



Discussion Questions for *A Dog's Life*

Use these questions to start a discussion with your students about *A Dog's Life* by Ann M. Martin. Read the book yourself too, so you can better discuss the story and enjoy the online activities together.

- In the opening chapter, Squirrel mentions many kinds of conditions experienced by the dogs she has known. Then she reflects that "I've known all these dogs, and I've been all these dogs." What does she mean by this statement?
- Mother had never lived with humans. Why did she teach Squirrel and Bone to fear humans? What other lessons did she teach the pups? How did these lessons help or hurt the dogs as they grew and made their way in the world?
- Why did Mother watch Mine so closely? Why do you think Mine was careless around humans? Have you ever seen a wild animal behave in an unusual manner? Describe your observations and share why you think the animal behaved in this way.
- Why didn't Squirrel and Bone search for Mother when she failed to return to the shed? If you were in their position, what would you do? What do you think happened to Mother?
- Squirrel had to decide whether to follow Bone or stay at the Merrions' shed. Did she make the right decision for herself? Why or why not?
- Was it right for Marcy and George to take Squirrel and Bone home with them? Why or why not? Did the Beckers do the right thing when they adopted Squirrel as their summer dog?
- Do you think Squirrel could tell the difference between gentle and harmful humans before they even touched her? What kind of behaviors would suggest to her whether a human might be kind or cruel?
- How did Squirrel show loyalty to Bone? To Moon? To the Beckers? To Susan? If you have a pet, how does it show loyalty to you? How do you show loyalty to the pets and people you care about?
- In what ways did Squirrel communicate with Bone? With Moon? With Susan? What are some ways that you and your pet communicate with each other?

- During her lifetime, Squirrel spent time traveling with a companion (Bone, and then Moon) and later alone. If you were a stray dog, would you prefer to have company or to be on your own? Why?
- Based on their interactions with Squirrel, Dr. Roth, Rachel, the Beckers, and Susan found that the stray dog had a quiet, gentle nature. If you were Squirrel, do you think you would be a gentle dog?
- In the last chapter, Squirrel states, "I didn't think I needed a human any more than Susan thought she needed a dog." In what ways do the "two old ladies" need each other?
- How might Squirrel's life been different if Mother had not disappeared? If she had not been separated from Bone? If Moon had survived? If you could rewrite the story, which of these events would you change, how would you change them, and why?
- If you adopted a stray dog, what are some things you would do to care for and make it feel safe?