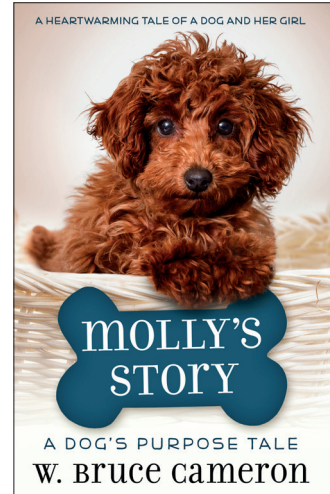
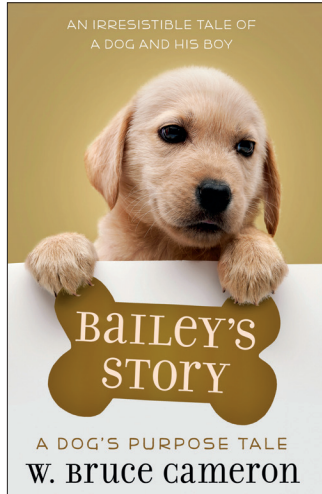
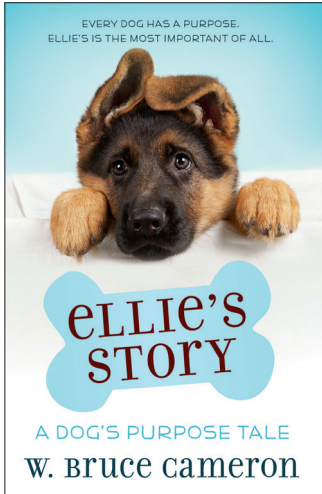




# STARSCAPE

## TEACHER'S GUIDE



## A DOG'S PURPOSE

### Puppy Tales

## W. Bruce Cameron

*On Ellie's Story: A Dog's Purpose Tale*  
Pennsylvania Young Reader's Choice Award (2016-2017)  
MD Black-Eyed Susan Book Award Nomination, Grades 4-6 (2016-2017)  
Colorado Children's Book Award Winner (2017)  
Louisiana Young Readers Choice Nomination, Grades 3-5 (2018)  
Rhode Island Children's Book Award Nomination (2017)

### About this guide

The questions and activities that follow are intended to enhance your reading of W. Bruce Cameron's middle grades *A Dog's Purpose* Puppy Tales. The guide has been developed in alignment with the Common Core State Standards; however, please feel free to adapt this content to suit the needs and interests of your students or reading group participants.



Photo credit: Ute Ville

**W. BRUCE CAMERON** is the *New York Times* bestselling author of *A Dog's Purpose*, *A Dog's Journey*, *The Dog Master*, *Ellie's Story*, *Bailey's Story*, and *Molly's Story*. He lives in California. Look for him online at [brucecameron.com](http://brucecameron.com), [facebook.com/Adogspurpose](https://www.facebook.com/Adogspurpose), and on Twitter (@wbrucecameron) and Instagram (@adogspurpose).

### About this series

No one understands humankind's best friends quite like #1 *New York Times* bestselling author W. Bruce Cameron, whose *A Dog's Purpose* Puppy Tales give insight into the unconditional love and loyalty canines naturally share with the humans in their lives. Told from a dog's perspective over the course of its many lifetimes, these heartwarming and hilarious tales impart life lessons and inspire people to reflect upon their bonds and relationships—and understand that every creature on Earth is born with a purpose.

"Ellie's view of the world is spot-on, feeling just like the thoughts dogs must have.... A satisfying and illuminating tale."

—Kirkus Reviews on *Ellie's Story*

"A natural choice for dog lovers."

—Booklist on *Ellie's Story*

"It is often said that dogs are man's best friend, and this book proves it as readers experience life as a dog through Bailey's narration.... Overall, this is a very heartwarming story."

—VOYA on *Bailey's Story*



## Ellie's Story: A Dog's Purpose Tale

*Ellie's Story: A Dog's Purpose Tale* describes the life of a search-and-rescue dog, but its unique viewpoint makes it a fantastic resource for children and adults who love dogs simply as pets, too. From puppyhood, to bonding with humans, to working to save lives, readers of all ages will be gripped by Ellie's story and its insights into humankind's best friends.

### READING WITH YOUR CHILDREN

## BEFORE READING

### THE BOOK:

## Discussion Questions

Help your young reader get excited about this book by exploring key words and ideas from the story. This will help strengthen the connections children make as they begin to read.

- This book is titled *Ellie's Story*. What is a "purpose"? What types of roles do dogs play in your community? What do you think is a dog's most important role?
- What books have you read about dogs? Describe your favorite dog book, noting whether it was fiction or non-fiction, and what you liked best about the story.
- Have you ever tried to train a dog or other pet? If so, what was the most surprising or challenging thing you learned about this process? If not, would you like to try dog training and what kind of dog (or other animal) might you like to train?

## AFTER READING THE

### BOOK:

## Discussion Questions

Some or all of the questions below may help launch family conversations or be useful preparation for the activities that follow.

- Who narrates *Ellie's Story*? Were you surprised when you realized the identity of the narrator? Why or why not?
- In Chapter One, Jakob chooses Ellie from a litter of German Shepherds. What are some of the key qualities he appreciates her?
- What is "Work" to Ellie? Describe the steps Jakob takes to teach Ellie to understand "Work" and, later, "Find." How is

"Play" a very important part of Ellie's training process? Is play important for people, too? Explain your answer.

- How does Jakob help Ellie conquer her fear of water? What rescue described in the story requires Ellie to deal with water? How does Ellie use her sense of smell to find a bad guy?
- What actions does Ellie take in the story that show she is an extraordinary rescue dog?
- Why does Ellie have to leave Jakob and go to live with Maya? How does she react to this transition? How is Ellie's understanding of the change similar to, and different from, the way a human understands such events?
- What challenges does Maya face as she works to become Ellie's handler?
- Ellie describes the different ways she is loved by Jakob, Maya, and other characters. Do these descriptions help to better understand the relationships your dog (or dogs you know) has with you and other members of your community? Explain your answer.
- List some key search-and-rescue missions Ellie undertakes before the trip to El Salvador. What makes searching through the earthquake rubble in El Salvador so different from her police work in the United States? How does Maya realize this and find a way to help Ellie with this new work?
- Why can't Ellie return to "Work" after El Salvador? What does she do instead? What happens when Ellie and Jakob are reunited in the last chapter of the story? How did you feel when Jakob told Ellie, "you're a good dog"?

## Activities

Take the story from the page to the pavement with these fun and inspiring activities for the dog lovers in your family.

- **MAKE A "DOGS ARE AWESOME" POSTER.** Inspired by the story, have children draw, paint, or glue magazine clippings, printed images found via parent-supervised web searches, or other visual art material onto a large sheet of cardboard or foam core. The poster may include images of dogs playing with people, dogs at work, even dogs in cartoons. Mount the finished work in a place of prominence in your home.
- **TRY AN OBSTACLE COURSE.** As part of her training, Jakob takes Ellie through an agility course. Design an obstacle course for people. Choose a space in your backyard or nearby park. Stations might include running between traffic cones, jumping rope, or tunneling under a picnic



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blanket. Make signs explaining what course runners should do at each station. Be creative! Invite friends or neighbors to try the course. Consider a “parents-vs-kids” race or other fun challenge on the course.

- **MAKE A LEARNING LIST.** Based on information from the book, collaborate with your child on a list of important “dos” for dog ownership and care. Consider listing things to look for in choosing a puppy, best practices for training young dogs, and ways to keep a growing dog feeling happy and purposeful.
- **TALK LIKE A DOG.** *Ellie’s Story* is narrated in first person by Ellie the German Shepherd. This helps readers understand the dog’s point-of-view and is also a model for helping children see other people’s and animals’ perspectives. Invite your child to describe, using “I,” a few minutes in the life of his or her own pet. Or, invite your child to describe how you, a sibling, or another family member might understand the child’s actions in an exciting or confusing situation.
- **HELP OUT.** Learn more about the work of search-and-rescue dogs at SARDUS (<http://www.sardogsus.org/index.html>), find out how dogs help with literacy through the R.E.A.D. program ([http://therapyanimals.org/Contact\\_Us.html](http://therapyanimals.org/Contact_Us.html)), visit your local ASPCA, or seek out other dog-friendly organizations in your community. Make a family plan to donate 2-4 hours (or more) supporting the great work of dogs.

made a good choice in choosing Ellie as the best possible rescue dog from her litter.

- **TEXT TYPE: NARRATIVE.**  
In the character of Maya, write several journal entries describing your dreams, doubts about, and plans to become Ellie’s new handler.
- **RESEARCH & PRESENT: EL SALVADORAN EARTHQUAKES.**  
Go to the library or online to learn more about the devastating earthquakes that hit El Salvador in 2001, and the role of rescue dogs in helping with recovery efforts. Use your research to create a PowerPoint or other multi-media style presentation to share with friends or classmates.
- **RESEARCH & PRESENT: RESCUE DOGS.**  
Go online to learn more about search-and-rescue dogs. (Hint: Begin your research at <http://www.sardogsus.org/index.html>.) Create an informative booklet that describes the training, the types of rescues dogs can accomplish, and other facts. If possible, make copies of your booklet to distribute to others in your school or community.

Supports English Language Arts Common Core Writing Standards: W.3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.7; W.4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.7; W.5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.7; W.6.2, 6.3, 6.7; W.7.2, 7.3, 7.7

## ***Bailey’s Story: A Dog’s Purpose Tale***

*Bailey’s Story: A Dog’s Purpose Tale* describes the life of a beloved pet from the canine’s point-of-view. From rough beginnings in a puppy mill to life as the devoted friend of “his boy,” Ethan, Bailey’s story will warm reader’s hearts and deepen their empathy with mankind’s best friend.

### READING WITH YOUR CHILDREN

## BEFORE READING

### THE BOOK:

## Discussion Questions

Help your young reader get excited about this book by exploring key words and ideas from the story. This will help strengthen the connections children make as they begin to read.

- This book is titled *Bailey’s Story: A Dog’s Purpose Tale*. What is a “purpose”? What types of roles do dogs play in your community? What do you think is a dog’s

## READING IN YOUR CLASSROOM

## WRITING ACTIVITIES

These Common Core–aligned writing activities may be used in conjunction with the discussion questions in the “Family” section above.

- **POINT-OF-VIEW:**

*Ellie’s Story* is narrated by Ellie, the German Shepherd. How does the author’s sensory descriptions (sound, sight, taste, touch, and smell) help readers connect with the dog’s viewpoint? What other techniques does the author use to create a believable dog’s voice for the narrative?

- **COMMUNITIES AND RELATIONSHIPS:**

Using clues from the tale and your imagination, write a short biography for Jakob or Maya. What led them to join the police force? Where did they discover their love for animals? What critical life experiences did they have just before meeting Ellie? What do you imagine for their future?

- **TEXT TYPE: OPINION PIECE.**

Write a one-page essay explaining why you think Jakob



most important role?

- Have you ever had a pet? Describe how the pet came into your family and what you knew (or wondered) about your pet's life before he arrived in your home. If you do not have a pet, what kind of pet might you like to have, why, and how might you find such an animal?
- How many examples can you list of ways dogs help their human friends? Consider how your pet helps you in your home, how service dogs help people with special needs, and how dogs are part of military, police, and other service organizations. If desired, keep your list on a home bulletin board, white board, or a sheet of paper, and add to it as you read this book—and afterward!

## AFTER READING THE BOOK: Discussion Questions

Some or all of the questions below may help launch family or classroom conversations or be useful preparation for the activities that follow.

- *Bailey's Story* is narrated by Bailey, the dog, himself. Were you surprised when you realized who was telling this story? Why or why not? What sorts of things does Bailey notice that a human narrator might not notice?
- How does Bailey come to “know the boy very well” (p. 13) in the early chapters of the book? If you could “speak dog” and explain things more thoroughly to Bailey, what might you try to clarify so he could better understand Ethan's activities with his dad, his need to go to school, the “game” of “Dog Door,” and the experience of the “Dog House”?
- In Chapter 6, Ethan and Bailey make a dangerous friend named Todd, who tries to keep Bailey for his own. What kind of kid is Todd? Would you call Todd a “bully”? What advice should you give Ethan about spending time with Todd? Are there reasons readers should feel bad for Todd? Explain your answers.
- What is “The Farm”? Do you think you would like to spend the summer at “The Farm”? Why is “The Farm” wonderful for Bailey? For Ethan? What kinds of freedom do Ethan and Bailey have at “The Farm” that they do not have at home? What happens when summer ends?
- How does Bailey behave at moments in the story when he is lonely, frustrated, or uncertain? How are his behaviors treated by Ethan and his parents? Describe a moment in your own life when you felt unsure or worried. What did you say and do? Compare and contrast your human actions to Bailey's animal responses to similar emotions.

- In Chapter 12, Ethan is left alone at “The Farm” for the first time. Describe what happens when Ethan decides to ride Flare out for a picnic. Do you think Ethan should have made this choice? Why or why not? How does Bailey help when Ethan gets into trouble? Does he understand he is helping? What would Bailey say is his most important job in life?
- In Chapters 14, 15, and 16, readers experience Ethan's high school life through Bailey's eyes. How do Ethan's main interests change? Does Bailey's understanding of his job as “Ethan's boy” change during these years? Why or why not?
- What warning signs that Todd is becoming more dangerous does Bailey observe but not understand? Do you think Ethan behaves well toward Todd in these chapters and during their fight at the end of Chapter 17? Explain your answer.
- How does Bailey become a hero in Chapters 18 and 19? What terrible thing happens to Ethan as these events unfold? Does your family have an emergency plan in case there is a fire or other dangerous event at your house? Describe this plan—or have the conversation today!
- After the fire, Ethan's life is dramatically changed. How does Bailey understand the changes in Ethan? What happens when Bailey and Ethan return to “The Farm” after the accident? What reunion does Bailey help make happen? How does Bailey help Ethan remember what he can still do?
- After reading *Bailey's Story*, how might you describe a pet dog's most important purpose in one sentence?

## Activities

Take the story from the page to the pavement with these fun and inspiring activities for the dog lovers in your family.

- **GOLDEN RETRIEVERS.** Go to the library or online to learn more about this popular dog breed. (Hint: Visit [www.akc.org](http://www.akc.org).) Make a list of things Bailey does in the course of the story that show he has the key qualities of a Golden Retriever. If desired, try this activity with your own pet's breed, or do this research for a breed of dog you are considering owning as a pet someday.
- **DOG PROOFING.** Bailey sometimes gets into trouble by chewing shoes, eating garbage, or entering/exiting places he should not. Take a walk through your home or yard. Bring a notepad and note the things you would have to “Bailey proof” if he were your pet. Are your doors well secured? Where do you keep your kitchen garbage? Do you have other pets, such as cats, that might help Bailey





get into trouble? What easily-found shoes, plastic toys, or other items might be big temptations for Bailey if he were home alone? After your exploration, discuss what you learned about your home from exploring it from this viewpoint. Does it cause you to make any home or yard changes for the pets in your life?

- **A DOG COMMUNITY.** Bailey finds furry friends in his neighborhood. Are your neighbors, nearby relatives, or friends also animal fans? Celebrate your canine community with a “playdate” in your neighborhood or at a local dog park. Make invitations for adults, kids, and dogs to come to your event. Prepare human and animal-friendly snacks. Plan activities such as relay-races or make-a-safe-pet-toy crafts. Be creative! Have fun! Celebrate the joy of family pets!
- **PET CHAT.** *Bailey’s Story* is narrated in first person by Bailey, the Golden Retriever. This helps readers understand the dog’s point-of-view and is also a model for helping children see other people’s and animals’ perspectives. Invite your child to describe, using “I,” a few minutes in the life of his or her own pet. If desired, invite your child to describe, using “I,” an experience in the life of a younger sibling, parent, grandparent, or friend.
- **HELP OUT.** Bailey is a lucky dog to have been rescued and adopted by Ethan’s family. Your child can help more unhappy dogs find safe, happy homes by designing an awareness-raising poster. Brainstorm poster titles (e.g., “DON’T SHOP AT PUPPY MILLS,” “ADOPT A SHELTER PET,” or “BE KIND TO DOGS”). Consider using paint, markers, colored pencils, photographs, or other images found online or cut from magazines. Once your decisions are made, make your poster. Visit a nearby supermarket, veterinarian, or library with your child and encourage him/her to ask if they have a good spot to hang your poster. Take a photo of your child beside their mounted poster to share with friends and family!

## READING IN YOUR CLASSROOM

## WRITING ACTIVITIES

These Common Core–aligned writing activities may be used in conjunction with the discussion questions in the “Family” section above.

- **POINT-OF-VIEW:** *Bailey’s Story* is narrated by Bailey, the Golden Retriever. To make this feel realistic, the author relies heavily on sensory descriptions, especially scents, sounds, and tastes. Have students imagine “hero dog” Bailey is visiting their school with Ethan. Write 2-3 paragraphs from Bailey’s viewpoint including his experience of arriving at the school entrance, meeting

various students and teachers, and the view from the front of the auditorium or a classroom as Ethan tells their story.

- **COMMUNITIES AND RELATIONSHIPS:** Bailey enjoys joining Ethan for fun and games in the neighborhood. Using clues from the novel, write a welcome letter to families who might be new to Ethan’s neighborhood. In your letter, introduce the kids and pets in the neighborhood, and describe the kinds of fun they enjoy in different seasons. Then, write a welcome letter to families who might move to your own neighborhood, including people, pets, activities, and other interesting details. Read your letters aloud to friends or classmates. What similarities and differences do you see between Ethan’s community and your own or between the real-life neighborhoods of your classmates? What good qualities do most communities share?
- **TEXT TYPE: OPINION PIECE.** Write a one-page essay explaining what you think Ethan should have done to end the argument he and Todd have at the end of Chapter 17, and whether you think Ethan should feel partly responsible for Todd starting the fire. Does any argument justify putting people’s lives at risk?
- **TEXT TYPE: NARRATIVE.** In the character of Hannah, write the story of how Bailey helped your friendship with Ethan grow. Or, in the character of Todd, write the story of why you tried to kidnap Bailey when you were young and why Ethan makes you feel so angry.
- **RESEARCH & PRESENT: PROTECT OUR PUPS.** Although Bailey does not realize this, he was born in a “puppy mill” or “puppy farm,” a place focused more on breeding dogs for profit than on their health and safety. Go to the library or online to learn more about the problems with many puppy mills. (Hint: Visit [www.humanesociety.org](http://www.humanesociety.org) or [www.PAWS.org](http://www.PAWS.org).) Have small groups of students create oral presentations encouraging dog lovers to avoid puppy mills, how, and why. If possible, have students give their presentations to others in their grade or school.
- **RESEARCH & PRESENT: FIRE SAFETY.** Bailey saves the family from a terrible fire. Go online to learn more about how families can plan for a fire emergency. (Hint: Begin your research at [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org) or [www.nfpa.org](http://www.nfpa.org).) Create an informative booklet or informational poster sharing what you have learned. If possible, make copies of your booklet to distribute to others in your school or community.

Supports English Language Arts Common Core Writing Standards: W.3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.7; W.4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.7; W.5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.7; W.6.2, 6.3, 6.7; W.7.2, 7.3, 7.7



## ***Molly's Story: A Dog's Purpose Tale***

*Molly's Story: A Dog's Purpose Tale* describes the life of a mixed-breed dog from her birth in the home of a kindly woman who fosters strays; to her puppyhood with CJ, a young girl with a difficult home life; to the discovery of her talents as a cancer-sniffing dog and loyal companion. This fast-paced story of how an unwanted pup and her lonely girl help each other find their talents will warm readers' hearts while encouraging them to reflect on what it takes to build a strong, supportive family.

### **READING WITH YOUR CHILDREN**

## **BEFORE READING THE BOOK: Discussion Questions**

Help your young reader get excited about this book by exploring key words and ideas from the story. This will help strengthen the connections children make as they begin to read.

- Titles in the *A Dog's Purpose Puppy Tales* series explore the ways canines partner with and support human beings. What roles do dogs play in your life, and in the lives of your family, friends, and community members? List any other books or articles you have read, or any television programs or movies you have watched, about dogs helping humans. What abilities do dogs have that make them especially helpful to humans?
- *Molly's Story* begins in the home of a woman who fosters stray animals. What ways might a dog become a stray, or find itself in an animal shelter? What might be some situations in which it is not the best plan for a family to adopt a pet? What are some issues a family might discuss before making the commitment to adopt a pet?

## **AFTER READING THE BOOK: Discussion Questions**

Some or all of the questions below may help launch family or classroom conversations, or be useful preparation for the activities that follow.

- *Molly's Story* is narrated by Molly, the dog, herself. How does the dog's perspective impact the objects described and the way human discussions are understood?
- In Chapter 1, Jennifer uses the phrase "foster failure." What does this mean? What other insights does Jennifer have about dogs and people?
- How does Molly feel when she first sees CJ? Does CJ have permission to adopt Molly? What actions does CJ take when she brings Molly home?
- Who is Gloria? What does Gloria do that makes her seem like an imperfect parent? Several times in the story, Gloria tells CJ that her behavior is "embarrassing." Is it, in fact, CJ who is behaving poorly in these situations? If you were Gloria's child, how do you think you would feel?
- Why does a truant officer come to CJ's home in Chapter 5? How does the truant officer's visit change CJ's daily life? How does it change Molly's life?
- Who is Shane? How does CJ meet Shane? How does Shane get CJ into trouble in Chapter 9? What advice might you have given CJ about trusting Shane? What reasons can you imagine for Shane's behavior and choices?
- In Chapter 10, as part of her community service, CJ meets a researcher named Andi. What does CJ do for Andi? What does CJ learn about Andi's research? What does Molly learn? Compare the way Molly learns Andi's lesson with the way she learns to stay quiet in CJ's basement earlier in the story.
- What difficult events in Chapters 11 and 12 make having her picture selected for an art exhibit a less-than-happy occasion for CJ? How do these events involve Gloria, Gus, and Sheryl?
- What mean trick does Gloria play in Chapter 13? How does CJ find Molly and figure out what Gloria has done? What does CJ feel forced to do after she brings Molly home? How do CJ and Molly survive for the next few days?
- At the end of Chapter 15, Andi tells CJ, "You can't run away from your problems. They'll always find you." Do you think this is good advice? How does CJ react to Andi's words?
- How does Sheryl help save the day at the end of Chapter 16? What good news does she give CJ in Chapter 17? Where does Sheryl spot CJ's painting? How might this be a hopeful sign for CJ's relationship with Gloria? What agreement does Sheryl help CJ and Gloria make with each other?
- Through her family troubles, and inspired by



her love for Molly, CJ discovers an artistic talent. In what ways might this surprise discovery help CJ over time? Do you have an artistic or athletic outlet, such as drawing, singing, dancing, playing soccer, or running, that helps you work through strong emotions? Do you think it is important to have such an outlet? Why or why not?

- Although Molly often tries to protect CJ, could it be that CJ's desire to protect her dog helps her learn to care for herself? Why or why not? Cite examples from the story in your answer.
- After reading *Molly's Story*, how might you describe a pet dog's most important purpose in one sentence?

## Activities

Take the story from the page to the pavement with these fun and inspiring activities for the dog-lovers in your family.

- **DOG DIETS.** Molly reacts to the strong salty taste in ham, and is sickened by eating old food. Dogs benefit from healthy, appropriate diets just like people. Imagine you have a small, part-Poodle pup such as Molly, or another dog of your choosing. Visit the food section of a pet store, talk to a veterinarian, or do online research to create an ideal meal plan for this pet. (Hint: Visit [http://www.humanesociety.org/animals/resources/facts/pet\\_food\\_safety.html?credit=web\\_id93480558](http://www.humanesociety.org/animals/resources/facts/pet_food_safety.html?credit=web_id93480558).) What are some best-food choices? How often should this pet be fed? What would be some healthy treats? What human foods might be especially dangerous to this dog and how can they be kept securely away? Invite your child to share what s/he is learned with other young pet owners or dog fans.
- **PET VIEWPOINTS.** *Molly's Story* is narrated in first person by Molly, the Poodle mix. This helps readers understand the dog's point-of-view and is also a model for helping children see other people's and animals' perspectives. Invite your child to describe, using "I," a few minutes in the life of his or her own pet. If desired, invite your child to describe an experience in the life of a younger sibling, parent, grandparent, or friend.
- **HELP OUT.** Molly is a lucky dog to have been fostered in a welcoming home and found her way to CJ's heart. Many strays and unwanted pets are not so lucky. Help your child find ways to help these unlucky animals, such as donating to a pet food drive, volunteering at a local shelter, or designing a poster to raise awareness about this problem. Brainstorm poster titles (e.g., "FOSTER OUR FURRY FRIENDS" or "CAN YOU HELP A STRAY DOG?") and information, such as a phone number or web address for a local pet shelter. Organize your art materials, such as poster paper, paint, markers, colored pencils, and/

or images found online or cut from magazines. Create your poster. Visit a nearby supermarket, pet hospital, or library with your child and encourage him/her to ask if they have a good spot to hang their poster. Take a photo of your child beside their mounted poster to share with friends and family!

## READING IN YOUR CLASSROOM

## WRITING ACTIVITIES

These Common Core-aligned writing activities may be used in conjunction with the discussion questions in the "Family" section above.

- **POINT-OF-VIEW:** *Molly's Story* is narrated by Molly the dog, but other characters' viewpoints are also critical to understanding this story. Have students write a 2-3 paragraph, first-person account of the day Molly met "her girl," the truant officer's visit in Chapter 5, the art class, or CJ's nights spent at friends' houses in Chapter 14 from the viewpoint of CJ, Gloria, Trent, Sheryl, or another character.
- **COMMUNITIES AND RELATIONSHIPS:** Through their work, both Sheryl and Andi interact with CJ without being able to completely address her difficult home situation. Using details from the novel, write a short report describing Sheryl's art classroom or Andi's research space. Explain the goals of their programs, and the people they hope to help. Read your reports aloud to friends or classmates. Discuss the ways each program was helpful to CJ. What did CJ and Molly learn? What similar, good qualities do the programs share? Are there programs in your own community that might have been helpful to CJ? How might a young person help a troubled friend or classmate find a helpful class or other resource?
- **TEXT TYPE: OPINION PIECE.** Both Molly and CJ are "strays" in different ways. Write a one-page essay exploring the meaning of the word "stray" and the ways in which this story might be read as two strays' journeys of beating the odds together.
- **TEXT TYPE: NARRATIVE.** In the character of CJ, write the story of how Molly helped you learn more about true friendship and how this helped your friendship with Trent grow. Or, in the character of Shane, write the story of why you stole from Sheryl, why you got so angry with CJ, and, maybe, why you are jealous of CJ.
- **RESEARCH & PRESENT: PET HOMELESSNESS.** Although Molly is a great help to CJ, the girl and her dog find themselves in several risky



home situations during the story. Go to the library or online to learn more about how pets lose their home situations and how this can be prevented. (Hint: Visit <http://www.asPCA.org/animal-homelessness>.) Use this research to create two checklists, one entitled “Are You Ready to Adopt a Pet?” and one entitled “Can You Help Save an Animal from Homelessness?” Have students make copies of their checklists to share with people in their community. If desired, offer copies of the list to be made available at your local library, animal shelter, or pet hospital.

▪ **RESEARCH & PRESENT: CANCER DETECTION & OTHER AMAZING ANIMAL ABILITIES.**

Molly’s actions help Sheryl detect her cancer early, making her treatment more effective. Visit the websites listed at the back of the book to learn more about dogs that may be able to detect diseases or predict seizures, horses that may help with psychotherapies, or cats that may help autistic kids. Have small groups of students create oral presentations about their findings. If possible, have students give their presentations to others in their grade or school.

Supports English Language Arts Common Core Writing Standards: W.3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.7; W.4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.7; W.5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.7; W.6.2, 6.3, 6.7; W.7.2, 7.3, 7.7

