

Teacher Guide

Grades 5–6

# Marley: A Dog Like No Other

John Grogan

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# MARLEY: A DOG LIKE NO OTHER

by  
John Grogan

## Teacher Guide

Written by  
Mina Lopez

### Note

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**Please note:** Please assess the appropriateness of this book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading and discussing it with them.

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## Skills and Strategies

### Critical Thinking

Inferences, analyzing, drawing conclusions, predictions, brainstorming

### Comprehension

Compare/contrast, summarizing, cause/effect, supporting judgments

### Literary Elements

Character analysis, metaphors/similes, theme, point of view, genre, author's purpose

### Vocabulary

Definitions, application, context clues, prefixes/suffixes

### Listening/Speaking

Discussion, presentation, skit, related viewing

### Writing

Journal entry, newspaper advertisement, acrostic, haiku, book sequel, script, newspaper review

### Across the Curriculum

Literature—other animal literature; Art—comic strip, movie poster, brochure, book cover, postage stamp, flipbook; Research—breed study, leash laws, obedience school, puppy mills; Science—lightning strikes, gastric dilatation-volvulus; Music—soundtrack

## The Perfect Dog—Master and Beast

The narrator remembers his dog Shaun from his childhood. As an adult, he travels with his wife, Jenny, to a house in the country where a breeder is selling Labrador retriever puppies. The couple chooses a spirited little puppy whom they get at a discount. Three weeks later, the narrator returns to pick up Marley, who has grown considerably. Marley's first night at home is rough, and he ends up sleeping contentedly in his master's bedroom instead of his intended sleeping area—the garage. The narrator and his wife spend the next few months observing and marveling at Marley's various quirks.

Vocabulary	
	temperament
	affectionate
	commotion
	queasiness
	console
	tempo
	indescribable
	ambivalent
	moribund
	oblong
	agile

### Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think the narrator's father thinks he should get a puppy that is not timid? (*The narrator's father knows his son is an active, outgoing boy. He knows his son needs a constant companion, and the dog his son chooses will have to be young, agile, and able to keep up with its owner. Also, a few fun puppy could mature into a sneaky or aggressive dog.*)
2. Describe Shaun. What is Shaun's nickname, and how did he get it? (*Shaun is intelligent and obedient. He quickly masters commands and is able to stay alone in the house. He patiently endures road trips and even being harnessed to a bicycle. His utter "perfect disposition" and behavior earn him the nickname "Saint Shaun."*)

How is foreshadowing used in “The Perfect Dog” and “And Puppy Makes Three,” and why? (Grogan states that Saint Shaun, a seemingly perfect dog, “sets the standard by which [he] would judge all other dogs to come” [p. 4]. As the story jumps to the narrator's adulthood in “And Puppy Makes Three,” “Clemence Dog” not only passes the score but also seems a bit boisterous. When the Grogans finally get a glimpse of a crowd of “Sunny Boy,” the father of the litter, they realize they may be in for trouble. These instances of foreshadowing alert the reader to exciting and humorous events to come and build anticipation.)

4. For whom is Marley named, and why? How does Marley prove himself worthy of his name? (*Marley is named after Bob Marley, who is John and Jenny's favorite reggae musician. Marley proves that he is a worthy name sake after his tail beats out a steady rhythm on John Grogan's steering wheel during the car ride home. John proclaims Marley a “reggae dog.”*)
5. Describe Marley's first night home. Why does Marley have difficulty getting used to his new surroundings? (*Marley's intended sleeping quarters are a blanket-lined room in the Grogans' garage. However, as soon as he is left alone, Marley whimpers and cries. After re-entering and leaving the garage several times to test Marley's reaction, Jenny eventually brings Marley's box into his bedroom. Marley's difficulty during this first night stems from his unfamiliarity with solitude. For his entire life Marley has been surrounded by his mother, father, brothers, and sisters. The sudden transition to solitude has upset and confused him.*)
6. How does Jenny react to Marley once he is home? What new side of Jenny's personality does John discover during this time? (*Jenny is immediately enamored with Marley and faithfully plays with, feeds, and trains him every day. She fusses over Marley as if he is a baby and even wakes up several times a night to take him outside. John discovers Jenny's gentle, motherly side during the couple's first few weeks with Marley.*)
7. Why does Jenny begin calling Marley “Mr. Wiggles,” and what is “the Marley Mambo”? (*Marley's tail seems to have a life of its own, almost as if it is one big muscle. Marley's wiggling motions become his trademark as his tail clears coffee tables and knocks down various objects*

around the house. When Marley grabs an object in his mouth, he begins quivering, bobbing, and swinging various parts of his body all at the same time. The Grogans call this ritual dance “the Marley Mambo.”)

8. What new game does John teach Marley on the beach? Why does the game make John hopeful while Jenny is doubtful? (*John teaches Marley a new version of “fetch.” When Marley retrieves a stick, John tempts Marley with a second stick. As long as Marley drops the first stick, John will throw the second stick for Marley to chase. John teaches Marley that “you’ve got to give to get” [p. 26]. Marley’s ability to eventually learn the rules of the game and be obedient make John hopeful. Jenny is doubtful because Marley is still carrying “his prize stick” in his mouth on the walk home, which could be indicative of possessiveness and/or willfulness.*)
9. **Prediction:** What other new trick will Marley learn?

### Supplementary Activities

1. **Figurative Language:** Use the Metaphors and Similes chart on page 21 of this guide, begin listing figurative language that you see in the book. Add to the chart as you read. Examples: **Similes**— “[Marley] was like the canine version of a Slinky” (pp. 18–19); “[Marley] stared at the book as if he were a starving man staring at a loaf of bread” (p. 22); **Metaphor**—shoelaces: dangerous enemies (p. 8)
2. **Breed Study:** Research Labrador Retrievers and answer the following questions about this dog breed: a) Why are Labrador Retrievers such popular family pets? b) What physical characteristics do Labrador Retrievers have? c) What special skills do Labrador Retrievers possess? (Note: All activities begin your research in mind on the Web site for the American Kennel Club® at <http://www.akc.org/breeds/labrador-retriever/> [active at time of publication].)
3. **Puppy Preparation:** On a separate sheet of paper, make a list of “The Top Ten Things to Consider Before Adopting a Puppy.” The list should go in order, with #1 being the most important and #10 being the least important. You may use information you’ve learned from the book, your personal experiences, or Internet research.

### A Battle of Wills—The Final Round

When Marley is almost six months old, the Grogans enroll him in obedience classes and are promptly embarrassed as Marley makes a mess of the first day. John attempts to train Marley himself, and the pair makes progress. However, Marley cannot seem to pay attention, destroying the garage when a thunderstorm frightens him and almost escaping the Grogans’ car through a passenger window. John describes the things Marley eats from magazines to bath towels to used Kleenex. By the time Marley is two years old, the couple has two young sons, Patrick and Conor, to look after. One day, after Marley destroys yet another piece of furniture, Jenny orders John to get rid of Marley. After some intensive training from John, Marley passes obedience school, and John breaks Marley of his last bad habit—jumping on people. Soon Jenny forgives Marley for his misbehavior.

### Discussion Questions

1. How does Marley demonstrate his need for training during the first obedience class? (*Marley leaps out of the car and bolts for the other dogs, sniffing, dribbling, and drooling all the way. He runs away from John and Jenny during class, chases his tail, entangles Jenny’s legs, jumps on her, and wrestles with his leash. He is easily the worst-behaved dog in the class.*)

## Metaphors and Similes

A **metaphor** is a comparison between two unlike objects. For example, "he was a human tree." A **simile** is a comparison between two unlike objects that uses the words *like* or *as*. For example, "the color of her eyes was like the cloudless sky."

**Directions:** Complete the chart below by listing metaphors and similes from the novel, as well as the page numbers on which they are found. Identify metaphors with an "M" and similes with an "S." Translate the comparisons in your own words, and then list the objects being compared.

Metaphors/Similes	Identify Objects Being Compared
1.  Translation:	
2.  Translation:	
3.  Translation:	

# Venn Diagram

Marley

Dogs of Boca Raton

Same

