



Good Dog Hank

Jackie French, Illustrated by Nina Rycroft

Book Summary

A very funny and affectionately warm picture book about a dog who is convinced he is doing the right thing – and a family who love him, no matter what.

Curriculum Areas and Key Learning Outcomes

Good Dog Hank is appropriate for pre-school aged groups but could also be used in Primary School rooms and the activities (simple punctuation and writing tasks) have been designed with this in mind. You may wish to modify them for your own group.

- English Language
- English Literature
- Visual Literacy
- Personal & Social Competence
- The Arts

Themes

- Puppy Love – Caring for an Animal
- Obedience

Appropriate Ages:

3+

ISBN 978 0 7322 9364 2
E-ISBN 978 0 7304 9639 7
Notes By Simone Evans



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Introduction

This is the story of a dog called Hank. Hank is not just a good dog ... he is a VERY good dog! At the beginning of the book we learn that Hank doesn't eat from the table (when anyone can see him, that is...) and he wouldn't dream of chewing your socks (he simply helps you wash them). As we read on we realise that Hank – although very good at obeying all the rules of his house – might just be interpreting them in his own way. But luckily no one at Hank's home or in Hank's street, seems to mind too much. And why would they? Hank is so enthusiastic and friendly that you cannot help but fall in love with him. And anyway, we aren't sure if he even knows he is doing anything wrong! Jackie French cleverly constructs another loveable animal hero in this book while Nina Rycroft brings him to life wonderfully with her drawings. *Good Dog Hank* is a warm and funny picture book that makes you want to own a dog just like Hank!

About the Author and Illustrator

Jackie French is an award-winning writer, wombat negotiator and the Australian Children's Laureate for 2014-2015. She is regarded as one of Australia's most popular children's authors and writes across all genres. You can read more about Jackie (including her humorous answers to 'frequently asked

questions') and see some photographs of her beautiful garden on the website:
www.jackiefrench.com

Nina Rycroft lives in Auckland, New Zealand, with her husband and two children. Nina co-wrote and illustrated, *Ballroom Bonanza*, a story inspired by her children's great-grandfather Tommy Jones (band master at the Tower Ballroom, Blackpool from 1947-1978). *Ballroom Bonanza* was a finalist in the CJ International Picture Book Awards.

Nina has illustrated over a dozen picture books and *Good Dog Hank* is her second collaboration with author Jackie French. In 2013 she illustrated French's book *Dinosaurs Love Cheese*.

You can read more about Nina (and enjoy some of her wonderful stop-animation illustration videos) at her website:
www.ninarycroft.com

Author and Illustrator Inspiration

Jackie writes:

'Hank is a real dog and part of our family. Hank looks like the dog in the book, too! But the family he lives with and his house were created by Nina. He's a BIG dog, but very gentle. He doesn't live close by though, so I miss him very much. That's why I wrote this book.



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Hank is *always* a good dog. He just works out ways to what he wants but still obey the rules. For example, Hank knows that you should never drink a glass of milk at the table. But no one has ever told him you can't sneak out at night and drink it when no one is looking.

Hank knows he must never go into the kitchen when dinner is cooking. So he sits at the door and stretches his neck and nose so he can eat the bits that fall on the floor.

But Hank *is* a good dog, too. He is the best dog in the world because he loves his family, and he looks after them by making sure he keeps any savage pigeons from attacking the house and checking that the groceries don't have lions hidden in the bags.

And Hank's favourite time is cuddling next to his family, with all the people he loves best.'

Themes

Puppy Love – Caring for an Animal

Lots of families have a pet and pets can become very special members of a family. If you don't have a pet you may have played with a friend's pet or be thinking about getting a pet in the future. You may have a reason for not wanting a pet!

Discussion Points:

Why do you think people like having pets?

Is it just families who have pets?
Why might someone living alone like a pet?
Do we only look after pets or do pets look after us too? Why/Why not?

Hank knows lots of words. He knows:

- Sit
- Down
- Be quiet (when he jumps in excitement)
- No
- Come here
- Walk
- Lie down
- Back
- Heel
- Go
- Go to your bed
- Dinner time
- Outside
- Hank cross (which means he can cross a road)

Hank also knows lots of other words:

- Bedtime
- Car
- Ride
- Beach
- Dig
- Park
- Home
- Daddy
- Mummy
- Harvey (Hank's best friend)
- Farm
- Grandma,



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- Who's here?
- Biscuit
- Treat
- Bad dog
- Good dog
- Ducks
- Breakfast

and many many more.

Discussion Points: Do you know a dog?
What words do they understand?

Hank's favourite words are:

- Dinner time
- Treat
- Walk
- Park
- Beach
- Mummy's home
- Daddy's home
- Come here Hank (when there are interesting scraps from dinner to eat)

What are your favourite words?

Hank likes to go to the dog park or dog beach to play with his friends.

Discussion Points: Why do you think there are special parks and beach for dogs?
Do you have a dog beach or a dog park near you?

Like us, dogs need food and shelter and care and love!

Discussion Point: Do you know how to be polite to dogs?

Activity: Find out the best way to say 'hello' to a dog you haven't met before.

Discussion Point: Do you know where dogs like to be patted or stroked?

Dogs like eating human foods, but some food like chocolate and onions and garlic can make them very sick or even kill them.

Activity: Find out what different dogs eat.

Discussion Point: If your dog makes a mess on the footpath or in the garden, do you know the best way to pick it up? (Hint: cover your hand with a bag and pick it up then put it in the bin. Then wash your hands.)

Some dogs are friends. Other dogs are friends but also work with humans. One of Hank's friends is a guide dog. Another is a sheep dog who helps herd sheep and cattle.

Discussion Point: What other jobs can dogs do with people?



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Obedience

When animals live with humans we expect them to be 'obedient'. Many people choose to take their puppies to puppy school to teach them obedience.

Discussion Points:

- What does the word obedient mean?
- Would you like an obedient dog? Or do you think it might be fun if your dog was just a little bit **disobedient**? Why/Why not?
- What do you think makes a dog a **good** dog?
- What orders do they need to know?

Curriculum Areas and Key Learning Outcomes

English Language

Jackie French uses lots of the punctuation we are used to seeing (**capital letters** and **full stops**) but there are two special types of punctuation that keep popping up on the pages of *Good Dog Hank*. Can you think what they are? (Pages 2 and 3 will give you a big hint!) French uses **ellipses** or '**dot dot dots**' (...) quite a few times in the story. These ellipses tell us that there is more information to come... She also uses **brackets** () and they have a

special effect too. They tell us a little bit more about the story. It is almost as though someone is whispering this information from the side of the room. Sometimes the information contained in brackets is called an 'aside' and you can see why.

Activity: You are the narrator! Write your own short story about a pet, and use at least three ellipses and three sets of brackets. Your narrator may like to have a few secrets that they share with the reader or there might always be something just around the corner ... that you share on the following page.

Activity: In pairs, write out some of the text from a series of Jackie French's pages, **but leave out lots of punctuation and spell some words wrong**. Now swap with another pair. As they have a go and correct yours, you try and fix up theirs. *This activity works well on small whiteboards.* Read the sentences aloud to check they are correct.

English Literature

Have you ever met a mischievous dog like Hank? How would you feel about owning a dog like Hank? Maybe you already do...

Activity: Get into pairs and in one minute tell your partner all the things that you think a mischievous dog like Hank might get up to around your house. You might already have a dog like Hank in which case it should be easy.



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Don't stop thinking of ideas until the teacher calls **STOP!** and **SWAP!** The second person to go has to be even more imaginative and think of some new ideas. When the class returns to sit in a circle, share your partner's best three ideas.

The story of *Good Dog Hank* is pretty funny. But what makes it funny?

Activity: As a class group, one person is invited to suggest a page that they thought was the funniest. The class should have a careful look at this page before another student is invited to explain what makes it funny. Is it the words? The picture? Or both?

Visual Literacy

We learn a lot about Hank and what he is *really* up to through examining the illustrations. Jackie French and Nina Rycroft have worked together to tell the story in more than just words.

Activity: As a class, look through the book and concentrate **ONLY** on the illustrations. Explain what Hank is really getting up to around the house. You decide if he is always being the 'best good dog of all.'

Hank lives with a family in their suburban house. During the story he spends time in lots of different rooms – we see him in the kitchen, the bedroom and the lounge room before he finally

winds up outside in the family's backyard, over the fence, into the park, the middle of the street and even flying through the air!

Activity: Think about the world that Hank inhabits. He would probably know his 'block' pretty well. What do you imagine it looks like on Hank's block? Using a large sheet of paper draw a 'birds-eye' view of Hank's world. Make sure you include the places Hank visits in the story, but also try to imagine some other places in Hank's world. I bet he would like a butcher shop on the corner with strings of sausages, or maybe a bakery ... Does he have any playmates living nearby? Label the places on your map. You may also like to give each of the streets a name.

Personal and Social Competence

Houses have rules, especially when children and pets are involved! Your house may have more, or less, or simply *different* rules to a friend's house – but most houses have at least *some* rules. Rules can keep us safe and they have lots of other benefits, even though sometimes they can feel like a bore.

Activity: Rules Rule!

As a class, brainstorm a list of possible house rules for children and pets. If your family doesn't have a pet, imagine what the rules might be at your house.



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Individually, take a piece of paper and fold it into four pieces. Open it up and number the grid 1-4. At square 1 choose a rule to draw and describe. At square 2 draw and describe what could happen if this rule did not exist. At square 3 draw and describe the advantage of this rule. At square 4 draw and describe the disadvantage of this rule. Share your ideas with the class.

The Arts

The front cover of a picture book can give us lots of clues about what the story might be about. After you have read the book, re-examine the front cover. Now that we know a bit more about Hank, why do you think Nina Rycroft has chosen to draw Hank 'bursting' through the letter 'O'?

Activity: Imagine Nina Rycroft has asked you to design an alternative cover for the front of the book. You must include the title of the book as well as the author's name (Jackie French) and the illustrator's name (you!) How are you going to hint at Hank's cheeky but loveable personality?

Nina Rycroft tells us a lot about Hank's personality through her illustrations. She has chosen to draw him as a big, golden dog with a wagging tail and a smiling mouth. The family love to cuddle up with him and you can see why!

Activity: Create some of your own doggie drawings. Using the three adjectives – **silly**, **scary** and **frightened** – draw very three different dogs. Your job is to imagine what these dogs would look like if they jumped off the page and into your lounge room. How would you choose to draw them? What colours would you use? What size would they be and what expressions are on their faces?

Activity: Choose one of your doggie drawings to bring to life. Use coloured modelling clay or play-doh to create a three dimensional dog of your choice. Try and make your dog's face as expressive as possible. You may also like to make a collar for your dog so it doesn't get lost and maybe some accessories like a bowl and leash.

Questions for Reading and Discussion

Examine the front cover of the book. If Hank is the dog, then what kind of personality might he have? Does he look happy? What else?

The dedication at the front of the book reads:
To Jack and Hank, with love always. Grandma
Who do you think Grandma is?

If you could think of one adjective to describe the way Hank feels on page one, what would it be?

Look at page five. Do you think the little girl is used to having Hank around?

Page seven shows Hank chewing on a sock. It's pretty wet! Would you be happy to put those socks on like that? Or would you want them to have another wash?

Pages eight and ten show the family cat. How do you think the cat copes with living with Hank? Do you think the cat is afraid of Hank or just plain fed up? Maybe it loves him. How would you feel if you were the cat in Hank's house?

Page fourteen shows Hank 'flying' through the cars. Could this really happen?

There are lots of people on Page fifteen staring at Hank with that teddy bear. Choose a character on the page. What are they thinking at that very moment?

Page sixteen shows Hank in the rubbish bin. What do you think he has found in there?

The last page of the story shows Hank asleep in bed. How many times do you think he has fallen asleep there and does anybody mind? Why/Why not?



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Bibliography

Websites

Author unknown, *About Jackie French*, retrieved from:
www.jackiefrench.com

Author unknown, Nina Rycroft, retrieved from:
www.ninarycroft.com

About the Author of the Notes

Simone Evans attended Newtown High School of the Performing Arts before completing a Bachelor of Media and Communications at Charles Sturt University, Bathurst. She has produced theatre and festivals in Australia and England, taught primary school classes in sunny Byron Bay and is now the Education Coordinator at Belvoir Street Theatre in Sydney.