



The Adventures of Big Dog: Troubles and Triumph

Donald R. Draayer

Alan Tollefson, Illustrator

Westwood Books Publishing

(71pp)

978-1-64803-926-3

The Adventures of Big Dog is a fun chapter book in which siblings are determined to prove themselves ready for a pet.

In Donald R. Draayer's chapter book *The Adventures of Big Dog*, siblings who yearn for a dog pet-sit for the first time.

Dawn and Dirk dream of having a dog. As such, they are thrilled when their neighbor asks them to watch Big Dog, her lovable golden retriever, while she is away. Their parents are reluctant, but Dawn and Dirk convince them to agree. They are confident that dog-sitting will be smooth sailing. But Big Dog has other ideas.

From getting lost in the woods to playing tug-of-war with the laundry, Big Dog's stay is filled with rocky moments. Still, his cuddly disposition and heroic actions persuade the family that they may need a dog of their own after all.

The brief, direct, and exclamatory chapters make good use of short paragraphs for reading ease, mirroring the easy joy of childhood. There's italicization for emotional context, as when "without" is italicized to imply the possibility of trouble when Dawn and Dirk leave Big Dog's leash behind. However, Dirk and Dawn's parents are variously referred to as "Mother and Father" and "Mom and Dad," and the family's dialogue is awkward. Further, the transitions between the chapters are abrupt.

The siblings are a familiar pair: they love the park, sometimes squabble, and do their best to listen to their parents. And there are illustrations scattered throughout accounts of Big Dog's antics—uncomplicated, charming sketches that highlight the retriever's goofy grin and wagging tail.

The narrative switches between focusing on Big Dog's thoughts and those of his host family, imparting lessons on responsibility and compromise throughout. Dawn and Dirk's parents deal with the aftermath of Big Dog's escapades and their children's hyper excitement. Still, it is made clear that the canine is not trying to be troublesome: Big Dog's bravery when a boy is in danger helps to balance out his mistakes.

Central to the book is the fact that Dirk and Dawn's parents want to ensure that their children are ready for a pet of their own. Thus, they give them the opportunity to prove themselves while caring for Big Dog. Dawn and Dirk list out what they would do to help with a dog, and the family has meetings to discuss the pros and cons of pet adoption, emphasizing the importance of healthy communication.

A goofy dog who's prone to antics leads the chapter book *The Adventures of Big Dog*, an often delightful story in which siblings are determined to prove themselves ready for a pet.

VIVIAN TURNBULL (March 16, 2022)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book and paid a small fee to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. Foreword Reviews and Clarion Reviews make no guarantee that the publisher will receive a positive review. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.