

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

Lassie Come-Home

by
Eric Knight

Book Information

Eric Knight, Lassie Come-Home
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After being sold to a wealthy duke living in the far north of Scotland, a collie undertakes a 1000-mile journey to Yorkshire in order to be reunited with her former master, the son of a poor farmer.

Award: Young Reader's Choice Award/Nominee

Topics: Adventure, Survival; Adventure, Travel;
Animals, Dogs; Classics, Classics (All)

Main Characters

Daniel and Dally Fadden an old couple who care for Lassie when they find her on their property

Hynes the cold-hearted caretaker of the Duke's dogs

Joe Carracloough a devoted boy who only wants Lassie to come back home to him

Lassie a beautiful and loyal female collie; she belongs to the Carracloough family until she is sold to the Duke

Mr. and Mrs. Carracloough Joe's parents

Priscilla the Duke's granddaughter

Rowlie Palmer a traveling potter who accompanies Lassie for a short way on her journey home

the Duke of Rudling a man who purchases Lassie from Mr. Carracloough

Vocabulary

"Aye" "yes"

bonnie pretty or lovely

collier a coal miner

moor vast open land, often swampy

tyke dog

The people of Greenall Bridge in Yorkshire, northern England love Lassie, a beautiful collie belonging to the Carracloough family. One day in early summer, young Joe Carracloough finds that Lassie is not waiting for him after school as she usually does. His parents inform him that they have sold Lassie because they need the money, especially now that Mr. Carracloough is unemployed. Lassie escapes and returns to Joe several times, but each time Lassie must be returned to her new owner, the Duke of Rudling. When Lassie returns the third time, Joe and Lassie try to hide in the moors but are unsuccessful, and once again Lassie is returned to the Duke. Joe is soon devastated when he learns that the Duke has taken Lassie to his home far away in the Scottish Highlands, which is hundreds of miles from his home in England. But still, Joe hopes Lassie will one day return to him.

Lassie finds an opportunity to escape when Priscilla, the Duke's granddaughter, realizes that Lassie belongs with Joe; she leaves the gate open so Lassie can escape. Although Lassie does not know where she is, she uses her homing instinct to guide her southward.

Along her journey, Lassie learns that men are not to be trusted and that she must run from them.

During the deep summer, Lassie finds herself facing her most difficult obstacle yet: a Scottish loch, or lake. She must make a hundred-mile journey around it, as she cannot swim across it. Meanwhile, Lassie gets a thorn embedded in her paw, but manages to continue. She then finds a river she must cross at the end of the loch, but she is smashed against some rocks by the powerful currents and suffers a broken rib. Seriously injured and weak, Lassie finds her way to a thicket where she rests for many days.

Lassie continues her journey south, but she is grazed by a bullet when two men mistake her for a sheep-killing dog. Later, in a large Scottish city, she is captured by dog catchers and taken to the pound, but she manages to escape by jumping out of a window.

Lassie crosses the Tweed River and enters England

Synopsis

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as autumn approaches. One night Lassie collapses near the cottage of the Faddens, a kind elderly couple. They take Lassie in and give her their last can of milk. The Faddens love and care for Lassie for several weeks, but they realize that Lassie has somewhere else to go, so they release her.

Continuing on her journey, Lassie meets a friendly traveling potter named Rowlie Palmer. The two become friends, and she saves his life when two robbers attack him. Rowlie wishes she could stay with him, but like the Faddens, he realizes she has somewhere to go.

By this time, Joe has essentially given up hope of ever seeing Lassie again. But, miraculously, one day Lassie is waiting for him outside his school; she is battered, exhausted, and underweight. He brings her home and is delighted when his parents work diligently to save Lassie's life. Joe knows, however, that the Duke will return for Lassie. He begs his mother to persuade his father to lie by saying Lassie is not there. Mr. Carracloough refuses to lie under any circumstances. Instead, Mr. Carracloough asks the Duke if the dog, considering the pitiful condition she is in, could be the same dog he lost. The Duke says that she cannot be. The Duke then offers Mr. Carracloough a job taking care of his dogs and kennels. He also allows the family to live in the cottage on his estate.

Lassie's health improves quickly under the Carraclooughs' care. Only a slight, nearly imperceptible limp remains. Her coat is once again lovely. She now has a litter of pups, and once again, the Carracloough household is happy.

Open-Ended Questions

Use these open-ended questions as the basis for class discussions, student presentations, or extended writing assignments.

Initial Understanding

Joe mentions how the people of his village try to hide their emotions. Why do they do this?

The people of this small community are proud. When things upset them, they may fear appearing weak or out of control. And since the people of this village are not wealthy, and many are on government support because they have lost their jobs, their pride is especially important as it is all they have left.

Literary Analysis

Lassie is often described as being "aristocratic." What are some examples of her aristocratic nature?

When Joe bids Lassie to stay at the Duke's kennels, Lassie is very aloof after the boy and his father leave. She ignores Priscilla's pleas to pet her and, instead, stares off toward the spot where she last saw Joe and his father. Also, when Lassie is attacked by the two dogs out on the moor, she shows incredible courage and perseverance.

Inferential Comprehension

How does Sam Carracloough show that he values honesty?

He is generally a man of few words, yet he speaks quite openly and freely with his son about honesty. Sam shows his honest nature by returning Lassie to her new home with the Duke whenever Lassie runs away. He has taken the Duke's money and, even though it hurts his son, he must return the dog. He has made a bargain, and he will not go back on his word. Even at the end of the novel, Sam will not lie to the Duke by saying that the dog is not Lassie. Instead he simply asks the Duke if the dog is his.

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Constructing Meaning

What is Rowlie talking about in this poem: "There's a tyke that's shy and canny, / But I think she's coming near. / Aye, she may be fearfu' canny, / But we'll overcome her fear"?

He is referring to Lassie's intelligent and clever nature. He knows that she is a well-trained dog and will not accept food from strangers. He can, however, see that she is becoming accustomed to him. Because she is such an intelligent dog, he must use an equally intelligent plan to get her to take food from him and follow him along on his journey.

Teachable Skills

Recognizing Setting This novel takes place both in England and Scotland. The landscape is described in detail, especially when Lassie is on her own, making her journey home. Cliffs, moors, lochs, rivers, industrial cities, and rivers are just some of the features mentioned. Have students study books and maps about England and Scotland. Have the students retrace Lassie's journey home, starting in the Scottish Highlands and ending in Yorkshire, England. Students can show classmates pictures and present information about each area or landscape features that are mentioned in the book.

Understanding Hist./Cultural Factors Dogs are classified into several groups, according to organizations such as the American Kennel Club. Lassie is a collie, so she is part of the herding group. Other groups include hunting dogs, sporting dogs, and non-sporting dogs. Have students research the different groups of dogs. Which dogs are assigned to those particular groups, and why? What are the roles of dogs in the different groups? What are they bred to do? Ask students to present their findings in a short, written summary.

Recognizing Details Lassie is a very well-trained dog. Her owner has spent many years working with her, and she knows many commands. It takes a lot of work and patience to train a dog properly. There are many methods for training

dogs using a variety of commands. Have students research reference books or interview dog trainers to learn how to teach several simple commands. Have students discuss their results with the class.

Responding to Literature The author of this book was influenced by stories he heard of a "come-home collie" when he was a boy and the author had a collie himself. His love for the breed is seen in his writing. Have students each write a tribute to a favorite animal of theirs -- dog, cat, horse, etc. Their writings can be poetry, song lyrics, essays or short stories. In their writing, ask students to be specific, including the type of animal, breed, age, and other significant aspects they would like to add.