



MY FATHER THE DOG Text Copyright © 2006 Elizabeth Bluemle
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A Teacher's Guide to **My Father the Dog**

Written by Elizabeth Bluemle

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About the Author

Elizabeth Bluemle's adventures have taken her from Arizona to California, from Europe to Africa, and from New York to Vermont, where she co-owns the Flying Pig Bookstore in Shelburne. Before settling into her current role as children's book author and independent bookseller, Ms. Bluemle worked as a script reader in Hollywood, a small press editor, a book packaging creative director, an elementary school assistant teacher, and a Manhattan school librarian. She holds master's degrees in education and creative writing from, respectively, the Bank Street College of Education and Vermont College. She has two dogs in her life (not counting her dad). Learn more at <http://www.elizabethbluemle.com>.

About the Illustrator

When Randy Cecil's mother read him stories as a child, he'd linger on each page to study the illustrations. He was always known as "the kid who could draw," and draw he did. He graduated from the Rhode Island School of Design, began working as a freelance children's book designer, and got his first book deal soon afterwards. *My Father the Dog* is his 15th illustrated book. Visit him at <http://www.randycecil.com>.

Kudos for *My Father the Dog*

"Young dog lovers will lap this up." ~*Publisher's Weekly*

"(A) doggone good tale...ideal for storytimes or one-on-one sharing." ~*School Library Journal*

"Tail-wagging hilarity that's simply doggone funny - and a perfect Father's Day gift." ~*Kirkus Reviews*

Story Summary

A child presents convincing evidence that her father is, indeed, a dog.

Pre-Reading

1. Ask how many students have pets at home. Do their pets ever act like people (such as playing with a ball, "asking" for hugs, etc.)? Ask the same questions about a class pet if you have one (guinea pig, hamster, fish, etc.). (*activating prior knowledge*)

2. **Take a Book Walk:** Show the front cover of *My Father the Dog*, pointing out the title, author and illustrator. What do students predict the story will be about? Now “walk” through the book, showing only the illustrations. Can students guess what is happening in the story? After predictions, list some questions students have that they think will be answered in the story. (*predicting, identifying key parts of a book, previewing text*)

3. **Check the chart below for some words and phrases that might be new for your students.** Before reading the book, choose a few and ask students what they think these words and phrases mean. As you read the book, ask students how they figured out the meanings (some can be gleaned from text clues, others from the illustrations, and some draw upon both text and picture clues). (*using context clues, identifying words with multiple meanings*)

Meanings that can be derived from...

...text	...illustrations	...both
evidence	tug of war	fetches
fuzzy around the edges	pit stop ☺	toots ☺
roughhouse	begging for scraps	innocent
startle		investigate
		loyal

☺ **Be prepared for lots of giggles!**

Discussion Questions:

1. How do the father and dog act alike? (*knowledge*)
2. How does the main character in the story feel about her father acting like a dog? Find an illustration that supports your answer (focusing on the character's facial expressions in the illustrations). (*comprehension*)
3. What would you do if someone in your family started acting like a dog? (*application*)
4. Which part of the story made you laugh the most? Why was it funny? (*analysis*)
5. How would the story change if the family owned a cat? A horse? A parrot? (*synthesis*)
6. Do you think the father in the story would really beg for scraps under the table? Why or why not? (*evaluation*)

Me, My Pet, and I

Using a Venn diagram, help students compare and contrast the dog and father from the story. Next, give students their own Venn diagram (see page 6 of this guide) to compare themselves to a pet or animal. (*comparing and contrasting, identifying relevant character traits*)

Pick a Pet, Any Pet

Brainstorm a list of pets and their characteristics. Organize students' answers as shown in the following chart:

Pets	How do they act?
cat	sleeps in the sun, jumps from high places, purrs
hamster	likes to run, hides snacks for later
fish	swims, gobbles food when it's served

Now ask students to write their own stories about a person who acts like a pet, beginning with a sentence modeled after the first line in the book : "My _____ pretends to be human, but I know (s)he is really a _____."

Younger children can each write a page to be assembled into a class book, while older children can write their own stories. For a twist, have children write about an animal who acts like a human: "My pet Ruff pretends to be a dog, but I know he's really a human." (*making connections: text to self, text to world*)

Mighty Metaphors and Super Similes

Explain the difference between metaphor (*My father is a dog*) and simile (*My father is like a dog*). As a group, brainstorm a list of metaphors and similes that compare people's behavior with that of animals, such as:

She's laughing like a hyena.
He's a sleepy sloth.
She is like a porcupine: prickly.
He's as fast as a cheetah on the football field.
She is lion-hearted.
He's a gentle bear.

Have each child choose one (or invent their own) and illustrate it. Place the drawings on a T-chart with similes on one side and metaphors on the other.

Ask students why they think the author chose to use metaphor as opposed to simile. Which is funnier: "My father is a dog," or "My father is like a dog"? Why? (*using and analyzing figurative language: metaphor and simile*)

Graph It!

Provide 4"x6" blank index cards and have students draw their pets (one pet per card). Children who do not have pets can draw an animal that they would like to have one day. Make a class pictograph.

Discuss:

1. Which pet is the most common?
2. Which is the least common?
3. How many more (or fewer) dogs are there than other kinds of pets?

(*creating a pictograph, analyzing data, forming conclusions*)

Animal Observers

Visit <http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/> and click on *animals*. Choose a video clip that shows an animal in action. Before watching, ask students to predict whether this animal will have more human-like behaviors or non human-like behaviors. Use the reproducible chart on page 5 of this guide to help students record the animal behavior they observe. Ask students whether each behavior is something that only animals do, or that humans do, too. Have them record this on the chart using checkmarks. Were their predictions accurate?

Example:

Animal name: Giant Panda

Animal Behaviors:	People act this way, too!	Only animals act this way.
climbs trees	√	
eats bamboo		√

Older children can observe more than one animal, and graph the results: which animals exhibit the most human-like behavior? The least? (*developing scientifically-oriented questions that may be answered through observations*)

Story time!

Reread the story, drawing attention to the timeline (morning to evening). What are clues that tell the time of day? Have students recreate the story's timeline in pictures and assign a time of day for each picture. Have students retell the story using the timeline as a reference. Emphasize the use of transition words, such as *first, then, next, and finally*. Ask how much time elapses from one event to the other. (*determining elapsed time*)

Paper Plate Puppets

Draw and color the face of the big dog from the story on a paper plate. Do the same with the father's face on another plate. Glue the plates together, placing a wooden craft stick between the two for a handle. Add sandy-colored yarn for hair and fur. Show the children how to retell the story using the paper plates. Children can make two-sided plate puppets with their own faces on one side, and a pet's face on the other. Using the plate puppets, children can tell how they are like their pets or other animals, and how they are different. (*identifying relevant physical characteristics or personality traits of main characters*)

Zoo School

Ask students to think of an animal. On your cue, have them walk around the classroom the way their chosen animals would, but without making a noise. Play background music as they walk. When you turn off the music and say "Zoo!" children should freeze in position and make their animals' noises.

Extension: Call out a letter of the alphabet, and students must choose an animal that starts with that letter. (*identifying locomotor movements: walk, run, hop, skip, jump, gallop, leap, slide*)

Animal Observation Record

My name: _____

Animal name: _____

Animal behaviors:	People act this way, too!	Only animals act this way.

How are people and animals different? How are they the same?

