

# Scrap #1: Tale of a Blond Puppy

## Author: Vince Ford

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### Synopsis

Scrap was dumped in the river by his owners when he was a baby. He was abandoned because he is a blond dog and many people believe that this means he will be no good at sheep mustering. Luckily, he is rescued by a friend of Lionel's and brought to live on the farm. With no mother to guide him and teach him what's what, Scrap finds life tough, until the old farm dog Bill takes him under his wing. Bill teaches Scrap everything he needs to know about life on the farm and Lionel trains him to be a sheep dog. Much to Scrap's delight, he proves to be an excellent sheep musterer – he has the Eye. Scrap loves getting out into the paddocks with the sheep and letting his instincts take over. Life on the farm is good for Scrap, but he can't help but wonder who his mother is and where he came from ...

### Text Type

*Scrap: Tale of a Blond Puppy* is the first novel in a new series written by award-winning New Zealand author Vince Ford. Suitable for young boys and girls, *Scrap* is the story of an abandoned pup that is rescued and trained to be a sheep dog. While the story is written in third person point of view, the reader is given a unique inside into Scrap's life on the farm, where animals can talk. The story is fast-paced and humorous and contains short, titled chapters. Illustrated with delightful pencil sketches, the story will appeal to anyone who likes animals. While the story is fairly light-hearted, some serious themes such as identity, prejudice and individuality are explored.

### Sharing the Novel

The novel has been divided up as follows: Chapters 1 and 2 (pp. 7–20), Chapters 3–7 (pp. 21–78) and Chapters 8–12 (79–127).

During the shared sessions encourage students to ask questions to clarify their understanding of words and ideas presented in the novel. Have them make inferences and predictions. While the story is told from third person point of view, this is very much Scrap's story. What is the effect of this? Have students discuss what we find out about life on the farm and any important themes or ideas raised in the text.

### Introducing the Novel

Have students study the front cover of the novel and read the blurb.

- In what way is Scrap different from other puppies?
- What do you think it feels like to be different from others?
- Who do you think Bill might be?

- What do you think the story might be about?
- How do you know that this is the first *Scrap* book in a series?

Teacher reads Chapters 1 and 2 (pp. 7–20) aloud to the class, students follow along in their books.

### Comprehension Chapters 1 and 2 (pp. 7–20)

- How do you know that Scrap is a tiny, inexperienced puppy?
- What does Bill teach Scrap about himself? Why does Bill think that Scrap really needs a mum?
- How did Scrap end up at Lionel's?
- Who runs the farm? Who is next in the chain of command?
- What are the dogs responsible for?
- What is the Eye? Why does Bill think that Scrap has it?
- Why does Bill think that Scrap has a lot to learn? What are the first two lessons that Bill teaches him?

### Discussion

- What does Scrap do instinctively (without having to be taught)?
- What important lessons does Scrap learn at the start of the story?
- Why do you think Bill takes on the role as Scrap's 'mother'?

Students read Chapters 3–7 (pp. 21–78) independently before the next shared session.

### Comprehension Chapters 3–7 (pp. 21–78)

- Describe Scrap's training. Why is it important that Scrap learns how to stand? What does 'wayleggo' mean?
- How does Bill outsmart Scrap when he challenges him to a race?
- What does Scrap have to give Bill after he loses the bet?
- Describe the experiment that Scrap conducts with the chickens. Why do you think he doesn't kill the chicken, despite Bill's encouragement?
- Why does Bill believe that Scrap's mum isn't far away?

- What does Bill tell Scrap about his arrival at Lionel's farm? Why does Charlie think that Scrap was dumped? Why is Scrap considered 'blond'? Why do some farmers consider this undesirable?
- How does Scrap feel when he finds out that he's a 'whitey'? Why does this worry him so much?
- Why does Bill think that Scrap is lucky to be living with Lionel?
- Why is Scrap apprehensive about meeting his mother?
- What advice does Bill give Scrap before he goes out into the sheep paddock for the first time? Why is Scrap so nervous about how he will perform? What does Bill suggest that he could do if he can't muster sheep?
- Describe what happens when Scrap musters his first lot of sheep. Why doesn't he run away even though he is scared?
- What realisation does Scrap come to about the Eye?
- How does Scrap feel when he realises that he is good at sheep mustering?
- Why is it so important that Scrap follow all of Lionel's instructions? How does Lionel teach him what 'that'll do' means?
- How does Scrap feel when Lionel takes him for a ride on the back of the Ute? What does he smell that makes his mouth water?
- Why is Scrap impressed with Bill's mustering skills?
- Why does Scrap think the new sheep are fierier than the ones at home? How does Scrap retain control over them? Why is he so determined to perform well?
- How does Bill teach Scrap his left from his right?

### Discussion

- What does 'brains before brawn' mean? Do you agree with this saying?
- What does 'colourist' mean? Can you think of an equivalent in human beings? Why is it unfair to judge people by the colour of their skin?
- Why is Scrap lucky to have Bill looking out for him? What sort of dog is Bill? Why does he care about Scrap so much?

Students read Chapters 8–12 (79–127) independently before the next shared session.

### Comprehension Chapters 8–12 (pp. 79–127)

- In what ways are the working dogs that Scrap sees different to himself and Bill? Why is he impressed by them?

- What is dog etiquette?
- Why is Scrap so surprised when he is introduced to Pearl?
- Why is Bill embarrassed when Scrap tells Pearl and Bob that he has been acting like a mum to him?
- Who is Johnny Mack? Why does Bill like him so much?
- How does Scrap get into trouble with Lionel?
- How does Scrap end up going on an unexpected trip?
- Why does Scrap feel intimidated when Johnny parks next to the dogs in the cage? What do the dogs tease him about? Why does Scrap get so angry?
- Why is Scrap determined not to go down to Sid ‘without a fight’?
- What does Scrap notice when he looks into the eyes of the female dog who returns with Jeremy?
- Who protects Scrap? Why do you think she does this? How does she stop Sid from attacking Scrap?
- How does Scrap know that Meg is his mother? Why does Scrap think that life must be tough for her?
- Why does Johnny chain Scrap to the back of the Ute?
- Why is Scrap determined to escape from his chain? What happens when he pulls too hard? Who rescues him?
- How does Johnny know that Scrap hasn’t suffered any permanent injury from his accident?
- How does Bill react when Scrap tells him that he met his mum? What does Bill know about Meg and the farm where she lives?
- Where does Lionel plan to send Scrap? How does Scrap feel when he learns that Bill won’t be coming with him? How does Bill convince Scrap that leaving is the right thing to do?
- What does Lionel teach Scrap to do in the weeks before he leaves?
- Why does Scrap make the decision to obey Johnny’s commands?
- Why does Scrap think that he was born to muster sheep?
- What does Bill say to Scrap before he leaves that makes him feel special?
- Describe the emotions that Scrap feels as he enters the next stage of his life.

### Discussion

- What effect do Bill’s words “Be the best dog you can be” have on Scrap?

- What qualities does Scrap possess? Why is it so important to have confidence in yourself?
- Why is it important to know who you are and where you come from?
- Do you have a special ability that makes you excel at something? Do you have to practise hard or are you like Scrap and 'born' to do it? How does it feel to be successful at something?

## Activities

**Writing** – Write a synopsis of what you think should happen in the next *Scrap* book.

**Writing** – From Meg's point of view, write the story of Scrap's life before he was rescued from the river.

**Static Image** – Design a poster advertising *Scrap* that would be suitable for display in your school library.

**Writing** – Choose an important theme or main idea from the story and explain how this is developed by the author.

**Writing** – Write a letter to the author explaining what you like about the story.

**Storyboard** – Choose 10 important events from the story and create a storyboard. Under each illustration briefly explain what is happening.

**Issues** – Create a poster against cruelty to animals.

**Reading** – Find and read another story that deals with the theme of prejudice or being different. Compare this story's treatment of the theme to how it is dealt with in *Scrap*.

**Character** – Draw a large outline of Scrap on a piece of cartridge paper. On one side write down all of his positive characteristics, and on the other side write down his negative characteristics. For each adjective or idea you come up with find an example from the story that illustrates this quality.

**Static Image** – Using information learned from reading the story design a brochure entitled 'Sheep mustering for dummies'.

## Activities from the Author:

Research New Zealand heading dogs and New Zealand huntaways. Compare and contrast the two types of mustering dogs. Choose a creative way to present this.

Choose four points through the book and write a blog about Scrap from Bill's viewpoint. What does he say about the pup? How does his opinion change through the story?

Notes written by Vicki Ladd