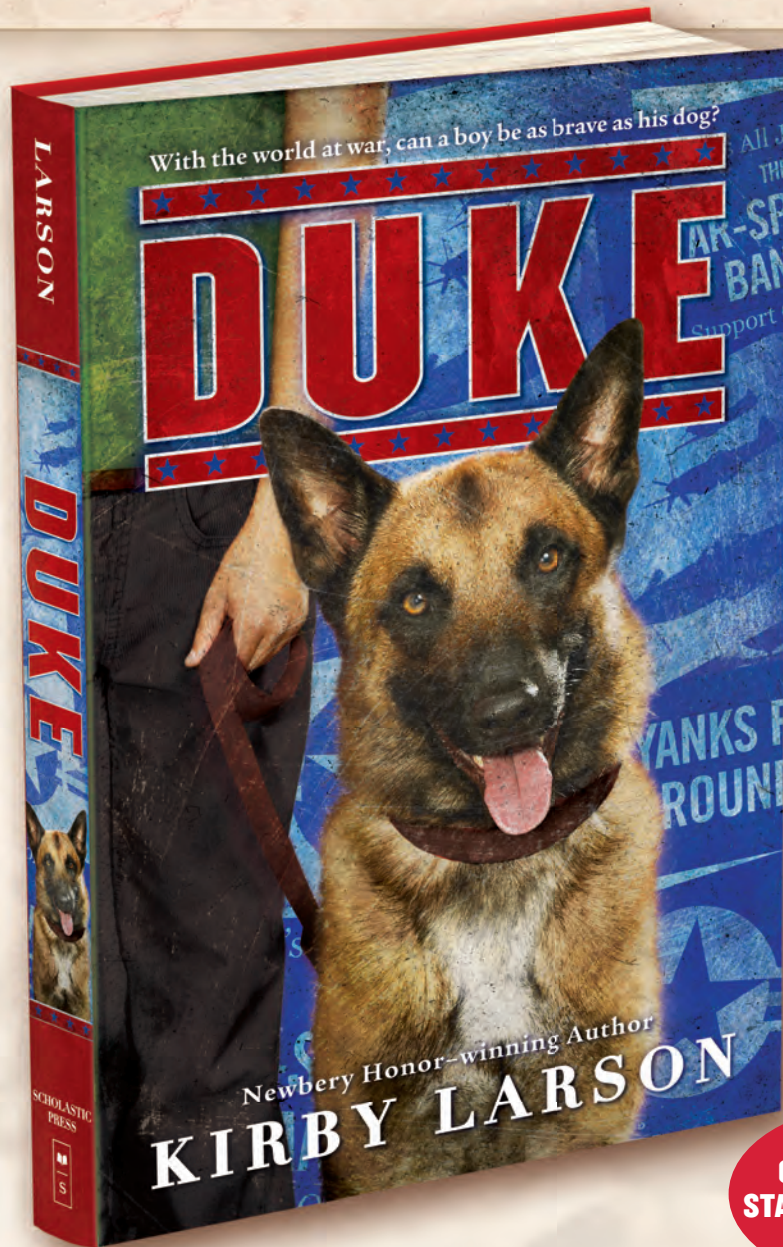


**GRADES
3-7**

DISCUSSION GUIDE



**MEETS
COMMON CORE
STATE STANDARDS—
SEE INSIDE.**

With World War II raging and his father fighting overseas in Europe, eleven-year-old Hobie Hanson is determined to do his part to help his family and his country, even if it means giving up his beloved German shepherd, Duke. Hoping to help end the war and bring his dad home faster, Hobie decides to donate Duke to Dogs for Defense, an organization that urges Americans to “lend” their pets to the military to act as sentries, mine sniffers, and patrol dogs.

Hobie immediately regrets his decision and tries everything he can to get Duke back, even jeopardizing his friendship with the new boy at school. But when his father is taken prisoner by the Germans, Hobie realizes he must let Duke go and reach deep within himself to be brave. Will Hobie ever see Duke, or his father, again? Will life ever be the same?

With powerful storytelling and gripping emotion, critically acclaimed author Kirby Larson explores the many ways bravery and love help us to weather the most difficult times.

THIS GUIDE CAN HELP YOU TEACH TO THE FOLLOWING COMMON CORE STANDARDS FOR LITERATURE

The standards quoted here are from the fifth grade. If you're teaching another grade, visit the Common Core State Standards website (www.corestandards.org) to see equivalent standards at your grade level.

Reading Standards for Literature

Key Ideas and Details

RL 1. Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

RL 2. Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text, including how characters in a story or drama respond to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic; summarize the text.

RL 3. Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text.

Craft and Structure

RL 4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative language such as metaphors and similes.

RL 5. Explain how a series of chapters, scenes, or stanzas fits together to provide the overall structure of a particular story, drama, or poem.

RL 6. Describe how a narrator's or speaker's point of view influences how events are described.

Writing Standards

Text Types and Purposes

W2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

PRE-READING ACTIVITY

Have students mark their opinion of the following statements below. Then, have students make a poster for each statement, tabulating the rankings. Display the posters and discuss.

Statement:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Why I Think This:
A person should do absolutely anything they can to help end a war.					
Even kids can make a difference in the world.					
A dog is like a member of the family.					
Bravery is something you're born with (or not).					
To be a good friend you have to act like a good friend.					

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

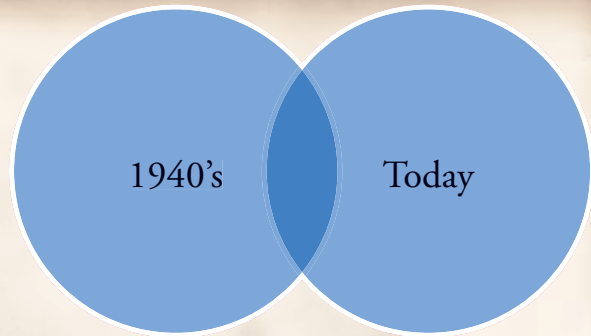
1. After reading the first chapter, list everything you know about Hobie. Circle the three things that you think will be most important to the story. Why is he going through such a tough time?
2. Describe Hobie's first day back at school without his best friend, Scooter. Who is Hobie's nemesis at school? Why? How does this person act? Do you think every school has a version of this student? Why?
3. How does Duke come to Hobie's defense? Who does this impress? Would you be willing to donate your dog? Why or why not? Shouldn't a person, even a child, be willing to do anything to end the war early? How could it make a difference in the war?
4. Explain how Hobie came to his difficult decision. What do you think most influenced his decision? Would you be able to make this choice or not? Why? Hasn't Hobie sacrificed enough with his father gone already?
5. Hobie says he feels "a bit like one of Dr. Frankenstein's mistakes. Like he'd been sewn up with something missing inside" (Chapter 5). What makes him feel like this? Have you ever regretted a choice you made? Do the kids at school make him feel better or worse about his decision?
6. Summarize the letter that Hobie receives from Duke and Pfc. Corff and discuss Hobie's response to it. What does this reveal about Hobie's character? What does it show about Duke?
7. Explain how Hobie could help with the war effort simply by building something. What makes Hobie's sister particularly good at helping? What does Hobie learn from his next letter from Duke?
8. Describe how Hobie helps out the girl on the street with her naughty terrier, Suzie. What idea does it give him for Duke?
9. Explain how Hobie has a change of heart about trying to get Duke back from the Marines. What good news does he receive about his four-legged friend?
10. Compare Hobie's summer vacation to your own. What does he love to do most? What are your favorite parts of the summer?
11. Who is Pepper? How did Hobie help to rescue her and help to find where she belonged? How does she create a wedge in Hobie and Max's developing friendship? Who do you agree with: Max or Hobie? Is Hobie "being a halfway friend?"
12. Analyze the news that Hobie's family receives from the Red Cross about his father, Palmer. What could be the worst case scenario? What could be the best? How do they finally get news? What do they send? If you were a prisoner of war, what would you most like to receive?
13. After learning about Duke's bravery in Guam, Hobie finally confesses his feelings and actions to his uncle Tryg. Then his uncle tells Hobie his own story. What does Hobie learn about his uncle Tryg? How does it make Hobie feel "like somehow he'd just taken a first big step away from being a boy toward being a man" (Chapter 17)?
14. How does Hobie finally make things right in his friendship with Max? Do you think it is easier for boys or girls to fix friendship problems? Why?
15. In the end, what does Hobie learn about Duke's service from Pfc. Corff? How does Pfc. Corff get to keep a bit of Duke for himself? How do Hobie and his family and friends celebrate the end of the war?



CLASSROOM PROJECTS

Writing

Create a Venn diagram like the one shown to the right comparing the setting of *Duke* to your life today. How are things the same? How are they different?



Many details from the World War II era are braided through Hobie and Duke's story. Research something that caught your eye in the book (or your Venn diagram) and write a paragraph or pamphlet explaining what you learned.

Vocabulary

Use the following words in the context in which they make sense:

careened **recruit** **pistons** **jumble** **maneuvers** **radiating**

Duke bounded after him, determination _____ to the very tips of his coat.

The bike _____ this way and that as Hobie executed his _____.

The cloakroom was a _____ of everyone getting into coats and jackets.

He wrenched the bike around sharply, legs pumping like _____ and headed straight at Hobie.

In fact I've become such a believer, I signed on to _____ other dogs.

Discuss afterward: How did you use the context of a sentence to help you figure out the meaning of an unknown word?

Point of View

Point of view is the view from which a story is told. With reading partners, discuss how the story would be different if told through the eyes of each of the characters in the chart below.

Duke	June	Mitch	Max

Discuss: How does point of view influence what a reader thinks or understands about events and other characters in the story?

Reading

Good readers know that summarizing what happened in a chapter or section of a book can help them understand and remember it. After you've read each chapter, write a one-sentence summary of what happened. With a reading buddy, compare summaries, and then revise together.

Chapter:	One-sentence summary:
1	
2	
3	
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Theme

After reading the entire book and summarizing each chapter, provide teams with the following definition.

THEME	The meaning of or truth about life shown in a story through a character's choices rather than told directly to the reader.
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1. Discuss three important choices Hobie makes in the book.
2. What ideas or truths are behind those choices (e.g., friendship, growing up, etc.)?
3. What is the author trying to tell you? What will you remember about the story and how will you compare it to your own life (e.g., friendship takes work)?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kirby Larson is the acclaimed author of the 2007 Newbery Honor Book *Hattie Big Sky* and its sequel *Hattie Ever After*, as well as *The Friendship Doll*, and *Dear America: The Fences Between Us*. She has also co-written a number of picture books, including the award-winning *Two Bobbies: A True Story of Hurricane Katrina, Friendship, and Survival*; and *Nubs: The True Story of a Mutt, a Marine, and a Miracle*. She lives in Washington State with her husband and Winston the Wonder Dog.



photo by Jennifer Stanton

Duke by Kirby Larson

Ages 8-12, Grades 3-7

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