

Prepared by Suellen, Guilford Free Library

A Dog's Life: the autobiography of a stray by Ann Martin

This is the story of Squirrel, a stray dog, told in her own words. Everything is comfortable in her world, until her mother and brother disappear. Left on her own, she is forced to face many challenges from humans, other animals, and the elements. As days pass, Squirrel learns that her life will never be the same, and wonders how she can survive on her own?

1. Why did Mother teach Squirrel and Bone to fear humans? What other lessons did she teach the pups?
2. Why did Mother watch Mine so closely? Why do you think Mine was careless around humans?
3. Why didn't Squirrel and Bone search for Mother when she failed to return?
4. Squirrel had to decide whether to follow Bone or stay at the shed. Did she make the right decision? Why or why not?
5. Was it right for Marcy and George to take Squirrel and Bone home with them? Why or why not? Did the Beckers do the right thing when they adopted Squirrel as their summer dog?
6. Do you think Squirrel could tell the difference between gentle and harmful humans before they even touched her? What kind of behaviors would suggest to her whether a human might be kind or cruel?
7. How did Squirrel show loyalty to Bone? To Moon? To the Beckers? To Susan? If you have a pet, how does it show loyalty to you? How do you show loyalty to the pets and people you care about?
8. In what ways did Squirrel communicate with Bone? With Moon? With Susan? What are some ways that you and your pet communicate with each other?
9. During her lifetime, Squirrel spent time traveling with a companion (Bone, and then Moon) and later alone. If you were a stray dog, would you prefer to have company or to be on your own? Why?
10. How might Squirrel's life been different if Mother had not disappeared? If she had not been separated from Bone? If you could rewrite the story, which of these events would you change? How would you change them, and why?
11. If you adopted a stray dog, what are some things you would do to care for and make it feel safe?