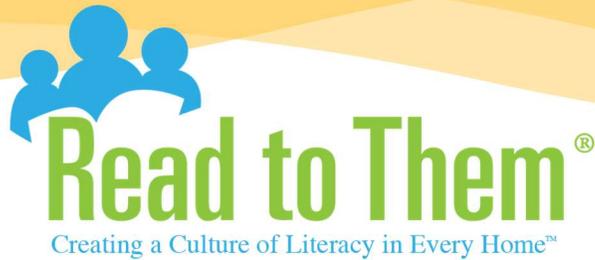


Discussion Questions for
Dog Days (2013)
by Karen English

Chapter One – It Was an Accident! (pp. 1-17)

1. Gavin has just moved to a new town and school. What do you think would be some of the pros and cons of moving? How do you think Gavin feels about moving to a new place?
2. What are some things you and your classmates could do to welcome a new student to your school?
3. Gavin does not have the video games Richard likes to play because his mother has different rules. How do you feel when your friends' parents have different rules than your parents?
4. When Gavin tells Richard he has the game *Animal Incredible*, the author says that “Richard looks at Gavin as if he’s grown a third eye.” (p. 3) What does this mean?
5. Danielle is always pointing out that Gavin’s ears are too big for his head, and Gavin feels that everyone has a feature that can be improved upon. Which of your own physical features do you wish were different?
6. Danielle hides her candy under her bed so that Gavin won’t find it, but it doesn’t work. If you had something important to hide in your room, where would you hide it so that no one would find it?
7. Danielle’s most prized possession is the snow globe she got in New York City. What is your most prized possession, and why is it so special to you? How would you feel if a sibling broke it?
8. Do you think Gavin and Richard will be punished? Think about a time when you made a mistake. What did you do and how were you punished? Did you feel your punishment was fair?

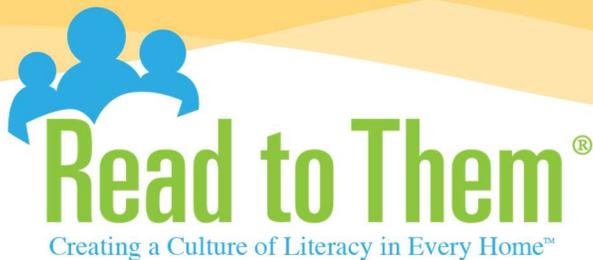


Chapter Two – Eat Those Peas! (pp. 18-28)

9. When Gavin’s family has company, Gavin is expected to be extra polite and use good table manners. Are you expected to act differently when you have guests? Do you have to help prepare for their arrival? Do you enjoy having house guests? Why or why not? Do you have relatives whose visit you dread?
10. What are three words you would use to describe Aunt Myrtle? Do you think you would like having Aunt Myrtle visit your house? Why or why not?
11. Gavin despises peas, and they make him gag. What is a food that you despise? Do you think it is fair that Aunt Myrtle is stepping in and making him eat forkfuls of his peas?
12. Aunt Myrtle suggests that Gavin walk her dog to earn money to pay for replacing Danielle’s snow globe. Do you think this is an appropriate consequence? Why or why not?
13. As Gavin tries to choke down his peas, he thinks to himself: *Mind over matter*. What does this mean? Do you think it could help you in a difficult situation?
14. Do you think it is right of Aunt Myrtle to insist Carlotta be allowed to stay inside despite the fact that Gavin’s mother does not like animals in the house?

Chapter Three –Problems, Problems, Problems (pp. 29-38)

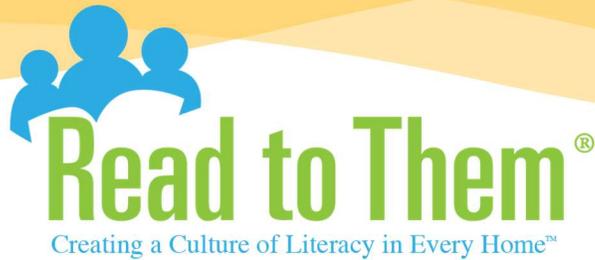
15. Why do you think Aunt Myrtle is so attached to Carlotta? What do you think Carlotta’s life is like back home at Myrtle and Vestor’s house?
16. Gavin wishes Carlotta was a “real dog” (p. 32) – something way bigger that could be a true friend. Do you think big dogs make better pets than smaller dogs? What kind of dog breed would you get if you had the choice? Or, would you prefer a different type of pet?
17. Gavin says that his new teacher does not yet know that he’s great at his times tables, soccer, and skateboarding. What are three things you would want your new teacher to know about you if you moved to a new school?
18. Gavin’s new teacher has a hyphenated last name, and Deja says she is not going to take her husband’s last name at all when she gets married. How do you feel about this?



19. Gavin’s teacher has the class sitting in cooperative groups. Do you enjoy sitting in cooperative groups, or would you rather sit at a desk away from your other classmates?
20. The winning table in Ms. Shelby-Ortiz’s class gets to pick a prize from the grab bag at the end of the month. If you could tell your teacher a few items you would like to see in the grab bag, what would they be?
21. Lots of classrooms have behavior management systems like Ms. Shelby-Ortiz’s room. Do you think they are effective in changing behavior? Are there better ways?
22. Antonia says that she doesn’t like the presents her grandmother gets her and would prefer she just give her the money. Ms. Shelby-Ortiz says it would be rude of her to ask her grandmother to do that. Do you agree with Ms. Shelby-Ortiz? Why or why not?
23. Gavin wonders why teachers always say “let’s” and “we” and “our” like they have to do the assignments too, when they don’t. Do you agree with him? Even though teachers don’t have to do the homework, what hard work do they have to do in order to perform their job well?
24. Gavin’s class has to write in their journals about problems they have in their life. What problems are you facing in your life right now? Would you like to write about them in a journal? Or is there a different way you would like to express your feelings?
25. Why do you think Richard keeps saying, “But I said ‘Catch’” (p. 38)?

Chapter Four –On the Job, Day One (pp. 39-54)

26. What do you think of the outfit Carlotta is wearing? Do you think dog owners should dress up their dogs? If you had a dog, what kind of clothes would you put on it? How do you think dogs feel about wearing clothes?
27. Gavin is instructed to use a plastic bag when Carlotta “does her business.” (p. 41) Do you think it is important for dog owners to pick up their dog’s poop when on walks? Do you think it should be a law?
28. Gavin has difficulty reading Aunt Myrtle’s instructions because they are written in cursive handwriting. Do you think that it is important in this day and age for students to continue to learn how to read and write cursive handwriting? Why or why not?



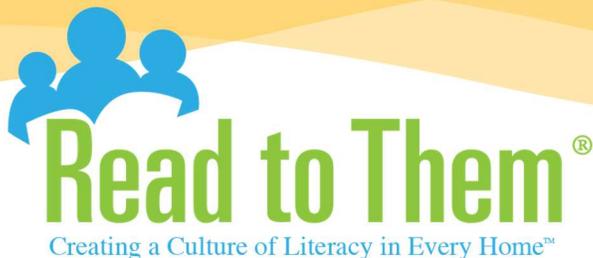
29. Gavin is very intimidated by Darnell, Gregory, and Harper. Are you intimidated by older kids?
30. What kind of friend is Richard? Use evidence from the text to support your answer. Do you think he makes a good friend for Gavin? Why or why not?
31. Why does Gavin feel as though he “can’t win” (p. 54) with his aunt?

Chapter Five – Where’s Carlotta’s Chew-Chew? (pp. 55-71)

32. Gavin is irritated with Richard for his lack of loyalty and decides to not talk to him for a while. Do you think this is a good solution? Why or why not? What would you have done?
33. Ever since Aunt Myrtle started staying with Gavin’s family, his mother has had a lot of things to do away from home, like volunteer work. Why do you think this is?
34. Gavin is disappointed that he doesn’t get to have wheat crackers and jam for his after school snack for the second day in a row. What is your favorite after school snack?
35. Gavin thinks that sometimes grownups forget that kids have feelings too. Do you agree with this? Why or why not? Can you think of an example of a time when you felt that a grownup did not think about your feelings?
36. Do you think Gavin should have tied Carlotta to the bike rack while he rode his skateboard with Richard? Why or why not?
37. Skateboarding gives Gavin a wonderful feeling of freedom. What hobby or activity makes you feel this way?
38. Why do you think Yankee’s owner lies and says Carlotta’s chew toy belongs to his dog?

Chapter Six – Harper and the Sticky Fingers (pp. 72-87)

39. Gavin’s teacher wrote *Open Topic* on the whiteboard during journal time, meaning they could write about anything they wanted. Would you like to have an open topic, or would you prefer that your teacher give you something specific to write about? What would you write about if you were given an open topic?



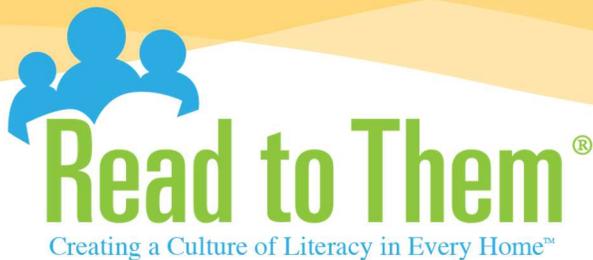
40. Gavin thinks that grownups never have to learn lessons and that it's not fair. Do you think this is true? What are some lessons grown-ups have to learn?
41. Gavin gets upset when Deja takes away his journal before he was finished writing. How does it make you feel when you aren't allowed to finish something like that?
42. Gavin thinks that Harper is getting a reputation as someone to stay away from. What is a reputation? What are some examples of positive and negative reputations?
43. What would you have done if you had been in Gavin's situation and were getting bullied by Harper? What would you have done if you had been one of the students watching?
44. Do you think getting a replacement toy for Carlotta was a good idea? Why or why not?
45. Do you think Gavin should have told Mr. D about Harper stealing from his store? Why or why not? What would you have done if you were in that situation?
46. Aunt Myrtle thinks that maybe Carlotta has outgrown her toy when she turns her head away from the new toy Gavin bought. What is a toy that you used to play with all the time that you have now outgrown?

Chapter Seven – Harper's Not Happy (pp. 88-98)

47. Gavin tells himself that there is a light at the end of the tunnel. What does that mean?
48. Harper was "benched" (p. 91) during recess for not doing his homework. Do you think students who misbehave or don't do their homework should lose their recess? Why or why not? What other punishments could be used instead?
49. Why do you think the tall kid with the dog named Yankee helped Gavin when he was being bullied by Harper? Why were his actions so surprising?

Chapter Eight – Where Did Carlotta Go? (pp. 99-112)

50. Gavin's mom makes French toast every Friday. Do you have any traditions like that in your family? What is your favorite breakfast treat?
51. Gavin looks forward to Fridays because of spelling tests, no homework, and staying up for an extra hour. What do you enjoy about the weekends?



52. Find two pieces of evidence from this chapter that show that Gavin is starting to like Carlotta.
53. Aunt Myrtle is so upset about Carlotta that she can't eat. How would you feel if your pet was missing?

Chapter Nine – Is That Carlotta? (pp. 113-122)

54. Did you feel sorry for Nikki when she learned she couldn't keep Carlotta? Do you think Nikki would make a good pet owner? Why or why not?
55. Gavin felt like a hero when he found Carlotta. Have you ever had a time when you felt like a hero? What did you do?
56. What do you think Gavin will do with his extra ten dollars?
57. What were the three miracles that Gavin felt happened that Saturday?

End of the Book

58. Would you recommend this book to a classmate? Why or why not?
59. How did Gavin change from the beginning of the book to the end?
60. Did this book make you want to have a pet? Why or why not?
61. Do you think Gavin will have any more problems with Harper? If so, what do you think he could do to make the situation better?
62. Tell about an event in the story that made you sad, happy, relieved, or worried.
63. If you had to read aloud one page in this story, which page would it be and why?
64. Were you satisfied with the ending of this story? Why or why not?
65. What was your favorite line in this story?
66. How have YOU changed as a result of reading this story?