Red Dog

Louis de Bernières

Introduction

after a few days in Perth. The women are desperately anxious and unable to enjoy the rest of their holiday. However, when they get home they find Red Dog back in Dampier, having got a lift with a truck driver.

Nancy and her friends live in a caravan park whose caretakers, Mr and Mrs Cribbage, dislike dogs intensely. After seeing Red Dog visiting various people, they put up ‘NO DOGS’ notices all over the park. They try to evict Nancy’s friend Patsy when they later see her with Red Dog. When their efforts are thwarted, Mr Cribbage threatens to shoot Red Dog. Following a visit from a group of angry men from Hamersley Iron, the Cribbages leave and are never seen again.

At the age of eight, after roaming all over north-west Australia, Red Dog’s luck finally runs out. He eats some poison, and although the vet does his best, Red Dog can no longer see or walk properly. Red Dog’s many friends visit him to say a sad farewell, and the vet finally puts him down. His friends in Dampier later put up a statue of Red Dog in his memory.

Background to the story

Whilst most of the people in this story are fictional, the story of Red Dog and his adventures is basically true. He became well known in north-west Australia in the 1970s as he travelled around continually, getting lifts in buses, trains and cars, being fed by people he met. He was particularly popular with the people of the industrial port of Dampier where he spent most of his life, and workers at the Dampier Salt Company made him a union member and a member of their social club, even opening a bank account for him. A life-size statue of Red Dog now stands on the road leading into Dampier.

As well as describing the adventures of Red Dog, the book strongly evokes the character of north-west Australia, with its fierce daytime heat and its vast, rocky, sparsely populated landscape.
Red Dog

Pre-reading activity

Picture match

Match the pictures with the words.

1. [Image of man and woman in car with blue light]
   Words □

2. [Image of man and dog in camper]
   Words □

3. [Image of dog with man]
   Words □

4. [Image of man with gun]
   Words □

5. [Image of woman and dog]
   Words □

6. [Image of dog running]
   Words □

7. [Image of dog lying on road]
   Words □

8. [Image of man with gun]
   Words □

Words
a. A fast car came up behind them, with a blue light.
b. Tally chased the car through the hot afternoon, loving every minute of it.
c. ‘Hey, you’re a beauty,’ John said.
d. ‘Well, aren’t you a nice friendly dog!’ Nancy said.
e. There was a sudden scratching noise on the car door.
f. ‘Where’s your mate?’ asked Jocko.
g. Red Dog was lying still at the side of the road.
h. Mr Cribbage came out with a gun in his hands.

To the teacher
Aim: To familiarize students with the setting and to introduce some of the main characters and events of the story.
Time: 10–15 minutes
Organization: Give one copy of the worksheet to each student or group of students. Help the students with any unfamiliar vocabulary, and ask them to match the pictures with the captions. When they have done this, ask them to discuss the situations and their context, for example: Why is the dog called both ‘Tally’ and ‘Red Dog’? Why are the men in the car being followed? Why is Red Dog lying at the side of the road? Why is Mr Cribbage carrying a gun? What order do you think the events happen in the story, and why?
Key: 1e, 2h, 3c, 4a, 5g, 6d, 7b, 8f
Red Dog

*While reading activity*

**Order puzzle**

*Put these events in the right order. Number them 1–20.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EVENT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a Peeto, Vanno, Jocko and John took Red Dog to the vet.</td>
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<tr>
<td>b Red Dog met John.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c Red Dog and Nancy became friends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d Peeto and his friends had to pay a fine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e Nancy tried to sit next to Red Dog on the bus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f John tried to kiss Nancy.</td>
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<tr>
<td>g Mr and Mrs Collins moved from Paraburdo to Dampier.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h Jocko did first aid on Red Dog’s leg.</td>
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<tr>
<td>i Red Dog started travelling on Hamersley Iron buses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j A policeman stopped Peeto and his friends while they were driving home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k Someone shot Red Dog.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l Red Dog stole some steak and burgers from a barbecue on the beach.</td>
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**ORDER**

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*To the teacher*

**Where:** At the end of chapter 4.

**Aim:** To revise key events and characters in the book so far.

**Time:** 10–15 minutes

**Organization:** Give each student, or pair of students, a copy of the worksheet and ask them to put the events in order, numbering them 1–12. When they have finished, go through the answers with the class, encouraging students to give more detail about the relevant people and events.

**Key:** a10, b3, c6, d12, e5, f7, g1, h9, i4, j11, k8, l2
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After reading activity

Word grid

Find the answers to the clues and fill in the word grid. When you have finished you will find another word from the story.

1 Red Cat scratched Red Dog’s nose with his __________.
2 Nancy lived in a __________.
3 Mr and Mrs Cribbage had a __________ about keeping dogs.
4 The men of Dampier Salt Company opened a __________ account for Red Dog to pay the vet’s bills.
5 Red Dog liked to __________ cats and wallabies.
6 When Red Dog came to a __________ on the beach, he stole some steak and burgers.
7 John bought a big __________ because he liked riding around with the wind in his face.
8 Red Cat was a big cat with orange-red __________ and green eyes.
9 After Red Dog ate some poison, the vet gave him an __________ to stop his convulsions.

To the teacher

Aim: To revise some key characters, events and vocabulary.
Time: 15–20 minutes
Organization: Give each student, or pair of students, a copy of the worksheet. Ask them to read the clues, fill in the grid, and find the hidden word running down the centre. When checking the answers with the class, ask students to give as much detail as they can about the relevant events, people, and related vocabulary.
Key: 1 claws, 2 caravan, 3 rule, 4 bank, 5 chase, 6 barbecue, 7 motorbike, 8 fur, 9 injection. The hidden word is WALKABOUT.