



Catch That Dog!

Educator's Guide

About the Book

When lonely, overlooked Joanie Dayton first encounters Masterpiece in a dirty alley, she mistakes him for (of all things) a stray cat. But after cleaning him up back home, she discovers her new friend is, in fact, a miniature poodle. A very grateful miniature poodle.

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What Joanie doesn't know is that Masterpiece isn't any ordinary dog. Masterpiece is actually a world-famous celebrity, a dog who's been in TV shows and magazines and spends his summers traveling the world hobnobbing with the rich and famous. So how did Masterpiece go from a palatial apartment in New York City to an alley in small town New Jersey? He was dognapped! And then escaped! And it was Joanie, of all people, who found him. Now, not only does the angry dognapper want to nab Masterpiece back, but his former owner is offering a reward for his return. A big reward. A reward that could change Joanie's life forever—if she can somehow find the strength to give up the only best friend she's ever had. What's a girl to do?



About the Author

Will Taylor is a reader, writer, and honeybee fan. He lives in the heart of downtown Seattle surrounded by all the seagulls and not quite too many teacups. When not writing he can be found searching for the perfect bakery, talking to trees in parks, and completely losing his cool when he meets longhaired dachshunds. His books include *Maggie & Abby's Neverending Pillow Fort*; *Maggie & Abby and the Shipwreck Treehouse*; *Slimed [as Liam Gray]*; *Catch That Dog!*; and *The Language of Seabirds*.

Pre-Reading Activities

• Pretend *you* wrote a book called *Catch That Dog!* Brainstorm character names and a fun setting, then write a 1-2 sentence beginning, 3-4 sentence middle, and 1-2 sentence conclusion. Design a cover for your book or draw a picture of your main characters in action. Share with the class or in groups.

• *Catch That Dog* is a made-up story about Masterpiece, a real-life famous poodle. Research another famous animal and write an exciting newspaper article introducing them to readers.



Vocabulary

Masterpiece spent the first part of his life in a very fancy home, and he's got the vocabulary to match! See how many of these words you can work into a comic poem about his adventures. Or try pronouncing them and their definitions the way a wealthy poodle might.

Scrounging (2)	Settee (60)	Tirade (122)
Meager (4)	Bungalow (77)	Gramophone (126)
Gaudy (10)	Charlatan (99)	Soiree (129)
Enraptured (13)	Squalid (99)	Seedy (172)
Aristocratic (17)	Purloined (99)	Condescending (189)
Pedigree (17)	Anecdote (103)	Barrage (193)
Brandishing (29)	Peal (106)	Pandemonium (208)
Fleur-de-lis (38)	Demeanor (110)	Connoisseur (218)
Forlorn (40)	Rickety (114)	Serendipity (218)
Montage (42)	Burnished (114)	Raconteur (221)
Palette (47)	Glower (119)	
Dapper (53)	Negligent (119)	



Discussion Questions



Chapter 2: When they first meet, Joanie is fooled by Masterpiece's appearance. Are there other places throughout the book where someone is fooled by appearances? Provide examples. Do you think this could be considered one of the book's themes? Are there others?

Chapter 7: Why do you think Joanie has kept her paintings secret so far? Explain using evidence from the text. Would you do the same if you were in her shoes? Why or why not?

Chapters 11-13: What experiences does Masterpiece have while exploring the town? Why are his expectations so different from the townspeople's reactions? What do you think he learns?

Chapter 13: How does Masterpiece feel when he sees the powder-blue car in the hotel parking lot? Does he want to go back to his old life at this point in the story? Why or why not?

Chapter 18: What influences Joanie's decision to call the missing dog hotline? Do you think she makes the right choice? What do you do when you have to face a difficult choice?

Chapter 27: Why doesn't Count Pulaski recognize Masterpiece when they meet? What do Masterpiece's actions tell us about how he's changed since meeting Joanie?

Epilogue: Compare this chapter to Chapter 1. What has changed in Joanie's world? Do you think her feelings about herself have changed, too? Why or why not? Why do you think the author chose to begin and end the book with such similar chapter titles?

After Reading Activities

- Write a "*Five useful things to know*" list introducing yourself, a friend, a pet, or a family member.

- Chapter 25 features speedbumps, which were invented in New Jersey in 1953, the same time and place as our story. Choose another everyday object from the book and find out when and where it was invented. Present what you learn as a TV reporter, either in groups or to the class.



- Count Alexi Pulaski built an entire business empire convincing the world to love his very favorite animal: poodles. Choose one of your favorite animals and write a business plan for how you would do the same. Would you have stores? Products? Slogans? What kinds of media would you use? What would your business be called? (Bonus: team up with someone doing a different kind of animal and brainstorm ways to promote your businesses together.)

Historical Note

Good news! Many parts of *Catch That Dog!* are true. Masterpiece was a real dog, and poodle entrepreneur Alexi Pulaski (who might not have been an actual count) was his real owner.



Masterpiece was born August 4, 1946, and quickly became Pulaski's all-time favorite. Charming, intelligent, and adorable at just eight pounds and nine and a half inches tall, he rose to become a champion on the dog show circuit. But his fame didn't end there. He went on to conquer New York high society and appear in magazines, newspapers, advertisements, and television shows. When a real-life prince offered a fortune to try to buy him for his wife, Masterpiece became known as "the world's most valuable dog."

He really did lead a parade of poodles up Fifth Avenue in Manhattan, and he really did dine with politicians in the finest hotels in Paris. He also had his own bank account, hosted fashion shows, and served as goodwill ambassador to Cuba. America went wild for poodles in the 1950s, and it was due in no small part to Count Pulaski and his mission to make everyone love little Masterpiece as much as he did.

Then, one sunny day in 1953, Masterpiece vanished from his usual spot at Poodles, Inc. A monthlong police hunt spread over thirteen states, but no trace of the dog was ever found. Only one witness came forward, claiming to have seen Masterpiece trotting out of Poodles, Inc. of his own free will alongside a dark-haired woman wearing a red coat. That woman, like Masterpiece's whereabouts, remains a mystery to this day.

So, what do you think happened? Was Masterpiece dognapped? Did he leave with a friend? Was he ready to give up his high-fashion life for something simpler? Or did someone make the choice for him?



I wrote this book to give the story of Masterpiece a happy next chapter. A chapter where he goes on an adventure and finds a home, a friend, and all the things he never knew he was missing. Where he finds a girl like Joanie Dayton, and she finds a dog like him. And not a day goes by without scratches.

The activities in this guide fulfill the following Common Core Anchor Standards
(please refer to www.corestandards.org for grade-specific equivalents)

Reading:	R.1, R.2, R.3, R.6, R.10
Writing:	W.1, W.2, W.4, W.7, W.9
Speaking & Listening:	SL.1, SL.3, SL.4
Language:	L.3, L.4

Guide prepared by the author. Say hello or ask questions at willtaylorbooks.com