



## **Forward, Shakespeare!**

Jean Little

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**Consider this question as you read *Forward, Shakespeare!*:  
How can a dog help you transform anger into joy?**

### **Story**

Seeing Eye pup, Shakespeare, conquered many fears in *Rescue Pup*. Now he is back, about to be matched up with a blind boy, ready to begin his working life. Tim is enraged by his blindness and wants nothing to do with a guide dog. But he is no match for Shakespeare.

### **Author**

Jean Little is one of Canada's most beloved writers for children. She is also blind and currently living with her third Seeing Eye dog. Three times she has traveled to the Seeing Eye headquarters in New Jersey to train with a dog, first Zephyr, then Ritz and now Pippa. For years she has thought about writing a book about the training of a Seeing Eye dog. Now she has done it, but Shakespeare is not just any dog.

Jean is also the author of *Birdie for Now*, *I Gave My Mom a Castle*, *The Birthday Girl* and *Rescue Pup*. She lives in Guelph, Ontario.

### **Curricular Integration**

Check out the Orca Book Publishers' site for the teachers' guide to *Rescue Pup*, Jean Little's prequel to *Forward, Shakespeare!*

### **Language Arts**

- In her book *Make it Real: Strategies for Success with Informational Texts*, Linda Hoyt discusses the process of Investigations in Chapter 20. Using this as a guideline or template, have students research the process of training Seeing Eye dogs.

- The dogs in *Forward, Shakespeare!* are able to speak "human." Have students create a cartoon strip that illustrates a situation from the book. Or have students create original cartoon strips using the dog characters from *Forward, Shakespeare!* but placing them in unique situations. For example: when Shakespeare returns to the Seeing Eye (pp. 3,4), when Shakespeare and Skip realize they are Seeing Eye dogs (pp. 20) or when Shakespeare encounters Pippa (p. 47).

- Visualizing as one hears text spoken is a powerful way to gain comprehension of the story. In her book *Strategies That Work*, Stephanie Harvey

devotes a chapter to visualizing activities. One of these is “Visualizing from a Vivid Piece of Text” (pp. 100-101). Select a passage from *Forward, Shakespeare!* that you find particularly powerful and vivid. For example: p. 13 when Tim rejects Shakespeare; at the beginning of Chapter 5 or p. 47 while Shakespeare ponders his new life ahead.

- Tim is on a “journey into freedom” (p. 19). Discuss the meaning of this phrase with students and have them write a letter to a friend explaining how this journey would change Tim’s life.

- Tessa is the girl Shakespeare spends the first year of his life with in *Rescue Pup*. Have students write a letter to Tim from Tessa introducing Shakespeare to him.

- Shakespeare experiences a great deal in his short life. Invite students to write several journal entries as Shakespeare, listing some of his most memorable experiences.

### Science

- After students have read about both famous and ordinary people living with disabilities, have them invent something that would improve the quality of life for one of these people. For example: a wheelchair that allows the user to play basketball or a special headset for someone who is hard of hearing.

- Shakespeare and Larkin are twins and their owners mix them up. There are different types of twins: identical or fraternal. Have students find out about twins and interesting characteristics they share.

- Global Positioning Systems (GPS) can provide the visually impaired with the ability to navigate around their city or town. Have students explore how GPS works and how it can enhance our ability to find our way.

### Drama

- Shakespeare tries hard to get Tim to like him (p. 14). Have groups of students act out possible ways that Shakespeare might win Tim over.

- Teach helps Shakespeare and the other guide dogs learn their craft. Divide students into groups and have them work together on a task or skill they will teach to the rest of the class. For example: learning to play a game, bake a cake or tie knots.

- Provide students with an opportunity to experience a walk without their ability to see. Pair off students and have them take on the roles of either guide (the person who can see) or guided (the person who cannot).

Once this has been established, create a safe situation in which the sighted student must guide the unsighted student, then have them reverse roles. Discuss their experiences.

### **Art**

- Tim mutters half under his breath, “ I wish I could see their faces.” (p. 36). Select one character from *Forward, Shakespeare!* and have your class draw him or her to provide an image for this situation. Another option is to designate groups of students different characters so that all characters from the book will be represented. Perhaps this can be done by having a signup for all the characters.

- Shakespeare and Larkin are twins. Some twins are identical and some exhibit slight differences in appearance. Have all students draw two dogs, but have some draw identical dogs and other draw dogs with slight differences. Display the pictures and see if students can distinguish between the groups.

### **Social Studies**

- You can also find your way by using a map. Tim and Sam travel several routes with their guide dogs. Have students draw a map of one of the routes they use, labeling the parts that are named in the story. Then have students draw a map of the route they take to school from their home. On this map they must include such things as a compass rose showing direction and names of streets and buildings or stores they pass.

### **Suggested Resources**

#### **Fiction**

Adler, David A. *A Picture Book of Louis Braille*.

Bauer, Marion Dane. *Run*.

Beuhner, Carolyn. *Superdog: The Heart of a Hero*.

Bogart, Jo Ellen. *The Big Tree Gang*. (twins)

Bunting, Eve. *The Summer Of Riley*.

DiCamillo, Kate. *Because of Wynn Dixie*.

Edwards, Julie Andrews. *Dragon, Hound of Honor*.

Harlow, Joan Hiatt. *Star in the Storm*.

Harvey, Sarah N. *Puppies on Board*.

Lang, Glenna. *Looking Out for Sarah*.

Little, Jean. *Birdie For Now; Different Dragons; I Gave My Mom A Castle; Stars Come Out Within; Willow and Twig; Rescue Pup.*

Luthardt, Kevin. *Larabee.*

Pearce, Jacqueline. *Dog House Blues.*

Read, Nicholas. *One In A Million.*

Rossiter, Nan Parson. *Rosie and Rugby.*

Rylant, Cynthia. *Dog Heaven.*

Thomas, Jane Resh. *The Comeback Dog.*

Turner, Pamela S. *Hachiko: The True Story of a Loyal Dog.*

### Nonfiction

(Dewey Decimal Classification numbers appear in parentheses where applicable)

Darling, Kathy. *ABC Dogs.* (636.7)

Garrett, Leslie. *Helen Keller.* (362.4)

Greer, Colin and Herbert, Kohl. *A Call to Character.* (808.8)

Harvey, Stephanie and Anne Goudvis. *Strategies That Work.* (372.47)

Hausman, Gerald. *Dogs of Myth: Tales From Around The World.* (398.2)

Hoyt, Linda. *Make it Real: Strategies for Success with Informational Texts.* (372.6)

Kindersley, Barnabas and Anabel Kindersley. *Children Just Like Me.* (305.2).

Landau, Elaine. *Blindness.* (617.7)

Lawrenson, Diana. *Guide Dogs: From Puppies to Partners.* (636.7)

Lundel, Margot. *A Girl Named Helen Keller.* (921)

McGinty, Alice B. *Guide Dogs: Seeing for People Who Can't.* (636.7)

Moore, Eva. *Buddy, The First Seeing Eye Dog.* (636.7)

O'Neill, Linda. *Imagine Being Blind.* (362.4)

Schneck, Marcus. *Dogs: A Portrait Of The Animal World.* (636.7)

Shore, Hennie M. *Anybody Can Bake a Cake.* (372)

Steede-Terry, Karen. *Integrating GIS and the Global Positioning System.*

Westcott, Patsy. *Living with Blindness.* (362.4)

White, Peter. *Being Blind.* (362.4)

### Online

Strategies for Teaching Students With Visual Impairments

[www.as.wvu.edu/~scidis/vision.html#sect0](http://www.as.wvu.edu/~scidis/vision.html#sect0)

American Foundation For The Blind Braille Bug Site

[www.afb.org/braillebug/](http://www.afb.org/braillebug/)

ABC Teach- Graphing Activities

[www.abcteach.com](http://www.abcteach.com)

Character Counts

[www.charactercounts.org](http://www.charactercounts.org)

Guide Dogs for the Blind: At a Glance: An Educational Resource Guide

[www.guidedogs.com/](http://www.guidedogs.com/)

Birthplace of Helen Keller

[www.helenkellerbirthplace.org/](http://www.helenkellerbirthplace.org/)

Unicef

[www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org)

The Seeing Eye

[www.seeingeye.org](http://www.seeingeye.org)

Guide Dogs

[www.canadaguidetodogs.com/dogjobs/wrk\\_guide.htm](http://www.canadaguidetodogs.com/dogjobs/wrk_guide.htm)

Braille Without Borders

[www.braillewithoutborders.org/](http://www.braillewithoutborders.org/)

Tips For Teachers Provides a useful list of tips for assisting students who have a visual impairment

[www.svrc.vic.edu.au/tipsforteachers.html](http://www.svrc.vic.edu.au/tipsforteachers.html)

How GPS Receivers Work

[electronics.howstuffworks.com/gps.htm](http://electronics.howstuffworks.com/gps.htm)

How Guide Dogs Work

[people.howstuffworks.com/guide-dog.htm](http://people.howstuffworks.com/guide-dog.htm)

### **A Letter from the Author**

I have had three exceptional dogs. The first was called Zephyr, he was in many ways the inspiration for Shakespeare. When we met in Morristown at the Seeing Eye, Zephyr knew fourteen commands. Like Shakespeare he was not at all sure he wanted to belong to me. He had been raised by a family he loved, and then he had been taught his guiding skills by a woman he adored. When he was brought to my room, he went to the door and whined to be let out so that he could go and find her.

But I loved him so much that he finally gave in and came back to Canada with me.

Before he retired when he was ten, he knew thirty-two commands including such things as, "Fetch my shoes." He would bring me one and wait until I said, "And the other one." He was a dog with a great sense of humor.

I wrote about him in my autobiographical book *Stars Come Out Within*, and his picture is on the cover.

When I returned to the Seeing Eye for my second dog guide, I was given a big black Lab who was named Ritz. He was anxious at first and always took his work seriously. I had two tiny Papillons by then, and my sister and her Scottie dog, her granddaughter and later her grandson moved with me into an old farmhouse where Ritz had to use his country training because there were no sidewalks. He managed to get along in that busy house filled with dogs, cats and two young children.

Ritz retired when he was ten and became a family pet, and I returned to the Seeing Eye and came home with my third dog guide, a small yellow Lab named Pippa.

I still have Pippa, although she is now nine and nearly ready to retire. She was named Hula when I got her, and she was raised by a girl named Autumn to whom *Rescue Pup* is dedicated. Pippa is not as serious as Ritz and not as funny as Zephyr, but she is a darling and I will miss having her as my guide.

All of these dogs played a part in *Rescue Pup*, my first book about Shakespeare, and in this one, which tells about what happened when Shakespeare went to school and became a proper Seeing Eye dog. These dogs are wonderful. Each one is different, but all are loving and so proud to be dog guides. I truly believe that my three Seeing Eye dogs have all understood both Dog and Human, the way Shakespeare does.

Jean Little