ELA Day 2 - Picking a Puppy

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Picking a Puppy

by W.M. Akers



Isaac knew there were times when it didn't pay to be picky. When he got dressed in the morning, he didn't look at what he was putting on; he just grabbed clothes at random from his closet. On the morning after Halloween, when his stomach hurt but he knew he needed to eat more candy anyway, he didn't linger over his pile of snacks. He just grabbed and ate. And on rainy Saturday afternoons, when he was stuck in the living room for what seemed like decades at a stretch, he didn't waste time channel surfing. He just turned the TV on and watched what it showed him, melting into the couch like snow in July.

There were times when what you chose didn't matter. But getting a new dog was not one of those times.

It had been three months since Isaac's dog had been put to sleep. Three months without anyone to lick his hand, to bark when he came in the front door, or to sleep by his feet while he read at night. The house was too quiet without Roscoe, and after a long, lonely season, Isaac's parents decided it was time to liven things up again. They were going to get a puppy.

"I'll be back in an hour," Isaac's mother told him when she dropped him off at the humane shelter. "Pick out a good one."

"You sure you don't want to come in and help me?"

"Nope. This is your dog, Kiddo. Your father and I trust you to pick the best one they've got."

Isaac was glad his mother left him alone. This was something he needed to do himself. Roscoe had been the perfect animal-loving, caring, and kind-and Isaac didn't think it would be possible to **replace** him. There was a Roscoe-shaped hole in his heart, and nothing in the world could fill it.

But then, he saw the puppies.

There were dozens of them in the kennel, each in their own little area. There were black ones and gold ones, big ones and little ones, ones whose ears stuck straight up, and ones whose ears flopped

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down backward on their head. And each one was cuter than the one before. Isaac felt like a kid in a candy store, but one who was only allowed a single piece of candy. He would have to choose wisely.

He walked down the rows, spending nearly a minute in front of each dog's gate, staring deep into the tiny puppy eyes. All puppies are wonderful, he thought, so how is a boy supposed to choose?

And then, when he rounded the first corner, he froze. Two beautiful white dogs stared back at him, their eyes as blue as early morning sky.

"Stella and Blanche," he read from the sign on their fence. "Half Siberian husky, half spaniel."

They were sisters, and they were the loveliest dogs he'd ever seen. They lay, curled on top of each other, staring at the boy who might take them home. Isaac was tempted, but...no. They were too pretty. He wanted a dog to have fun with, and a puppy with a coat that white would never want to play in the mud.

The next dog to catch his eye was an English bulldog, whose cheeks hung from his face liked cooked spaghetti. He seemed to smile at Isaac, drool oozing from his half-open mouth, then flopped on his back, and presented his stomach to be scratched.

"Spike," read Isaac. "You've got a lot going for you-you seem like a great dog to pet. But I want a dog who runs around."

Behind him he heard a little yip, coming from the liveliest dog he had seen so far. It ran back and forth in its cage like a movie on fast-forward, a little bundle of energy that Isaac couldn't help but smile at.

"Chauncey," he read. "A Yorkshire terrier. That's a pretty silly name you've got, but otherwise...wow. I think you might be the dog for me."

He poked his fingers through the gate, and Chauncey licked them hungrily, just like Roscoe had done. Isaac was **smitten**. He went to find the attendant, to ask to take Chauncey for a test-walk. But when he returned, leash dangling from his hand, the Yorkie's cage was empty.

"Hey, boy?" he said. "Where did you go?"

In the building's backyard, he saw Chauncey running in circles around two little girls. They looked to be twins, and by the sound of their laughter, they were the happiest children in the world. Isaac had liked Chauncey a lot, but he couldn't imagine two children better suited to a puppy. He shrugged his shoulders and continued his search.

As he went down the aisles, he saw many wonderful puppies, but none who were perfect. He was about to give up when he got to the end of the line. In a pen smaller than the other dogs lay a **scruffy** little mutt with a dopey little face and a stubby little tail. He slept, wrapped around a chew toy, wheezing slightly with each breath. His name was Harvey. As he watched Harvey dream, Isaac realized he didn't want a perfect dog. He wanted the dog that nobody else wanted. That was the best puppy of all.

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Vocabulary

replace

verb

definition: to put in place of.
The mechanic replaced the car's dead battery.

Spanish: reemplazar, reponer, sustituir

forms: replaced, replaces, replacing

scruffy

adjective

definition: ragged-looking or untidy.

forms: scruffier, scruffiest

smitten

adjective

definition: struck or overcome by strong feelings of attraction, liking, or infatuation.
The moment he saw her, he was smitten; she was the woman of his dreams.
I didn't expect to be very impressed with the place, but I have to admit I was smitten with it.

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1. Before you start reading...

Here are the vocabulary words that will be in this reading. Let's see how well you already know them.

Check the box that shows how well you know each word. It's ok if you don't know them yet (this is not graded)!

	Don't know it	Have heard of it but not sure of its meaning	Know something about its meaning	Know it well
replace				
smitten				

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2. Word Changer

Words have different forms when we use them in different ways. Write the correct vocabulary word, in its correct form, in each blank.

The mechanic _____ the car's dead battery.

The moment he saw her, he was _____; she was the woman of his dreams.

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3. After reading and exploring the words through some activities...

Do you know these words better? Check the box that shows how well you know each word. It's ok if you don't know them yet (this is not graded)!

	Don't know it	Have heard of it but not sure of its meaning	Know something about its meaning	Know it well
replace				
smitten				

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Name: _____ **Date:** _____

1. What happened to Isaac's dog Roscoe?

2. At the beginning of the story, Isaac thinks it will be hard to replace Roscoe, because Roscoe was a perfect dog. How does Isaac feel about finding a perfect dog at the end of the story?

3. Picking a puppy is a hard decision for Isaac. What evidence from the story supports this conclusion?

4. Why isn't Isaac upset when two girls take the Yorkie puppy Isaac liked?

5. What is a theme of this story?

6. Read the sentences and answer the question.

"Roscoe had been the perfect animal-loving, caring, and kind-and Isaac didn't think it would be possible to replace him. There was a Roscoe-shaped hole in his heart, and nothing in the world could fill it."

What does the author mean by the phrase "a Roscoe-shaped hole in his heart"?

7. Isaac looks at many different puppies _____ he finally finds the right one for him.

What word or phrase best completes the sentence?

8. When Isaac sees Harvey, he realizes what kind of dog he wants. What kind of dog does Isaac want?

9. Explain whether anybody wants Harvey. Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

10. Why does Isaac think the dog that nobody wants is "the best puppy of all"? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

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