

A TEACHER'S GUIDE FOR

Forever Ripley

ABOUT THE BOOK

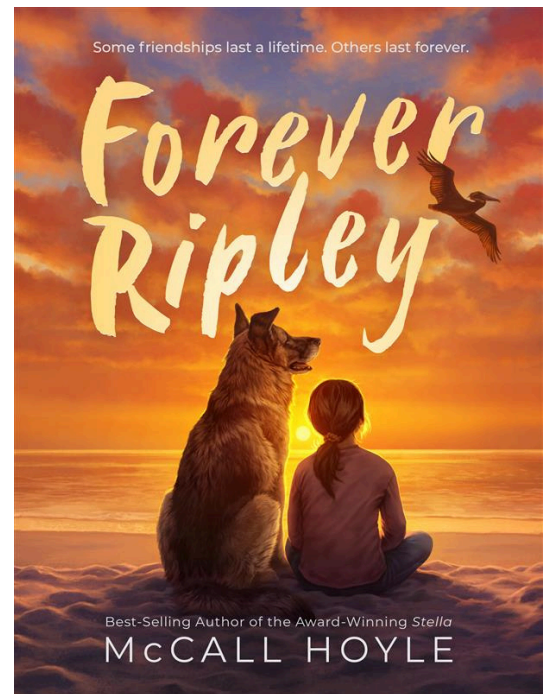
Told from the perspective of an old German Shepherd Dog, this deeply personal middle-grade story by award-winning novelist McCall Hoyle affirms the powerful and enduring relationship between dogs and humans.

Ripley has been trained to protect ever since she was a pup. As a German Shepherd Dog, she helped protect the wildlife refuge with Max, the best man Ripley has ever known. But that was before the accident. Before the pain of Max leaving. And before his last words: “Take care of the girls, Ripley.”

Ripley adores her girls, especially Charlie, more than anything, even peanut butter. But Ripley has been feeling the aches and pains that come with old age, and she knows her seasons are ending. Dogs do not have forever.

When the veterinarian confirms Ripley’s days are numbered, Charlie creates a bucket list to celebrate Ripley’s life, with ice cream in Nags Head, fried chicken from the Golden Skillet, and sandpiper chasing at the beach. In carrying out the bucket list, Ripley learns that though she can’t continue to protect her flock, she can love them into independence so Charlie can take care of herself, even in the face of bullies and trespassers who are threatening the wildlife refuge. And if Ripley can keep her promise, she just might be ready to leave her second great love, Charlie, to return to her first, Max.

Forever Ripley teaches important lessons about love, grief, growing into independence, and the peace that comes from having lived a flawed but loved-filled life.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



McCall Hoyle is an award-winning and best-selling author, a veteran teacher, and a former school librarian. When she grows up, she’d also like to be a professional dog trainer. She writes heartfelt books for kids of all ages and believes one of the best ways to spread hope and share her heart is by writing about the special bond between dogs and their humans. When McCall isn’t writing or teaching, you can find her with one of her four-legged friends training for agility, obedience, or dock diving—or perhaps chasing make-believe bunnies with them at a lure coursing event in the foothills of the North Georgia Mountains she calls home.

Forever Ripley



PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. Authors and artists use colors, words, pictures, and more to create a mood or feeling for a story or illustration. Good readers constantly make predictions about what will happen next in a book, often without even realizing they are doing it. With these ideas in mind, examine the cover of *Forever Ripley*. Pay careful attention to elements such as the colors, time of day, and scenery to predict what will happen to and between Charlie and Ripley in the story. Jot down your predictions. Share with a partner. If your teacher allows partners to share with the whole class, pay attention to similarities and differences on your classmates' lists.
2. Learning to talk about our feelings with someone we trust instead of keeping them bottled up inside is an important lesson in *Forever Ripley*. Think about a time when you were afraid to share your feelings with a friend, teacher, parent, sibling, or someone else. Why was it scary to share your feelings? If you did share, did you feel better or worse afterward? Explain.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When Charlie first meets Nathan, she does not like him very much. As they get to know each other better and learn more about each other, they realize they share some common interests and life experiences that bring them closer together. What are some of the common interests and experiences that bring them together? Have you ever had a similar experience with a new person? Explain.
2. Mr. Chen told Charlie the only way people can make “room inside [themselves] for all the good stuff in life is to shatter”—“to break wide open before [they] can heal.” Do you agree that there are some benefits to feeling sadness? Why, or why not? Use examples from your own life or from the book to support your answer.
3. The protagonist is the main character in a story. The main character in a story usually grows and changes more than any other character in the book, but in *Forever Ripley*, several characters grow and change a lot: Charlie, Ripley, Mom, even Nathan. Which character do you think grows and changes the most? Explain your answers with details from the story.
4. A shepherd is “a person who takes care of a flock of sheep by feeding them, leading them to water, and protecting them from predators and other dangers.” How do Ripley and Amelia, Charlie’s mom, shepherd Charlie in the first half of the book? Explain. Does Charlie ever protect her mother or Ripley? Explain.

5. If Ripley could speak and could give Charlie and Mom one last piece of advice before she left, what do you think she would tell them? Explain.
6. Good readers constantly make predictions, or smart guesses, about what will happen next in a story as they read. Now that you have finished reading *Forever Ripley*, what predictions can you make about Charlie and Mom's future life after the story ends? Explain.
7. An epigraph is "a quotation selected by an author and included at the beginning of a book to help readers better understand the tone, mood, or feeling of a book." Go back to the very beginning of *Forever Ripley*. Find the Helen Keller quotation. Explain what it means to you and also how you believe it applies to Charlie and Ripley's story.
8. Ripley says the swamp is as much a home to her as the house she lives in with Mom and Charlie. What do you think she means? Have you ever felt that connected to a place other than your actual home? Explain.
9. Ripley spent her early life as a working dog, helping Max protect the plants and animals in the swamp from rulebreakers. She spent the second half of her life as a family dog, protecting Charlie. Which work do you believe was more important? Explain, using examples from the book.
10. Most books have a theme or a big life lesson. There is not always just one correct answer. What do you think is the most important lesson or theme in *Forever Ripley*? What do you think Ripley would want readers to learn from her life?

ACTIVE READING THROUGH READING STRATEGIES

In addition to predicting, which you did before you started reading *Forever Ripley*, active readers use other strategies, often without realizing they are doing it, while reading.

1. **Visualizing:** Reread one of your favorite scenes in the book that does not have an illustration with it. Imagine the scene playing in your head like a movie. What do you see, hear, smell, taste, and feel as you view the movie in your head? Now draw a picture of your own. Be sure to include as many of these details as you can. Find a partner and explain what details you included and why.
2. **Summarizing:** Pretend one of your classmates has been absent for part of the assigned reading. Summarize the last chapter you read for him or her. Pick which parts of the chapter are most important to share to help your classmate catch up quickly. Leave out small details that are not important to the overall story or chapter. Did your summary focus on an important story development, important traits of a certain character, or something else? Explain your decisions for what you included or left out of your summary in a small group or as a whole class.
3. **Connections:** Active readers are constantly making connections when they read. They frequently make personal connections between themselves and the story or characters by focusing on what they have in common. They frequently make connections between the book they are reading and other books or movies, and they frequently make connections between what they are reading and world events of the past and present. Think about a connection you can make between yourself and *Forever Ripley*, between another book or movie and *Forever Ripley*, or between *Forever Ripley* and events of the past or present. Then share with a partner or the class.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- 1. Writing:** No book or story ever wraps up every detail of all the characters' lives. Readers must predict and imagine what happens to the characters after the final page. Reread the last chapter of *Forever Ripley*. Imagine what Charlie, Mom, Ripley, or Nathan are doing in the weeks, months, or years after the story ends. Then write an epilogue, which is a chapter frequently included at the end of a book that shows what the character's life looks like after the story ends.
- 2. Visual/Technology:** A well-developed book or movie trailer requires attention to reading strategies, such as summarizing and predicting. It also requires attention to story details that help set the tone and mood of the story and requires that a reader comprehend and understand what they have read. With a teacher or parent, find a blank template or outline for a book trailer storyboard. Write a script for the book trailer, and complete the storyboard outline to explain the most important images, words, and scenes to introduce others to *Forever Ripley*. With a parent or teacher, use software like Animoto or Canva to create a book trailer to

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