

Learning Guide



Reading to Dogs

We hope you enjoyed learning all about the joys and benefits of reading to dogs. Extend your learning with this print-ready Learning Guide!



What's in this Learning Guide?

Get Set to Listen:

Check your knowledge before and after listening to the episode by determining if statements are TRUE or FALSE.

Discussion Questions

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.3-8.1; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.3-8.3

Read to a Dog: Extension Activities

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4-5.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4-5.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4-5.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.4-5.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.4-5.4

Reading to Dogs Heartrate Tracker

NGSS: LS1.A: Structure and Function; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.3-5.1; CASEL: Self-Awareness

Draw Yourself Reading to a Dog

Book List & Tips for Reading with Expression

Additional Resources



The Children's Hour
kids public radio

© 2025 The Children's Hour radio show podcast
<https://www.childrenshour.org/reading-to-dogs/>



Get Set to Listen

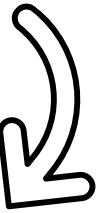
1. Before listening!

Read each statement and write TRUE or FALSE based on what you already know.



2. After listening!

Based on what the experts said in the episode, write TRUE or FALSE.



Before Listening	TRUE or FALSE?	After Listening
	1. Read to the Dogs is a program where kids read to trained therapy dogs at the library.	
	2. Only children who can read chapter books are allowed to participate in Read to the Dogs.	
	3. Dogs in the program correct children if they mispronounce words while reading.	
	4. Petting the dogs while reading helps children feel calm and safe.	
	5. The program is only offered in Albuquerque, New Mexico.	
	6. All dogs in Read to the Dogs must be trained, calm, and certified as therapy dogs.	
	7. Children earn stickers and certificates for reading to the dogs regularly.	

What did you learn?



Get Set to Listen

Answer key

1. TRUE
2. FALSE. Anyone can read any book to the dogs.
3. FALSE!
4. TRUE
5. FALSE. The program is offered in most libraries across the United States.
6. TRUE
7. TRUE



Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever read out loud to a dog or another animal? How did it feel?
2. Why is reading to a dog different from reading to a teacher or class?
3. Why might reading to a dog be calmer and less nerve-racking than reading to a person?
4. How do dogs help kids feel calm when they read?
5. If you could read to a dog, what book would you choose?
6. What other skills can kids learn by reading to dogs besides reading?



Group Discussion Strategies

Think Pair Share:

1. Individually, student writes down their answer to a question.
2. Students pair up and tell each other their answers.
3. Teacher calls for volunteers to share with the whole class their answer (and/or their partner's answer). Teacher notes key words/phrases on board.

Round Robin:

1. Teacher poses one question (written on top of a large page) to students, who are assembled into small groups of 3 or 4.
2. Students take turns brainstorming the answers. The recorder of the group writes down all answers.
3. The leader reads the group's ideas to the entire class. Teacher moderates.



Read to a Dog: **Extension Activities**

Reading to a dog is a fun, low-pressure way to build confidence and grow as a reader. Try these engaging activities to learn even more along the way!

1. Draw a scene from the story after reading it.
2. “What did the dog think about the book?” Write a short review or draw a comic about the book from the dog’s point of view. Share reviews with the group or post them on a library bulletin board.
3. Write a short story or dialogue from the dog’s point of view about listening to a child read. Discuss how the dog “feels” about being read to.
4. After reading, draw the dog you read to and write a short story about your adventure together.
5. Act out a scene from the book while reading it to the dog.





Reading to Dogs Heartrate Tracker

Your name: _____

Dog's name: _____

Listen

to [The Children's Hour "Reading to Dogs" episode](#) (segment 13:46-14:50).

Petting a dog can slow down your heart rate and lower stress hormones like cortisol, which helps you feel more relaxed. When we pet or spend time with dogs, our brains release chemicals called endorphins, oxytocin, and serotonin.

Endorphins: Natural "feel-good" chemicals that reduce stress and pain.

Oxytocin: Sometimes called the "love hormone," it helps us bond with others.

Serotonin: Helps stabilize mood and make us feel calm and happy.

Experiment

Step 1: Predict

Before reading, guess what might happen:

- My heart rate will:
 - ☐ Go up ☐ Go down ☐ Stay the same
- I think I will feel: _____

Step 2: Measure Resting Heart Rate

Count your pulse for 15 seconds and multiply by 4 to get beats per minute (BPM).

- Resting Heart Rate (BPM): _____
- How do you feel? ☐ Calm ☐ Nervous ☐ Excited ☐ Other: _____

Step 3: Read to a Dog

Spend 5–10 minutes reading to a dog. Remember to pet the dog gently while reading.

Step 4: Measure Heart Rate Again

- Heart Rate After Reading (BPM): _____
- How do you feel now? ☐ Calm ☐ Happy ☐ Excited ☐ Relaxed ☐ Other: _____

Step 5: Compare & Reflect

- Did your heart rate go up, down, or stay the same? _____
- How did reading to the dog make you feel? _____
- Why do you think petting the dog affected your heart rate or mood? _____

Extension: Graph Your Results

- Draw a simple bar graph showing your heart rate before and after reading.
- Label one bar "Before" and the other "After".



Draw Your Dog

Draw yourself reading to a dog!

How do you feel? What book did you read?



Upload your drawing to our Instagram [@tchradio](#),
TikTok [@thechildrenshourradio](#), and [Facebook page](#),
and check out others' drawings!



Mail your drawing to:
The Children's Hour
PO Box 70236
Albuquerque, NM 87197



[Record a Voice Message](#)
This might be used on The Children's Hour!



Post your drawing
on our Instagram,
TikTok and
Facebook! Check
out others'
drawings!

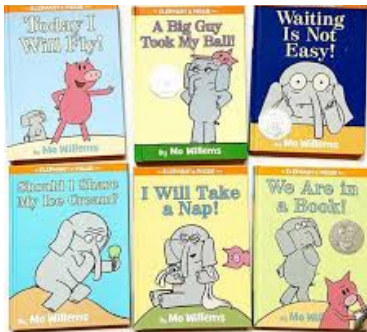


Book List

Dogs love it when you read with excitement and emotion! These books are great for practicing expression, pacing, and pronunciation. They are sure to make you laugh and keep your dog coming back for more!

Tips for Expressive Reading

- **Vary your voice:** Use higher pitch for excitement, lower for seriousness, and slow down for emphasis.
- **Use Punctuation:** Treat commas, periods, and exclamation points as cues for pauses, stops, and excitement.
- **Embrace Drama:** Think of it as acting; use gestures and different voices for characters.



Elephant and Piggie series

by Mo Willems

This popular and hilarious series about two best friends—Gerald the cautious elephant and Piggie the cheerful pig—uses simple words and speech bubbles to teach early readers about friendship and feelings.

ages 3-8



The Disgusting Critters series

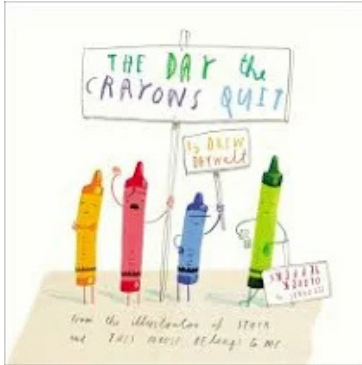
by Elise Gravel

This hilarious and informative series uses funny facts and silly illustrations to teach kids about creatures like the housefly, making science fun and engaging.

ages 6-9



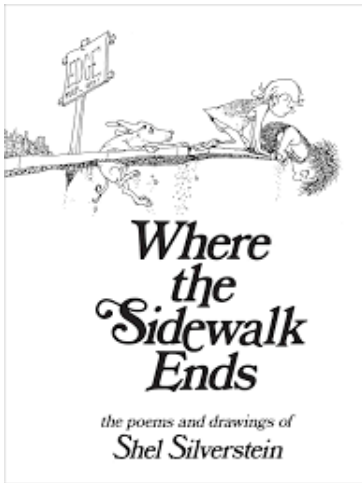
Book List



The Day the Crayons Quit

by Drew Daywalt

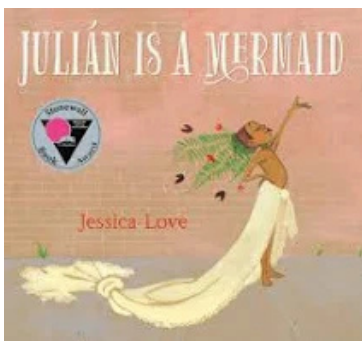
A funny, bestselling book where a boy finds his crayons on strike, each with a complaint, leading to a creative solution.
ages 3-8



Where the Sidewalk Ends

by Shel Silverstein

A much-loved poetry book full of imaginative poems and playful drawings about funny characters and magical places.
ages 4+



Julián is a Mermaid

by Jessica Love

An award-winning picture book about a young boy who makes a mermaid costume and is lovingly supported by his abuela. The beautiful illustrations make this a great book for “reading the pictures” without having to know how to read all the words.
ages 3-8



Additional Resources

[Reading with Rover](#)

Learn more about the Reading to Dogs organization featured by this episode's guests.

[Read to the Dogs at the Albuquerque Public Library](#)

Find information about program locations and times.

[Pet Partners: We Are All Ears](#)

Resources for pet assistance programs, including materials, certificate, fact sheet, reading list, and blog post with suggestions for how to participate.

Videos

[We Are All Ears: A Worldwide Read with Pets Project Presented by Pet Partners](#)

