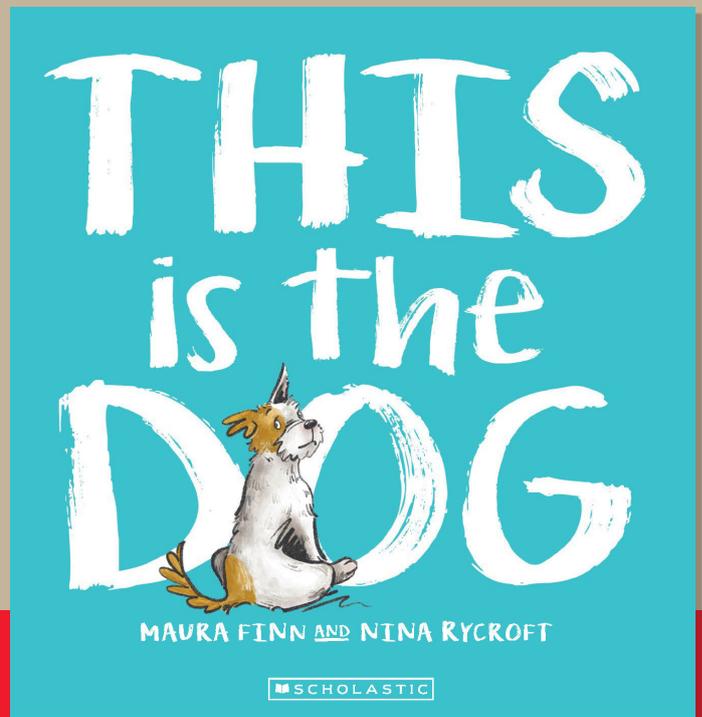


# This is the Dog

By Maura Finn

Illustrated by Nina Rycroft

- Reading • Writing • Social Studies •
- Thinking Skills •



## Synopsis

*This is the Dog* is a tale about a dog with a half-crumpled ear and fur that sticks out, who longs for someone to take him away from the pet shop where he lives in a cage. People visit the store, but they snuggle and fuss over other dogs, with not a thought for the dog with the half-crumpled ear. One day he notices the latch off his cage and sneaks out in search of adventure and food. He follows his nose through traffic to a good place to eat, but the storekeeper sweeps him away. The dog follows people along the street, goes on a bus ride and gets off at a park where there are lots of families and dogs enjoying themselves. He wonders if his home might be here. But then it rains, and he's a sad, lonesome dog. A kind girl sees him and brings him a blanket and a bowl of food. She sees what nobody else can see in the dog and bring the dog home with her.

## About the Author

**Maura Finn** was born and raised in Wellington and now lives in Melbourne with her husband and two young daughters. In the early writing days of her childhood, she ran a lucrative business in the school playground, swapping tailor-made poems in exchange for lunchbox leftovers. Maura's previous title for Scholastic is the adorable *Oh So Many Kisses!*

## About the Illustrator

**Nina Rycroft** is an award-winning illustrator living in Auckland with her husband and two children. Nina worked as a designer before turning her hand to illustration. Her first picture book *Little Platypus* (Nette Hilton) was a CBCA Notable Book in 2001. Her portfolio includes *Good Dog Hank* (Harper Collins), *Possum's Big Surprise* (Scholastic Aus) and *Grasshoppers Dance* (Scholastic NZ). *Pooka* (Working Title Press) won the YABBA (Young Australian Best Book Award) in 2013 and was a CBCA Notable Book. Nina is also director and co-founder of the Picture Book Illustration e-Course.

## Writing Style

A heart-warming tale about finding a place in the world. The main character is a lonely dog in a pet shop who longs for a home with a family who will love him. The author has written the story in third person, present tense with a rhyming pattern of a-b-c-b. Each page has one long sentence, written over four lines with a rhythmic beat of 4-5 syllables in each line in the stanza. The author repeats the phrase 'this is the dog with the half-crumpled ear' often in the story, as it keeps the rhythm. The text has adjectives to describe what the dog looks like, for example, snuffly snout, half-crumpled ear, etc. The author uses super-charged verbs to show action: bounds, rumbles, strides, sweeps, lures, etc. She also uses nouns and ellipses to show the passage the dog takes to escape from the pet shop. For example: 'This is the latch ... the window ... the street ...'. The author has also used ellipses to slow the reader down, allowing time to pause and ponder. *This is the Dog* has 32 pages and targets 3–7-year-old children: reading aloud to 3-5-year-olds and reading by older readers.

The illustrator has created the artwork in Procreate using an iPad and Apple pencil. Nina Rycroft has drawn black or dark outlines and coloured them in a watercolour finish. To represent something being behind glass, she has painted a yellow background with faint outlines to represent people behind the window, making them look three-dimensional. Swirls flow through some of the pictures to show the dog following a scent through a busy street or park. The bus also swirls along a road out of town.

## Shared Learning and Discussion Points

During the shared sessions encourage students to ask questions to clarify their understanding of characters and events. Have them make inferences and predictions, relating to their own experiences. Read the passages aloud and have students read alongside or by themselves.

### ASK YOUR STUDENTS:

Look at the cover and read the blurb.

- What do you think this story is about?
- What do you already know about pet shops and owning a dog?

### Comprehension questions

- Why do you think the illustrator has drawn the dog facing away but head turned back to look at the reader? (pp.4-5)
- Why is part of the picture in butter yellow—what does that yellow represent? (pp.4-5)
- How many dogs are in the picture? Can anyone name any of the breeds? (pp.4-5)
- Why do some people squeal with delight? (pp.6-7)
- Why have people overlooked the dog with the crumpled ear? (pp.6-7)
- What is the pink then white swirl in the picture and why is the dog following it? (pp.9-11)
- What type of shop is the dog going inside? (p.11)
- Why does the baker sweep the dog outside? (pp.12-13)
- What scent is the dog following? (pp.14-15)
- How has the artist shown us the bus is moving? (pp.16-17)
- Why did the dog get off the bus and go through the gateway? (pp.18-19)
- What does the dog like about the park? (pp.21-22)
- What makes the dog feel lonely and sad again? Why? (pp.23-24)
- Who rescues the dog? (pp.25-26)
- Why does she take him home?
- What new experiences does the dog have and which one does he like the best?



# Activities

## ACTIVITY 1: PET DOG GUIDE

Write a guide for caring for a type of dog. Research what you should feed the dog and how often. Find out what you should do for them at different stages of their life, and how you can keep them healthy and safe, as well as happy and under control.

## ACTIVITY 2: MAP IT!

Draw a map of the places that the dog goes to in the story, starting with the pet shop. Discuss your map with another reader—is there anything you have left out?

Your map should include:

- B** – Border around the map
- O** – Orientation, showing North on a compass
- L** – Legend or key that explains the symbols in your map
- T** – Title, what is the map for?
- S** – Scale, give an idea of the distances

## ACTIVITY 3: THREE WISHES!

A genie has landed in the middle of the story and grants the dog three wishes. What does the dog wish for and why? How does it change the story?

## ACTIVITY 4: DRAW IT!

Draw the main character, showing them as a pup, juvenile dog, and as an adult. Underneath each picture say what you think they might be doing at that point in their life. Explain why they might be doing it.

## ACTIVITY 5: TEXT TO ...

**Text to self:** Turn to a partner and share a story about yourself that relates to the book you've just read, *This is the Dog*.

**Text to text:** Turn to your partner again and share a book or a TV programme you've read or seen that has a dog as a main character. How is it the same or different?

**Text to world:** Turn to your partner and share what this story reminds you of in the real world?

Written by Maria Gill



teacher toolkit

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