

Grade 3: Unit 1, Week 5 People and Their Pets

Read Aloud: **The Dog Walker** by P.A. Grossman

Wonderful Words: *assertive, bashful, crouch, conventional, deliberate*

The Dogwalker

“How can you be so shy?” Maria asked her brother. “You have to take your talent out to the world, so that it can be discovered. You have to promote yourself, Tony! You have to be more assertive so that people will take notice of you.”

“You’re assertive enough for both of us,” Tony replied. They were in their family’s garage, where Tony had just performed a pantomime for some neighborhood children. Now the children were gone, and Tony wiped the white stage makeup off his face. “And anyway, I bet all the famous mimes, like Marcel Marceau, were bashful. If they wanted to talk, they’d have become big-mouthed actors!”

“Okay, so you’re shy. I’ll be your manager,” offered Maria.

Tony could hardly believe that Maria was his little sister, two years younger than he. Wasn’t big brother supposed to be guiding her?”

“The town’s annual Talent Discovery Contest is coming up. I’m going to sign up,” said Maria. “You’ll have two weeks to rehearse, and I’ll manage your act. You don’t have a thing to be concerned about. You’ll be discovered and your career will blossom. You’ll move to Hollywood or New York or Europe. Then you can buy me a stable of horses and a private wildlife refuge!”

“You are really off your rocker,” Tony told his sister. He knew that Maria loved animals, but he told her, “You are not going to use my talent to get yourself some

animals. I don't want to be in the talent show." He put his jar of theater makeup back on the shelf and stomped inside.

"But you have a responsibility to your talent!" called Maria, chasing after him. She got inside his room before he could close the door. "Come on, Tony, you told me you were working on a new pantomime. Let me see it."

Tony looked at his sister. Despite the fact that he had just taken off his make-up, he could not resist the opportunity to show her his new routine. "Okay," he said, "it's called The Dogwalker."

Maria knew the title was only for Tony's private use. Mimes do not tell the audience the titles of their skits. The whole point is for the mime to act out all the gestures of a particular situation without ever saying a word. It is up to the audience to interpret what they were acting out.

Tony started by crouching down. He made some motions to show that he was trying to get a collar around a very small dog. Then he lurched backward and fell to the ground. Maria laughed. She could tell from Tony's expression that a much larger dog had knocked him down. Tony got up, but it was clear that the small dog had gotten away. He went after it. As he tried to catch it, he had to keep turning back to motion the big dog to stop jumping on him. For a few minutes, Tony struggled to get collars and leashes on both dogs.

Finally, both dogs were ready to go. For a moment, Tony just calmly walked them along. Suddenly, he was jerked to one side by the big dog. It had apparently seen another dog and was barking. Maria could tell he was barking because Tony's hand that held the big dog's leash started bobbing up and down. Finally, Tony got the big dog under control.

But after just a few more normal steps, the little dog stopped in its tracks. Tony tugged and tugged at the leash, but the little dog would not budge. Meanwhile, the big dog grew impatient. He began to circle around Tony and the little dog, entwining them in his leash.

Before Tony was even finished, Maria burst into applause. “If you do exactly that routine on the night of the Discovery Contest,” she advised, “you won’t have a thing to worry about.”

Talent Discovery Night was so popular that all the seats in the town hall were filled. Tony had butterflies in his stomach as he waited for the show to start. But Maria had assured him that he was bound to be discovered by the important talent scouts she knew for a fact were in the audience.

Tony’s act, number 23, was third to the last in a long line of talent acts. He watched all the other contestants perform as he waited for his turn. There was a boy who painted still life pictures with a giant brush attached to his back, a girl who could twirl two Hula-Hoops in opposite directions at the same time, and a double-jointed young man called The Human Bridge who bent from his back and walked along on his hands and feet. There were more conventional acts, too, such as guitar players and dancers, and a woman who sang a piece from an opera.

When Tony finally got to perform, his pantomime was greeted by much laughter and applause. He left the stage feeling that he had done his best, but he didn’t know if he had a chance of winning the competition.

Following the final two acts, the jury gathered at the back of the theater to deliberate.

When they returned, the audience became perfectly quiet. The head juror, a retired Shakespearean actress, cleared her throat.

Maria smiled confidently at Tony from her seat in the front row, but he was too nervous to smile back. Then came the decision: the winner was a 14-year-old jazz dancer.

Tony bowed his head for a moment, but then he rushed forward to congratulate the winner. He didn't hear the judges call his own name as a Special Honorary Mention. But the others heard it, and as they patted him on the back he turned beet red and could not stop blushing all night.

The next day, it took Maria a while to get over her disappointment that no Hollywood agents had come forward with offers to make her brother a star. "Next year, we'll win," she said at last. "Don't you worry, they'll discover the greatest mime in history before too long."

Tony just smiled at his little sister and opened the door to his room so the present waiting inside could rush out and lick Maria's face. The little dog he had gotten her as a thank-you present looked just like the one in the pantomime would look, if it were real.

assertive

Define: When people are **assertive**, they speak up for themselves in a confident way.

Example: Janet was very **assertive** while speaking about her accomplishments at the job interview.

Ask: Name a situation in which you might need to be **assertive**.

bashful

Define: When someone is **bashful**, he or she is shy.

Example: On the first day of school, the **bashful** child hid behind his mother.

Ask: When is a time you might be **bashful**?

crouch

Define: To **crouch** is to bend low.

Example: Dad **crouched** so I could whisper a secret into his ear.

Ask: If you need to reach something, do you stand on a chair or do you **crouch**? Why?

conventional

Define: When something is **conventional** it is an accepted way of doing or acting.

Example: After playing the piano with his toes, Ben's instructor asked him to play in a more **conventional** way.

Ask: Which sandwich is more **conventional**—peanut butter and pickles or peanut butter and jelly? Why?

deliberate

Define: To **deliberate** is to think carefully and slowly.

Example: My group **deliberated** for an hour about how to create our social studies project.

Ask: What things might you **deliberate** about as a group?