



My Dog the Dinosaur

Written by Jackie French

Illustrated by Stephen Michael King

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Synopsis

Gunk's dad wears fluffy chicken slippers. His sister, Fliss, is into weightlifting and his mum is searching for aliens. Gunk has Spot, his pet dog ... or is it? (A dog, that is.) Spot has a long neck, a flat tail and eats lettuce. Lots of it. Come to think of it, Spot is the silliest-looking dog Gunk has ever seen. Spot is scared of cats, too, and Fliss's motorbike. And then Spot starts to grow ...

Will Spot ever learn how to bark? What strange secret does Pete, the girl next door, keep in her shed? Can Gunk teach Spot to like dog food? Or will everyone in the world want to take Spot away when they find out that he isn't really a dog?

Ages: 7–10 years

About the Author

Jackie French is a full-time writer who lives in rural NSW. She writes fiction and non-fiction for children and adults, and has columns in the print media. Jackie is regarded as one of Australia's most popular children's authors. In 2000, Jackie won the Children's Book Council's Younger Readers' Award for *Hitler's Daughter*. In 2002, she won the ACT Book of the Year Award for *In the Blood*. Her bestselling picture book *Diary of a Wombat* was named an Honour Book in the 2003 CBC Awards and won the ABA Book of the Year, as well as numerous other awards in Australia and overseas. Most recently, *To the Moon and Back*, co-written with her husband Bryan Sullivan, won the 2005 Eve Pownall Award for Information Books.

About the Illustrator

Stephen's first picture book, *The Man Who Loved Boxes*, was nominated for the Crichton Award for illustration, was the winner of the inaugural Family Award and was selected for Pick of the List (US). He has since illustrated over 20 books, and has been shortlisted five times for the Children's Book Council Awards. In 2002, he won both the YABBA and Koala children's choice awards for *Pocket Dogs*.

All About Wacky Families

Jackie thinks that all families are wacky ... in their own way.

- What do you think is special about your family?
- Is everyone in your family human? Can an animal really be a member of a family?

All about Dinosaurs

- Dinosaurs are 'extinct'. Explain what this means.
- What sort of dinosaur is Spot? Where did his ancestors live? How long ago?
- What other dinosaurs were around then? What did Spot's ancestors eat in those days?
- Are there any dinosaurs that you think would be fun to have around today? What are they?
- How would YOU look after a pet dinosaur? Would you rather have a dog or a dinosaur for a pet?
- Gunk gets Spot from the pound. What other animals are kept at the pound? Why are animals kept there? Where is your local pound? Who looks after it?
- What other unusual pets could you have?

Activities and Discussion

1. In what ways did Spot stand out from the other dogs at the pound? (pp. 3–4) Gunk knew at once that Spot was the dog for him. Do you think that people choose dogs to match their own personalities?
2. On Spot's first night in Gunk's home, how could Gunk tell that Spot was lonely? (p. 13) Discuss some of the ways that dogs (and cats) communicate with people without using speech.
3. Where did Spot deposit her 'green gloop', upsetting Mum, Dad and Fliss? (pp. 16–18) New puppies and kittens need a lot of looking after. What are some of the problems you might have as the owner of a puppy or kitten?

4. Why did Pete think that Spot's fear of Mrs Fluffytum was a mark of intelligence? (pp. 23–24) List some animal behaviours that we take for granted (for example, cats chase mice). Do animals always behave in predictable ways? Choose an animal and write a brief report on its behaviour.
5. Why did Spot dash onto the football field in the middle of the championship game? (pp. 35–37) Dogs can be very protective of their owners or their owners' belongings. Use the Internet to find some examples of dogs that have shown amazing courage or loyalty. Record your findings.
6. Discuss Pete's reason for keeping the contents of her shed a secret. (pp. 51–52) Do you think she was wise to be secretive? How did she decide that it was safe to trust Gunk? Is it necessary to be like everyone else to be accepted at school?
7. Explain how Gunk and Pete tried to overcome the problem of Spot's refusal to bark. (pp. 65–72) What difficulties did they encounter? Make a list of the special roles for which dogs can be trained. Research one of these roles, for example, a guide dog, and present a talk on your findings.
8. How were the bank robbers able to take Gunk as a hostage? (pp. 84–85) What is a hostage? In what way might Gunk have been useful to the bank robbers?
9. How was Pete able to prove that Spot and Gunk could never be separated? (pp. 97–98) By the end of the story, Gunk and Pete had also become close. Describe how their friendship developed. Without Spot, do you think they would ever have become friends? Explain your answer.
10. What were Pete and Gunk's future plans for Spot? (pp. 103–106) Why do you think Dad fainted when he heard them? Write a further chapter for the book entitled *Two Years Later*.