

Love That Dog

Recommended for Grades 4-8

Book Summary: Love That Dog

Written as a series of journal entries, we meet a boy named Jack. Jack thinks poetry is for girls. With some encouragement from his teacher, he begins to write his own poems. As time passes, he goes from not wanting anyone to know he wrote the poems to offering advice on how to best format the poems for the class to read.

[SPOILER] Influenced by one of his favorite writers, Walter Dean Meyers, Jack writes a special poem about the death of his dog. He becomes so passionate about poetry that he writes to Walter Dean Myers and convinces him to visit his school. In the end, Jack has discovered that he really enjoys reading and writing poetry. He uses poetry to express his feelings. Just as he was inspired by many famous poets, his poems now inspire his fellow classmates. At the end of the book, we can read all those poems which Jack referred to in his journal.

Author Biography: Sharon Creech

Sharon Creech was born on July 29, 1945 in South Euclid, Ohio. Her rowdy family consisted of Mom, Dad, one sister, and three brothers. (A fictional account of what it was like in her family can be found in her book Absolutely Normal Chaos. In the summertime, her family would take a vacation to Wisconsin or Michigan. Once they went to Idaho, which became the basis of her book Walk Two Moons.

She received her Bachelor of Arts from Hiram College and a Master of Arts from George Mason University. In 1979, she moved to England. She worked as a high school English and writing teacher in both England and Switzerland.

As a teacher, she learned so much about writing that she began writing her own books. She wrote two books for adults which were published in England but are no longer in print. All her other books have been written for young adults and children. One of her most famous books is Walk Two Moons which won the Newbery Medal in 1995. Other well known books written by Sharon Creech include Bloomability, Ruby Holler, Heartbeat, The Wanderer (Newbery Honor recipient), Chasing Redbird, Absolutely Normal Chaos, and Love That Dog.

Sharon is married to Lyle Rigg, the headmaster of the Pennington School in Pennington, New Jersey. She has two grown children, Rob and Karin. She continues to write to this day.



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Discussion Questions: Love That Dog

1. This entire story is told using Jack's journal entries. How does this affect the story? How would the story have been different had it been told in a more traditional way?
2. What makes something a poem? Is it rhyme, formatting, or something else? Could anything be a poem? Why or why not?
3. Look at the poem 'My Yellow Dog' on page 37. Would you have called this a poem? Why or why not? Could you read this poem aloud to classmates or friends? Why or why not? Are some poems only meant to be read in your head and not read aloud?
4. We see Jack concerned about using too many words from a Walter Dean Myers poem in one of his own poems (pg. 49). His teacher seems to have said it is okay as long as he puts 'inspired by' after the title. How much do you have to change something before it is no longer copying? Is it the same when you are writing a report for school? Or are the rules different?
5. Jack writes, "If that is a poem about the red wheelbarrow and the white chickens then any words can be a poem. You've just got to make short lines" (page 3). Is that true? Is this entire story a bunch of poems? Or are only certain parts poems? How do you decide?
6. Why do some of the kids want to remain anonymous about writing their poems? What are the good parts about being anonymous? What are the bad parts?
7. Poems can evoke many different emotions. How did you feel after reading the poem on page 46? How did you feel after reading the poem on page 68? Which poem do you prefer? Why?
8. The poems that inspired Jack are printed at the end of the book. Which of those poems did you like best? Which inspired you the most? What did you like about it?
9. Do you think it would be easier to share your sad feelings with a poem or to tell someone? What's good and bad about sharing your feelings each way?



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