

American Humane Association

The nation's voice for the protection of children & animals



“Can I Have a Dog, Please?” Lesson Plan

Grades: 3 - 5

Ages: 8 - 10 years

Time: 45 - 60 minutes. *This lesson can be modified to meet a variety of time constraints.*

Character Pillars:

Fairness

Responsibility

Citizenship

Standards:

| Standard | Area | Performance Description |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| English/Language Arts | Reading | E1c |
| English/Language Arts | Speaking, Listening, Viewing | E3a, E3b |
| Mathematics | Problem Solving | M5b |
| Mathematics | Mathematical Reasoning | M5d |

Rationale: Animal shelters provide a much-needed safe haven for sick, injured, unwanted, homeless and lost pets. Shelters work hard to educate their constituents, care for the animals in their community and attempt to find new homes for pets. This lesson provides students with the opportunity to reflect on the many factors families must consider when they think about adding a pet to their home. By considering such factors, students will engage problem-solving skills to learn about what it takes to be responsible pet owners.

Behavioral Objectives:

Students will:

- Develop an awareness of the responsibilities that go along with pet ownership.
- Identify factors that must be considered when choosing the right dog for a family's lifestyle.
- Become more aware of the option of adoption through an animal shelter or breed-specific rescue group.
- Learn how to take into account information from a veterinarian or dog trainer before choosing a dog.
- Experience the character pillars of responsibility, fairness and citizenship as they relate to choosing the right dog.

Materials:

- Chalkboard, dry-erase board or flip chart
- "Can I Have a Dog, Please?" narrative
- "Logic Problem" and "Answer Key" handouts

Procedure:

- Facilitate a discussion about what things a family should consider when choosing the right dog for their home.
- Create a record of the following categories as they are mentioned on the board (or one category per flip chart page), so you can refer to them later.
 - Be sure to leave space under each category where you can add notes later.
 - Suggested categories:
 - Time (how much time the family has, how busy their schedules are, etc.)
 - Space (how big their house is, do they have a yard, etc.)
 - Money (can they afford a pet, annual expenses/budget, etc.)
 - Messiness (do they mind shedding, drooling, etc.)
 - Activity level (is the family active, inactive, etc.)
 - Allergies (do any members of the family have dog allergies)
 - Young children and other pets (any other children at home, any cats, other dogs, other pets, etc.)
 - Allowed (are pets allowed by landlord, renter's insurance, municipality, etc.)
- Explain that the students will hear a story about a family looking for a dog, then be given four choices of dogs for that family.
- The group will discuss and consider each dog to decide which is the best match for the family.



- Pass out the handout entitled "Can I Have a Dog, Please? Narrative."
 - Ask the class to follow along as you read the narrative aloud.
- Next, read the four choices of dogs that are given.
- Begin a discussion of the categories you have already discussed and recorded, but this time, focus on Henry and his family and how they fit each category.
- Record Henry's family's needs and desires under each category you have already recorded.
 - You may need to read the narrative more than once.
- Initiate a discussion about how addressing these things is part of being a responsible dog owner.
- Although a family like Henry's may want a particular type of dog, it is best to choose a dog that is the right match for the family.
- After identifying what must be considered when choosing a dog, discussing the narrative, discussing each dog and identifying the needs of Henry's family:
 - Ask the students to vote on which dog is the best choice for Henry's family.
 - The best choice is dog "B."

Closure:

- Review all of the considerations in choosing the best dog for a family:
 - Time
 - Space
 - Money
 - Messiness
 - Activity level
 - Do any members of the family have dog allergies?
 - Are there any young children or other pets?
 - Are pets allowed?

Assessment:

- Distribute the "Logic Problem" to the students.
 - Students may work individually or in pairs.



- Review the strategies needed in order to complete the problem.
 - If you need more information, research “logic problems” or “logic puzzles.”
- Once the class has completed the problem, lead a group discussion about their choices and why they made those choices.
 - An “Answer Key” is provided.

If Time Allows:

- Lead a discussion about the following:
 - It was difficult for Henry to choose only one dog since there were so many to choose from. Why do you think there are so many dogs in shelters?
 - Examples: behavior problems, lost, not wanted, too many puppies, etc.
 - What are some solutions you can think of so that dogs don't end up in shelters?
 - Examples: ID tags, spay/neuter, training, more exercise, choose the right dog, etc.
 - If you want to help, what are some ways that you can help a shelter?
 - Examples: volunteer, donate money, donate supplies, plan a fundraiser, participate in education programs, etc.

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"Can I Have a Dog, Please?" Narrative

Henry is a 7-year-old boy who would love to get a dog. Right now, his family does not have any pets, but his mom said that they could get a dog if Henry helps take care of the new pet. Henry's family, which includes an older brother and their mother, lives in a small, fifth-floor apartment on a busy street. Henry's mom works a lot, but their neighbor takes care of the boys after school. The neighbor loves dogs and has said she would be happy to help out with the new pet. Henry's apartment is clean and neat, but his family wouldn't be bothered by a little dog hair. The boys are very active and spend a lot of time outside, walking and exploring the small park across the street. Now that Henry is a little older, his family has decided they are all ready to get a dog.

On Henry's mom's day off, the whole family visits a nearby veterinary clinic and a dog trainer to learn about things like:

- what supplies they need to care for a dog
- what kind of dog would be best for them
- what veterinary care dogs need
- how to train a dog

Henry, his brother and their mom then go to the local animal shelter. They visit all of the dogs and like these dogs the best:

- A. A very big dog who eats a lot, sheds a lot, is very nice, gets along with other dogs and has a lot of energy.
- B. A medium-size dog who sheds a little bit, loves children, is very friendly and likes to walk, but is a little older so he doesn't need a lot of exercise.
- C. A medium-size dog who does not shed at all and is very sweet, but is afraid of children.
- D. A tiny dog who is very, very energetic and active, and needs a lot of exercise.

Which of these dogs do you think would be the best match for Henry's family?





Logic Problem

Carefully read each of the clues below. Next, using the logic chart, match the family with the dog that best fits their needs by marking the best choice with an X.



Clues

1. The Gonzalez family lives in a single-family home in the country. They love to take walks in the woods, and they are not worried about the home being “messy” with dog hair.
2. The McCabes live in a three-family home with a small yard. They have a cat and a baby girl who is allergic to dogs.
3. Dr. Jones is elderly and is looking for a walking partner to join her on her daily walks. She lives in an apartment building, and her landlord said she could have a small dog as long as it doesn’t shed much.
4. The Farney family lives on a large farm with a dog and chickens. They want a big dog to keep the other dog company.
5. The Johnsons live on the first floor and their landlord will allow any type of dog. They are looking for a big dog who will want to play with their three sons.
6. Mr. Yin lives alone in a small apartment. He is lonely and looking for a lap dog to keep him company, and his landlord said he could have a small dog.

| Dogs:  Families:  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium • Likes kids • Sheds a lot • Doesn't like other pets | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Big • High energy • Likes other animals • Likes kids | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small • Medium energy • Afraid of kids • Doesn't shed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large • Sheds a lot • Very active | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small • Low energy • Sheds | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium • “Hypoallergenic” hair doesn't shed • Likes kids & cats |
|--|--|---|--|---|--|---|
| Gonzalez Family | | | | | | |
| McCabe Family | | | | | | |
| Dr. Jones | | | | | | |
| Farney Family | | | | | | |
| Johnson Family | | | | | | |
| Mr. Yin | | | | | | |



Logic Problem Answer Key

| Dogs:  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium • Likes kids • Sheds a lot | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Big • High energy • Likes other animals • Likes kids | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small • Medium energy • Afraid of kids • Doesn't shed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large • Sheds a lot • Very active | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small • Low energy • Sheds | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium • "Hypoallergenic" hair doesn't shed • Likes kids & cats |
|---|---|---|--|---|--|---|
| Families:  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doesn't like other pets | | | | | |
| Gonzalez Family | | | | X | | |
| McCabe Family | | | | | | X |
| Dr. Jones | | | X | | | |
| Farney Family | | X | | | | |
| Johnson Family | X | | | | | |
| Mr. Yin | | | | | X | |

