

The Best Pet

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Text Type: Fiction: Persuasive — Fantasy Story

Summary: In rhyming words, Mrs. Lane's grade 1 class tells her they want a pet to feed and love, but not just any ordinary pet. Students write letters to her with four outrageous suggestions and, in the end, Mrs. Lane gets them all!

Audio Available Online
www.lpey.ca

Text Features

Visual Literacy

- ▶ some text set up as personal letters

Print Concepts

- ▶ quotation marks
- ▶ question marks
- ▶ dashes
- ▶ commas

First Reading

Reading Strategies

Comprehension

- ▶ predicting
- ▶ making connections: text to self and comparing

Working with Words

- ▶ using text cues to solve unfamiliar vocabulary

Assessment Opportunities

Note each student's ability to:

- ▶ join in reading the repeating language patterns
- ▶ track print with their eyes
- ▶ make predictions based on text clues
- ▶ make connections: text to self and comparing



BEFORE READING

Teaching Tip: A song version of *The Best Pet* can be found online on the grade 1 website at www.lpey.ca. The song version does not match the text exactly, but you may wish to use it as an alternative way of introducing the book to students.

Making connections:
text to self

Activating and Building Prior Knowledge

Ask students, *Do you have or have you ever had a pet? Close your eyes and think about your pet or any other pet you would like to have. Open your eyes and draw a picture of this pet.* Have students share their pictures. Record the different types of pets on cards and post them on a wall or on the board with reusable adhesive. Save these cards for a game that students can play later.

ESL Note: Be sure to include ESL students in the discussion by asking questions such as, *Who doesn't have a pet? What pet would you like to have? What animals do people have as pets in Korea (or wherever)? Are you afraid of animals? Why?*

Print concepts

Display the front cover of the book and read the title, author's name, and illustrator's name. Show the back cover and read the blurb. Point out the quotation marks in the blurb and discuss their purpose. *Quotation marks show that someone is talking. Who do you think is saying these words?* Reread the first paragraph of the back-cover blurb and then have students share their ideas.

Predicting

This is a story about a class that wants a pet that is "something different." What do you think they want? Allow a few students to share their answers and record them on chart paper or the board.

Setting a Purpose

Predicting

Say, *You have made some predictions about what pet Mrs. Lane's class wants. Now let's read and see what pet they want and if they get it.*



DURING READING

Tracking print

As you read, track with a pointer. Match one to one, except on the pages with the repeating language pattern, where you can track with a sweep to encourage phrasing.

Making connections:
text to self

Pause on pages that end with the question "What would you do?" and encourage students to share their thoughts.

Building confidence

Invite students to join in once they have become familiar with the repeating language pattern: "Mrs. Lane, Mrs. Lane, we want a pet..."

Language predictability

Pause at challenging vocabulary, such as *cuddle*, *tank*, *leak*, and *flooded*. Model self-questioning and solving vocabulary using text cues, e.g., *I wonder what cuddle means? It says a cat is soft. What might a person want to do with a pet that is soft?*



AFTER READING

Predicting

Review students' predictions about what pets Mrs. Lane's class might want. Compare their predictions to the pets that appeared in the book. Ask, *Were you surprised at the kind of pets that were in the book? Why?*

Analyzing

Remind students that they were reading to find out if the class got the pet they wanted. As a class, talk about what Mrs. Lane did.

Evaluating

Discuss what is real and what is pretend in this book. Display the picture on the last page, which gives an aerial view of the classroom. *What in this picture would you see in a real classroom? What in this picture would you not see in a real classroom?* Create a two-column chart with the headings "Real" and "Pretend" and record students' responses on it.

Making connections: comparing

Refer to the cards showing the pets (from Before Reading) that students own/owned. *Are the pets in this story the same as your pets? What is different about them?*

Second Reading

Reading Strategies

Comprehension

- ▶ analyzing
- ▶ making connections: text to world

Working with Words

- ▶ analyzing made-up animal words into chunks (*ratosaur*, *dragodog*, *giraffocat*, and *spiderfish*)

Assessment Opportunities

Note each student's ability to:

- ▶ join in reading the repeated language patterns
- ▶ track print
- ▶ make text-to-world connections about the pros and cons of pets
- ▶ analyze the pros and cons of each pet in the story



BEFORE READING

Making connections: text to world

Activating and Building Prior Knowledge

Refer to the cards you made of pets that students own/owned. *Is it always a good idea to get a pet? What do you have to think about before you decide to get a pet?* Chart the pros and cons about getting a pet:

What's Good About Getting a Pet (Pros)	What's Bad About Getting a Pet (Cons)

ESL Note: After the chart is made listing the pros and cons of pet ownership, ask students to use the information from the chart to make sentences that model the following: It's good to have a pet because.... It's bad to have a pet because....

Analyzing

Setting a Purpose

Let's read this story together again to look at the pros and cons for each of the pets the children wanted. After we finish the story, I will ask you to list the pros and cons of one of the pets Mrs. Lane's class wanted.



DURING READING

**Tracking print/
print concepts**

Read the book, tracking the print in phrases to develop rhythm. Encourage students to pause briefly at commas, pause a bit longer at the dashes, and raise their voices at question marks.

Building confidence

Invite students to chime in using a singsong voice whenever you reach the repeating language pattern. They may also wish to join in during the partly repeating pattern that appears in the letters: "Dear Mrs. Lane...."



AFTER READING

Word solving and building

Return to the made-up words (*ratosaur, dragodog, giraffocat, and spiderfish*), pointing to and saying each part separately, e.g., *rat-osaur*. Then help students recognize the different parts, e.g., *We know what a rat is. Where have we heard "osaur" before? That's right. It's part of the word dinosaur. That means a ratosaur is a mix of two animals. What are they?* Write each made-up word, and then beside it write the two words that it is composed of.

ESL Note: When you write the made-up words on the board, underline each part with a different colour to make it easier for students to distinguish that there are two different animals in the word. After you write the two words next to the made-up words, review by asking questions such as: *What is a dragodog?* (It is half dragon and half dog.)

Analyzing

Say, *As we read, we found out the pros and cons of each pet.* Divide the class into four groups and assign each group one pet from the book. Have the groups chart the pros and cons of choosing their pet. The groups can then present their chart to the class.

Inferring/evaluating

Why did Mrs. Lane get four pets? Discuss as a class. Do you think Mrs. Lane made the right decision? Why or why not?

Third Reading

Reading Strategies

Comprehension

- ▶ analyzing
- ▶ making connections: text to self

Working with Words

- ▶ analyzing words into chunks

Assessment Opportunities

Note each student's ability to:

- ▶ join in reading repeated language patterns
- ▶ track print with a pointer or with their eyes
- ▶ analyze the information in the text to support their thinking
- ▶ make text-to-self connections



BEFORE READING

**Making connections:
text to self**

Activating and Building Prior Knowledge

When you really want something, how do you let your family members know how much you want it? Do you talk to them, leave hints, or write a note?

Tell students to turn to a partner and share their thoughts.

Analyzing

Setting a Purpose

Now we are going to read the book again. Let's see the different ways the children send letters to their teacher to let her know they want a class pet.



DURING READING

**Tracking print/
building confidence**

Give two students pointers. Have one student lead a group in reading the repeated language pattern "Mrs. Lane, Mrs. Lane, we want a pet..." Have the other student lead a group in reading the students' letters. Students can also join in if they wish as you read the other parts of the book.

Word solving and building

When you read the days of the week, highlight the fact that all these words end in *day*. Emphasize the two parts by pointing to them as you say them separately, e.g., *Mon-day*. Discuss how every day of the week ends in the word *day*.



AFTER READING

Analyzing/evaluating

Talk about the different ways the children wrote letters to Mrs. Lane. *Can you think of other ways that they could have written letters? Which way do you think would work the best? Why?*

Word solving and building

Continue your discussion about solving words by analyzing them into chunks. Note that some words can be broken into familiar parts to make them easier to read. Point out the words *miss-ing*, *an-other*, *morn-ing*, *some-thing*, and *class-room* in the book. After you have modelled the strategy for students with a couple of the words, give students a chance to try breaking up the words into chunks.

ESL Note: Students can come up to the board and write half a word from the story and another student can complete the word with the other part. After doing a few of these, students can read the list.



FURTHER READINGS

Many texts benefit from being reread with students. The three readings suggested in this plan can be expanded to include further rereadings. Participation will increase when a book becomes familiar and students will become more comfortable in taking turns and using a pointer to track print. For each rereading, we recommend that you select a balance of Print Concepts, Comprehension, and Working with Words strategies from the following suggestions. Make your selections based on the needs of the students in your class.

Print Concepts, Book Handling, and Text Features

Tracking print

As you read, continue to track print, but ask questions to elicit students' print tracking and print concept knowledge, e.g., *Where do we start reading? We're at the end of a line. Where do we go now? We're at the end of a page. Where do we read next?*

Print concepts

Draw students' attention to the colons on pages 4 and 6. Invite students to locate other colons in *The Best Pet*. Point out their position in the book: before dialogue and before the children's letters. Discuss with students the purpose of these colons.

Focusing on Comprehension

Making connections: text to world

As a class, make up an imaginary "best pet" like one of the pets in the book. Ask students, *Why would this pet would be great to have in a classroom?* Create a two-column chart. Give the first column the heading "Pros" and record students' responses in it. Now ask students, *Why wouldn't this pet be so great to have in a classroom?* Write their answers in the second column under the heading "Cons."

Analyzing

Create a chart with the headings "Pet," "Size," "Number of Legs," "Special Abilities," etc. across the top. Under the "Pet" heading, list the pets from the book. With students, discuss the animals' characteristics and record them on the chart. You may wish to add to the chart the imaginary pet that the class invented.

Making connections: text to self

Have students think about what they would do if they were Mrs. Lane. Ask them, *Would you get all four pets? Would you get only one of the pets? Would you get a different pet? No pet?* Have students share their responses with a partner through role-playing, pretending they are Mrs. Lane and explaining what they would do.

Self-monitoring

Talk about the strategy of self-questioning. *As I read this book, I had some questions. When I read the first letter about the ratosaur, I asked myself, is this letter a joke? I kept reading and realized that the students weren't joking. The students and Mrs. Lane really believed that a ratosaur existed. So I thought to myself, I wonder if this book is a fantasy story with make-believe animals in it. When I read about the dragodog, I knew I was right.* Ask students to share any questions they asked themselves during the readings.

Word solving and building

Phonological and phonemic awareness

High-frequency words

Working with Words

Point out the rhyming words *frog* and *dog* in the repeating language pattern. Ask students to think of other words in the same rhyming family, e.g., *fog*, *hog*, *jog*, *log*. Ask if students can find the other two rhyming words in the repeating pattern, *fun* and *done*, and have them find rhymes for these words, e.g., *bun*, *fun*, *run*, *sun*.

Discuss the short “e” sound in the words *best* and *pet* in the title. Have students find other words in the book with short “e” sounds. List them on chart paper or the board, and then challenge students to think of more words to add to the list.

Point out these high-frequency words in the book: *she*, *they*, *I*, *you*, *it*, and *we*. Discuss how words (pronouns) like this are used. Ask students if they can think of one more pronoun. If they need guidance, prompt by asking, *How would you say, Michael went to the store, without using Michael?* Have students find each of these high-frequency words around the classroom or in other books.



RESOURCE LINKS

You may wish to do some of these optional follow-up activities. Choose those that best meet the needs and interests of your students.

Writing

Return to the chart you made earlier about the imaginary pet the class invented, and review with students the notes in the “Pro” column. Using Shared Writing, have the class write a letter to you saying why you should get this pet for them. Follow the style of the letters to Mrs. Lane in the book. See the Persuasive text-type study in the Writing Guide.

Have students make up their own imaginary pet. Tell them to give their pet a name like the ones in the book and then to write a sentence or two saying why the pet would be a good choice. Assist students as necessary with their writing. Students can then draw a picture of their pet.

Independent Reading

Make the six small versions of *The Best Pet* and the online audio available for students. The online audio for this book includes a song version of the story. Encourage students to sing along once they become familiar with the melody.

Provide students with books about pets for individual or partner reading. Instruct them to think about the pros and cons of the pets they read about. Have students share with a partner their thoughts about what is good and what is not so good about one type of pet.



Home Links

Have students bring home a book about a type of pet, real or imaginary.

Recommend that family members read these books aloud to students and then have an open-ended discussion about the pet, e.g., *What did you find interesting about the pet?*
Would you want to own one?
Why or why not?

Working with Words

Make this game available for students to play at a centre or in their free time. Print the names of students in the class on cards and put them in a bag. In another bag, put the cards you created earlier with the names of pets students said they have or would like to have. Students can take turns picking out one name from each baggie. They must take part of each name to come up with a new imaginary pet and then write it on paper.

Once concepts have been introduced in context, see the focused lessons in the Working with Words Guide for more direct instruction for those students who need it.

See also the specific Building Words lessons (“Children” and “Classroom”) in the Working with Words Guide.

Read Aloud

Collect some other fantasy stories about pets/animals to read aloud to students.