

# *Belle's Star*

## Teacher's Activity Book



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## **INTRODUCTION**

This activity book complements Belle's Star, a novel written from a dog's point of view, which empowers children ages 8-12 to build new lives after escaping bullying and abuse or other difficult situations.

The activities and discussion questions provide thought provoking opportunities for children to interact with their parents, teachers, classmates, and friends about issues raised in the novel. They provide ways to foster understanding and develop tools that can help people make positive changes at a personal and community level.

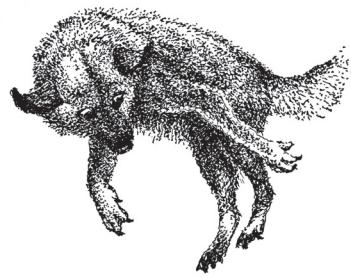
Whether children have experienced bullying or abusive behavior, witnessed it happen to others or been the perpetrators themselves, they can benefit from the activity book's positive, constructive focus. Parents, teachers and other youth leaders will find practical tools for helping children overcome the impact of negative behaviors that, if left unchanged, could create lifelong scars.

The activities and discussion questions can be used as enrichment exercises in the classroom or home school setting, in small counseling group discussions, around the dinner table, in youth gatherings at houses of worship, and among youth related civic organizations that promote community involvement.

Margaret Cheasebro

## CHAPTER 1 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does the dog know that Bonehead and Big Toby don't like her?  
How do people act when they don't like you?  
How do you act when you don't like them?
  
2. Bonehead got mad when his wife beat him at a card game. Why do you think he was so upset about losing the game?
  
3. What is a good way to act when you lose a game?
  
4. Have you ever played with people who get mad when they lose?  
How does it feel to play with people who act like that?
  
5. People who behave like Bonehead and Big Toby are sometimes called bullies. What kinds of things have you seen bullies do?
  
6. Has someone ever bullied you? If so, what did they do?
  
7. Have you ever bullied someone? If so, what did you do?
  
8. Why do you think Bonehead and Big Toby acted so mean?



## ACTIVITY

Look up the Humane Society on the Internet. Ask your parents to help you get in touch with someone from the Humane Society in your area. Ask members of the local organization how you and your family can assist animals who need help in your community.

## CHAPTER 2 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In what ways did Darcy and Auntie Ellen treat the dog differently than Bonehead and Big Toby did?
2. The dog still didn't trust Darcy and Auntie Ellen even though they were nice to her. Have you ever treated someone nicely only to have them mistrust you? Why do you think they didn't trust you?
3. The dog didn't like the smell of cat on Auntie Ellen. Have you ever smelled something you didn't like? What was it, and what made you dislike the smell?
4. Auntie Ellen said Bonehead knew her weaknesses, and that's why he could make her pay him \$10 to keep him from hurting the dog more. Do you think it was a weakness that made Auntie Ellen not want the dog to get hurt, or could it have been a strength? Why or why not?
5. Do you have weaknesses or strengths that make other people think they can take advantage of you? Name one or two of your strengths or weaknesses and tell why you have them.
6. Have you ever tried to help someone, but it didn't work, like when Darcy wanted to call the Animal League on her cell phone, but Big Toby took the phone away from her before she could make the call? How could Darcy have handled the situation differently?
7. Have you ever stood up for someone who was being bullied, and you got in trouble because of it? What are some other ways you could have handled the situation?
8. The dog was so dirty she looked ugly, but both Auntie Ellen and Darcy could imagine how pretty she would look when she was cleaned up. When you see people or animals that look dirty, what do you think, and how do you feel about them?

## ACTIVITY

One way to keep safe when people bully you is to find allies. Sometimes they come to your aid even when you don't ask for their help, like Darcy and Auntie Ellen came to the dog's aid. This week pick someone you know who is bullied by other people. Think of some ways you can help them feel safer and accepted. Then try at least one of the methods and see how it works.

## CHAPTER 3 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Belle was afraid she wouldn't be accepted by the cat and dog, who already lived with Ellen. How do you act when you're afraid someone won't accept you?
  
2. Belle didn't want to be considered a human's pet because the humans she knew didn't treat her well. What are some ways to treat animals well so they will trust you? What are some ways to treat other people well so they will trust you?
  
3. Misty had her claws removed so she could not scratch. As a result, she could not defend herself well with her paws.  
Do you know people who are handicapped in some way?  
If so, how do they compensate for their handicap?
  
4. Belle decided to herd Painter away from the flowers because Ellen didn't want her flowers damaged. Belle also thought if she demonstrated her herding skills that she might land a job as a cow dog. What motivates you to help others?
  
5. Ellen thanked Belle for saving her flowers. How do you thank people for helping you?
  
6. How do other people show their gratitude to you?
  
7. Belle was worried that Misty would be mad if she caught more balls than Misty did, but Misty didn't care about that. She just wanted to have fun playing. When you play with others, how important is it for you to win?
  
8. Do you know people who enjoy playing no matter who wins?  
Do you know people who are upset if they don't win?  
Which people are more fun to play with – the ones who think they have to win or the ones who enjoy playing even if they don't win? Defend your answer.

## ACTIVITY

Belle was amazed by the wonderful way Ellen treated her. Take some time to watch how other people treat their pets. Keep track of how many ways you notice pet owners being kind to their pets. Try some of those methods on your own pet or, if you don't have one, on a friend's pet, and see how the animal reacts.

## CHAPTER 4 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

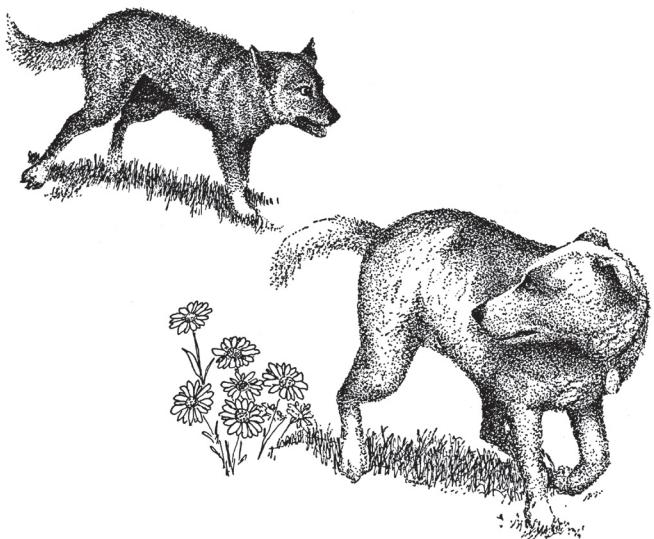
1. Ellen punished Painter for digging up garden plants by giving him a time out in his pen. What kind of punishments are you given for doing something wrong? How do you punish your pets?
2. Painter said he dug in Ellen's flowers because he didn't stop to think about the choice he was making. Have you ever done something without first thinking of the consequences? If so, what happened?
3. What kinds of questions can you ask yourself to help you think about what the consequences could be?
4. Running made Belle joyful no matter what unpleasant things were happening in her life. What do you do to help yourself feel better when things aren't going well in your life?
5. Belle had a hard time believing Darcy and Ellen were trying to be nice to her because the humans she had known treated her badly. Do you know people who have a hard time believing others will treat them nicely because of the bad experiences they have had? How do you feel when you are around those people?
6. Misty told Belle to keep her eyes open when she met humans, to notice friendly people and to choose one of them as a friend. How do you choose someone for a friend?
7. Belle uses her sense of smell to tell a person's mood. What method do you use to tell how someone is feeling?
8. Belle is beginning to think that playing games that no one wins is okay. She also begins to realize that some people try too hard to win. What kinds of games have you seen people trying too hard to win?  
Why do you think they want to win?  
If you compete in a sports game that has first, second and third place awards, are you satisfied with getting less than first place? Why or why not?

## ACTIVITY

Pretend you are a detective. See if you can figure out the mood of all the people you meet today. Ask yourself how you detected what their mood was. Keep track of the number of ways you can discover how a person is feeling.

## CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Jim didn't want Ellen to keep Belle because he said they didn't have enough money to feed another animal. Have you ever worried about showing kindness to someone because you thought it would cost too much money?
2. Have you ever decided not to help someone because it would cost too much? If so, how did you feel about making that decision?
3. When Belle kept Painter from digging in the garden, Jim decided it might be okay for Belle to stay. Have you ever changed your opinion of someone? If so, what kinds of things make you change your mind about the person?
4. Has a friend of yours ever helped you be accepted by someone you didn't know? If so, what happened and how did you feel?



## ACTIVITIES

Ask an adult you know to go with you to help serve lunch at a volunteer lunch program or soup kitchen for people who are too poor to buy food. As you help the people, try to guess what emotions they are feeling. Are they happy, sad, mad, scared, frustrated, confused?

Ask the people who run the food program what kinds of foods they need most. Then ask people you know in your neighborhood to donate money to the program. After a week of collecting money, tally what you have gathered and take it to the people who are in charge of the volunteer lunch program.

## CHAPTER 6 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Belle bit Jim when he accidentally stepped on her paw. What could she have done instead of biting him?
  
2. When someone hurts you, do you immediately assume they did it on purpose, or do you think it might have been an accident?
  
3. What is a good way to react if someone hurts you? Here are a few suggestions. Choose the answer you think is best and defend your position. If you have a different suggestion, explain it and tell why you think it is a good idea.
  - A. Punch the person in the nose.
  - B. Say, "It hurts when you do that. Please stop."
  - C. Start rumors about the person.
  - D. Call the person a bad name.
  
4. If you hurt someone by accident, what should you do? Here are a few suggestions. Choose the answer you think is best and defend your position. If you have a different suggestion, explain it and tell why you think it is a good idea.
  - A. Say, "Ha, ha, I'm glad you're hurt."
  - B. Walk off without saying anything.
  - C. Say, "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to hurt you. How can I help?"
  - D. Blame someone else for what happened.
  
5. Jim was mad when Belle bit him and wanted to have the dog put to sleep. When Ellen accused him of trying to get rid of an animal he didn't really want, Jim realized he wasn't being fair. He recognized that if he hadn't stepped on Belle's paw, the biting incident would not have occurred. What does that tell you about Jim's character?
  
6. Have you ever been mean to someone because you thought the person hurt you on purpose, only to learn later that it was an accident?  
If so, how did you react when you learned the person didn't intend to hurt you?

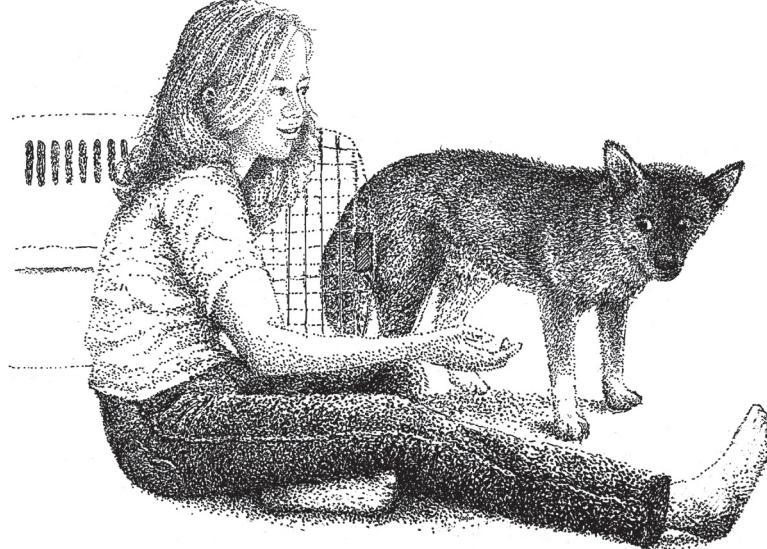


## **ACTIVITY**

Painter told Belle she would be fine at Darcy's house if Belle could stay calm. What are some ways you can stay calm when you feel scared or mad? Choose from the following list as many as you think might work and tell why you chose them. If you have other ideas, add them to the list. Then use one or more of the suggestions when you start to feel upset and need to stay calm. See which suggestion works best for you.

- A. Take several deep breaths. This pattern works well. Breathe in, count to our; breathe out, count to six.
- B. Count to 10 slowly.
- C. Walk away.
- D. Make a joke.
- E. Give the person who upset you an "I" message. Say, "I feel upset when you do that. Please stop."

## CHAPTER 7 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Uncle Jim called Darcy the name Skinny Bones. He thought he was teasing her, but Darcy didn't like it. If you know someone doesn't like your teasing, is it still okay to continue teasing the person? Why or why not?
2. Belle felt hopeful when she realized Margaret and Darcy understood her. How do you feel when someone understands you?
3. How can you help someone know you understand them? Choose the method you think will work best and explain your choice. Ask yourself how you would feel if someone responded to you in one of these ways.
  - A. Say, "It sounds like you feel confused." If the person seems to feel something different than confusion, name the emotion you think the person is feeling.
  - B. Say, "I felt like that once." Then launch into a story of your own experience.
  - C. Tell the person to quit thinking about the unpleasant or sad thing.
  - D. Tell them it's stupid to feel upset or scared.
4. Have you ever had to move to a new place? If so, what helped you to adjust?
5. If you know people who have recently moved to your school or neighborhood, how could you help them feel welcome?

### ACTIVITY

Visit an animal shelter in your town. Volunteer some time to help feed the animals there. As you feed each one, speak in a kind voice to let them know you are there to help, not hurt them. Notice how they react. You may have to spend a longer time with some animals before they begin to trust you. When you get home, share your experiences with your family.

## CHAPTER 8 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What do you think it means to trust your feelings?
2. What helps you sort out what your feelings really are?  
Does it help to talk with friends or a trusted adult?  
Do you like to go somewhere quiet where you can be alone to think?  
Does something else work better for you?
3. When someone says or does something that embarrasses or startles you, how do you react?
4. Have you ever said or done something that embarrassed or startled someone else?  
What did you do about it?  
What did you wish you had done about it?
5. When adults in your life discipline you, do they give you one chance to obey as Margaret did for Buster?  
If not, what do they do?
6. Belle recognized that she could not control what Jim did, but she could control the way she acted. Have you ever realized that you can't change someone else, but you can change the way you act and think about that person?  
If so, how did that change your relationship with the other person?
7. Have you ever had a dream that you thought was real?  
If so, how did it affect you?

## ACTIVITY

Think about one strong opinion you have about someone or something. For example, you may have the opinion that people who wear mustaches are strange or not as good as you are simply because men in your family don't wear mustaches. Keep track of your opinions and how they change over time.



## CHAPTER 9 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Jim was afraid Belle would bite someone again because Belle bit Jim earlier. Have you ever made a mistake, after which people stopped trusting you because they thought would make the same mistake again?  
If so, how does it feel when people don't trust you?  
How do you think other people feel when you don't trust them?
2. Darcy didn't like it when Jim called her Skinny Bones. When she explained her feelings, and Jim agreed to stop calling her that name. Have you ever politely asked someone to stop doing something to you or calling you a name you didn't like?  
If so, what happened?  
If someone asked you not to treat them in a certain way, how would you respond?
3. If Darcy had gotten mad at Jim for calling her Skinny Bones instead of handling it in the polite but firm way she did, what do you think would have happened?
4. Jim didn't have much experience with animals or kids, so he didn't know how to treat them. Sometimes people say and do things that hurt us because they don't know any better. Has something like that ever happened to you?  
If so, how did you react?
5. Belle didn't realize that Buster had been forced to live with so many different people. Sometimes we don't know the difficult experiences others have had because they seem so well adjusted now. If Buster had let himself hold a grudge against the people who didn't want him, do you think he could have been as happy and well adjusted as he is now?  
How do your attitudes about your past experiences affect you?
6. Belle thought no animal ever got out of the pound alive. She discovered she was wrong. Have you ever worried about something you later learned wasn't so bad after all?  
If you feel comfortable doing so, tell about one of those worries.

## ACTIVITY

The next time someone does something to you that makes you upset, stop and ask yourself if the person did it on purpose. Give yourself time to think it over before you react. Keep a bank in your bedroom. Every time you realize that someone didn't intend to hurt you, drop a quarter into the bank. At the end of one week, count how many quarters you have collected. Use the money in a way that makes you happy.

## CHAPTER 10 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Belle uses her nose to interpret how people feel. What ways do you use to understand how people are feeling?
  
2. At first, Belle was afraid to put her paw in Bob's big hand. Then when she tried it, she discovered it was safe. Have you ever been afraid to do something, then discovered it wasn't so bad after all?  
If you feel comfortable talking about it, describe your experience.
  
2. When Bob offered Belle a pretzel, she didn't know what it was, and she wasn't sure she would like it. When she tasted it, she discovered it was good. Have you ever been afraid to try something because it was new?  
What happened when you tried it?
  
3. When Belle heard Margaret rattling soda bottles in the kitchen, she got scared because the humans she once had been around threw bottles when they got mad. Have you ever had something scare you so much that you wanted to run away when you heard sounds associated with that experience?  
If so, how did you deal with that fear?
  
4. While Belle watched the people play volleyball, she was confused when they joked with each other. She thought they might be starting a fight. How can you tell the difference between when people are joking with each other and when they are mad?
  
4. Belle thought people might be fighting instead of joking because she had never been around humans who treated each other nicely. What can you do to help animals or people who have not experienced much kindness?
  
5. When Belle tried to lick the top of a soda bottle, Darcy told her not to because soda was not good for dogs. Belle knew that Darcy was trying to protect her so she backed away from the bottle. Can you tell how a person feels about you when they tell you to stay away from something? What clues do to tell how they feel about you?
  
6. It made Belle feel good to know that she made the humans in her life happy. It helped her want to be their pet. Do you have a pet that makes you happy?  
What is it about the way that makes you happy?
  
7. If you have a pet, does your pet act like it's happy to be around you? What does your pet do that lets you know it is happy to have you for an owner?

## ACTIVITY

On a sheet of paper make two columns. In the first column, list all the animals and people in your life that you make happy. In the second column list the ways in which you make them happy.

On the other side of the paper also make two columns. In the first column, list all the animals and people who make you happy. In the second column list the ways in which they make you happy. Compare the lists and discuss your findings with someone you trust.



## CHAPTER 11 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think dogs wear tags on their collars?
2. Belle felt excited to see Misty and Painter again even though she had only met them once. Have you met people with whom you felt very comfortable to be around even after knowing them for only a short time? Why do you think you feel so comfortable around those people?
3. Leashes help dogs not to run off and to stay near their owners. What rules do you follow that help you stay safe?
4. Have you ever taught a dog to walk on a leash? What was the experience like for you?
5. Belle loved to roll in the grass with her new animal and human friends nearby. Do you have a place that makes you feel happy and relaxed? Describe one thing about the place that makes you like it.



## ACTIVITY

Plan an outing for you and your family and one or two other families with whom you like to spend time. Pack a picnic lunch and find a place outside to enjoy nature while you play and eat together. Tell each other one thing you like about spending time together

## CHAPTER 12 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever tried to help a friend who didn't realize danger was near? How did you feel?
2. Belle wished she were bigger so she could protect her new friends. Have you ever wished you were bigger than you are or smaller than you are? Would being bigger or being smaller help you?
3. What are some advantages of being different than you are now? What are some advantages of staying just the way you are?
4. Big Toby held a grudge against Darcy for what happened during their meeting at the gas station. Have you ever held a grudge against someone? If so, how did you handle it?
5. Has anyone done something to get even with you because they held a grudge against you? If so, what did they do, and how did you respond?
6. When Belle thought there was nothing she could do to help Darcy, she said, "It's one thing to feel something. It's another to be able to respond to it." What do you think she meant?



## ACTIVITY

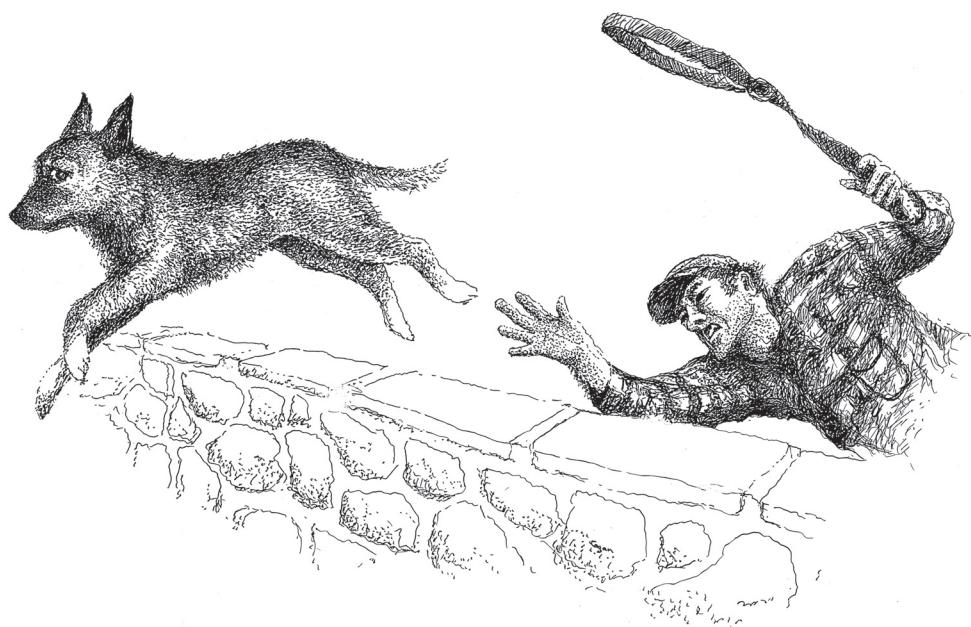
Draw pictures of at least three people you have sometimes wished to be. On each picture write why you want to be like that. Draw another picture of yourself and write on that picture all the reasons why you like being just the way you are.

## **CHAPTER 13 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. Have you ever had to come to the defense of someone who was being mistreated? If so, how did you feel about it?
2. Belle used her herding skills to help save Darcy. Everyone has at least one skill they can use to help others. What is one skill that you have?
3. In school there are rules about not fighting. Is there ever a time when it's okay to fight?
4. Are there ways other than fighting to handle a situation in which you are attacked? What could you do instead of fighting?
5. Belle realized she loved Darcy when Darcy demanded that Bonehead and Big Toby give Belle back to her. When in your life have you realized that you loved someone?
6. Have animals ever helped you?  
If so, how?

## **ACTIVITY**

Talk with your teacher, principal and fellow students about bullies. Come up with some ideas to help feel safe from bullies at school. Then work to put those ideas into practice.



## **CHAPTER 14 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. Jim showed he was pleased with Belle for saving Darcy by scratching her behind her ears. How do you show people you are pleased with what they did?
2. How do you think Belle felt when Jim scratched her behind her ears? How do you think Jim felt when Belle let him scratch her?
3. Belle helped Darcy without biting anyone, an accomplishment for her because biting used to be her defense against things that scared her. What kinds of behaviors have you learned to overcome as you discover better ways of dealing with your fears?
4. Misty told Belle not to nip her when they played. Belle listened to Misty and left her alone. If people tell you not to play with them in a certain way, what do you do? Have you ever told someone not to play with you in a certain way? If so, what happened and how did you feel about it?
5. Jim wanted to be nice to Belle, but he didn't know how. Do you know some people who want to be your friend but just don't know how to do it? How do you treat them?
6. Why do you think Belle was so proud of her new tag?
7. Why do you think a star was a good shape for Belle's tag?

## **ACTIVITY**

Create a tag you would like your pet to have. Think about a shape for the tag that has meaning for your pet. Think about what you want to put on the tag. Sometimes people include the pet's name and the owner's name, address and phone number. Then contact your local pet store to see where you can get the tag made. When the tag is made, put it on your pet's collar. Now if your pet gets lost, people will know how to contact you.