

Discussion Questions for *A Dog's Life*
By Ann Martin

Info: *A Dog's Life* is written from the dog's perspective and gives readers a view of the kind of life a homeless dog might experience and helps raise awareness of the responsibilities of pet ownership.

Read aloud paragraph on page ix and x that sets the tone for the story.
“Warmth is important to an old dog.....”

1. Did you like the fact that this story was told by the dog?
2. Why did Squirrel's mother give him and Bone their names?
3. Squirrel's mother had never lived with humans – why did she teach her puppies to fear them?
4. What other lessons did she teach the dogs? Why do you think she watched Mine the fox so carefully?
5. Why do you think happened to her the day she did not return? Why do you think her pups did not go to look for her?
6. Squirrel had to decide whether to follow Bone or stay at the Merrion's shed. Did she make the right decision for herself? Tell why.
7. Was it right for Marcy and George to take Squirrel and Bone home with them? What problems occurred and why?
8. Did the Beckers do the right thing when they adopted Squirrel as their summer dog?
9. Why do you think Squirrel did not stay in many of the places where humans put food out for her?
10. How did Squirrel show loyalty to Bone? To Moon? To the Beckers? To Susan?
11. If you have a pet – how does it show loyalty to you? Do you show loyalty to the pets and people you care about?

12. In what ways did Squirrel communicate with the other dogs? With people?

13. 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 they both need each other?

14. How would Squirrel's life have been different if Mother had not disappeared? If she had not been separated from Bone? If Moon survived? If you could change any part of the story what would you change?

15. If you adopted a stray dog, what are some things you would do to help them feel safe?

- *Prepared by Diane from Ridgefield Library*

A Dogs Life Activities

Explore the library's dog care books and make a group list of important ways to care for a dog.

Call the local shelter and collect old towels or other things that they need to care for the dogs.

Share the article *Dog Savior* about the rescue of Hurricane Katrina dogs. (attached)

Go online and view available dogs at local shelters – to show the need for good homes. <http://www.DAWS.org> (Danbury Animal Welfare Society) DAWS also has information on dog training and articles about ways people can help rescue dogs.

Sequence of events

Read paragraph on pg. 1x & x “warmth is important to an old dog...”

Mother names her puppies “Squirrel & Bone” – 2 things she is fond of. Pups are born in a shed – people don’t know they’re there.

Mother keeps her pups in a wheelbarrow until they are ready to explore the shed – she pushed them out and guides them how to hunt for food.

Mother leaves and never is seen again.

Squirrel and Bone meet a child from the house – Matthias – he feeds the pups. Readers are hopeful that he will take care of the pups but Bone decides to leave. Squirrel follows him into wild.

Both dogs are found by Marcy and George as they walk along the highway. Marcy falls for the pups but after they take them home they find they are not house trained and get into the garbage.

George takes them in the car and throws them out the window in a mall parking lot. Bone was picked up by a family but no one saw Squirrel – her shoulder was broken. She waited for Bone to come back – then wandered off into the woods and roamed from town to town.

Squirrel another dog named Moon. They traveled together, slept together and Moon help Squirrel heal from injuries sustained when they were attacked by a pack of stray dogs. Eventually Moon and Squirrel ventured onto a road and were hit by a truck- Moon died. They were both picked up by a family and Squirrel was taken to nice vet called Dr. Roth who helped fix her injuries and spayed her at no cost.

The family that picked her up – the Beckers, decided to adopt her and took her home. They made her stay in the garage. The children eventually lost interest in her and the parents forgot to feed her. Eventually they left and went back to the city for school –they were only on summer vacation and they left Squirrel – she went back to the wild.

She travelled many winters and summers – till she became an old dog. She couldn’t hunt as well and was hungry all of the time. One day she ventured into Susan’s back yard and Susan coaxed her to come in after setting out food for her many days. Squirrel became tamed with gentle entraining. They enjoyed each others company – that is where she laid by the fire and remembered her life.