

Before You Were Mine Story by Maribeth Boelts

Grades: K-3

Story Summary

"Before you were mine, did you have a boy who saved you the last bite of his cookie and raced with you at the park?" The author of this book, Maribeth Boelts, asks this question that many who have adopted dogs have probably asked their pets. The little boy in *Before You Were Mine* wonders what his dog's life was like before he was adopted from the shelter. Did he have a name like Gus or Miles? Did he once have a family who loved him? How long had he been alone? Maybe it doesn't matter what happened before, because now he has a good home. He's getting all of the love every dog should have and giving it right back, too! This story will show you how adopting a pet can bring happiness to the pet as well as the new owner.

Objectives

1. To enhance understanding of "shelter pets."
2. To compare and contrast "shelter" pets and traditionally purchased pets.
3. To develop storytelling skills.
4. Develop an understanding of differences between raising a puppy and a mature shelter pet.

Before Reading the Book

Ask the children if any of them have adopted dogs or cats from animal shelters. What did you know about your pet's life before it came into your home? What are some of the reasons people might have for bringing a dog or cat to a shelter? Tell the children that today they will be listening to a story about a dog that is adopted from a shelter and the happiness shared by the dog and his new owner.

After Reading

1. The little boy in the book wonders what his dog's life was like before he had him. Why doesn't he know?
2. What are some of the things the little boy is wondering about?
3. The little boy is thinking about the reasons why the little dog was let go. What might some of the reasons be?
4. The little boy is worried that his dog was not treated nicely by the first family. What are some of the things he is thinking about?
5. Sometimes a family loves a pet but can't keep it. What might be some of these reasons for taking a pet to the shelter?
6. The shelter told the little boy that the dog had been running for a long time before coming to them. How do you think they knew this?
7. What did the shelter do to get the little dog ready for adoption?
8. The little boy and his family thought they could never love a dog as much as their last dog. What happened to change their minds?

Activities

1. Have the children create a story. They will draw a picture of their imaginary “shelter pet” and develop a history for this pet. Where do they think their pet came from? What was the behavior like? What did their pet do when they joined their family?

2. Have a class discussion, “Where do our pets come from?” Discuss the process of obtaining pets from a pet store and from an animal shelter.

Have the children develop a sense of the advantages and disadvantages of each way of getting pets.

3. Write a group story, “When I take My Dog Home.” Have two columns, one for an older shelter dog and one for a young puppy. What are the differences they will encounter between bringing a puppy home and bringing a shelter dog home?