

Dogsled Molly

Janice McAlpine

Merri Vacura, Illustrator

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Dogsled Molly is a fun picture book introduction to the exciting world of dogsled racing, modeling care and compassion toward animals.

In Janice McAlpine's exciting picture book, *Dogsled Molly*, an energetic young dog becomes part of a life-saving, trophy-winning team of sled dogs.

Mr. McPherson's two-year-old dog Molly is full of energy—a real handful. Mr. McPherson has the idea to make Molly a sled dog. At first, Molly is nervous about meeting other dogs, wearing a special harness and booties, and learning to pull a sled, but she comes to love running fast through the snow with the sled following behind.

Molly does such a good job that she gets a chance to be part of Mr. Swenson's team and compete in a five-mile race. The team is doing well on varied, often rough terrain until an accident happens. The dogs surround Mr. Swenson to protect him until help arrives. Molly's first race teaches her a lot about being part of a team.

Introducing easy-to-understand and interesting facts about the care and training of sled dogs, the text is written with energy and enthusiasm, communicates love for canines, and is sensitive in its portrayal of the relationship between dogs and their humans. The narrative is insightful about Molly's apprehensions and insecurities and shows the respect and patience with which her owner treats her.

The sled dogs are portrayed as joyful as they await the race, and determined as they give their all in it. Descriptions of the races are vibrant: "The dogs barked and danced about as they eagerly waited for the shot that would send them all into a frenzy of yelping, triggering the spurt of energy they needed to get going."

Conversations and descriptions of the animals' behaviors contribute to the story's enthusiasm. The communication between the dogs is expressed through looks and feelings, inner thoughts, and spoken words; that it's short and straightforward makes it believable. Their viewpoints are deep and rich. Some sentences run long, but their language is accessible. Changes in font are distracting and inconsistent.

Bright illustrations enhance the text, capturing the dogs' enthusiasm, the affection between the humans and dogs, and the friendship between Mr. McPherson and Mr. Swenson. The human and animal eyes are not realistic, though; they convey too much stress. The color selected for the humans' open mouths gives the impression that their tongues are protruding.

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KRISTINE MORRIS (August 22, 2019)

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