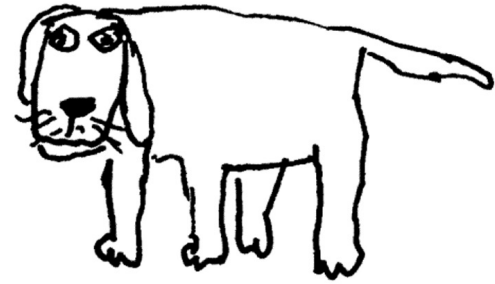


LOVE THAT DOG

BOOKTALK



"I don't want to," begins Jack, the narrator of *Love That Dog*. "Can't do it. / Brain's empty." Jack's story is told as a narrative poem: It chronicles how a boy learns to write but also poignantly illustrates his love for his dog, his growing admiration for words and images, and his relationship with Miss Stretchberry, the teacher who helps him believe he might really have something to say. In a voice that's sometimes irreverent and always accessible, Sharon Creech explores what makes a poem and what makes a poet, inspiring readers to believe that they can write something that "is really / a poem / really really / and a good poem, too."



GRADES 3-7

DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. In his first journal entry, Jack says that "boys / don't write poetry." Do you agree? What kind of a person do you picture when you imagine a poet?
2. Jack's beliefs about poetry change throughout the year. What do you believe about poems? What makes something a poem? How are poems different than stories and other kinds of writing?
3. When he's first learning to write poetry, Jack borrows a lot of ideas from other poets' works. Why? Does borrowing from others help him to develop his own style? Where do you draw the line between being inspired by someone else and copying his or her work?
4. Jack feels nervous about having his work displayed in the classroom. Why does he want his early poems to be anonymous? How does he expect his classmates to react? Do you ever have a hard time sharing your work? Why?
5. Jack is enchanted with how Walter Dean Myers's voice sounds when he reads aloud. What makes someone good at reading out loud? Try reading aloud your favorite poem from *Love That Dog*. How does it sound different from when you read it in your head?
6. Look back at Jack's poems about his dog, Sky. How do these poems build on each other? How does Jack reuse his own words, and where can you find lines that were inspired by other poets?
7. Jack wants to cut the final four lines of his poem from January 24th. Why? Do you think the poem is stronger with the final lines or without? Explain.
8. What makes Miss Stretchberry a good teacher? How does she teach? What kinds of things do you imagine that she writes in Jack's journal? What does she do to build Jack's confidence?
9. Which of Jack's poems is your favorite? How does it make you feel? Describe Jack's writing style and compare it with your own.
10. Are you at all similar to Jack? Discuss Jack's growth as a reader and as a writer using quotes from the book. Which one of his statements about poetry most echoes your own feelings?

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