

The Good Dog

Use these questions and the activities that follow to get more out of the experience of reading *The Good Dog* by Avi.

1. On page 45, Jack says to McKinley, “Boy, you sure don’t like that guy, do you?” in reference to Pycraft. What are some of the reasons that McKinley does not like Pycraft?
2. Describe how McKinley looks on page 104 as he tries to communicate with Duchess while she is locked in the doghouse.
3. On page 198, why does McKinley say to Aspen: “Take the lead. I’ll guard the rear. Whatever happens, don’t worry about me,” as they help Lupin get back to the wilderness?
4. In his speech to the dog pack on page 236, McKinley says “Steamboat dogs! I call upon you to recognize this human pup for the friend he is! Let this boy be voted an honorary dog!” What do you think it means to be an honorary dog? Is that a title you would like to have given to you? Why or why not?
5. How would you compare the leadership skills of McKinley and Redburn? Does the dog pack make a wise decision at the meeting based on those skills? Explain.
6. What are the effects of Lupin’s visit to the civilized area of Steamboat Springs?
7. What do you think would happen if the dogs of Steamboat Springs decided to follow Lupin to the wilderness?
8. Imagine you are interviewing Jack about the dog pack meeting. What questions would you ask?
9. Why do you think the author, Avi, chose to write from McKinley’s point of view? How would the story have been different if written from someone else’s point of view?
10. Reread the description of Jack and McKinley’s responsibilities on page 10. At the end of the paragraph, we read that McKinley “took his job seriously.” Do you think that animals actually feel responsibility? Explain.
11. On page 201, McKinley asks himself to whom he owes his loyalty. He is not sure if his allegiance should be to the humans, the dog pack, the wolves, or himself. Are you ever unsure about what is right in a situation? What do you do when this happens?

12. Suppose you could talk to animals. What kind of animal would you choose to talk to, and what would you and the animal say to each other (in human language)?
13. What might have happened if Redburn had been elected head dog? How might the outcome of the book's events have been different?
14. On page 29, Duchess tells McKinley that "[Lupin] believes that it's time we stopped living with people. Time to be independent, to get back to the wild the way we once lived." How would the world be different for humans without dogs as pets?
15. The book's title and final sentence contain the same two words: "good dog." How would you support the claim that McKinley is a good dog?

Note: These questions are keyed to Bloom's Taxonomy as follows: Knowledge: 1–3; Comprehension: 4–6; Application: 7–8; Analysis: 9–11; Synthesis: 12–13; Evaluation: 14–15.

Activities:

1. Draw a map of the trip that McKinley and Jack make to the pack meeting in the middle of the night. Illustrate and label points of interest along the way.
2. Being a dog, McKinley does not know what many common human objects are called, so he invents names for them. For example, he talks about "eating sticks" (silverware), "a human pup" (a boy), and "staring papers" (books). List some of the names that McKinley has come up with and what objects they refer to. Then identify ten common school objects and invent descriptive names for them that McKinley might use. Write a short story from the point of view of McKinley, using your new terms.
3. Contact your local humane society or animal shelter to find out what can be done to prevent cruelty to animals. Create a presentation to share with your classmates.

Selected Books by Avi:

The Barn
The Book Without Words
Bright Shadow
Captain Grey
The Christmas Rat
City of Light, City of Dark
Crispin: The Cross of Lead
Ereth's Birthday

The Fighting Ground
The Man Who Was Poe
Midnight Magic
Nothing but the Truth
Perloo the Bold
The Secret School
The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle
Who Stole the Wizard of Oz?

Author Web Site: <http://www.avi-writer.com>