Puppy Problems

**SUMMARY** Zoë has moved away from her best friend, Lila, because of her mom’s new job as governor. She e-mails Lila about her excitement at finally getting a dog of her own. But when Zoë learns she is allergic to most dogs, she is told she may need to buy a purebred dog rather than one from a shelter. Public opinion goes against her, but Lila saves the day by finding a purebred, non-allergenic miniature schnauzer on a shelter’s Web site. Zoë gets her pound puppy after all.

**LESSON VOCABULARY**
- abandoned
- allergic
- apologizing
- attachment
- conference
- embarrassing
- rally
- union

**INTRODUCE THE BOOK**

**INTRODUCE THE TITLE AND AUTHOR** Discuss with students the title and the author of *Puppy Problems*. Ask: What kinds of problems might people have with choosing a puppy? Ask them to think beyond the adorable qualities for which puppies are known.

**BUILD BACKGROUND** Ask students if they have ever known someone who was allergic to animals. Explain that many people are allergic to cats and that some people are allergic to dogs as well. People who decide they want a dog (or a cat) despite allergies need to choose a breed that has few if any allergens. Because shelters have mostly mixed-breed dogs (and cats), people with allergies usually have to buy purebred animals from a breeder.

**PREVIEW/USE ILLUSTRATIONS** Have students skim through the book, looking at the pictures. Ask: What do you think the story is about? Who are the characters? How do they communicate, and where does the story appear to take place? Can you tell that there may be an underlying story about the characters as well as the story about a puppy?

**READ THE BOOK**

**SET PURPOSE** Have students set a purpose for reading *Puppy Problems*. This purpose should be guided by the impressions they get from reading the title and skimming the illustrations along with their own curiosity.

**STRATEGY SUPPORT: VISUALIZE** Remind students how to *visualize*. To visualize means that as you read, you form pictures in your mind about what is happening in the story. Tell students that they should combine what they already know with details from the text to create pictures in their mind. Add that they can use all of their senses, not just sight, to help them form pictures.

**COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS**

**PAGES 3–4** What can you tell about Zoë and Lila from their e-mails? *(They are good friends who want to stay in close touch with one another.)*

**PAGE 12** What does the newspaper headline tell you about public opinion regarding adopting from a shelter? *(Many people think it’s a good and compassionate idea.)*

**PAGES 13–14** What prompted Zoë to talk about her puppy problem with the reporters? *(She was frustrated that her mom and dad weren’t around to talk with about the need to choose a special breed of non-allergenic dog.)*

**PAGE 17** Why do you think public opinion about the puppy adoption changed into a protest rally against Zoë? *(People who had supported her shelter adoption now thought of her as a spoiled kid who would be happy only with a high-priced dog.)*

**PAGE 19** Why did purebred dog breeders threaten to boycott every pet food company that had donated money to the new governor’s election? *(They believed that the new governor and her family had taken a stand against purebred dogs and wanted to get attention on their own behalf.)*
REVISIT THE BOOK
READER RESPONSE

1. Adopt: Many stray and abandoned dogs need a home; many people say mutts make the best pets. Buy: Purebred dogs usually have predictable behavior and looks; some people just prefer a specific breed. Both: Adopting or buying a dog means that the dog will go to someone’s home and have a chance at a happy life.

2. Responses will vary but should indicate that Zoë was in great discomfort at the shelter.

3. Responses will vary but need to reflect correct use of three of the vocabulary words.

4. The reporters had praised Zoë’s wish to adopt a shelter puppy and may have felt betrayed—or confused—by her worrying about needing to choose a purebred dog. Responses to the second question will vary.

EXTEND UNDERSTANDING Explore the element of plot with students by asking questions such as “What does the author want readers to learn from reading this story?” Explain that there are several plots in Puppy Problems: Zoë and Lila’s friendship remains strong even though they no longer live close together; Zoë’s wish to adopt a dog—one she’s not allergic to; the ability of a young girl to make the news because of her mom’s new, public role as governor. Ask students if they remember a First Family that had to forgo adopting a pound puppy because of allergies.

RESPONSE OPTIONS

WRITING Ask students to write an e-mail to Zoë about her choices, with advice on how she may need to be careful of what she says in the future.

SOCIAL STUDIES CONNECTION Provide appropriate nonfiction books about purebred dogs and their roles with humans, and invite students to use the Internet to learn more about both purebred dogs and the mixed-breed dogs that are typically found in shelters for homeless animals. Have them share what they learn with the class.

Skill Work

TEACH/REVIEW VOCABULARY
Read the vocabulary words. Ask students about words they may already know. Discuss how they first heard of the words and what they think the words mean. Tell them that they will become more familiar with these words as they read.

ELL Have students write the translation for each vocabulary word in their home languages and then write the English word beside it. Listen for cognates they find.

TARGET SKILL AND STRATEGY

COMPARE AND CONTRAST Remind students that to compare two or more things, they describe how those things are alike. To contrast is to describe only how the things are different. Have students tell what a shelter dog may be like (a dog to love, usually a mixed-breed that is a surprise in personality and looks). Next compare that to a purebred dog (also a dog to love but that is predictable in personality and looks). Then have them contrast the two types of pets.

VISUALIZE Tell students that to visualize is to form a picture in their minds about what is happening in the story. Encourage students to try to visualize the behind-the-scenes events and characters in Puppy Problems as they read it. Ask them to describe what they think Zoë’s mom must have looked like when she heard that her daughter now wanted a purebred dog.

ADDITIONAL SKILL INSTRUCTION

CAUSE AND EFFECT Remind students that an effect is something that happens and a cause is why that thing happens. Have students practice identifying cause and effect in simple sentences such as “The reporters wrote negatively about Zoë because she now said she would get a purebred dog.” (What happened: the reporters wrote negatively about Zoë. Why it happened: she changed from wanting to adopt a shelter dog to needing to buy a purebred.)
Compare and Contrast

- When you **compare** two or more things, you think about how they are alike and how they are different.
- When you **contrast** two or more things, you only think about how they are different.

**Directions** Look back at *Puppy Problems* to complete the chart. Fill in the chart with information based on what you learned from the book and from your Internet research on pound puppies and purebred dogs.

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<tr>
<th>Pound Puppy</th>
<th>Purebred Dog</th>
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5. Write a paragraph that compares and contrasts a pound puppy to a purebred dog. Use the chart, the story, and your own experience as you write.
Vocabulary

Directions Write the word from the box that best completes each sentence.

1. Zoë wanted to find a puppy that had been ______________ or was a stray.

2. The new governor met with members of the teachers’ ______________

3. Lila’s e-mail included an ______________ about a purebred miniature schnauzer.

4. The puppy problem started when Zoë learned she was ______________ to most dogs.

5. Zoë’s mom had to call a press ______________ about the choice of a new dog.

6. The governor found herself ______________ to breeders of purebred dogs.

7. Zoë probably found her new situation as first daughter both ______________ and a little scary.

8. People may get together for a ______________ for any of many reasons.

Check the Words You Know

abandoned allergic apologizing attachment
conference embarrassing rally union

Directions What do you think happened to Zoë and her family and the new dog after the story ended? Write a paragraph about what you think their lives might be like. Use as many vocabulary words as you can.

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