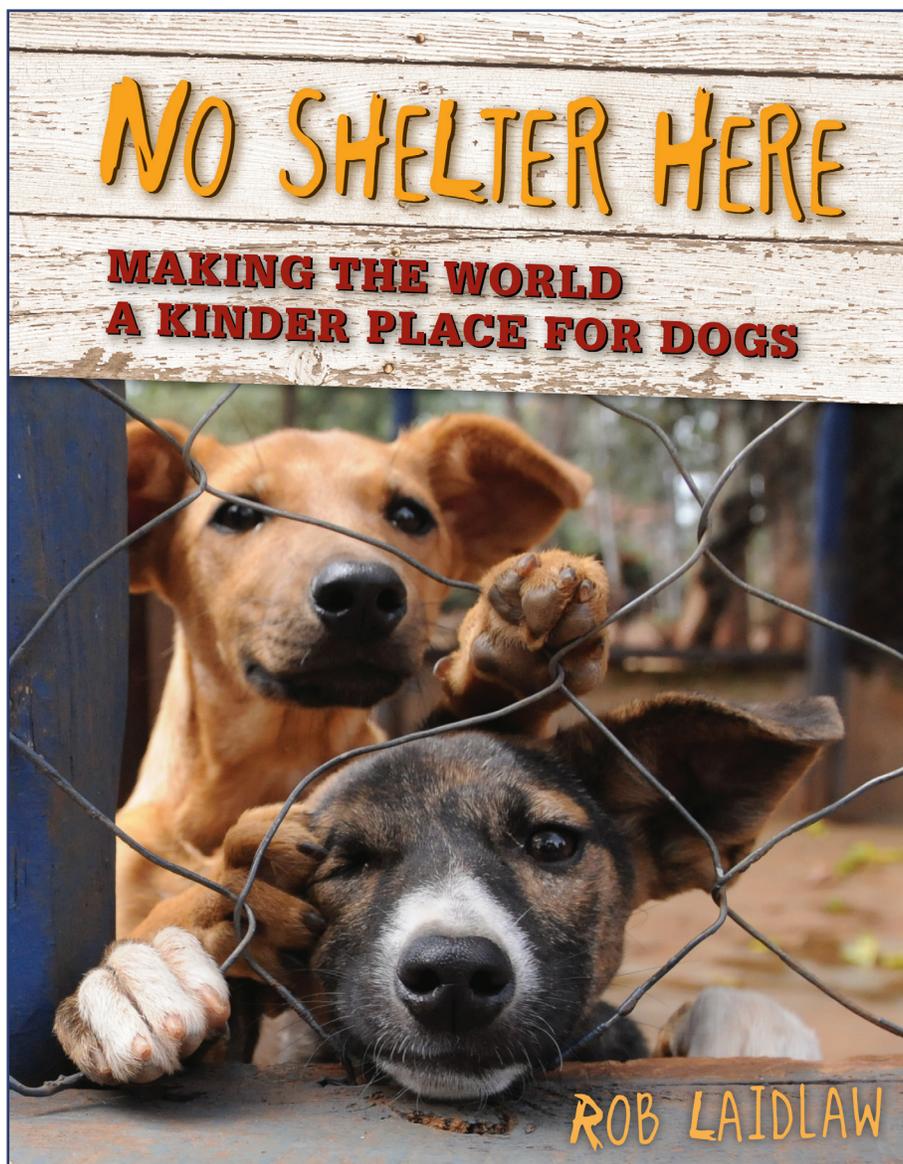


NO SHELTER HERE

Rob Laidlaw

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Created by Erin Woods



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MAKING THE WORLD A KINDER PLACE FOR DOGS

ROB LAIDLAW

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STORY SUMMARY

No Shelter Here explores the world of homeless, free ranging, mistreated, and exploited dogs, and the challenges they face. It also focuses on “Dog Champions” around the world who dedicate their lives to helping dogs. Enhanced with photos, informational sidebars, and inspiring good-news stories, *No Shelter Here* will galvanize young readers to become Dog Champions in their own communities. [Pajama Press, 2011]

Rob Laidlaw is an animal activist and a chartered biologist. Learn more about him at:
<http://roblaidlawbooks.com>

PRE-READING LESSON

Brittney Johnston and Ines Valente made a very thorough video about pound seizure for their grade eight Media Studies course. This video addresses what the issue is, what the law says about it, what public feeling about the issue is, and what young people can do about it.

Watch *Pound Seizure: The Ultimate Trust Violation Parts 1, 2 and 3* at www.youtube.com/watch?v=AOYRhp2dykc&feature=relmfu

Discuss:

What goal do you think Brittney and Ines had when they made this video? Were they just trying to get a good mark, or was it something more?

Have you ever done a school project on something you were passionate about? What was it? Did caring about the subject matter change how you worked or how you learned?

Do you think Brittney and Ines would have been more or less interested if they had been making a video about, say, their favorite TV character or a game they enjoy? Why?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How did it make you feel to read about the homeless or abused dogs in *No Shelter Here*?
2. How did it make you feel to read about the “Dog Champions”—kids who are helping dogs?
3. Do you think any kid could be a Dog Champion? Could you? Why or why not?
4. Which story or piece of information in *No Shelter Here* interested you the most? Why?
5. Which story or piece of information in *No Shelter Here* surprised you the most?
6. Sometimes it’s very difficult and sad to read about animals that are suffering. Do you think it is important to read books like this one? Why or why not?
7. Page 24 talks about puppy mills where dogs are sometimes kept in small crates and not given proper care. Why might a puppy mill owner not care for his or her dogs properly? How might this help a business? How might it hurt it?
8. Think about the dogs you know. Are they family pets, working dogs, or strays? How do dogs help people, and how do people help dogs? Why is this relationship important?
9. Has reading this book changed your attitude about owning a dog or helping dogs? How?
10. A book designer is someone who decides how the pictures and text will look on each page. This book’s designer used lots of bright colors and fun images like paw prints and stars. Why do you think she made that choice? Would the reading experience be different if she had used fewer colors and more serious images?

11. Look at the pictures, captions, headings, and sidebars in *No Shelter Here*. What do these graphic text elements add to the book? What would it be like to read it without them?

**TELLING THEIR STORY
(WRITING, LITERACY, ADVOCACY)**

Storytelling is an important part of advocacy. There are two main reasons why people decide to work for change: they are affected by an issue themselves, or they are inspired by the story of someone else who has been affected by it.

Materials: Newspapers, scissors, writing paper, pencils

Preparation: None

Directions:

PART ONE: INSPIRATION

1. Have students look through newspapers for stories that have inspired change (e.g. coverage of a successful fund raiser for cancer awareness organized by a cancer survivor) or for stories that might inspire change (e.g. a story about a community center that will be closed unless money can be found for repairs).

2. Working in pairs or small groups, students should answer the following:

- a) What is the problem in the story?
- b) What is a solution either proposed by the story or inferred by the reader?
- c) What possible action is suggested by the story?
- d) Why is the story/might the story be successful at getting people’s attention?
- e) How does the writer convince the audience that the issue is important to them?

3. Have students share their findings with the rest of the class.

PART TWO: WRITING

1. Have students think of a story they could tell to inspire change. The issues they address can be global, national, municipal, or exclusive to your school or classroom. Consider brainstorming ideas with the whole class if you feel some students might struggle with this.

Some examples:

A story about a friend who stood up to bullies could inspire the drafting of a school-wide anti-bullying pledge

A story about visiting a lonely relative in a nursing home could encourage other people to make similar visits

A story about finding more and more garbage on the street could suggest the need to lobby for limits on the creation of new disposable products

A description of an overcrowded animal shelter could spark a local campaign for spaying and neutering pets and strays

2. Thinking about the story they are going to write, students should write down answers to questions a) through e) from Part One.

3. You may determine the length and format of the story based on curriculum requirements for your students’ grade. The content should be informed by their answers to questions a) through e).

Extension: Turn the finished stories into a newspaper or magazine and distribute it to other classes or to members of the community.

**CIVIL ACTION
(CIVICS, SOCIAL STUDIES)**

No Shelter Here discusses several kinds of law, including some that deal with the following issues:

The sale of puppies in pet stores (17)

Pound Seizure (27)

Chaining (33)

Ear docking, tail cropping, and devocalization (34)

The banning of certain breeds (37)

Materials: Chalkboard, whiteboard or projector; pens; printed copies of finished petition

Preparation: Research dog-related legislation that is in place for your area. You can do this research ahead of time or guide the class through it. For local laws, contact your municipal government. For provincial/state or national dog legislation, you can find helpful information at:

www.animallaw.ca (Canada)

www.animallaw.info (USA)

Directions:

1. Choose a law that affects your area and has a negative impact on dogs, such as Ontario’s legislation that enforces pound seizure. Discuss:

Why do you think this law was written?

Do you agree with this law? Why or why not?

What should you do if you don’t agree with a law?

2. Contact the level of government that controls this particular law. If it is a local law, you may be able to have a representative speak to your class about it. Find out what guidelines you would have to follow to circulate a petition, including:

- a) How many signatures you should aim to collect
- b) What kind of information those who sign it need to provide (address, phone number, etc.)
- c) Whether those who sign the petition need to be registered voters
- d) Whether your petition needs to be approved before it is circulated

3. As a class, draft a paragraph that explains what the law is, and why it is a problem. End with a statement that urges the government to make a specific change. This paragraph will go at the top of the petition.

4. As a class, write a short script for introducing the petition. For example,

“Hi, I’m collecting signatures to change the law that says animal shelters have to give up dogs to scientific research. Would you like to sign?”

5. Divide students into pairs to practice delivering the script. Let them know that it’s okay to say the same thing in different words, but knowing the script will help them feel less nervous. Have them practice answering questions like “Can you tell me more about your petition?” or “What is this law, exactly?” If students get stuck, the information they need should all be in the paragraph you wrote together.

6. Make a plan for collecting signatures. The plan should include a target number, a deadline, and a rough idea of which individuals or groups of people

students will approach. Good suggestions are family, friends, a parent’s coworkers, other students and teachers in the school, or groups of people students may know through extracurricular activities. Be sure to inform parents about the initiative and make sure they are comfortable with their child’s involvement.

7. Publicize your initiative within your school and, if possible, within your community.

Alternate: Choose an issue that is not addressed by a law in your area and discuss:

Why do you think there is no law about this issue?

If you could write a law about this, what would it say?

Do you think everyone would agree with your law? Why or why not?

Follow steps **2** to **7** above to petition for the creation of a new law. You are likely to have the best success targeting your local government.

DOG STATISTICS

(MATH, ART)

Materials: blank paper, pencils, pencil crayons, rulers, graph paper

Preparation: none

Directions:

1. Ask students to draw a detailed portrait of their dog. Beside the portrait they should write the dog’s breed and its favorite toy, favorite food, and favorite game. Students who do not have a dog can design a dog they would like to have. Caution them to make it realistic.

2. Ask how many students in the class have dogs. Tell them you are going to make a graph that answers the question, “Where does your dog come from?” Record the following statistics in a chart:

- a) How many dogs came from a shelter
- b) How many dogs came from a breeder
- c) How many dogs came from a pet store
- d) How many dogs came from a friend or relative
- e) How many dogs used to be strays
- f) How many dogs came from other sources

Note: You may need to tell students about this activity a few days in advance so that they can ask their parents about their dogs’ origins.

3. Demonstrate the creation of a bar graph using the information collected in Step 2.

4. Tell students they will be making their own bar graphs that answer other dog-related questions, such as “What color are your dog’s eyes?”, “What is your dog’s favorite toy (or game, or food)?”, “Is your dog a mixed breed, a hybrid, or purebred?”, etc.

5. Have students create a chart to collect their statistics and give them time to circulate and ask each other their questions. It may help to provide them with class lists to make sure they don’t miss any of their classmates.

6. Pass out graph paper and give instructions for the drawing of the *x*- and *y*-axes. Give them time to draw their bars and remind them to double-check the numbers before they color them in.

Extension: Older students can use the same data to create a pie chart.

**INFORMATIVE TEXT
(WRITING, RESEARCH, FEATURES OF GRAPHIC TEXT)**

Materials: Writing paper, pencils, white paper, rulers, markers or colored pencils

Preparation: Choose several spreads from *No Shelter Here* that demonstrate different features of graphic text.

Directions:

1. As a class, look at several pages of *No Shelter Here*. Ask the students to identify the features of graphic text the book uses, including sidebars, pictures, different fonts, bullets, and text boxes.

2. Brainstorm a list of other features of graphic text, such as charts, graphs, maps, diagrams, columns, rows, and artistic treatment of text (e.g. curved, three-dimensional, textured, etc.). Talk about the impact of each and why it is an effective technique for displaying information.

3. Brainstorm a list of issues that are important to students in your class. The list might include topics like rainforest destruction, endangered animals, cancer research, homelessness, access to sports for low-income children, etc.

4. Working in pairs or alone, students should write a paragraph about one issue that explains what it is, whom it affects, and why or how it should be solved.

5. Have students exchange their paragraphs for peer editing, but don’t have them write the final draft yet.

6. Give each student, or pair of students, a poster-sized piece of white paper. Tell them they will inform people about their issue by creating a poster that incorporates multiple features of graphic text.

7. Each poster should include the following:

- a) A heading
- b) The paragraph students have already written
- c) At least one picture/drawing with a caption
- d) At least three other features, such as a map, a graph, a sidebar, etc.

Students should mock-up their poster before writing on the white paper by cutting out their paragraph and several shapes to represent their other graphic features, then experimenting with different placements on the page.

8. Have students create their final poster. **Note:** If the school has the appropriate software, you may incorporate a computer lesson and have students design the poster digitally.

**PUPPIES AND PAINTERS
(ART)**

Materials: Magazines, pens, pencils, erasers, paper for sketching, canvas boards, acrylic paint, paint brushes, dog shape diagram from the final page of this guide

Preparation: Find magazines that include pictures of dogs. Family magazines and pet magazines are likely to be your best sources.

Directions:

PART ONE: RESEARCHING DOG ARTISTS

As a class, look at the work of several artists who paint dogs.

- a) Ron Burns paints shelter dogs in bright colors to help them find new homes.

www.ronburns.com

b) Carol Gillan paints close-ups of animals, including dogs, on bright, solid-color backgrounds.

www.carolgillan.com

c) Sarah Newton creates stylized pictures of dogs for greeting cards and prints.

fineartamerica.com/profiles/sara-newton.html

Students can use the work of these artists, and others, as inspiration for their own painting.

PART TWO: BECOMING DOG ARTISTS

1. Pass out magazines and ask students to cut out pages with pictures of dogs.

2. Using the “Dog Shape Diagram” images at the end of this guide as an example, explain that all bodies can be represented as a collection of circles and joining shapes. Artists draw figures this way to help them represent proportion correctly, and it is especially helpful with animal bodies.

3. Tell students that they will practice drawing these shapes on top of the dogs they have cut out of the magazines. They should start with large circles for the head, chest, and hips, then move on to small circles for the knees, muzzle, and paws. Finally, lines that join the circles to each other should follow the shape of the dog with reasonable accuracy. Ears and tail can be added.



4. When they have practiced drawing on top of the magazine dogs, students can then try drawing dog shape diagrams on plain paper.

5. Have students cover their canvas board with a single background color. If they choose to have a detailed background, this plain coat may be mostly hidden in the end, but it will ensure there are no white spots.

6. Using a pencil, students should draw their dog (still using the shape construction) lightly on the background color. Remind them to consider different placements: a close-up of part of the dog, a portrait of its face, a more distant perspective of the dog in a landscape, etc.

7. Still using their magazine photo as a reference, students can paint the dog’s features on top of the shapes, and fill in any other details the painting requires.

Notes About Acrylic Paint:

Acrylic paint dries quickly. Brushes should not be left in the open air. Place them in a container of water while students work, and wash them with warm (not hot) water and soap at the end of the session. Work the soap into the bristles gently, then rinse it out. Pat them dry.

Acrylic paint is great for mixing colors. If you need to preserve a mixed color on a palette or in a container, spritz it with water from a spray bottle and seal it with plastic wrap. Spritz it again when you uncover it.

Acrylic paint does stain clothing. Be sure students are well covered.

Acrylic paint is thick, which makes it great for layering and covering up mistakes. For detail work, however, it may be easier to work with paint that has been thinned by dipping a brush in water and mixing the water into the paint.

Extension: Sell the paintings by organizing a silent auction to raise money for your local animal shelter. Make it a big event by including a dog food-and-toy drive, posters that profile pets needing homes, games, prizes, and food sales. Local businesses may sponsor you with prizes and publicity. Empower your students by letting them plan and organize the event while you offer guidance.

DOG SHAPE DIAGRAM

