



RedRover Readers Program

**Discussion and Activity  
Guide for**

***Orville: A Dog Story***

Written by Haven Kimmel, illustrated by Robert Andrew Parker



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## Concepts

- What is a “lost” dog? What is a “stray” dog?
- How do people’s responses to the same animal differ?
- How does a dog’s response to people differ?

## Before Reading

Have you ever seen a lost dog or a stray dog? (What does it mean to be lost? What does it mean to be a stray?)

Share the book cover with the students. Ask students to describe the cover and make predictions about what they see. Allow students to form their own ideas; they can revise their ideas as you read the story.

- Who do you think this animal is?
- What could be happening: describe the picture.
- The book’s title is: *Orville: A Dog Story*
- Clarify: Whose story will be told?
- How can a dog’s story be told?
- Predict (make an educated guess): What do you think will happen in this story?

## During Reading

After reading page 7, ask, “Why do you think Orville wants to say hello?”

After reading page 9, ask, “How does Maybelle react to Orville?” How does Herbert react to Orville? Why do you think they react differently?

After reading page 13, ask, “How do you think Orville feels in this picture?”

After reading page 16, ask, “Why do you think Orville barks and pulls on his chain?” “How has Orville’s reactions to Maybelle and Herbert changed?” “Why do you think this?”

Stop at the bottom of page 17. Ask: “Why is Orville angry?” “Why is he sad?” “How can anger and sadness be mixed together?” “What do you think Orville thinks about when he is alone on the chain?”

Stop at the bottom of page 21. Ask: “What do you think will happen between Sally and Orville?”

Stop at the bottom of page 24. Ask: “Why does Orville go in Sally’s house?”

After the last page, ask, “How do Sally’s reactions to Orville change?” (How does she react at first, etc.) “Why do you think her reactions change?”

## **After Reading**

Review some of the story's illustrations with students and ask:

- Think about Orville at the beginning of the story when he was lost (p. 5).
- Think about Orville at the middle of the story when he is living on the chain at Herbert and Maybelle's house (p. 14 to 15)
- Think about Orville at the end of the story when he is living in Sally's house (p. 32).
- Has Orville changed? How? Why?
- Orville was fed by Herbert and Maybelle. What does Sally provide for Orville that Herbert and Maybelle did not? How do you think Orville feels in Sally's home?

## **Activity: Beginning-Middle-End Sequencing**

Tell students *Orville: A Dog Story* has a beginning, middle and end that they just reviewed.

Draw the following table on chart paper or a white board. Label the sections. Write students responses and guide students with questions as they complete the table.

Ask students: How does Orville's life change in the beginning, middle and end of the story? Is Orville still a stray dog at the end of the story? How do you think people will respond to Orville? (Why?/Tell me more.)

<i>Orville: A Dog Story</i>	Beginning	Middle	End	Prediction: What will happen next? Why?
How does Orville feel?				
How does Orville act?				
Where is Orville living?				
How do people treat Orville?				

## **Extensions: Choose one or more**

### **A. What we say and do**

Provide pairs of students with dialogue (thoughts and spoken dialogue) from the story printed and cut out on small strips of paper. Make sure each pair of students has a quotation; some quotations are used more than once. (See quotes on the last page of this guide that can be printed on small strips of paper.)

Once the students have their quotes, make sure they can read them. Otherwise, read the quotes to them. Make sure the students can identify the character who speaks the quote they have been assigned.

“Wouldn’t it be nice just to jump right up on her,” Orville (p. 9).

“That’s the ugliest dog I’ve ever seen,” Herbert (p. 9).

“He’s ugly all right, and half-starved, too. I’m thinking we should take him home,” Maybelle (p. 9).

“He’d make a good watchdog, and maybe he could run the rats out of the barn,” Maybelle (p. 9).

“If you keep barking like this, we’ll take you to the pound,” Herbert (p. 18).

“Stupid dog,” Herbert (p. 20).

“Ma’am, I think the dog just *loves* you,” Jimmy (p. 30).

“Look at the two of you,” Maybelle (p. 32)

“There are ways to slip free of a chain,” Orville (p. 32).

Have students work in pairs to illustrate their quote. Ask students to think about how a character can be shown by what he says or how she acts. Ask: How do individual’s responses to the same dog differ? How does Orville’s response to people differ?

### **B. Looking and describing**

Bring in photographs of dogs from a local shelter (currently available or adopted already). Use photos that show the dog prominently, preferably alone. Try to have enough photos so that each pair of students can hold a photo. Also bring in samples of descriptions and photos shelters use to describe dogs for adoption.

- Show students the illustration of Orville on p. 12.
- Provide each student with a photocopy (color if possible) of the illustration of Orville on p. 12.
- Re-read the description of Orville. Show students how tall Orville would be. Compare the written description to the illustration.

- Ask:
  - Does the written description match the illustration? If so, how? If not, what would you change?
  - Why would Herbert and Maybelle judge Orville based on how he looks?
- Show students photos of the dogs. Have pairs of students look closely at a photo.
- Ask students to think about how they would describe Orville if he were a shelter dog in need of adoption into a permanent home. Tell students they have two minutes to work together and think of ways to describe the dog.
- Show students samples of descriptions shelters use to promote dogs for adoption. Explain that volunteers write these descriptions.
- Ask:
  - What words are used to describe the dogs?
  - What is your response when you read or hear the descriptions?
  - Do you think the descriptions will help a dog be adopted? Why or why not?
  - Remind students that Herbert had planned to take Orville to the “pound,” the animal shelter. If Orville were at the animal shelter, how would you describe him so he could be adopted? Write the description.
- As a class, create a description for Orville that could be used at an animal shelter to have him be adopted. Guide students through the description process, age, qualities, etc. Write students’ suggestions on a whiteboard or chart paper.

### **C. Animal Behavior Observation**

Visit a real shelter to observe animal behaviors for dogs and cats. Some animal shelters may offer virtual tours or be willing to Skype with your class to show off their animals and the facility if a field trip to the actual building is not possible.

Encourage children to choose one animal to focus on and record what they notice about the animal’s behavior and body language. Use the form below or create your own to capture the students’ responses. A sketch sheet to draw what they observe can also be added.

### **D. Design a Dream Animal Shelter**

Invite students to think about how an animal shelter keeps animals happy, healthy and safe during their stay. Brainstorm as a group some of the things that are needed. (Possible answers include soft beds, food, water, a way to keep animals separated, water bowls, food bowls, an area to play, balls to play, blankets, toys, music, caring staff and volunteers, collars, etc.)

If possible, include a visit to a real animal shelter so they can make observations.

Tell students to imagine they have community support and all of the money in the world to design their dream animal shelter. If they have visited a real animal shelter, ask how their dream shelter might be different from the animal shelter they visited and if there are ways their dream shelter

would be the same. Invite students to get creative and design their own dream animal shelter. Ask students to draw their shelter and label what they decide to include in it. Before they begin drawing ask the following questions:

What will your dream animal shelter look like? (How big is it? How many animals can stay there at one time?)

Where will your animal shelter be located?

What types of things will it have in it? What will make animals like it?

(How will it keep them healthy, happy and safe?)

What will make people like it? (How will you get people to visit and adopt animals?)

Why is it a dream animal shelter?

Have students share their designs with a partner or in front of the class.

### **E. A Dog for a Day**

Help students better understand what dogs communicate through body language. First have students complete the matching activity below or do the activity as a class together. Discuss as a class the kinds of situations they think these dogs would be responding to, ask, “What would make a dog happy?” “What would make a dog scared or nervous?” “What would make a dog feel threatened?” Then pretend to be dogs together. Lastly, invite students to write and illustrate a story on their own that includes dog body language.

Physically practice a few dog postures with your students using the images below. Get on all fours on the ground and make sure each child has enough room to move around. Start with “happy/relaxed” with your mouth loosely opened, ears relaxed/loose/up but to the side (use your hands to model ears) with a light tail wag (move your back end). Then try raising a hand/paw up while leaning back or away from what is scary with a crouched posture (your head and rear-end lowered) to practice a “frightened/submissive” posture. Then practice a play bow by lowering your front arms down and sticking your rear-end up in the air to communicate that you are a dog who wants to “play.”

Now ask students to think about what it would be like to be a dog for one day? Ask, “What would you want to do if you were a dog for a day?” “What would you think about?” “Where would you go?” “What would you look like as a dog doing all of these things throughout your day?”

Invite students to write a story and complete this sentence, “If I was a dog for a day, I would...” Encourage students to include illustrations. The dog body language should match what is happening in their story. For example, “If I was a dog for a day, I would go to the dog park and play.” [Picture of a dog doing a play bow or looking happy/excited]. “After the dog park I would go to my favorite pet store to get yummy treats.” [Picture of a dog with a wagging tail/ relaxed mouth.] “On the way to the pet store I saw a huge truck that scared me.” [Picture of a dog who is frightened.] “At night I’d curl up with my human brother while he read books.” [Picture of a happy/content dog curled up.]

### **At the End of the Lesson**

Ask students to reflect on the questions, “What did you learn from today’s book and discussion that you didn’t know before?” You can do this with the whole group, in a sharing circle or related class meeting format, by having students fill out index cards, or other formats as you choose. We recommend that you have a variety of formats. After getting a sense of what the students learned, reinforce key themes that they mentioned and add perhaps one or two that you would like them to keep in mind from the key concepts. Also discuss any follow up assignments or take home materials. Remember the students’ responses to the question, “What did you learn?” to add to your report about this reading.



## Shelter Animal Behavior Observation

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Species/Type of Animal: \_\_\_\_\_ Name: \_\_\_\_\_

What was the animal doing before you came up to him or her?

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Did the animal's behavior change when you came up to him or her? Yes or no? \_\_\_\_\_ If yes, what changes did you notice?

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Describe the animal and his or her environment:

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What do you notice about the animal's ears? (Are they up, down, forward, back or flat against the animal's head?)

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What do you notice about the animal's eyes? (Are they bright, open and alert or dim and partly closed?)

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What do you notice about the animal's body?

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What do you notice about the animal's tail?

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Based on your observations above, what do you think this animal is communicating and how do you think he or she is feeling?

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Draw a line from each picture to the three words that describe it.

May Be Friendly

Nervous

Frightened

Leave Alone

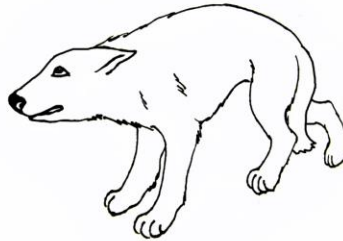
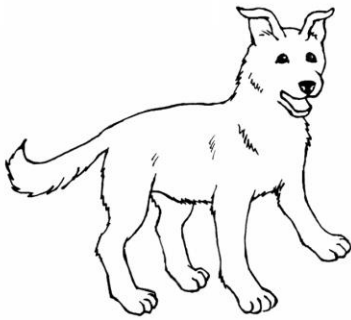
"Angry"

Happy

Threatening

Stay Away

Relaxed



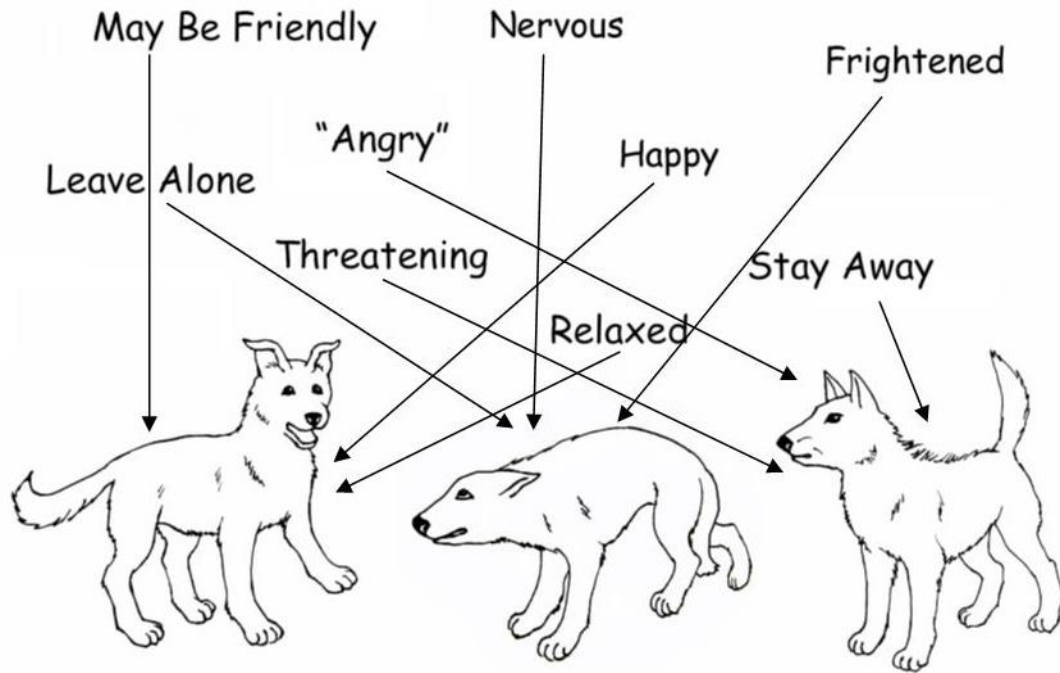
Sarah Wilson, SarahWilsonDogExpert.com

Drawn by Arielle Fischer

Used with permission from Sarah Wilson

Answer key

Draw a line from each picture to the three words that describe it.



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“Wouldn’t it be nice just to jump right up on her.”

“That’s the ugliest dog I’ve ever seen.”

“He’s ugly all right, and half-starved, too. I’m thinking we should take him home.”

“He’d make a good watchdog, and maybe he could run the rats out of the barn.”

“If you keep barking like this, we’ll take you to the pound.”

“Stupid dog.”

“Ma’am, I think the dog just *loves* you.”

“Look at the two of you.”

“There are ways to slip free of a chain.”