

When Trent goes to work one day and C.J. is feebly walking through her apartment, she collapses. Max frantically barks until a neighbor comes to save her. C.J. is put on a transplant list for a new kidney and must endure dialysis if she wants to live. She is despaired by the thought that she has done this to herself by her suicide attempt. As C.J. gets treatments and waits for a kidney transplant, she starts to regain her strength. She witnesses Max "praying" for Trent when he feeds her and realizes, with fear, that Max is signaling that Trent has cancer. She begs Trent to visit a doctor and their worst fears are realized when it is discovered that Trent does indeed have cancer. C.J. is grateful to Max for saving her husband. The early detection allows for a successful radiation treatment and Trent's life is saved. Trent, C.J., Sneakers, and Max go to live in a house and Max lives there for what he calls a "long, long time."

Max's legs become stiff and sore. Although he has lived a long life, and been a good dog to C.J. and Trent, he is dying. The little dog tries to hide his pain from his "girl," but Trent and C.J. know his time is up. Trent tells him that he has done a good job taking care of C.J. but he lets him know that he will protect her now. Max feels a familiar sensation of warmth and darkness, and slips away.

### **Chapters Twenty-nine – Thirty**

When Max awakes, he is no longer "Max," but a beagle puppy. Women in long robes come and talk to him. When people come to see the beagle and his siblings, he hangs back. His thoughts are of finding Clarity. One of the nuns taking care of the dogs is a woman named Margaret and she names the beagle "Toby." We find out that "Toby" had been the dog's first name from his first life here on earth. He has come full circle. While Toby waits for C.J. to find him, Margaret gives him a "job." He becomes a member of a hospice. He is trained to be quiet and good around the terminally ill. At night when people are sleeping, he can tell when someone is slipping away and stays with that person. He has a friend living with him, another dog named Chaucer, and a cook who feeds him treats from time to time. At the end of chapter twenty-nine, Toby recognizes the voice of one of the new patients in the hospice. It is Gloria.

When Toby barrels into the room, he sees C.J. He is all sobs as he greets her. She is amused at his antics. C.J. has aged a great deal. She is now a psychologist, one whose expertise is eating disorders. She has lost her husband, Trent, and is now nurturing Gloria, who suffers from Alzheimer's disease. When Gloria finally passes away, C.J. volunteers her time at the hospice, and although she is not there every day, Toby is not anxious. He knows she will find him again when she needs to.

## **Chapter Thirty-one**

When C.J. returns to the hospice, it is to be a patient. Her affairs are in order and she seems at peace with her decision to check herself in. We learn that she had received a kidney transplant earlier in her life, but her kidneys are failing again. She takes herself off of dialysis and says her goodbyes. She tells Toby that he reminds her of her other dogs, Molly and Max, and she passes away.

Toby realizes that his purpose in life was to love humans. He spends the rest of his days taking care of the patients and holding vigil as they pass. When he is awakened one day by a sharp pain, we know that he has lived his final day. His friends at hospice take him to the vet and tell him they love him. This time, when he passes away, it is not in dark, but in light. When he opens his eyes, he is swimming in golden waves. He inhales and realizes that the delightful scents he smells are coming from golden shores. He hears his name as "Molly" and looks to the shore to see all the humans who have been in his life. He whimpers with joy as he swims to them.

## Suggested Chapter Questions

*Students should be able to do more than comprehend the text; they should establish a connection to their text. Our goals as teachers include providing a safe environment so that students can express their own opinions. In fact, students are often more open to changing their own opinions than adults. We want them to express original thought by connecting to their reading. The chapter questions below offer a variety of assessment opportunities and they include well-researched reading and instructional strategies for whole groups, flexible smaller groups, and independent readers. Questions should support synthesis in reading, which is why the depth of knowledge (DOK) levels range from 1-4. For students to progress from tacit readers to reflective readers, they will need opportunities to discuss the text and write about the text. Teachers should supply students with post-it notes, posters in the room, time-line graphics, and other graphic organizers to respond to.*

### **Chapters One – Five**

#### Grades 6-8

1. Point of View: Who is the narrator of this story? How is this unusual or different from other books you have read?
2. What is reincarnation and what evidence do we have that Buddy was reincarnated?
3. Why does Buddy think that when he dies of old age, he will not be reincarnated into another dog?
4. Do you think Gloria is a good mother? Why or why not?
5. Foreshadowing: Why do you think the author included the part about Buddy having a "metallic taste" in his mouth? How is this an example of foreshadowing? How does Hannah treat Gloria?
6. What offer does Hannah make to Gloria and how does Gloria respond?  
Figurative Language: What is a euphemism and how does the author create a euphemism in the description of Buddy's death?
7. Provide an anchoring experience: students write about the death of a beloved pet. What is Buddy reincarnated into? How can one litter come from two sires?
8. Why is Buddy transferred to a foster family and what "astounding discovery" does "Molly" make?
9. How does Molly make sense of her new identity?
10. Use of Graphic Organizers: Create a plot time line where students add the most important details in chronological order as the story progresses. Use post-it notes so students can add their opinions, questions, emotions, etc. along the continuum; use this for discussion, predictions, and reflections.

### Grades 9-10

Students can use the same questions as the younger students use, only, they can offer their own anecdotal entries using journaling activities or small group discussions. While younger readers can concentrate more on summaries of events, older readers can concentrate on synthesizing the significance of events.

### Grades 11-12

1. Use Socratic Seminars to discuss the significance of events and the importance of perspective. How will the telling of this story create an understanding of how dogs interact with humans? How and why do animals seek to understand their environments? Why do you think animals respond empathetically to their human owners? What textual evidence supports that they do experience empathy?
2. Use of "Exit Slips": After classroom discussions, whether as a whole group or in smaller, flexible groups, have students write out what they still want to know, or what they want to discuss in the next classroom discussion.
3. Rhetorical Devices: More advanced readers can identify and analyze the rhetorical devices used by the author in the use of similes, metaphors, personifications, hyperboles, etc. Have them use post it notes as they read to share with the class.

## **Chapters Six – Eight**

### Grades 6-8

1. Why does Clarity come back for Molly?
2. Why is Trent concerned for C.J. with her having a dog in her house? Why is C.J. angry when Gloria purchases a fur coat?
3. Discussion Topic: Is it okay to purchase a fur coat? Why or why not?  
Characterization Lists: Students create a T-chart, labeling it with "C.J." on one side and "Gloria" on the other. Students find descriptions and quotations to add on each side that work to build a characterization of each person. Discuss the differences.
4. (Older students can "infer" from the quotations — is Gloria a good person and/or mother?)
5. Why does C.J. give Molly to Trent for safekeeping?
6. What textual evidence do we have that indicates that C.J. may have an eating disorder?

7. Provide Anchor Experiences: In journal entries, students can confide in their own experiences with those who suffer from eating disorders. What do they think provokes this behavior in young women?
8. (Older students may offer "triggers" for bulimic behaviors in teens. How does Gloria contribute to C.J.'s eating disorder?)
9. How does C.J. "convince" her mother to let her keep Molly? What does this say about their relationship?
10. Foreshadowing: How does the last line in chapter eight give a sense of foreboding?

#### Grades 9-10

1. Students find textual evidence of comedic aspects of the story and share with class.
2. In smaller groups: Have students make predictions on what will happen with Molly, C.J. and Gloria based on events so far in the story.
3. Graphic Organizer: Students create a plot line and use post it notes to explain exposition and rising action.
4. Persuasive Writing: Students write a letter to their parents, explaining why they should be able to have a pet. Share with class. Identify persuasive techniques/language that would appeal to parents.

#### Grades 11-12

1. Figurative Language: Students identify examples of "irony" in the text. How do dogs demonstrate empathy?
2. How should have C.J. introduced Molly to Gloria? What mistakes has she made that may come back to haunt her in future chapters?
3. What is the difference between Internal and External Conflicts? Have students write a character study on C.J. and Gloria. What are their internal and external conflicts? What inferences are being made and what conclusions can you make that support your opinions of each of them?

### **Chapters Nine – Twelve**

For any grade: Motivation is a key component of characterization. Have students study each character for motivation. Younger students can create pictures and place "bubbles" outside of their portraits' hearts or brains to explain whether a character's motivation comes from the heart or from the brain. Have them create these profiles for Trent, C.J. , Molly, Gloria, and Shane. They can add to these profiles as they continue reading. Older students can write 5 paragraph essays in which they defend their

interpretations of characters and their motivations. 11-12 grade students can write the same essay; only they include a thesis, which supports their hypothesis about the character they are studying. For example, an essay on Gloria and her motivation might include the following thesis: "Gloria's narcissism prevents her from being able to love and feel empathy for any creature that does not give her a tangible benefit, such as money or other "gifts."

#### Grades 6-8

1. Of all C.J.'s friends, who does Molly like the best? Why do you think that is?
2. How does Molly reason that the connection between C.J. and Ethan justifies Molly belonging to C.J.? (Hint: how do nicknames play a part in this reasoning?)
3. Why is Trent afraid to ask C.J. to the prom? How does Molly know he is afraid? What details do we discover about C.J.'s father's death in this chapter and why does C.J. think she will have the means to leave home when she turns eighteen? What does Molly say is her "most important function?"
4. Why doesn't Molly like Shane and what does Molly mean when she says "A dog can always tell," (P. 92).
5. How does Gloria try to kill Molly? What is her motivation to kill Molly?
6. The adoration of a pet would not interest her." Include instruction on MLA citation and imbedding quotes in an essay.
7. Why does it make C.J. unhappy to throw up? Why does she continue to do so if it causes her pain?
8. Even though Molly survived her poisoning, do you think this will be the last time Gloria tries to hurt her? Why or why not?
9. Identify and describe three different moods Trent exhibits; why does he feel as he does and how do Molly and Rocky pick up on his emotions? Why is Trent nervous to see Molly when she comes back from her cruise?
10. Why doesn't C.J. see as much of Trent when she returns from her cruise? Why doesn't Molly like Shane?
11. What does C.J. give Shane and how does it backfire on her?
12. Compare/Contrast Shane and Trent and how they feel about C.J. What textual evidence supports their character traits?
13. How does Trent rescue Molly when C.J. is sent away?
14. When C.J. returns, Gloria tries to ground her. Why is it unsuccessful?
15. At the end of Chapter 11, what does C.J. announce and what do you predict will happen?
16. Who are Annabelle and Zeke?
17. Why do Molly and C.J. keep moving to different houses?

18. Who is Andi and what kind of work does she do with dogs?
19. Why does C.J. experience a sense of dread when she sees Gloria at Emily's house?

### Grades 9-10

Questions from grades 6-8 help assess whether students are reading the book; however, the teacher can include a more thorough discussion with the following questions:

1. Where do you think Gloria received the money to take C.J. on such an extravagant cruise?
2. Gloria has a passive/aggressive personality. Define what this means and find evidence of it in these chapters. (Students can work in small groups to find the "evidence" and support their findings to the class).
3. Why do you think C.J. shows such disdain for Rick?
4. Why is it important that we don't make snap judgments on other people's lives? How does C.J. hurt Trent? Is it intentional or unintentional?
5. Why is C.J. responsible for Shane's crime? Is this fair? Why or why not? (Teacher's note: this is perfect teaching opportunity for students to discuss whether C.J.'s choice is criminal. Have students explain their choices)
6. How does Gloria play the "victim" in each situation? Does this support a characterization of Gloria as a "narcissist?"
7. Why are Emily's parents wary of C.J. as a friend for their daughter?
8. What do you predict will happen when Gloria shows up at Emily's home? Do you think she is there out of concern for C.J.? Why or why not? Research: How can dogs detect cancer in humans?
10. Grades 11-12: Use the same questions for younger grades, but extend their learning by having them come up with questions that do not have "yes" and "no" answers. Model the use of "value" questions.
11. "Is it fair for C.J. to impose on other families?"
12. "Rick tries to interfere with the raising of C.J. by making the mother a victim. What 'condition' do you think he suggests that Gloria suffers from?"
13. "What bad choices has C.J. made and does she understand how her choices affect others? Do you think she would make the same choices if she knew the affect she had on other people?"
14. "How can Trent help her?"

## Grades 11-12

1. Students can also find examples of comic relief in these chapters and share with class. What is an example of dramatic irony when Gloria tries to poison the dog? How is this an example of "Karma?"
2. Extended learning opportunity: Students research the ways dogs are used as "service dogs" in the health field. How is their sense of smell so important to research? In whole class instruction, have students visit this website: and discuss the implications. Students can pose questions to and email their questions.
3. Field Trips: Have students visit a nursing home that uses dogs in their programs so they may observe the dog's affect on the elderly.
4. Throughout the book, you will be presented with several connections to the community in the form of field trips and guest speakers. Accumulating projects can include volunteering at a rescue shelter. In various parts of the country, teenage volunteers are often used to clean out dog kennels for various organizations, such as guide dog training.

## **Chapters Thirteen – Seventeen**

### Grades 6-8:

1. What is the real reason Gloria does not want C.J. living with other people?
2. What does Gloria threaten to do if C.J. does not want to live by her rules, and how does C.J. call her bluff?
3. Anchor Experiences: What rights do children and parents have? Students can create a list of rights for both parents and children. These posters can be presented around the room. Have students vote for their favorite "list."
4. There is a reference to C.J.'s trust in chapter thirteen. What can you predict has happened to the money in the trust? Support your answer with textual evidence.
5. How does the man with throat cancer affect C.J.? Do you predict she will stop smoking? Why or why not?
6. What is Molly trained to do?
7. Foreshadowing: When a man bangs on the door to Gloria and C.J.'s home, he runs away before C.J. can see who it is. Molly smells his scent and the reader finds out it is Shane. Why does the author include this scene? Why is this an example of foreshadowing? (Older students can define stalking behavior).
8. When Gloria has a Christmas party, Molly signals that a guest has cancer. How does Gloria make this all about her?
9. Discussion: Should C.J. have told the woman about Molly "curtseying" to her and what it means? Why or why not?

10. What happens between C.J. and Giuseppe? Whose side does Gloria take and how does this affect C.J.?
11. Anchor Experience and Reflection: Think of a time when you were telling the truth and were not believed. How did it make you feel? (Students can use this in a journal activity before they read the chapter as an anticipatory set)
12. What does Gloria do to Molly that suggests the dog is not safe in the house? How does C.J. discover that it is Gloria who tried to dump the dog?
13. How does Molly discover Rocky's "purpose?"
14. What are C.J.'s plans at the end of chapter fifteen and why does Trent think she has not thought things through?
15. What promise does C.J. make to Shane that she does not intend to keep? Prediction: Will Shane just accept that C.J. is gone, or do you think he will reappear in her life? Why or why not?
16. C.J. says she has discovered her talent. What is it? How is this an example of sarcasm?
17. Is Shane dangerous? Find textual support for your response.
18. (Older students can write down how people try to control others. Have them identify controlling behaviors in Shane)
19. How does C.J. get away from Shane?
20. How does Molly know what an ocean is? How does she "allude" to past lives? What is life like in California?
21. Why does C.J. give the strange man she meets in California a different name?
22. Discussion: what evidence do we have that C.J. did not think her plan through? What dangers will she have to face? (Have students discuss what they would do in C.J.'s position)
23. When C.J. is taken into custody, Molly is sent to a shelter. What does it mean that Molly has "four days" as announced by a worker at the shelter?

#### Grades 9-10

1. In addition to answering questions from the younger grades, have students describe the circumstances that led up to C.J.'s decision to run away from home. Ask students to come up with a list of alternative solutions she could have come up with, despite the stressful events that were occurring in her life.
2. Anchor Experience: Have students write about a time when they were overwhelmed by events in their lives, and have them give advice to other teenagers in how to seek help. (Have older students research and create

- a list of agencies that offer help to teenagers in crisis. Have them create posters to present in the classroom with this information.)
3. Discussion: Is Shane still a danger to C.J.? What resources are available to her? Who should she contact regarding his behavior?
  4. Many teenagers fantasize about being on their own and moving to exotic places. What experiences does C.J. have in California and do you think it will change her opinion of this fantasy?
  5. Why would Molly only have four days in a rescue shelter? Research your city's shelters and find out if they are no-kill shelters or not. Talk to someone who works there. In small groups, assign a research project that pertains to rescue shelters. (Older students can volunteer at a shelter for hands-on experience; talk to administrators at local rescue shelters for these opportunities.)
  6. Discussion: What can we do to make sure more pets are spayed and neutered?

#### Grades 11-12

1. Anchor Experience: Students choose a location in the world where they would like to 'escape' to. Have the students research cost of living, job opportunities, etc. for teenagers without a high school diploma and share out with the class.
2. Informative/Persuasive speech and/or essay: Students research the needs for rescue shelters and come up with a plan to reduce pet populations and the need for shelters. Students may contact the President of "Life is Better Rescue" in Colorado at for more information. Discuss the difference between primary and secondary resources in research.

### **Chapters Eighteen – Twenty**

#### Grades 6-8

1. What is the "aggression test" and why is it important for dogs to pass it? Do you think this test is an adequate test to determine if a dog is "adoptable?"
2. What are some reasons a dog might bite, even if it is not a "mean" dog?
3. Apparently Gloria has given C.J. some conditions in order to return home. What are they? Do you think they are fair? Why or why not?
4. How do we know that Gloria is not a good judge of character in this chapter? Give textual support for your answers.
5. How did Molly save Sheryl's life?
6. What does Molly discover about Gloria's spending that sends her into a rage? Why do you think she is so angry?

7. What is the cause of the accident at the end of chapter 18, and what "epiphany" does Molly have?
8. Why does Molly fight to be "reborn"?
9. Describe Max and why is his size an adjustment?
10. Identify different odors that Max can smell when he is taken to his outdoor pen. Due to the sounds and smells, where do you think he is?
11. How does Max first identify C.J.?
12. When Max chases C.J. he is in a dire circumstance that could take his life: what is it?
13. Max is most likely a combination of what two dogs?
14. What happens when C.J. tries to give Max back?
15. Anchored to Experience: Have students share how their pets can read their "moods." What is Duke and Max's reaction to Gregg when they can sense that C.J. is getting angry?
16. Why does Max have to be so ferocious to protect C.J.?

#### Grades 9-10

Questions from grades 6-8 can be used to assess whether students are keeping up with the reading.

1. Teaching Opportunity: Useful in a Socratic Seminar or in small groups- Prompt: For every action, there is a reaction, or consequence. What could C.J. have done differently instead of running away?
2. Characterization Chart: Add to Gloria's characterization description. What about Gloria's actions in California would provide evidence that she is a narcissist? Could Molly's death been avoided? How?
3. When Max recognizes C.J., how do we know, as the reader, that Molly is older? What can we "infer" about C.J.'s relationship with Gregg?

#### Grades 11-12

1. Have students discuss different ways C.J. could have handled her problems with her mother. Discussion question: "What would you do if you knew your pet was not safe from a family member?"
2. Extended Learning: Define a Trust Fund. Does C.J. have any legal rights concerning her trust? Why or why not?
3. What are some legal ways C.J. could have dealt with her mother and Shane? Narcissistic people tend to think in egocentric terms. Have students discuss how Gloria does this and why this makes her a good, or not a good, mom to C.J. Molly has an epiphany — it alludes to the first

- novel. Since this is the sequel to A Dog's Purpose, what can we predict about the title of the book and what will happen with C.J.?
4. Molly's death is tragic; what are the definitions of a tragedy in literature that lends itself to her death?
  5. Why does Max have to be so ferocious to protect C.J.?

### **Chapters Twenty-one – Twenty-four**

#### Grades 6-8

1. Based on Max's description of C.J.'s schedule, what kind of job does she have? What types of things confuse Max about humans?
2. Why does Max think he is the "dog in charge?"
3. What machine "terrified" Duke?
4. When Trent comes to the house, he mentions C.J.'s weight. Why is he alarmed at how thin she is?
5. In chapter twenty-one we learn what Trent's occupation is. What does he do for a living? What happened to Rocky?
6. Why is C.J. sad when she leaves Trent?
7. When Barry comes back early from his trip, he seems angry at C.J. for turning his dog into a "whimp." What kind of person is Barry? Is he likeable or not? What textual evidence do you have to make a judgment on his character?
8. Why is Barry's presence bad for C.J.?
9. Who is Mrs. Minnick and how is she helping C.J.?
10. How do we know that Duke is heartbroken when C.J. leaves him in the care of Marcia?
11. What two events depress C.J. after she moves into her small apartment? How can Max sense her sadness?
12. Max thinks C.J. is mad at her shoes; why? What does he decide to do to make her feel better that has to do with her shoes? How does she react?
13. What does C.J. do with Sneakers at the end of chapter twenty-four? What do you predict will happen?

#### Grades 9-10

1. Students create a timeline of events that happen to C.J. from when she gets Max to the end of chapter twenty-four. Have students label the events as "Bad Luck" or "Preventable." Have them explain how our choices have consequences. Based on the reading, what can we infer about C.J.'s choices?
2. Why isn't C.J. truthful with Trent about her situation?
3. How is the end of chapter twenty-four an example of foreshadowing?

## Grades 11-12

1. Through a series of bad luck and bad choices, C.J. is experiencing what kind of emotion?
2. Anchored in Experience: Reflect on a time when bad events or poor choices kept piling up. What did you do? How did you resolve your situation?
3. Project-based Learning Activity: If C.J. had been aware of government assistance or other charities that could have helped her, she may not have been in such an awful situation by the end of chapter twenty-four. Research some real agencies that work with people in these situations and come up with some solutions that may work for C.J.

## **Chapters Twenty-five – Twenty-eight**

### Grades 6-8

1. At the beginning of chapter twenty-five, why do you think Max is living with Trent? Have students speculate and share.
2. Where is C.J.?
3. What do you think has happened to C.J. and what textual clues do you have to support your conjecture?
4. How do we know that C.J. was in a coma?
5. How does Trent treat Gloria?
6. Add to Gloria's characterization chart: what does she say and do that defines her as a mother? Is it good or bad?
7. What is the sense of foreboding we have as readers at the end of chapter twenty-five? Describe C.J.'s fragile condition.
8. What happened to Trent's fiancé?
9. Prediction: What will happen between C.J. and Trent? What textual evidence do you have to support your answer?
10. What does Trent think Max is doing when Max is signaling?
11. What surprise guest does Trent bring to see C.J.?
12. Reflection: Have students write about a time when a pet made them feel better. Where does Trent take C.J. at the end of chapter twenty-six?
13. Some people say that love is not selfish; it is kind. How does Trent demonstrate his love for C.J.?
14. What was the name of C.J.'s father and how did he die?
15. When does C.J. realize that she loves Trent?
16. Describe the wedding in the dog's perspective.
17. What event occurs at the end of chapter twenty-seven that is an example of foreboding?

18. How does Max save C.J.? Can you think of other examples out of the news when a dog has saved a human's life? Research and share.
19. How does Sneakers come to live with them again? Where has he been?
20. In this chapter we get clues about the seriousness of C.J.'s condition. What does she need (medically) to get better?
21. When Max signals again as Trent breathes on him, what does C.J. ask of Trent? Why do you think Max tries to hide his pain from C.J.?
22. When Max dies, what is his last thought?

#### Grades 9-10

Use chapter questions from 6 -8 to assess reading comprehension.

1. Have students conduct a mini-research project on suicide and causes. Have them discuss their findings. Most importantly, have them discuss the many agencies and people available to a young person in crisis.
2. If C.J. had been successful in committing suicide, how many people would her action have affected in a negative way? Graphic Organizer: Draw C.J. in the center and a line to every living thing that was connected to her. Have students share what the reaction would be from each person. Finally, how would it have affected Max?
3. What textual evidence do we have to support that Trent has always loved C.J.? Break classroom into smaller groups and assign chapters to each group. Have each group find textual support from their assigned chapters that support the theory that Trent has always loved C.J. and share with class.
4. Compare/Contrast the way Trent treats C.J. and the way Gloria treats C.J. Dogs have been known to save human lives time after time. Have each student find an example of a "Hero Dog" and put together in a power point or other video. Have students vote for their favorite "Hero Dog" and send the owners a letter with an award.
5. When Max passes away, do you think he will come back as another dog? Why or why not? What more can be done for C.J.? (Prediction)

#### Grades 11-12

1. Using questions and activities from the other grades, choose a couple of areas for extended learning, such as:
  - Research on Service Dogs
  - The Need for Organs and Organ/Transplant
2. Have students conduct research on dogs used to detect cancer by contacting at.
3. How do the students think this story will end? (Prediction)

4. Extended Learning: Students can take what they have learned in the book and share it with the community. Have them conduct their own school-wide, district-wide, or community-wide contest for "Hero Dogs." Have an essay contest and read the entries as they get back to the classroom. Have students vote for a winner and have a special fundraiser to give the dog a basket of treats and recognition.

### **Chapters Twenty-nine – Thirty-one**

Grades 6 -8

1. When Max wakes up, he is a puppy again. Where is he living and what is his new name? What about his new name delights him?
2. Why does Fran say that Toby is "An old soul...?" (P. 306)
3. How does Toby try to provide comfort at the end of someone's life?
4. What is a Hospice?
5. Describe Toby. What kind of dog is he?
6. At the end of chapter twenty-nine, Toby recognizes a voice. Whose voice is it and why do you think the author ended this chapter with the answer? What do you PREDICT will happen?
7. Why is Toby so elated when he scampers into Gloria's room?
8. What is C.J.'s nickname for Toby?
9. What does Gloria accuse Clarity of doing? Why is this an example of irony? What is Alzheimer's and what does it do to the body? Have students read about the disease and share.
10. What occupation does C.J. now have? Why do you think she may have selected this occupation?
11. Have students share out what they want to do with their lives. In a journal, ask students to share WHY they have chosen certain fields.
12. As a psychologist, what does C.J. discover about Gloria's behavior?
13. Do you think C.J. should forgive Gloria? Why or why not?
14. What "loss" has C.J. experienced?
15. What kind of proposal does C.J. give to Fran?
16. When Gloria passes away, what does Toby think his new job is?
17. Why do you think Toby is patient to wait for C.J. at the end of chapter thirty?
18. How does C.J. know that Dawn has an eating disorder? What are "comfort foods?" How does helping Dawn come around full circle when C.J. is dying?
19. How does Toby help C.J.?
20. How does C.J. show her bravery at facing her own death?
21. Why do you think C.J. chose the hospice as her last home?

22. When C.J. passes, what is Toby's reaction?
23. What are some things that C.J. taught Toby — as all of the other identities?
24. When Toby dies, he does not descend into darkness. Describe the difference. What does Toby see and how does he react to the "after life?"
25. What would you say was the most important lesson you learned from reading this book?
26. Have students write a review and include if they would recommend the book to someone else.

#### Grades 9-10

1. Have students research a hospice. In a journaling activity, students can share any experience they may have with hospices.
2. Do the students believe in Karma?
3. Have students sit in a large circle and ask them this question. Ask them if it is Karma that Gloria would end up dying of Alzheimer's disease. Have students complete their graphic organizer of Gloria, one in which they have used to characterize her. Timeline: Students may also finish a timeline on events of the book with questions/comments attached.
4. Ask students if Gloria died happy? Why or why not?
5. Compare/Contrast Gloria's passing to C.J.'s passing.
6. In past chapters, whenever a dog passed away, he or she was filled with darkness and water. What is different about Toby passing away? Why do you think the author made these choices?
7. What are the major themes in the book?
8. Would students recommend the book?
9. What questions do they still have?

#### Grades 11-12

1. In addition to questions and activities from the younger grades, have students write letters to the author and send it to him via his website: <http://brucecameron.com>.
2. In a Socratic Seminar ask: "Is Toby's journey over? Why or why not?" "Do our actions dictate what happens to us when we leave this earth?"
3. Have students write an alternative ending to the story. Compare and share. Vote for the best "alternative."
4. Have students create "Book Trailers" for *A Dog's Journey*. Have them watch the book trailers at the website [www.adogspurpose.com](http://www.adogspurpose.com).

## Discussing a Shift in the Text

### **At Middle School Level:**

Discuss and model a plot graph. Ask students to fill in as they read.

- Exposition (setting and characters)
- Rising Action (Identify Conflict(s) and Protagonist/Antagonist)
- Describe the Climax (can you have more than one in a novel?)
- Falling Action (How is conflict dealt with)
- Resolution (Any questions at the end of the story)
- What happened to everyone? How are shifts identified?

### **At High School Level:**

Discuss how a novel can follow a plot line, but have several climatic moments that do not end the story. How does the setting affect the plot line? How is characterization used to identify protagonist and antagonist? How is the narration (point of view) affected by the use of a dog's voice? How does the author convey suspense? What are examples of foreshadowing? Can a question at the end of a chapter be an example of foreshadowing? Give examples of sensory images to describe settings, events, people, and animals. What do you predict will happen after the shifts in the novel? Compare and contrast the first novel to its sequel.

### **Advanced level:**

What rhetorical devices does the author employ to illustrate his theme? What are the allusions to the previous text? Does the point of view solicit more empathy? Why or why not? How does the author's choice of diction influence his writing style/voice? What is the author's attitude towards his work? How does figurative language work to create mood? How does a shift create tension? What are some other choices the author could have made? Do examples of alliteration or the use of sycophancy affect the work? How? Have students re-write the ending emulating the author's style; students should explain their choices.

## Characters

### **Buddy: Chapters One – Three**

From *A Dog's Purpose*, Buddy is the protagonist in the beginning of this book. Even though Buddy comes back as different dogs after each death, it is Buddy's voice we hear throughout.

### **Molly: Chapters Four – Eighteen**

Molly is the descendant of an AKC registered Poodle and an unknown sire. Instead of curly hair, Molly has dark straight hair. Molly has to be placed in a foster home when it is discovered that her fur causes an allergic reaction in the little boy who first owns her. Molly meets Clarity June (C.J.) and knows it is her duty to protect her and be with her, much the same way it was her duty to protect Ethan (C.J.'s grandfather) when he was young.

### **Max: Chapters Nineteen – Twenty-eight**

Max is a Chihuahua-Yorkie mix who is born in a kennel, back into the "place of barking dogs." Although Max is shocked to discover he is so small, he is born with the determination to find C.J. and take care of her, despite his diminutive size. Because Max is not interested in finding another home, and often growls at others, he is labeled "unadoptable" and is scheduled for euthanization. By chance, Max sees Clarity as a young woman, walking a Great Dane named Duke. He sacrifices his life to reach her, and when C.J. tries to return him to his owners, she is told that she is the only one he likes and that if she does not take him, he will be euthanized the next day. C.J. adopts Max and Max is with C.J. during her most trying days, both emotionally and physically.

### **Toby: Chapters Twenty-nine – Thirty-one**

Toby is a Beagle. Nuns who decide that his future is as a service dog raise him in a convent. He is taken to a hospice where he is supposed to "Be Still" so he can offer relief to those who are dying. Toby has a sense when people are passing and sits with them in their final days. Although he yearns for C.J., he knows that his duty is in the hospice. One day he recognizes the voice of a woman as Clarity's mother, and he is ecstatic to see C.J. Although he does not live with C.J., they cross each other's path more than once. At first, C.J. is a visitor; when her mother passes, she returns as a therapist. Finally, C.J. checks herself in when she is dying.

**Hannah:**

Owner of "Buddy." Was married to Ethan, the original owner of Buddy. She is grandmother to Clarity June. Hannah and Ethan had a son who was once married to a woman named Gloria. Hannah is patient with Gloria and loving to Buddy and Clarity.

Gloria: Gloria is C.J.'s mother. She is a narcissist who is concerned with her own needs ahead of her daughter's. She is not an animal lover, and in fact, treats Buddy with disdain. She is responsible for the poisoning of Molly. Gloria is not a sympathetic character; she is critical of C.J. and is neglectful and irresponsible as a parent.

**Clarity June:**

"C.J." is the granddaughter of Ethan, the protagonist in *A Dog's Purpose*. In this novel, she is the girl for whom "Buddy" and his subsequent lives as other dogs, feels responsible. She is a victim of a critical mother and she suffers from a lack of self-esteem. C.J. has bulimia and depression. Her compassion for her dogs is evident, although she lacks the maturity to know how to raise them without help. Her decision-making and choices are not always sound, but they come from a good heart. Her best friend, Trent, who seems to have the responsibility and compassion of a more mature adult, even when the two of them are in high school, often aids her. C.J. becomes a compassionate, sincere woman who spends her last years taking care of others.

**Trent:**

As C.J.'s best friend in high school, the reader surmises that he loves Clarity in ways even he does not totally fathom. As an adult he is responsible, caring, empathetic, and reliable. Their friendship grows into a deep love. He adopts Molly's brother, Rocky, as a puppy, so the two of them enter and re-enter C.J. and Molly's life several times. When C.J. has Max, Trent is the only man Max adores. Trent eventually marries C.J. and takes care of her during her illnesses, as she takes care of him through his bout with cancer. He passes away before C.J., but the reader feels as if he has lived a full life, without regrets.

**Shane:**

Shane is a high school boy who gets involved with C.J. He appears to be a bad choice for C.J. He uses her key to get into a school building and she must pay the price for his theft of school property. He is responsible for her juvenile record and the loss of her beloved dog, Molly, by causing an accident that results in Molly's death.

## Themes

A Dog's Journey offers a variety of teachable moments. There are several distinct themes:

- **Unconditional Love:** The "purpose" of a dog's life is to provide unconditional love for his or her owner; this love, when returned, gives humans some of their most treasured moments in life.
- **Coming of Age:** C.J. comes of age in a story where we meet her as a bubbly and affectionate toddler, to an empathetic and nurturing woman at the end of her life. Her journey is paved with the turmoil of self-doubt and self-loathing, due to an unlovable and callous mother. She is prey to men who use her and is guilty of unsound decision-making. Her bad decisions as a teenager have lasting consequences. Because she lacks a formidable education, she does not have marketable skills. Many of her poor choices are due to her financial stress. When she is a victim to poor luck and bad timing, she is overwhelmed by her depression and stress and attempts to commit suicide. Without Trent, she may have succeeded, but with his help and love, she is able to become a strong, independent woman. The consequence of her attempted suicide results in her inability to have children. At the end of her journey, she feels ready to transition to the next stage. She is at peace with her life, and the love she has shared.
- **Dog as man's best friend:** Dogs can be taught to detect illnesses in people; they are used as healers, helpers, and guides. They give without regard to their own happiness. Buddy's journey that continues as dogs Molly, Max, and Toby is to fulfill a purpose of love and protection.
- **The Journey as a life's work:** Just as Odysseus discovered when he fought to return to his life as King of Ithaca, so does Buddy discover when he fulfills his purpose in loving his boy, Ethan, that it is not the purpose of a life, but the journey one undertakes that determines the outcome. When Ethan is gone and Buddy remains, he meets Clarity, the granddaughter of Ethan. He remains loyal to her until the end. The epiphany he achieves is that his purpose is not only to love one person, but to love all of his "people." When his journey is over, he will meet with all the people who have been in his life.
- **Reincarnation:** To go on this ride, the reader is asked to believe in this concept, at least for dogs. For Toby, Buddy, Molly, and Max to discover a purpose in life, they must come back again and again to search for C.J. and protect her. This overwhelming desire to protect and love humans remains after the dog's death, and thus, into a new dog's life. When a life has ended, love remains.

- **Karma:** Call it "fate," "coincidence," or "dramatic irony," this is a motif played out in the plot. Gloria's "punishment" in the end is death by Alzheimer's, a cruel death for those who suffer from it, and it can be said that Gloria was cruel. It is befitting that Gloria ends her life in a hospice where Toby serves as the "dog angel," who sits with people when they are "crossing over." Gloria, who has been a negligent and often criminal mother, dies without money or men, the two tangibles she fought for her entire life. When Molly learns how to "pray" when she smells cancer on people, dies, this knowledge is given to the reincarnated Max. Had he not been able to detect and "signal" that Trent had cancer, it may have gone undetected too long. Instead, C.J. is flabbergasted to discover that her new dog, Max, also signals for cancer and this discovery causes her to persuade Trent to get medical attention. Because he catches the cancer in time, he is able to survive. In addition, while C.J. serves the hospice as a therapist, she is able to recognize the signs of an eating disorder in a young girl. That same young girl returns to see C.J. when C.J. is dying. The reader discovers that the girl is heading to med school; it is assumed that her success is a consequence of meeting with C.J. earlier in her life and conquering her own demons. It is also dramatic irony that Toby is renamed "Toby", the first name the dog ever had from the first book, *A Dog's Purpose*. This time, when Toby dies, he is not reincarnated. His journey has taken him full circle — and in the end, he does not merely feel the water that surrounds him when he is about to be born again; he emerges from the water to see a distant shore with all of his human beings urging him on by calling out his various names.

## Extended Learning

1. Students may choose to visit a hospice or nursing home where service dogs are used and write about their experiences.
2. People are available to come to classrooms for the following demonstrations:  
Service Dogs
3. Cancer-sniffing dogs: [www.dogsdetectcancer.org](http://www.dogsdetectcancer.org)
4. How to Foster a Dog
5. How to Fundraise for a local dog shelter — see Life is Better Rescue
6. Have students brainstorm about what they would like to do with this book. Be sure to share your experiences with author W. Bruce Cameron on his website, <http://brucecameron.com>
7. Adopt a Dog Shelter: There are dog shelters, dog rescue organizations, and dog charities virtually anywhere. Student involvement could include doing a fund raiser, volunteering at a shelter, attending a charity event, or even creating a dog rescue organization. The students could sponsor a dog as it moves through the stages of rescue, training, fostering, and successful adoption.
8. Project-based Learning Design: Have students create a no-kill shelter in their city/county. Have them research the financing, needs, manpower hours, marketing, etc. They just may come up with a proposal for their local legislatures.
9. Visit a local shelter and make a note of special needs. Have students get involved by creating their own fundraisers to serve the shelter. Many shelters hire students to walk dogs, clean out cages, and play with kittens.
10. Students can research all animal support groups in their area and compare/contrast their results. Students may find a need that is not being fulfilled; for example, building doghouses and giving them to people who leave their dogs outside in the winter.

## Georgia Lee Cameron

The author's daughter, Georgia Lee Cameron of Denver, Colorado, became intimately involved with animal welfare and rescue when she joined a friend to start a rescue center in 2005. The shelter's focus was on training and education throughout the "rehoming" process. As time went on, and Georgia's involvement became more consuming, Georgia saw a desperate need to help adopt out the at-risk population of animals. Animals are at-risk when they are too young, or in need of fostering before they are placed in their "forever homes." For most animal shelters, animals unable to take care of themselves are euthanized. Georgia, who was currently working for a lobbyist in Denver, took her skills and experience to help produce legislation to help these animals. In 2011 she created "Life is Better Rescue." Now, Animal Control will allow Georgia and her volunteers to help out a litter of puppies, or an injured dog before it is taken to a shelter. "I get calls from Springfield, Missouri, and cities in other states now. We have a mobile unit where we can go and pick up, say, 40 animals, and take them back to Denver and place them in the care of one of more than 100 foster volunteers' homes." Georgia says that her organization is truly concerned with the quality of life for both the animal and the human who is adopting. "For example, it would be a mistake to adopt a dog who needs to work or run with a person who lives in an apartment and does not like to go outside," she explains. And Georgia does more than just talk about her philosophy of matching the right pet to the right owner; she lives it by example. Georgia was contacted when a huge English Mastiff was brought in by Animal Control in another state for what they believed was a hit and run by a car on the freeway. Georgia had the dog transported to Denver and looked at by her own vet. A car did not hit the dog; it had been beaten severely with a baseball bat.



Georgia named the dog "Porsche" and gave her a forever home. After healing from multiple skull fractures, Porsche has found a loving home and is the trademark face of "Life is Better Rescue."

Georgia is able to visit classrooms either by Skype or in person. Her educational outreach program helps students grasp the severity of the problem of unwanted animals, and teaches them the necessity of spaying/neutering pets. Georgia says that her organization, of which she is president, has been extremely successful thus far. As of Sept. 2013, they have rescued more than 1800 animals, which include chickens, goats, birds, and even snakes. It is her vision to open a shelter with many acres so that she and the other workers can help even more animals. Georgia's idea for how students can get involved? "Have them take pictures of all the animals at the shelters," she suggests. "Many times a picture is what helps the adoption. Volunteers at shelters often have too much to do to take several pictures of each animal, but students could!"

**To reach Georgia Cameron for a classroom visit, contact her through:  
info@lifeisbetterrescue.org**

## Acknowledgments

**Amy Cameron** earned a Bachelor's degree in Broadcast Journalism from Arizona State University and a Master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction from Avila University in Kansas City, Missouri. She currently teaches Language Arts at Grandview Senior High School in Grandview, Missouri where she serves as the Department Chair.

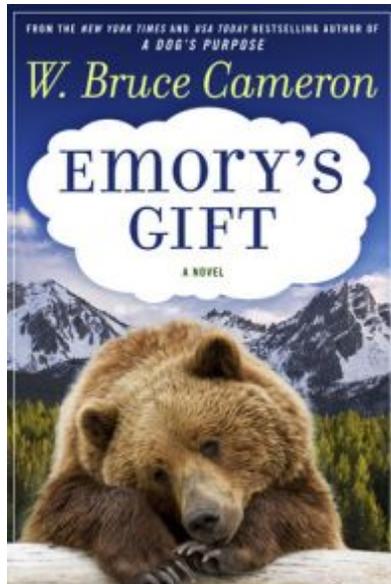
**Judy Robben** has been teaching for 26 years as a classroom teacher and a remedial reading expert. She earned her Bachelor's degree in Education at St. Louis University and her Master's degree in Education at the University of Kansas.

For additional resources, check out these websites:

[www.cutestpetcontest.com](http://www.cutestpetcontest.com)

[www.brucecameron.com](http://www.brucecameron.com)

## Other Books by W. Bruce Cameron



### *Emory's Gift* *The Dogs of Christmas*

**Teachers:** As with *A Dog's Purpose* and *A Dog's Journey* all of these books are appropriate for Middle School, High School and Advanced readers.

**Study guides are also available for all of these books.**

For more information please visit:  
[www.brucecameron.com](http://www.brucecameron.com)