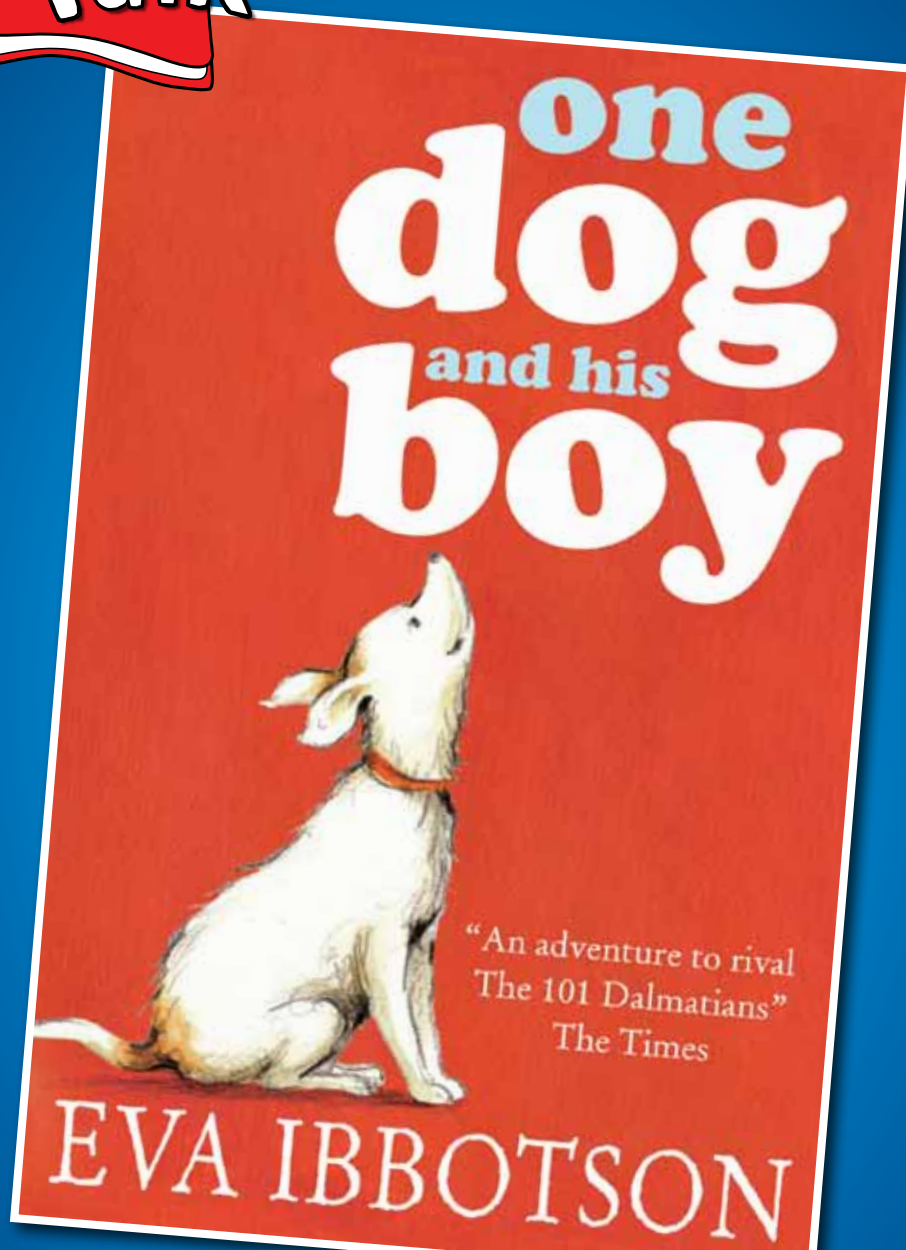


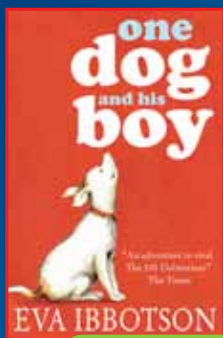
 SCHOLASTIC

**Book
Talk**



AGES 8+

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AGES 8+

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| Price | £4.99 / €5.80 |
| Case | Read On |
| Author | Eva Ibbotson |
| Illustrator | Sharon Rentta |
| Publisher | Marion Lloyd Books an imprint of Scholastic Children's Books |

Using this book in your classroom

Themes

This exciting, funny and very moving story deals with themes of **courage** and **love** – love between **parents** and **children**, between **friends** and, most of all, between **people and dogs**.

Summary

Hal's parents are rich, and they keep on buying him things – but the only thing he has ever really wanted is a dog. A dog, however, is completely out of the question as far as his parents are concerned. For his tenth birthday, Hal's parents reluctantly decide to *hire* a dog for him. They don't tell Hal that the dog is only on hire, and Hal is blissfully unaware that Fleck, the most perfect dog he can imagine, has to go back to Easy Pets after the weekend. Fleck and Hal form a strong bond in the very short time they have together, and when Fleck is bundled back to Easy Pets, both are heartbroken.

Hal realises that his parents lied to him, and feels that he can never trust them again. So, when the opportunity arises, he secretly goes back to Easy Pets to get Fleck back. Hal decides to run away with Fleck to his grandparents in Northumberland. But getting from London to Northumberland is not straightforward for a boy and his dog on the run – particularly when Hal finds that Fleck is not the only dog to have escaped from Easy Pets that day!

They manage to hitch a ride north with a travelling circus, but things become very difficult when Hal's distraught parents put out an advert offering a sizeable reward for information about Hal. When they finally make it to Hal's grandparents' house, Hal is reconciled with his parents. At last, it is clear even to them that Hal and Fleck have to be together! So there is a happy ending for everyone – including the other escaped dogs, who each find their perfect owner during the journey north.

Did you know?

- Eva Ibbotson was born in Vienna but left Austria for Britain as a child, in 1933, as her Jewish family needed to escape the Nazi regime.
- *One Dog and His Boy* is Eva Ibbotson's last book, as she died aged 85, just before it was published.



The Story Session

1. Introducing the book

- Encourage the children to share their experiences of looking after and loving pets. Have any of the children owned a dog? What are the good and bad things about having a dog for a pet?
- Ask the children to talk about pets in pairs, and encourage children who are pet-owners to try to explain to their partner how they feel about their pets. Children who don't have pets could talk about the type of pet they would want to have if they could, and explain why.
- Read Chapter 1 out loud, and ask the children how they feel about Hal's parents. Do they think Hal's father is right that he will be bored with the hire dog by the time it has to go back to Easy Pets? How do they think Hal will feel when he finds out? Are Hal's parents deliberately tricking him? Talk about how little Hal's parents seem to understand him. Why do the children think this is?

2. Reading the story

- Read Chapter 2. Why do the children think the author decided to move away from Hal and his family at this point and introduce the dogs at Easy Pets? Does this make the children want to read on to find out what will happen next?
- Encourage the children to predict which dog Hal might choose. Do they think it will be Fleck? Share predictions about what might happen when Hal comes to Easy Pets.
- The children could read the rest of the story independently or as a class. Pause after each chapter to talk about how Hal is feeling and why – the story takes Hal on an emotional rollercoaster!
- After Chapter 5, share the children's ideas about what might happen next for Hal, Pippa and the dogs – will they manage to find lifts to take them to Northumberland? What dangers might they meet? Do the children think Hal's parents will have missed him yet? What might happen when they do?
- At the start of Chapter 6, do the children think it's significant that almost the first thing Hal's parents do when they know he's missing is to send out for huge amounts of cash to pay off potential kidnappers? Talk about how for Hal's parents, money seems to have replaced love.
- At the end of the book, talk about how the author resolves the story so satisfyingly, with a happy ending for everyone who deserves it. What messages do the children think the author might have been trying to give readers with this story? Lots of responses are possible – encourage the children to explain their thoughts.

3. Follow-up

- What lessons do the children think Hal's mother and father learned during the story? Will Hal's life be different now? The children could write a page from Hal's diary describing his new life with Fleck and his parents, after the end of the story.
- What adventures do the children think the other dogs will have in their new lives? They could choose their favourite dog from the story and either act out or write a short story about what the dog gets up to next.
- There are lots of websites where children could do some research about what it's like to have a dog as a pet, or about different breeds of dog – for example, www.dailyuppy.com or www.justdogbreeds.com.

YOU TELL US

- Did you use these notes to have a Book Talk in class?
- Were they helpful?
- Are there any changes you'd like to see to make them more useful?

We're always happy to hear your comments, so please email us at bookfairs@scholastic.co.uk (UK) or bookfairs@scholastic.ie (Republic of Ireland).