



CITY DOGS

STUDY GUIDE

By Glenda Goertzen

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Introduction to *City Dogs*

City Dogs is the sequel to *The Prairie Dogs* (Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 2004). *The Prairie Dogs* tells the story of Pierre, a champion agility poodle accidentally abandoned in a small prairie town. With the help of an oddball pack of local strays, he manages to overcome an array of dangerous obstacles in his quest to find a home.

City Dogs continues the adventures of Pierre and his friends, this time introducing them to the excitement of the big city. The friendship, courage and resilience displayed by the characters in *The Prairie Dogs* are in play as well in *City Dogs*. Pierre has an additional challenge—the responsibility of keeping his new family safe. There are plenty of obstacles to overcome, some dangerous, some humorous, and new lessons to be learned about trust and cooperation.

Readers who are interested in wildlife will enjoy an introduction to the animals of the Canadian prairie. *The Prairie Dogs* explores the summer prairie, while *City Dogs* includes adventures on the winter prairie. Getting these little dogs onto the wild prairie in the middle of winter without burying them in snow proved to be a challenge. I accomplished this by drawing upon a number of my own experiences. Years ago I worked at a Saskatchewan television station. (Yes, we did play videogames at night when the rest of the staff went home!) Over the years I became familiar with the wildlife that inhabited the stretch of prairie between our isolated building and the city—wildlife that sometimes found a way into the building. More recently, I moved to Prince Albert and enjoyed the annual sled dog races on the outskirts of the city. Thus I found a hideout for Pierre and Dare, a mode of transportation to get them there, and some interesting new allies.

The adventures of the Prairie Dogs will be continued in a sequel, *Miracle Dogs*.

I hope you enjoy sharing this story with your students. The Study Guide can be used to encourage them to take a closer look at the underlying themes and lessons in the story. But above all, make it fun!

Glenda Goertzen



About the Book

The Prairie Dogs are back!

When Pierre the poodle and Dare the terrier are kidnapped from their small prairie town, their friends hop a train to the big city to rescue them. Little do they know Pierre and Dare have already escaped and are having the adventure of their lives!

New friends and old enemies join the Prairie Dogs as they race through the city in search of a safe place for Dare to have her puppies. With the help of a team of sled dogs and a smoking magpie, Pierre and Dare manage to elude a pair of ruthless thieves, television cameras, and the dreaded Crunchy Nibbles, only to become trapped in a very odd place indeed.

Mew, the puppy who thought she was a kitten, is all grown up now but just as catlike as ever. Mouse the Chihuahua still faints at the first hint of danger, but he is determined to brave any peril to rescue his friends. However, this might be the Prairie Dogs' most difficult rescue yet . . .

About the Author



Glenda Goertzen was born in Morse, Saskatchewan. Frequently bedridden with severe asthma, she became a voracious reader and began her creative career at the age of four by drawing picture books. She wrote the first draft of *The Prairie Dogs* in high school. After receiving her BFA in Film and Video she worked in television for ten years before switching to a career in libraries.

Glenda spends much of her time giving readings and writing workshops in Canadian schools and libraries. When not writing or travelling, Glenda reads, gardens, practices yoga, walks dogs for the SPCA, and enjoys the outdoors. Her love of Canada's natural environment plays a strong role in her books.

Glenda's works-in-progress include adult and young adult mystery and fantasy novels, juvenile novels (including sequels to *The Prairie Dogs* and *City Dogs*), juvenile nonfiction books, and children's picture books, with a little sketching and cartooning on the side.

For more information about Glenda Goertzen and her books, visit www.glendagoertzen.ca.

Reviews

“Fans anxiously waiting for Glenda Goertzen’s sequel to *Prairie Dogs* will love *City Dogs*. All the heroes and villains from Silvertree are back, and the canines find both new friends and dangerous enemies...Suspenseful and amusing reading...It is Goertzen’s ability to “speak dog” that makes the book so enjoyable for all dog lovers. The black-and-white snapshot-like illustrations by Peter Hudecki are great for readers making the transition from picture books to the development of imaginations from text. He succeeds in keeping even the most reluctant reader part the adventure!” ~ *Canadian Children’s Book News*

“A series of humorous adventures unfold, holding the reader’s interest through to a happy ending. Fast-paced and well written, the story also includes interesting glimpses of the surrounding prairie. The animal characters are fun, friendly and loyal, providing appealing entertainment for the young reader. This novel should prove a popular addition to the school library collection.” ~ *Resource Links*

“As in *Prairie Dogs*, the humour in *City Dogs* is delightful. The characters, again, are the dogs who add their own humour to the story as they are naive but loveable...Although it is a sequel, this book can also stand alone and would appeal to a variety of readers, including readers of animal fiction and adventure stories. *City Dogs* would be an excellent class novel for individual reading or as a read aloud choice. It would be an excellent addition for personal, class, school and public libraries. Highly Recommended.” ~ *CM Magazine*

“Young readers will enjoy *City Dogs*, a fast-paced, engaging story which features some delightful canine characters.” ~ *The Stratford Gazette*

City Dogs was nominated for the Saskatchewan Book Award and listed as a Canadian Children’s Book Centre’s Best Books for Kids & Teens, 2008.

Curriculum Links

Language Arts

- Skills of listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing, and representing
- Seasonal: *City Dogs*, while not exactly a holiday book, takes place over the Christmas season
- Thematic links: Dogs ~ Friendship ~ Cooperation ~ Cities ~ Prairie environment ~ Christmas ~ Television production

Science

- Prairie ecology: the story describes several species of prairie animals to be found in winter

Chapter One: Old Enemies

Define the following words and use them in a sentence.

- Unruly
- Vasovagal syncope (Just kidding! You can skip this one.)
- Suspicious

1. What is Dare preparing to do that surprises Mr. Abram?
2. What does Mouse do when he realizes he's in a veterinary clinic?
3. Which animal in the clinic is surprisingly friendly toward Mew?
4. What does Pierre do to protect his friends from Bull?

Chapter Two: Old Friends

Define the following words and use them in a sentence.

- Crept
- Intruders
- Commenced

1. What are Mew and Old Sam arguing about?
2. Who comes to visit Mr. Abram's house?
3. According to Suzie the cat, what happened to Pierre, Dare and Bull?
4. What does Mouse use for a bed?

Chapter Three: The Dognapping

Define the following words and use them in a sentence.

- Sympathetic
- Resumed
- Tolerate

1. Why is Bull afraid to cross the road?
2. Where do Pierre and Dare try to hide from Bull?
3. Why can't Pierre and Dare cross the ditch?
4. What does the man from the van do with the dogs?

Chapter Four: Pierre's Plan

Define the following words and use them in a sentence.

- Jinxed
- Naïve
- Ancestors

1. What does Beth do to make Pierre more attractive to her customers?
2. What do the dogs do to discourage customers from buying them?
3. Why does Bull change his mind about having revenge against Pierre and Dare?
4. Why doesn't Sprout the Chinese crested dog want to escape?

Chapter Five: City Dogs

Define the following words and use them in a sentence.

- Tattoos
- Previous
- Canine

1. How do the dogs trick Beth and Skid into taking them out of the pet store?
2. Why does Dare bite Skid's ear?
3. Why do some of the dogs leave Pierre and Dare once they're free?
4. Describe the unusual place the dogs find while looking for the animal shelter.

Chapter Six: The Blizzard

Define the following words and use them in a sentence.

- Original
- Obstacles
- Destination

1. What event is taking place in the park?
2. Why does Pierre change his mind about going to the animal shelter?
3. How do Pierre and Dare escape the humans trying to catch them?
4. Why does Dare want to go to the grain elevator?

Chapter Seven: The Train Ride

Define the following words and use them in a sentence.

- Intention
- Grateful
- Jealous

1. How are the dogs travelling to the city?
2. Why do you suppose Mew and Mouse are doubtful about having Ratter along?
3. Why can't Juju and Old Sam go with them?
4. What potential problem does Mew discover at the end of this chapter?

Chapter Eight: Prairie Pups

Define the following words and use them in a sentence.

- Emerged
- Triumphant
- Relieved

1. Who helps the dogs when they're lost?
2. What kind of building do the dogs take shelter in?
3. What kind of tree does Dare give birth under?
4. What does Pierre think is wrong with the puppies? What is Dare's explanation for it?

Chapter Nine: Pierre Off the Air

Define the following words and use them in a sentence.

- Ultimate
- Furtive
- Abandoned

1. What bad habit of Pica's does Pierre disapprove of?
2. How does Pica help Pierre?
3. Who does Pierre see in the TV monitors?
4. Why do Pierre and Dare want to hide from the humans in the building?

Chapter Ten: The Train Crash

Define the following words and use them in a sentence.

- Swayed
- Tremendous
- Analyzed

1. Mew notices the days grow shorter in winter. What does she think is the cause?
2. Why does Ratter complain about Mr. Abram taking such good care of Mew and Mouse?
3. What does Mew think might be the real reason Ratter joined her and Mouse?
4. What are the men with the cameras doing as they drive their van from place to place?

Chapter Eleven: Hunter and Hunted

Define the following words and use them in a sentence.

- Frantic
- Inched
- Ruined

1. Why does Pierre get stuck in the “camera barn” for half an hour? What *is* the camera barn?
2. Why does Pierre look for the farm?
3. What information does Pica give Pierre that he doesn’t believe?
4. Who is Pierre reunited with at the end of the chapter?

Chapter Twelve: The Crunchy Nibbles Bandits

Define the following words and use them in a sentence.

- Currents
- Pungent
- Reconsider

1. What does Pierre tell Mouse to do?
2. Describe the new “Bull Dogs” pack.
3. What kind of building do the dogs decide to rob? What do they plan to steal?
4. Why do most of the new Bull Dogs decide to leave the pack?

Chapter Thirteen: Heroic Stunts

Define the following words and use them in a sentence.

- Disgraceful
- Quality
- Swooped

1. Why does Ratter decide not to start a new pack with Bull after all?
2. What is Mew's plan to get the dogs back to the TV station?
3. What does Bull steal to distract the crowd?
4. Why do Beth and Skid decide to get rid of the dogs?

Chapter Fourteen: Dare on the Air

Define the following words and use them in a sentence.

- Bewilderment
- Supervising
- Demonstrated

1. What happens to Mouse when he and Dare raid the refrigerator?
2. One of the humans develops a phobia in this chapter. What is he afraid of?
3. How does Dare discover what happened to Pierre and the other dogs?
4. Why does Dare let herself be seen by the humans in the middle of the TV show?

Chapter Fifteen: Prairie Pursuit

Define the following words and use them in a sentence.

- Collapsed
- Mutating
- Scooted

1. Describe one of the tricks the dogs use to escape Beth and Skid.
2. Name one animal who helps Pierre and his friends avoid capture.
3. What does Brenda, the blond woman, accuse Beth of?
4. How do you think Mr. Abram found the dogs?

Chapter Sixteen: TV Dogs

Define the following words and use them in a sentence.

- Example
- Miraculous
- Predators

1. What does Dare complain about at the beginning of the chapter?
2. Who adopted Ratter and Cupcake?
3. What breed of dog are Calloway's new puppies?
4. What does Calloway want Mr. Abram to help him do?

Review Questions

1. Describe one of these characters:
 - Pierre
 - Dare
 - Mouse
 - Mew
 - Old Sam
 - Ratter
 - Bull
 - Pica
 - Cupcake
 - Sprout

2. What other stories and movies can you name where small town characters visit a big city?

3. In *The Prairie Dogs*, Pierre and Bull were enemies. In *City Dogs*, they become allies. What do you suppose brought about this change?

4. Describe one of the challenges Pierre faces in this book. How does he overcome this challenge?

5. Pierre and Dare are helped by many other animals in this book. Name some of them and how they help.

Suggested Projects

1. Draw a picture of one of the characters. Underneath write what breed of dog or what kind of animal it is.

2. Find more information about one of the wild animals Pierre and his friends come across.

3. Put on a skit based on one of the chapters of the book.

4. Send a letter or email to the author. Describe what you enjoyed about the book.

5. Write a short story about a real animal you've known. It could be a pet, an animal in a zoo or a wild animal. It can be a true story or a made up story.

6. If you live on the prairie, take a walk through a natural area. See how many prairie plants and animals you can identify.

City Dogs Trivia Challenge

How many of the wild prairie mammals and birds mentioned in the book can you name?

What animal does Mew sometimes behave like?

- A) Cat
- B) Mouse
- C) Horse
- D) Bird

Ratter is Dare's:

- A) Uncle
- B) Cousin
- C) Brother
- D) Puppy

What does Mouse do when he's frightened?

- A) Shed fur
- B) Throw up
- C) Hiss
- D) Faint

What kind of poodle is Cupcake?

- A) Teacup
- B) Toy
- C) Miniature
- D) Standard

How many puppies do Pierre and Dare have?

- A) Two
- B) Four
- C) Six
- D) Fifteen

What kind of bird is Pica?

- A) Owl
- B) Magpie
- C) Crow
- D) Pigeon

What habit does Mouse find difficult to give up?

- A) Smoking cigarettes
- B) Stealing Crunchy Nibbles
- C) Eating bugs
- D) Climbing trees

Bull wants Pierre to join his pack because Pierre is:

- A) A fast runner
- B) A quick thinker
- C) A good fighter
- D) Secretly a wizard dog

City Dogs Trivia Challenge Answers

How many of the wild prairie mammals and birds mentioned in the book can you name?

Antelope
Badger
Bison or buffalo
Coyote
Deer
Duck
Fox
Gopher
Hare
Magpie
Mouse
Owl
Pigeon
Prairie dog
Rabbit
Skunk
Sparrow
Wolf

What new name was given to Mew by Mr. Abram?

A) Mitzy

Ratter is Dare's:

C) Brother

What does Mouse do when he's frightened?

D) Faint

What kind of poodle is Cupcake?

A) Teacup

How many puppies do Pierre and Dare have?

A) Two

What kind of bird is Pica?

B) Magpie

What habit does Mouse find difficult to give up?

C) Eating bugs

Bull wants Pierre to join his pack because Pierre is:

B) A quick thinker

Prairie Dogs Word Search

Circle the letters of the hidden words!

E	P	N	T	S	E	P	V	E	F
R	Z	C	E	I	L	O	V	I	C
R	E	I	R	L	C	O	B	R	H
E	S	T	R	V	A	D	E	I	I
I	U	Y	I	E	R	L	A	A	H
P	O	X	E	R	I	E	G	R	U
E	M	H	R	T	M	Z	L	P	A
F	R	R	G	R	F	H	E	L	H
F	A	A	F	E	S	G	O	D	U
W	E	M	D	E	V	Z	J	O	A

BEAGLE
 CHIHUAHUA
 CITY
 DARE
 DOGS
 MEW
 MIRACLE

MOUSE
 PIERRE
 POODLE
 PRAIRIE
 SILVERTREE
 TERRIER