

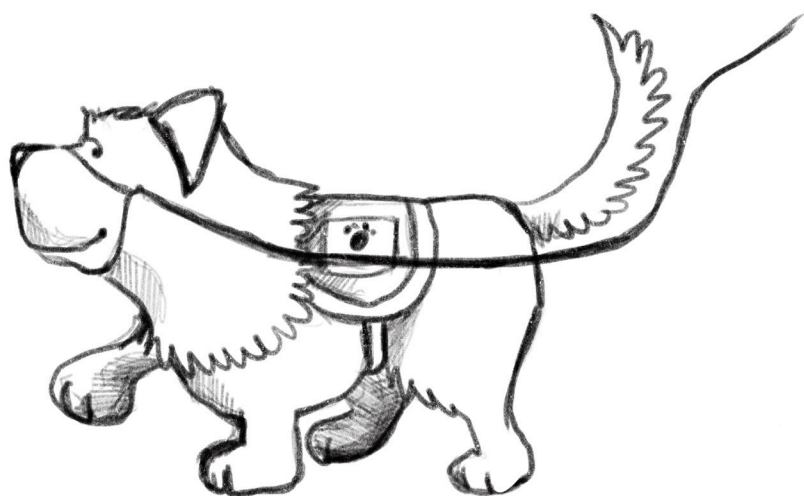
## Story Summary

Harley the service dog is on the job! He goes to school every day with Ms. Prichard to make sure she feels safe. Their students are a lot of fun, but Harley can't play with them while he's wearing his work vest. They write him lots of letters instead, and everything is perfect in

the best, most quiet class in the whole school. Until the day the old stage curtains catch fire. As the fire alarm blares and chaos erupts, Harley remembers that Ms. Prichard isn't the only human in his class who gets upset by loud noises.

## Pair this book with:

*Ben and the Scaredy-Dog* by Sarah Ellis, illustrated by Kim La Fave



**Peggy Collins** is an award-winning children's book author-illustrator with more than 35 titles to her name, including *Harley the Hero*, *Hungry for Math: Poems to Munch On*, *In the Snow*, and *In the Garden*. She has also written and illustrated for animated apps teaching math, indigenous history, and education. Peggy lives in Newburgh, Ontario with her two children.

Illustrated Book Ages 4–7 | ISBN: 978-1-77278-195-3 | Pages: 32

## THEMES

Service Dogs, Different Abilities, Neurodivergence, Friendship, Empathy, Courage

## BISAC CODES

JUV039150 JUVENILE FICTION / Disabilities & Special Needs

JUV002070 JUVENILE FICTION / Animals / Dogs

JUV035000 JUVENILE FICTION / School & Education

## CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Comprehension—read-aloud; infer, predict, make connections; parts of speech

Reading & Writing—compare and contrast; write a friendly letter; acrostic poetry

Language & Drama—parts of a fictional story; tableaux

Health & Character Education—belonging & contribution; identity

Dear Educator,

I wanted to take the time to introduce myself and to say thank you for bringing *Harley the Hero* into your classroom. This book features Harley, who is based on my real-life service dog named Stanley. As you will read in the note at the back of the book, I am an elementary teacher with Limestone District School Board. I am the first teacher in this board to have a service dog. He is with me for my invisible disability—Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. After being away from the classroom for a number of years, I returned with Stanley, which was a completely new experience. I had many worries about how we would be perceived, as there is still stigma around mental illness. I also worried the children wouldn't be able to follow the rules for Stanley, since they should not touch him or play with him while he is working. That is where the idea for the animail box was born.

A trainer from Kingston 4 Paws helped me figure out how to train Stanley to open a mailbox that I could keep in my classroom. This allowed students to interact with Stanley while still following the service dog rules, by sharing letters, stories, art, and even treats with him. When author Peggy Collins visited my classroom, she saw not only the impact Stanley had on me, but also how his presence helped children in my classroom.

I have been so fortunate to write this curriculum guide for you and to share my story with you. I would like you to be able to continue to ask me questions and to invite Stanley and me to your classrooms. I have created the email address [animail4stanley@gmail.com](mailto:animail4stanley@gmail.com) for you to connect with me. I love seeing mail and letters and hearing the questions students have about service dogs. I am sure that the children in your classroom will fall in love with *Harley the Hero* and all of the characters in this text who provide an age-appropriate dialogue about friendship, mental health, neurodivergence, empathy, and courage.

With sincere appreciation for all that you do,

Sherri and Stanley

**CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS:**

ACTIVITY	MAIN SUBJECT AREAS	SPECIFIC SKILLS
Read-Aloud	Comprehension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activate prior knowledge</li> <li>• Infer, predict, and make connections</li> <li>• Parts of Speech - Verbs</li> </ul>
Service Dog and Therapy Dog: The Differences	Reading and Writing	Compare and contrast
Writing Letters to Harley	Writing	Writing a friendly letter in a specific format
Fiction Retell	Language Drama	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parts of a fictional story</li> <li>• Tableaux</li> </ul>
What Makes a Good Friend?	Health Character Education Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Differences / neurodiversity</li> <li>• Friendship</li> <li>• Media Literacy</li> </ul>
What Makes Me Unique?	Belonging and Contributing Health Drama	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identity</li> <li>• Mental Health</li> <li>• Creating Skits</li> </ul>
Facing Our Fears?	Belonging and Contributing Art	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicating our feelings, self-regulation</li> <li>• Courage</li> <li>• Friendship</li> <li>• Visual Art</li> </ul>
Acrostic Poetry	Writing	Writing poetry using an acrostic format.

## THE READ-ALOUD

For this activity, teachers can choose the discussion points most appropriate for their particular group of students.

### Learning expectations:

Students will:

- identify reading comprehension strategies (e.g. activate prior knowledge, infer, predict, make connections) and use them before, during, and after reading to understand texts

### You Will Need

- *Harley the Hero*
- Chart paper
- Markers

### How To:

#### Before Reading

Show students the front and back covers of the book. Pose the following questions: “What looks unusual about the dog on the cover? Why is the teacher holding a letter on the back cover? What do you think is the significance of signs in this book?”

On a piece of chart paper, make a brainstorm web with the words “Service Dog.” Have students share what they know about service dogs by activating their background knowledge of service dogs within their community. Depending on age level, prompt students to offer reasons why someone might have a service dog.

#### During Reading

**First spread:** Have students compare their own classroom to what they see in the illustrations. What is the same? What is different? Have students offer predictions about why Harley has a mailbox. Read through the chart paper in the illustrations that outlines “Things to Know About Harley.” Provide time to discuss what students think of when they hear “invisible disability.” Read the text.

**Second spread:** After you read, “Harley’s a great dog,” pause for effect. Add emphasis to the lines, “Most of the time. Unless he can see your feet.” This part of the book is meant to provoke laughter from the students listening.

**Third spread:** Spend time looking at the facial expressions on the characters’ faces. Invite students to share their responses about what Harley might be thinking versus what Amelia is feeling or thinking. What difference do students see in the boy’s facial expression to that of his classmate Amelia? Invite students to infer how each character feels about Harley.

**Fourth spread:** The theme of friendship is evident on these pages. Ask students what “jobs” they might have in helping their own friends feel safe. Pose the question, “Do you think that Ms. Prichard and Harley are friends?”

**Fifth spread:** Invite students to share what things might upset them at school that they might need help with during their day. Guide students to see the comparison the author is making between the narrator, Jackson, and Harley the service dog. Ask students why the author might do this.

**Sixth spread:** Look at the words “Quieter” and “Space.” Invite students to share why they think the book’s designer would have put these as all capitals in the text.

**Seventh spread:** Ensure that students can see the artwork being done by the students on each page. Ask them to look at the illustrations of the book and the pictures being drawn by the students in this spread. What do they notice? (hint: the author used real ani-mail for these pictures).

**Eighth spread:** The concept of safety being equated with quiet is explored on these pages. Quiet is contrasted loudness in relation to fire. What emotions come to mind when you hear the words “safe” versus “fire”? How do you think Amelia is feeling? What about Ms. Prichard? Explore the word “courage” here. What makes Amelia courageous? Ms. Prichard? Harley?

**Ninth spread:** The illustrations look much different on these pages. Why do you think the illustrator chose to change the way she uses color here?

**Tenth spread:** “My face was wet,” says Jackson. What do you think Jackson is feeling as Amelia’s best friend? “Harley barked and pulled hard on his leash...” What is Harley trying to tell Ms. Prichard?

**Eleventh spread:** The verbs *nudged*, *pulled*, *barked* and *licked* are mentioned here. You can have students stand and act out these words to deepen their understanding of what they mean.

**Twelfth spread:** Amelia goes from hiding under Ms. Prichard’s desk to crawling with Harley and her teacher under the smoke. What character traits would you use to describe Amelia?

**Thirteenth spread:** Consider the word “hero” and how it applies to Harley. Invite students to share what they think makes someone a hero. Jackson and Amelia are hugging Harley. Why is this okay at this part of the book based on the Service Dog Rules?

**Fourteenth spread:** Read with expression, with your voice coming down at the end.

## After Reading

- Discuss the idea of friendship in this book. There are multiple friendships in the book. 1) Ms. Prichard and Harley; 2) Jackson and Amelia; 3) Amelia and Harley 4) Jackson and Harley. What character traits would you use to describe the relationships between each set of friends?
- Read the Author’s Note at the end of the book. Discuss the differences between fiction and non-fiction. Pose the question, “how does non-fiction inform fiction?”
- Use Google Earth to look up the setting of the book, Selby Public School, located in Selby, Ontario.

## ACTIVITY 1: SERVICE DOG AND THERAPY DOG: THE DIFFERENCES

Students will read and discuss different texts and then compare and contrast service dogs and therapy dogs.

### Learning expectations:

Students will:

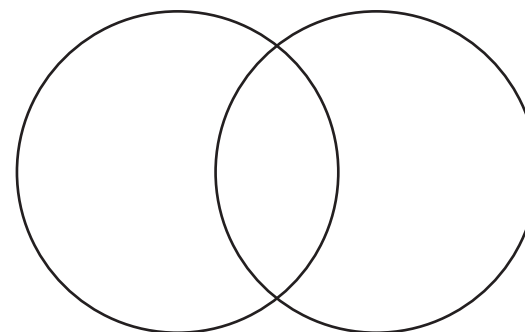
- read and discuss different texts and then compare and contrast service dogs and therapy dogs.
- utilize a graphic organizer to sort information

### You Will Need:

- *Harley the Hero*
- *Madeline Finn and the Therapy Dog* by Lisa Papp
- markers

### How To:

1. Re-read *Harley the Hero*
2. Read *Madeline Finn and the Therapy Dog* by Lisa Papp.
3. Ask students what the differences and similarities are between Star (*Madeline Finn*) and Harley (*Harley the Hero*). Depending on the age of students, you may need to spend some time discussing what makes something different (contrast) and what makes something similar (compare).



4. On chart paper, create a Venn diagram. One side will be for Star from *Madeline Finn and the Therapy Dog* and the other side will be for Harley.

5. Create a second Venn diagram to translate the students' knowledge and observations between both books into the similarities and differences between service dogs and therapy dogs.

*Comparison guide to help teachers provide background information on differences between Service Dogs and Therapy Dogs, which are often referenced as being the same in terms of their duties, but vary greatly.*

## Comparison between Service Dogs and Therapy Dogs:

Comparison	Service Dogs (in Canada)	Therapy Dogs (in Canada)
Accessibility laws may allow dog type into a variety of places	Yes	No (some places, like libraries and nursing homes may allow access for specific activities)
Needs to tolerate a wide variety of experiences, environments and people.	Yes	Yes
Allowed in living areas where pets are normally not allowed,	Yes	Yes
Primary role is to provide emotional support through companionship	No	No
Specifically trained to assist just one person	Yes	No
Provides emotional support and comfort to many people	No	Yes

## ACTIVITY 2: WRITING LETTERS TO HARLEY

Letter-writing is great practice for asking questions and is a format that can be taught for many reasons.

### Learning Expectations

Students will:

- write for an intended audience using a prescribed format
- Identify the parts included in a friendly letter

### You Will Need:

- letter template for Harley (included in this guide)
- chart paper
- markers

### How To:

1. Review when we generally send friendly letters (thank you notes to school staff, friends, family members, etc.)
2. Review the parts included in a friendly letter (heading, greeting, body, closing, and signature).
3. Review the letters that are written by students in *Harley the Hero* (refer to seventh spread of book).
4. Share the provided examples of student mail sent to the real service dog behind the story of *Harley the Hero* (see end of guide)
5. Generate a list of questions for Harley.
6. Give students the letter template for Harley and have them write a friendly letter.
7. Letters to the real-life service dog, Stanley, can be emailed to his handler (and real-life teacher, Mrs. Richards) at: [animail4stanley@gmail.com](mailto:animail4stanley@gmail.com)

## ACTIVITY 3: FICTION RETELL

There are many strategies for retelling a fictional story. Use this *Harley the Hero*-inspired template to reinforce the parts of a fictional story.

### Learning Expectations

Students will:

- retell a story, in written or oral form, following a specific format
- demonstrate an understanding of parts that make a fictional text by identifying the setting, characters, problem, events and solution.

### You Will Need:

- “Paws to Retell the Story” template
- *Harley the Hero*
- anchor chart on parts of a story

### How To:

1. Complete this lesson at a point in your Retell unit where students have a basic understanding of the parts of a story.
2. After reading *Harley the Hero*, have a whole-class discussion on where the story takes place and who the main characters are.
3. Using the think-pair-share strategy, have students identify what they believe the problem is in the story.
4. Choose certain pairs of students to share their thinking.
5. Then have them share again using a think-pair-share strategy to identify the solution in the story.
6. Choose groups to share their thinking aloud with the rest of the class
7. Have students complete the “Paws to Retell the Story” template to demonstrate their understanding.
8. As an extension, students can create a short tableau to demonstrate their understanding of the problem and solution presented in the text.

## ACTIVITY 4: WHAT MAKES A GOOD FRIEND?

Friendship is a prominent theme in *Harley the Hero*. Use this activity to start a conversation about traits that make a good friend.

### Learning Expectations

Students will:

- Identify personality traits that make a good friend in someone else.
- Identify the traits that are within us that make us a good friend.

### You Will Need:

- chart paper
- markers
- blank white or colored paper

### How To:

1. Engage in a whole-class discussion around the topic of friendship. What does friendship mean? What does friendship look like? What does friendship sound like?
2. After reading *Harley the Hero*, discuss the following as a whole class: How is Jackson a friend to Amelia? How is Amelia a friend to Jackson? How is Harley a friend to Ms. Prichard? How is Harley a friend to Amelia?
3. On chart paper, create a brainstorm web for what makes a good friend.
4. Using a blank sheet of white or colored paper, create a poster advertisement for a friend with the title, “Wanted: A Good Friend”. In your poster, students should advertise what they are looking for in a friend. They also should identify what the friend will get in return (what makes the first student a good friend).

## ACTIVITY 5: WHAT MAKES ME UNIQUE?

Explore visible and invisible differences between people.

### Learning Expectations

Students will:

- identify visible and invisible differences that make us who we are.
- identify visible and invisible differences in others and how this relates to neurodiversity.

### You Will Need:

- *Harley the Hero*
- chart paper
- markers
- compact mirrors (optional)

### How To:

1. In a whole-class discussion, talk about the difference between invisible and visible differences.
2. Have students get into pairs and sit across from one another. Have each student take turns identifying visible differences between each of them (if social distancing is required, you can have students use a compact mirror to self-identify).
3. Bring students back to a whole-class discussion. Look at Amelia, Jackson, and Ms. Prichard. Amelia wears headphones. Jackson uses a balance ball instead of a chair. Ms. Prichard has a service dog. Can you see why these characters need these things to help them? Can you tell by looking at someone if they have Autism? ADHD? Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder? Why is it important to discuss invisible differences and similarities between each other?

4. On chart paper, include examples of visible and invisible differences that were discussed as part of the previous whole-class discussion.
5. Ask students, “How can you be a role model and show respect for differences in other people?”
6. Create and practice small skits that show how to model respect for others.



## ACTIVITY 6: FACING OUR FEARS

Fear is something that everyone experiences. Students will look at how two different characters from different texts conquer their fears.

### Learning Expectations

Students will:

- develop self-regulation strategies that help overcome fears
- find commonalities between themselves and their peers to realize that everyone can feel fear
- analyze different texts that explore similar messages

### You Will Need:

- *Harley the Hero*
- *Ben and the Scaredy-Dog* by Sarah Ellis
- *Ben and the Scaredy-Dog* reading guide, available here:

[https://pajamapress.ca/resource/ben\\_and\\_the\\_scaredydog\\_teaching\\_guide](https://pajamapress.ca/resource/ben_and_the_scaredydog_teaching_guide)

### How To:

1. Re-read *Harley the Hero*.
2. Read *Ben and the Scaredy-Dog* and try the Facing Fear activities from the guide using the link provided above.
3. How did Amelia experience fear in *Harley the Hero*? How did Ben experience fear in *Ben and the Scaredy-Dog*?
4. Make connections to how each character overcame their fear. Invite students to make personal connections to fears that they have overcome in their own lives.
5. Use the discussion about fear to talk about how students can add to their “self-regulation” toolboxes to help them when their minds and bodies become overwhelmed with fear.
6. Introduce the word “empathy” and talk about the characters from

*Harley the Hero*. How do the characters in this book display empathy? How does this empathy help those characters overcome their fears?

7. Art activity—create a paper version of a toolbox and ask students to draw what they might need in order to be successful every day.



## ACTIVITY 7: ACROSTIC POETRY

Acrostic poems are a good starting point for writing poetry for younger students. They can also be a good exercise for older students, who can use more complex words with larger phrases.

### Learning Expectations

Students will:

- write an acrostic poem within a format given.

### You Will Need:

- *Harley the Hero*
- Acrostic Poetry paper or lined paper

### How To:

1. Read *Harley the Hero*.
2. Discuss base words that you could use for your poem. Suggestions might include: Harley, Hero, Courage, Amelia, Friendship, etc.
3. Brainstorm as a group to come up with words that relate to the base word, then model the writing of an acrostic poem using the brainstormed words and phrases.
4. Have students work independently or in pairs to brainstorm their own base words and related words and phrases. They may also draw on the previous group brainstorming.
5. Have students write their own poem.
6. Students can share their poems orally with the class or consider having a “poetry café” with another class.



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Dear Stanley?  
 What is it like being a dog? How  
 were your dreams last night... Hmmm  
 I wish I had my own mailbox. Did you  
 go to the owner's service dog I  
 lost? I've lost six. How hard is it to  
 stay away from things you won't  
 like? How do you like sleeping all the  
 time? How did you become  
 a service dog? I wish  
 I were one. How are  
 you and Mrs. Richardson?  
 Love  
 Wyatt



Dear Stanley  
 I love being in your class.  
 I like having a dog in  
 the class. You are the best  
 dog. I like your colour.  
 When you sleep you look cool.  
 Your friend, Elizabeth

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## “Paws” to Retell

