

Hickory Doc's Tales: The Pack: First Generation

Linda Harkey

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Linda Harkey's *Hickory Doc's Tales* is full of adventure and mischief relayed from the perspective of animals. Its stories are silly and fun, even as they share important life lessons.

Doc is a German Shorthaired Pointer, a purebred hunting dog. He is the oldest and wisest of a five-dog pack that lives at the Lazy Dog Hacienda in Oklahoma. His brother, Zeke; his daughter, Patch; his son, Rush; and a Labrador retriever named Newt complete his family. Each dog has its own personality, and each serves as the central figure in at least one of the book's stories.

As characters, the dogs are hard to relate to. They do not indicate much affection for one another or the humans they live with. Though they take care of one another, they are also frequently irritated with each other. These are hunting dogs, more work animals than pets, and that may be difficult for children who do not have work animals in their lives to understand.

Each chapter in the book shares a new adventure. The pack primarily assists their human, a hunter, with retrieving quails, but they encounter a variety of other animals, too, including a skunk, a rattlesnake, an armadillo, and some cows.

The stories all seem authentic to the kind of activities that one might expect hunting dogs to be involved in, and they impart age-appropriate lessons with their often amusing antics. For example, Newt does not like that he looks different than the other dogs, but Doc helps him learn that there is real value in differences. When Rush disobeys Doc, he comes up against a porcupine and ends up with a mouth full of quills, helping him to learn that he must obey his father and stick with the pack.

There are full-page black-and-white illustrations at the beginning of each chapter. The cover image is repeated between most chapters, along with a new picture to illustrate the main action of the coming story. They are simple cartoon images without a great deal of detail and are amusing but not particularly memorable.

Hickory Doc's Tales is an entertaining book that shares the unique perspective of a pack of hunting dogs. The book offers a rich landscape to explore, one that will be new and appealing to many children. The clear text and lessons in each story are appropriate for children who are just transitioning to chapter books.

CATHERINE THURESON (September 25, 2017)

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