



Celapene Press

Dog Gone

by

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Teachers' Notes

by

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Recommended for ages 10+

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INTRODUCTION

I darted into the cemetery and hid behind a tombstone. I hunched myself up, balancing on the balls of my feet, and peered desperately into the night, listening for whoever was out there to make another sound. It was freezing – I had trouble keeping my jaw clamped shut so my teeth didn't chatter.

Ish's dog is gone. Vanished in a country town. Mum's on holiday, Dad's in Sydney. Ish and his bossy sister Molly are staying with Gran. There are no clues. Only something mysterious in the town's graveyard. Then a bully from the local school starts to blackmail Ish. Can things get any worse?

Whether this novel is studied as a class text, as part of a literature circle or independently by students, *Dog Gone* provides a rich resource of true-to-life characters who deal with the adventures and challenges of everyday life in a way readers are positioned to engage with and relate to through an alluring story arc. A wealth of opportunity presents for discussion, reflection and engagement.

Dog Gone explores themes such as loss, resilience, bullying, family and friendship.

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM FOCUS

'The English curriculum is built around the three interrelated strands of language, literature and literacy. Teaching and learning programs should balance and integrate all three strands. Together, the strands focus on developing students' knowledge, understanding and skills in listening, reading, viewing, speaking, writing and creating.' (Australian Curriculum)

All questions, discussion points and activities for *Dog Gone* have been referenced to The Australian Curriculum v8.3: English Years 5 and 6. (<http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/>)

Activities and questions in these notes incorporating the three strands – language, literature and literacy – have been organized conveniently into two sections: Reading Focus and Writing Focus.

READING FOCUS

See Australian Curriculum v8.3 English: (ACELA 1504), (ACELA 1506), (ACELA 1518), (ACELT 1609), (ACELT 1610), (ACELY 1698), (ACELY 1712), (ACELY 1701), (ACELY 1702), (ACELY 1703), (ACELY 1713).

Reading Prompts

Use the following question prompts to construct meaning from the text

Looking at the cover

- Predict from the front cover what you think this story will be about. Now read the blurb on the back cover and add to or change your predictions.
- With a group brainstorm all the ways you think a kelpie cross could go missing.
- What do you know about kelpie crosses as a breed of dog?
- From the cover predict the theme(s) of this book.

Chapter 1

This is an emotionally charged chapter. To receive the news of the death of a loved grandfather at any time is sad but to receive it on your birthday, just as you are about to open a present from him is 'mega-sad'. How would you feel if you were this young man?

- Do you agree with Grandpa's advice for understanding poems?
- Comment on Samuel Taylor Coleridge's definition of poetry.
- It is not till the last paragraph of Chapter 1 that we learn the boy's name. What is it? Have you ever met anyone with this name before?
- How would you describe the relationship Ish had with his grandpa based on what you've learned from this chapter?
- What role does Lucky play when Ish gets the bad news?

Chapter 2

- Where is the story set?
- What is your understanding of a free form poem?
- What do we learn about Molly's character?
- Why wasn't Mum staying with Gran?
- How does the author show us that Lucky adores Mr Ironclad?

Chapter 3

- What is the metaphor Ish uses to describe his cold feet?
- Why was Ish thrilled with Grandpa's gift of a telescopic fishing rod?
- Ish is in the graveyard paralysed and shivering. Describe Lucky's reaction.
- Describe the freaky action of the fishing line.
- What makes you want to read on at the end of this chapter?

Chapter 4

- Based on the description given in the first paragraph, draw your impression of the ghost.
- Ish is twelve. How old is Molly?
- When Gran laughs, she looks like a slinky in action. Have a go at acting out this movement.
- Describe how Lucky came to be missing.

- Have you heard of the term ‘magic realism’? It’s when a story that could be true to life has an element of magic in it. What elements set *Dog Gone* in this category of fiction?
- Can you predict what has happened to Lucky? Keep reading to see if you are right!

Chapter 5

- Describe Lucky.
- What was Mr Ironclad’s practical solution to helping find Lucky?
- What do we learn about Molly’s personality in this chapter?
- People have all different ways to cheer themselves up or deal with stress. What does Ish do? Survey a group of friends and identify the strategies they use. Think about what you do.
- List all the emotions Ish exhibits in this chapter. What gives you clues to how Ish is feeling?
- Ish cheers himself up by writing a poem about one of Lucky’s funny habits. Can you be happy and sad at the same time?

Chapter 6

- Why does Ish determine to try to find the ghost?
- What does Ish decide to do every day until he finds Lucky?
- Why do you think the author has included poems as part of the text? How do you think your reading experience would change if there were no poems?
- Two very short sentences start this chapter. Can one word comprise a sentence?
- Three things seem to signal the presence of the ghost. Can you list them?
- How does Ish try to put Gran off from coming fishing?
- How many years has Ish had Lucky?

Chapter 7

- You’re starting to get to know Ish’s sister, Molly, by now. In three sentences describe her character.
- How do Ish and Molly get on? How do you get on with your brothers and sisters, if you have them?
- How does Mr Ironclad feel about Lucky?
- Lucky is lucky by name and lucky by nature. List 4 ways he has escaped death or punishment.

Chapter 8

- Ish now has 3 significant people missing in his life. Who are they?
- The author could have just said that Gran was worried. Instead she describes her ‘out of character’ actions to give us that message. Talk about them with a friend and perhaps share some observations you have made of other people who have been worried.
- What is your understanding of the term, ‘heart reader?’
- Why was Dad in Sydney?

Chapter 9

- Where does Ish go first thing in the morning in this chapter? Why?
- Do you have a special place you like to go to if you're feeling a bit down in the dumps? Describe it.
- Sum up the character Brody in just three words.
- What is the simile Ish uses to describe the way he runs away from Brody and his mates.

Chapter 10

- What rule had Ish broken that would make Gran cross with him if she found out?
- Why do you think she made the rule in the first place?
- What is Molly referring to when she says, 'It sounds more like a prison to me!'
- What is the origin of Mr Ironclad's and Lucky's close relationship?

Chapter 11

In this chapter the author uses humour to contrast some of the bleak things happening in Ish's life.

- What is your understanding of the term, 'Consolidated School?'
- In this chapter, we learn two facts about Brody Callahan. He has been mowing Gran's lawn. Brody's mum has died. They seem like incidental facts but have a part to play in the big picture story.
- Why do you think the principal called Ish, Michael?
- How does Molly save the day in the principal's office?
- What do you think of Gran and *the bloomer incident*?
- Research the 13, 14, 15 times tables. (If you know your 5 and 10 times tables, the 15 times table can be quite easy.)

Chapter 12

- Ish's first day at school isn't the most positive experience. Write down some feelings you would have had if you had been Ish that day.
- Using Ish's description, draw a picture of Miss Beech.
- How did Ish camouflage the fact that he'd written a rude and unkind limerick about his new teacher?
- Try writing a limerick. Can you figure out the rules for writing one?
- Ish has inadvertently given Brody a weapon to blackmail him. What is Ish's 'big mistake'?
- 'If Mum hadn't gone on that stupid holiday and Dad hadn't gone to Sydney, I'd be with my friends at my own school. And I'd still have Lucky.' Evaluate Ish's reasoning.

Chapter 13

- Where does Ish go on his way home from school? Why?
- What is the simile that Ish uses to describe his mum and dad's angry words?

- What is the emotion that is described in Ish's poem, 'He's Leaving'?
- Brody is now blackmailing Ish. What must Ish do to get the valued fishing rod back?
- Can you think of a plan that would help Ish? Write it down and check back after you have read the next 3 chapters.
- What is the first signal that the ghost might be present?
- Did you notice that the author once again used the page-turning device? We can work out what he can see but poor Brody is in for the surprise of his life!

Chapter 14

- The first sign that the ghost was present was the change of temperature. Comment on the actions of the fishing line.
- Have you worked out the third signal the author uses to signal the presence of the ghost?
- Why can't Ish confess to Gran about the missing rod?
- What is your understanding of Ish's plan for Brody to get a better maths score than him? Refer to the one you invented. Compare and contrast.

Chapter 15

Now Ish is facing the prospect that not only is Lucky missing – he may be dead. Ish's poem tells how he has survived a snake bite, being left in the bush as a puppy and being locked in a delivery van.

- Do you share his sense of dread?
- What do you think of Ish's interpretation of the Tarot card?
- Can you explain why Ish loves going to the river?
- Can you guess what's happened to Brody at the end of the chapter?

Chapter 16

- Draw a quick sketch of the image in your head of the well.
- How deep is it?
- How does the author convince you to keep reading at the end of this chapter? (Keep this device in mind when writing your stories.)

Chapter 17

- How far did Ish fall?
- Do you think the ghost saved Ish's life? Refer to the text for evidence.
- Ish reasons that Brody has seen the ghost. How? Review his reasoning and evaluate if you would have come to the same conclusion.
- How did Ish get his name?
- Brody apologises to Ish for calling him names and giving him a hard time and in doing so we learn why he has been mean to Ish. Discuss the reasons with a partner.

- Do you get a feeling Uncle Vinny could have a part to play in the story? What about Nelly Arnott?
- 'If ever we get out of here,' Brody said, 'I'll help you look for Lucky. I know how it feels to lose a dog.' Keep a note of this promise. Will Brody follow through?

Chapter 18

- While he's in the well, Ish has lots of time to think. List a couple of things he goes over in his mind.
- In this chapter, Brody discloses some relevant facts about his mother and father. We already know he once had a dog. He and Ish are similar in lots of ways. Discuss this idea.
- Earlier in the book Gran was described as a 'heart reader.' Do you think this description also applies to Ish?

Chapter 19

The air temperature has become warmer. There is a whispering noise. It feels to Ish that something is trying to turn or pull his head around.

- What are you thinking?
- When Ish has access to a torch he can actually see his surroundings in the well. He feels as if the walls start to close in on him. What is the name given to the fear of being in confined spaces?

Chapter 20

- What is the major discovery Ish makes in this chapter?
- Ish hears Mum's voice giving him advice and Grandpa's voice giving him encouragement. All the time there is whispering and white noise. Which of our senses has the focus in this story?

Chapter 21

- Write a quick description of Ish's dad.
- Notice that Ish is now happy to have Brody called his friend.
- Why didn't Ish tell Dad about the ghost?

Chapter 22

This chapter depicts a lot of emotion. Molly has obviously been bottling up a lot of feelings and her dramatic outburst culminates with, 'I hate you!' and Ish is 'a traitor'. Dad refuses Ish's request to live with him in Sydney. Reflect on the feelings each of the children is feeling.

- What is the question Ish has been planning to ask Dad? What is Dad's response?

Chapter 23

- Dad outlines the reasons Ish cannot live with him in Sydney. List them. Do they sound reasonable?
- What was Mum's misfortune in Mongolia?
- Molly and Ish deal with stress/bad news in different ways. Compare Molly's outburst to Ish's questioning acceptance.
- Brody has reverted to being mean. What do you think has caused this change?

Chapter 24

- Things are certainly not going Ish's way. Dad has been called back to Sydney. What is Dad's job?
- Can you identify with the necessity Dad feels in having to go back to Sydney?
- Ish feels everything is unfair and he has no control over things that are happening. He describes five things that are making him sad. List them.
- Ish confesses everything to Gran expecting her to fix things up for him. But what is Gran's response? Does this fit with how you know to deal with bullies? Are there other strategies that Ish could use?
- Ish tells Gran everything, but not about the ghost. Why not? What would you do in Ish's shoes?
- What does Ish determine to do at the end of the chapter?

Chapter 25

- Ish thinks Dad went away because of him. Can you locate the paragraph that supports this belief?
- Read Ish's poem, *In Trouble* and explain how Dad's shaver broke?

Chapter 26

- Brody now shows a different side to his character. Is he good after all? Give evidence from the text.

Chapter 27

- Could the noises Ish hears indicate the presence of another ghost? What do you think?
- The cemetery at night was out-of-this-world creepy. Locate the paragraph that describes the cemetery and have some fun reading it out loud in a spooky voice.

Chapter 28

- This chapter is important to the plot of the story. It's full of physical activity, violent movement and a very real threat of death for Ish. Reread the pitchfork/wheelbarrow section to understand Ish's close call.
- Remember the van that nearly ran over Lucky?
- Outline Ish's plan to distract Vinny.
- How is Molly's tripping over and crying out in pain important to the plot of the story?

- Lucky is well named because he has had lots of lucky escapes. Some people would say Ish should be called Lucky! Do you agree?
- Think about adding 'good planner' to Ish's character list.

Chapter 29

- Molly saves the day. Lucky saves the day. Grandpa, the ghost, saves the day. Expand these statements giving your interpretation of what's happening in the story.

Chapter 30

- How do Gran's orange juice actions reveal her distress?
- Does Lucky like Brody? How do you know?
- Do Gran and Brody's dad know each other. How can you tell? Has Gran ever met Vinny?

Chapter 31

- How does the fishing line help Ish catch the gigantic redfin?
- Once more the setting is the Selview Cemetery. This time the author uses the setting to show Ish's sensitive side. Ish and Lucky both support Brody at his mother's grave. What do we find out about Brody's mum?
- Reflect once again on the similarities between the two boys. (They have both lost a loved one recently. They both have absent fathers. Brody had a puppy, Ish has Lucky. Both have a significant loved one who loved poetry.)
- What do you think of the ending?

Discussion Questions

- Ursula Dubosarsky's review on the back-cover states: "Written with charm and humour, this is a story full of incident and emotion about a missing dog, a ghost and a family at crossroads – but most of all about the wondrously healing power of poetry in the life of a child." Do you agree with this opinion and each of the elements mentioned, i.e. missing dog, ghost, family at crossroads, poetry in Ish's life? Rank the elements in order of most enjoyed and then compare your ranking to those of other friends who have read the book.
- Can poetry writing, and reading be healing? Grandpa tell Ish to "Just enjoy the swish and swirl of the poems." Samuel Taylor Coleridge says, "Poetry – the best words in the best order." It certainly works for Ish. Scan through Ish's Poetry Journal finding some favourites from the text and new ones to enjoy.
- Ish is a resilient boy. He is dealing with some heavy-duty problems – family breakup, death of a family member, bullying, his beloved dog is missing, a new school and his mother is ill in a far-off country. A man with mental health problems is threatening him. He might even be seeing things. In real life, there are agencies and strategies to help with these problems.

- Do you think Grandpa, the ghost, will ever appear again in Ish's life? Support your decision by referring to the text. Will Vinny ever tell anyone about the ghost? What about Molly and Brody?
- A best friend is worth everything. Do you agree? The friend theme recurs in lots of strands of the story. Grandpa and Ish, Ish and Lucky, Ish and Brody, Gran and Mr Ironclad.
- Molly might lack the sensitivity of Ish but she is always there for him in the end.

If you enjoyed this book you can follow Ish's adventures in Carole Poustie's new, soon to be released, book titled *In the Dark*.

WRITING FOCUS

See Australian Curriculum v8.3 with ideas from the following learning outcomes (ACELA1507), (ACELA1508), (ACELA1512), (ACELA1513), (ACELT1795), (ACELT1611), (ACELA1521), (ACELA1523), (ACELA1526), (ACELT1618), (ACELT1800).

Writing Prompts

Use the following prompts to gain insights into some of the writing devices used by the author and apply them to your own writing.

Chapter 1

- Who is the narrator in this story? Everything is told through Ish's eyes so this story is written in first person. When an author writes in first person we feel we are there with the narrator seeing and feeling what they do.
- It is often said that the first chapter sells a book. Did the author hook you with the first chapter? What did you think of the first two sentences?
- Grandpa gives Ish advice for understanding and enjoying poems: 'Just enjoy the swish and swirl of the words dancing off the page.' With the group share some poems you enjoy. Poems from this year, and when you were younger. Poems that you have read or someone has read to you.
- The author is using personification – the description of an inanimate object as though it was a person or living thing. She is likening words to humans who dance and in doing so provides a memorable description.
- Start to write a character list for each of the characters in the story. Here are some to get you started:

<u>Ish</u>	<u>Grandpa</u>	<u>Lucky</u>
12 years' old	poet	affectionate
likes fishing	dead	mischievous
sensitive	loved Ish	missing

Chapter 2

- Add Molly, Mum and Mr Ironclad to your character list.
- Ish's first poem is a free form poem, (no need to rhyme). Check Ish's first poem. Use it as a model and have a go at writing one based on someone or something very important to you.

Chapter 3

- ‘The moonlight made the tumbledown tombstone near the path ahead look like a giant hand riding out of the mist.’ The author has used a simile likening the tombstone to a human hand. Similes often use the word, ‘like’.
- ‘I always went alone, without Molly, and I always took the same route: out the back gate, past the peppercorn tree, down the lane, over old Nelly Arnott’s back fence, through the cemetery and down to the river.’ Apart from being one of the longest sentences in the book it shows the use of a colon (:) to start a comma list. You can also use semicolons (;) to separate the items in the list.
- Add Nelly Arnott and the ghost to your character list.

Chapter 4

- Another simile. Gran is likened to a slinky which gives us a very good image of Gran and her movements. Ish is standing ‘like a stunned mullet.’

Chapter 5

- An adjective is a word class that describes, identifies or quantifies a noun or pronoun.
- *Surprise before Bed* shows a good use of adjectives – a dead bird/dirty socks/gardening shoe/muddy footy socks.
- The representation of dead bird or a dirty sock to a bone is a metaphor.
- The author uses exaggeration to amuse and offer an insight into characters’ feelings. In this case Molly is described as ‘screaming her head off’.

Chapter 6

- Two very short sentences start this chapter. Authors vary the length of sentences to create interest, emphasise a message and provide variety.
- Add to Ish’s collection of ‘101 Pick-Up Lines for Old Codgers’.
- In writing, a sentence is marked by punctuation. There are different types of sentences:
 - Simple sentences which have the form of a single clause. *My dog was gone.* is a good example.
 - Compound sentences have two or more main clauses of equal grammatical status and are usually marked by a coordinating conjunction such as ‘and’, ‘but’ or ‘or’. *Gran gave me a doubtful look and said it was strange to have flies in winter.* is a good example.
 - Complex sentences have two or more subordinate clauses. *I hoped Gran wasn’t also going to insist on joining us, because she suddenly seemed to be developing a renewed interest in fishing as well.* is a good example.

Chapter 7

- Read *A Bad Bite*. Notice how the author doesn’t come right out and reveal that Lucky was bitten by a tiger snake. Rather it is a slow reveal such that the last line helps us infer that the tiger snake is the problem.

Chapter 8

- ‘Gran is one of those people who make you feel better just by coming into the room.’ What a great character description! Have a go at describing someone you know by saying something about how they make others feel?

Chapter 9

- The author doesn’t tell us that Brody was a big lad. She uses the image of ‘a sumo wrestler’ and we form a vivid image. Similarly, she likens Gran to a river: ‘Maybe she was like a river for Mum’. And we already know through Ish’s thoughts and dialogue that he sees the river as a source of calm and comfort. Write three sentences about a place that gives you calmness and comfort.
- Add Brody Callahan to your character list.

Chapter 10

- Another example of personification, ‘I was dragging my heavy heart along the route back to Grans.’
- The author uses dialogue to help build a character picture. Listen to Mr Ironclad speaking, ‘Hope I’m not intrudin’ or nothin,’ but I’ve just made a batch of doughnuts. Me mum’s recipe an’ all.’ Think about Gran’s way of speaking. Molly has some memorable lines as does Vinny.

Chapter 11

- Verbs are our action words. When Ish says, ‘My *what-iffing* was suddenly interrupted when Molly spoke’ we have the author inventing a strong verb meaningful to the plot. Later, she talks about Miss Beech’s eyes ‘lasering’ Brody. Another strong verb.
- Add Mr Stilt and Miss Beech to your character list.

Chapter 12

- Nouns are a word class that includes all words denoting physical objects such as ‘fishing rod’, ‘dog’. They are called concrete nouns. Abstract nouns express intangibles such as ‘democracy’, ‘courage’.
- There are three grammatical types of nouns: common nouns which include words such as ‘hat’, ‘phone’. These do not name a particular person, place or thing. They can be concrete or abstract. The second type are proper nouns such as ‘Sydney’ or ‘Carole Poustie’, and they serve as names of particular places, persons, days/months and festivals. They usually occur without a determiner such as ‘the.’
- The third type are pronouns.
- In this chapter the author uses four different nouns to describe Gran’s pants: undies/ bloomers/knickers/underpants. In terms of humour, which one gets your vote for making this a funny chapter? Why do you think four different nouns were used?
- Experiment with writing limericks.

Chapter 13

- In *He's Leaving* think about the repetition of 'beep beep beep' and 'rock and rock and rock' and the effect it has on us hearing and sensing what Ish is feeling.

Chapter 14

- Possessiveness is signalled through apostrophes with common and proper nouns. In this chapter, we have: Brody's hand, Grandpa's fishing rod, Gran's alarm clock, everyone's breakfast dishes.
- Add Dad to your character list.

Chapter 15

- Commas can be used to separate phrases. 'When Grandpa took me fishing, we always grabbed a handful of peppercorn leaves from the peppercorn tree in the back lane, on our way down to the river.' is a good example.

Chapter 16

- Commas are also used to separate things in a list. 'The bottom of the well was full of old junk – empty paint tins, broken tiles, rotten fence palings.'
- Add Uncle Vinny and Brody's dad to your character list.

Chapter 18

- To pass the time Ish writes a list of all the things he wanted to do if he got out of the well. List five things you would do if you were in such a situation. Research 'list poems.'
- Add Brody's mum to your character list.

Chapter 22

- The author uses a mixture of dialogue and nonverbal cues to describe Dad's feelings. Instead of saying Dad was bitterly disappointed at Molly's reaction to the canoe trip she uses the image of a slowly deflating balloon. A good technique to keep in mind when writing.

Chapter 23

- Note the descriptive writing of The Star Hotel dining room. We can see the room and almost smell the bacon and eggs.

Chapter 24

- Personification once more – 'Now my last bit of hope had just driven away in a taxi.'
- Can you take a feeling word like 'hope' (anger, sadness, nervousness, embarrassment, disappointment etc) and write it in a sentence that uses personification to show it?
- Keep this writing device up your sleeve for when you write your next story or poem.

Chapter 26

- A change in a character makes for interesting reading and writing. Think about the change in Brody and keep it in mind for your writing.

Chapter 27

- Reread the author's description of the cemetery at night. Close your eyes and see if you can picture the physical layout. Can you hear the secret formulas bubbling, feel the mist, smell the night smell of the ghost gums? Note the use of similes – the cemetery is like a laboratory and the headstones are likened to concrete books.
- Use this setting as a story starter for your own cemetery story.

Chapter 28

- 'Vinny is a man you wouldn't like to meet on a dark night.' Reread the author's description. Think about the ways she has used the setting – overgrown driveway, peeling paint, rundown carport to add to our understanding of his character.

Chapter 29

- Ideas can be expanded through careful choice of verbs. Consider the author's use of strong verbs to drive the plot. Check out:
 - googling/thrashing/curling/gaping/swirling/shimmering and surged/clanked/yanked/whipped/writhed/streamed.

Chapter 30

- Proper nouns serve as names of particular persons, places, days, months, festivals.
- Sydney Harbour Bridge, Melbourne and Mount Selview Consolidated School are proper nouns. List all the characters in this book to identify more proper nouns.

Chapter 31

- The author uses a question to end the story. 'Did I miss anything?' Did you find yourself mentally filling in all the blanks? An effective device that you might keep in mind.
- Refer back to the end of Chapter 2 where Ish says, 'I sat on the grass outside Gran's house and put my arm around Lucky's neck. If anything ever happened to him, I don't know what I would do.' We do!

Writing activities

Scan through the following word list. Identify any words new to you. Look them up. Now write a quick definition of each word and get a partner to check you can spell them.

- Journal
- Commotion

- Miraculously
- Hysterical
- Infuriating
- Delinquent
- Receiver
- Eucalyptus
- Swivelled
- Schedule
- Deliberate
- Affection
- Silhouette
- Rehearse
- Suspiciously
- Cemetery
- Commit
- Committing
- Laboratory
- Berserk
- Ferociously
- Ruckus
- Zigzagging

***Dog Gone* could be classified as what is referred to in literary circles as a *Bildungsroman* – a ‘coming-of-age’ story. In other words, the story shows the psychological and moral growth of the main protagonist (the main character) throughout the book.**

- In what ways do you think Ish changed throughout the course of the novel?
- What do you think he learned?
- In a good book, for a character to have room to grow, they need to start off with at least one *character flaw*. What do you think Ish’s main character flaw is?
- Write character profiles for three of the other characters in *Dog Gone*. Do they have flaws? Quirks? (For instance Molly’s bad temper) What, in the text, sets them apart from the other characters? (Think: voice [not only the sound of their voice, but the words they use, how they think, their logic or ‘take’ on the world, educational standard], background, age, physical description, attitudes ...)
- Create your own protagonist for a book you might write in the future. Produce a comprehensive character profile for them (physical appearance; likes; hates; fears; dreams and plans; relationship with other family members; experiences that shaped them when they were very young; and their CHARACTER FLAW).
- Now introduce your character into one of the scenes in *Dog Gone* and include them in a dialogue you invent.

Setting plays an important role in *Dog Gone*. The main setting is Mount Selview – a fictional place on the Murray River.

- What role do you think the setting plays in the overall story?
- Ish's favourite place in the whole world is on the log that he and Grandpa used to fish from on the bank of the Murray River. Or anywhere near water. Reread some of the water scenes in this book. Using as much concrete detail as you can, describe a place where you love to spend time. Try to use all your senses: what you can see, hear, smell, taste and feel.

Figurative language is another important aspect of the *Dog Gone* text. Figurative language refers to all the elements that come together in a piece of writing (very often in a poem, especially) to make it 'sing'. That is, the sound of the words as well as the meaning, the imagery (helping us to form images in our minds as readers), and the tone or 'feel' of a piece of writing that creates an emotional response in the reader. Reread 'Tuned in':

Tuned in

*I think my dog's psychic
or is it his supersonic hearing?
he has a thing going
with Gran's next door neighbour
how do I know Mr Ironclad
is five minutes away in his car?
Lucky is running
backwards and forwards
between the front
and back doors
barking the cups
off their saucers*

- What is the metaphor used by the author to describe Lucky's barking?
- Can you remember the metaphor Ish uses in chapter three to describe his cold feet? And the simile used in the same chapter to describe the tumbledown tombstone?
- Can you incorporate a metaphor and/or a simile into a poem of your own about the favourite place you described earlier?

How to SHOW your story instead of TELL it. Read Ish's poem 'He's Leaving'.

- How is Ish feeling in this poem? How do you know?
- Notice that the author never *tells* you how Ish is feeling when his dad leaves. But you can work it out by reading about what Ish *does*. Nowhere does the author say 'Ish was

sad'. Instead, the author lets you figure that out for yourself by supplying you with concrete details of what Ish *does* to *show* how he is feeling.

- Try writing a paragraph or two showing how your character feels without actually naming the feeling.

Perhaps you could use one of the many storyboard applications available on the internet to write your own short story using some of the writing tips you have learned from reading *Dog Gone*.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Carole is a prize-winning poet with work published in literary journals and anthologies. Her sequel to *Dog Gone*, titled *In the Dark*, is available in all good bookshops and as an eBook. She reviews for *Maggies* magazine and is the convener of the spoken word event 'Stopping all Stations'. For most of her career Carole has been a primary school performing arts teacher but she now spends her time teaching adults professional and creative writing.

Carole has performed as a singer/songwriter and when she is not teaching or writing, works part-time in a listening role for the WellSpring Centre.

Carole's formal qualifications include: Master of Arts (Writing and Literature) with specialisations in professional writing and children's literature; Diploma of Professional Writing and Editing; Graduate Diploma in Music Education; Diploma of Teaching (Primary); and Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (TAE40110).

Pat is a retired primary school teacher with a continuing interest in the fostering of students' reading and writing skills and interests. She continues to be an active reader and writer.

Pat's formal qualifications include: Diploma of Teaching (Primary) and Graduate Diploma in Reading Education. She is a trained Reading Recovery Teacher.

LINKS

Carole Poustie's website:

<http://www.carolepoustie.com.au>

***In the Dark* (sequel to *Dog Gone*):**

<http://www.carolepoustie.com.au>

All about words:

<https://blog.oxforddictionaries.com>

<https://www.vocabulary.com>

<http://www.dictionary.com>

Bullying:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers/Pages/students.aspx>

<https://bullyingnoway.gov.au/TeachingAboutBullying/WorkingInTheClassroom/Pages/The-curriculum-and-bullying.aspx>