

# MIRACLE DOGS

## STUDY GUIDE

By Glenda Goertzen

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Note: Certain words and phrases in **boldface** within this study guide are linked to online resources.

## Introduction to *Miracle Dogs*

*Miracle Dogs* is a sequel to *The Prairie Dogs* and *City Dogs* (Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 2004, 2007). *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 and wild animals of the winter prairie.

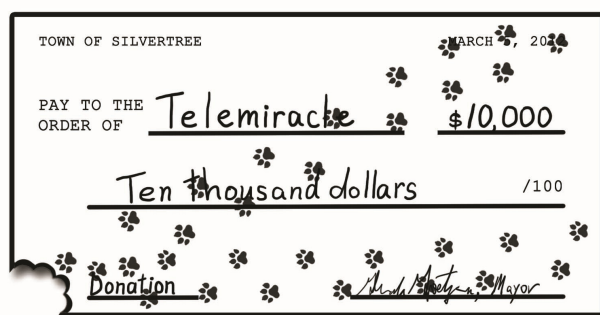
Pierre and his friends face new challenges in *Miracle Dogs*. They have a pair of puppies to look out for, and their father Pierre frets about their future. He doesn't want them to face the variety of hardships he and his friends have endured as strays and as victims of abuse. When the dogs encounter a group of heroic Assistance Dogs, Pierre decides to train his children to follow their example—never mind that the puppies are not at all on board with the idea. Pierre's campaign to ensure a secure future for his children meets with one obstacle after another; a freak accident while performing a dog act on the Telemiracle stage; an unwilling sojourn in the house of their worst enemy; runaway puppies; and a fearsome collection of feral cats who force the dogs to undertake a difficult rescue mission.

*Miracle Dogs* sends Pierre and his friends across the winter prairie, where they encounter old friends and intriguing wildlife. My main goal in writing the *Prairie Dogs* series was to entertain children who love animals, but I also wanted to describe the Canadian prairie in a way children can relate to—through the eyes of an inquisitive outsider, a creature who lives through his senses. The beauty and adventure of the Canadian prairie is best appreciated at ground level, and who better to describe it than a small dog?

While the characters behave like dogs, they think like children and adolescents, providing a fresh and often humorous perspective on issues that affect today's youth—peer pressure, bullying, abuse, learning to tolerate differences in one another. On a more mature level, Pierre learns lessons about trust, love and humility when the youngsters in the story secure their own futures with his assistance rather than his guidance.

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

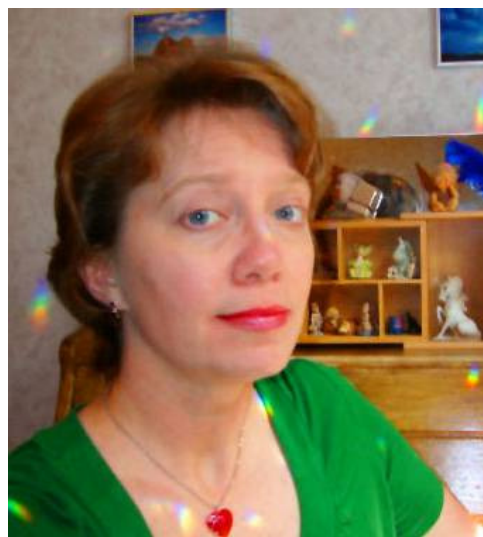
Pierre, the former agility dog champion, and his companions Dare, Mouse and Mew, finally have the life they've always longed for; a comfortable home, a human they can trust, and a lively pair of puppies who might become Assistance Dogs. Stardom will surely be theirs as well as they prepare to perform a dog act on the world-famous Telemiracle stage. But a freak accident turns their world upside down.

Suddenly the dogs are prisoners of the dog-hating Calloway family. Their puppies are prisoners of a dangerous colony of feral cats who call themselves the Pride, led by an old enemy of Dare's. It will take a miracle to get everyone home in one piece!

For readers aged 7-11 and dog lovers of all ages.

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

## About the Author



Glenda Goertzen was born in **Morse, Saskatchewan** and now lives in **Prince Albert, Saskatchewan**. She began her creative career at the age of four by drawing picture books and comic books. She continued to write stories throughout high school, including the first draft of *The Prairie Dogs*. As a grown up, however, she turned away from her dream of becoming an author and instead pursued a career in television. After a decade of TV jobs, from computer graphics artist to producer of a children's program, Glenda was overwhelmed by a desire to be surrounded by books rather than TV screens. While doing homework for her Library Technician course, she grabbed a piece of scrap paper and discovered it was a page from an old draft of *The Prairie Dogs*. She dug up the manuscript, read it, and decided to return to writing and illustrating. She now spends her days, at work and at home, surrounded by books.

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*, *City Dogs* and *Miracle 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](http://www.glendagoertzen.ca).

## Reviews

“*Miracle Dogs* is a delightful read. Although it could stand alone, the continuation of the characters and plot make this an interesting trilogy...*Miracle Dogs* can certainly be enjoyed by all ages, and readers of animal stories, realistic fiction and adventure will not be disappointed. Highly Recommended.” ~ *CM Magazine*, December 2012

## Curriculum Links

### Language Arts

- Skills of listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing, and representing
- Resource-based learning
- Thematic links: Dogs ~ Cats ~ Fears ~ Portrayal of characters with disabilities ~ Assistance Animals ~ Prairie environment ~ Independence ~ Acceptance ~ Charity

### Science

- Prairie ecology: the story mentions many species of prairie animals with descriptions of their natural habitats
- *Miracle Dogs* inspires an interest in the environment

### Canadian and Saskatchewan content

- The story takes place on the Canadian prairie
- The characters make an appearance at the Saskatchewan Kinsmen Foundation’s Telemiracle



## Chapter One: Abram's Canine Clowns

Define the following words and use them in a sentence.

- Survive
- Tyranny
- Obnoxious

1. Where was Pierre one year ago?
2. What are Pierre and the other dogs doing in the high school gymnasium?
3. What do the puppies pretend to be?
4. Where are the dogs going to perform next?

## Chapter Two: Another Calloway

Define the following words and use them in a sentence.

- Knowledgeable
- Butted
- Wagscallions (Just kidding. The author made this word up.)

1. Who joins the dogs in the van, and how do the dogs react?
2. What song title does Mr. Abram invent?
3. What is Pierre worried about?
4. What story does Pierre tell the puppies?

## Chapter Three: A Day of Song

Define the following words and use them in a sentence.

- Bellowed
- Expert
- Discipline

1. Why is Mouse not afraid of the huge crowds?
2. What famous person sings on the stage?
3. Who do the dogs meet at Telemiracle?
4. What does Pierre want the puppies to do in the future, and why?

## Chapter Four: A Performance Gone Wrong

Define the following words and use them in a sentence.

- Remained
- Frolicked
- Dazzle

1. Why do the dogs attack Telemiracle Teddy?
2. What happened to the giant cheque?
3. Why does Mouse faint?
4. What goes wrong with the performance?

## Chapter Five: Service Poodle

Define the following words and use them in a sentence.

- Prisoner
- Literally
- Gadgets

1. Why is Mr. Abram staying in Colleen Calloway's house?
2. What does Pierre want the puppies to do for Colleen?
3. Why do the other dogs misbehave?
4. Why is Old Sam upset at the thought of Mr. Abram being a grandfather?

## Chapter Six: Puppies in Peril

Define the following words and use them in a sentence.

- Faith
- Colony
- Feral

1. What other animals do the dogs meet while searching for the puppies?
2. What is the Roaring Red Beast?
3. What is the difference between a stray animal and a feral animal?
4. Why does Titan run away?

## Chapter Seven: The Haunted Museum

Define the following words and use them in a sentence.

- Habitat
- Bedraggled
- Alert

1. Why are there fake humans in the museum?
2. What kinds of stuffed animals do the dogs find in the museum?
3. Why do the kittens attack Mouse?
4. Where have the cats been hiding?

## Chapter Eight: The Pride

Define the following words and use them in a sentence.

- Brawny
- Complicated
- Prey

1. Why did the puppies come to the museum?
2. Why did Mew used to think she was a cat?
3. Why does Sadira want to find a home for her kitten?
4. What does Sadira do so her kitten will know Sadira sent Pierre to find her?

## Chapter Nine: The Wild Kitten Chase

Define the following words and use them in a sentence.

- Succeeded
- Clever
- Instinct

1. Describe Pierre's plan for finding Cricket.
2. What goes wrong with Pierre's plan?
3. What does Mew stop to look at in the pet store?
4. What mistake do the dogs realize they've made at the end of the chapter?



## Chapter Ten: Dogs in a Fog

Define the following words and use them in a sentence.

- Tines
- Shallow
- Cautiously

1. How do the dogs lose the kitten?
2. When the dogs go looking for the kitten in the fog, what is Pierre afraid of?
3. What has happened to all the antlers on the prairie, according to Dare's mother?
4. Why does Dare howl?

## Chapter Eleven: Frosty Farms

Define the following words and use them in a sentence.

- Procedure
- Jovial
- Intruders

1. What strange and unfamiliar creature do the dogs encounter?
2. Why aren't the dogs happy to see Freddie and Gipsy?
3. Why do the dogs change their minds about taking the kitten back to town?
4. How is Mew related to Mick?

## Chapter Twelve: Mouse Undercover

Define the following words and use them in a sentence.

- Pinpoint
- Prudent
- Hypnotized

1. How did Mouse and Dare meet when they were younger?
2. How does Mouse sneak into the museum?
3. How does Mouse scare the cats away?
4. Where does Mouse stop to rest while climbing the tree?



### Chapter Thirteen: Warrior Chihuahua

Define the following words and use them in a sentence.

- Skirmish
- Acquaintance
- Flabbergasted

1. How does Mouse keep the cats from attacking him?
2. Who shows up at the museum to help rescue the puppies?
3. Why do you suppose the museum makes Colleen so sad?
4. How does Cinnamon cheer Colleen up?

### Chapter Fourteen: Busted

Define the following words and use them in a sentence.

- Fulfilled
- Serenaded
- Lagged

1. What is Colleen doing when the dogs arrive at the museum?
2. Why does Pierre examine the contents of the tea cups and teapot?
3. Why does Colleen flee from the police?
4. Why does Pierre run in front of the police car?



## Chapter Fifteen: Service Pups

Define the following words and use them in a sentence.

- Quills
- Ordeal
- Wistful

1. Where are the dogs at the beginning of the chapter?
2. Who does Calloway accidentally bring to his mother's house?
3. What good news does Mr. Abram receive over the phone?
4. Why are Calloway and Dare horrified at the end of the chapter?

## Chapter Sixteen: Miracles

Define the following words and use them in a sentence.

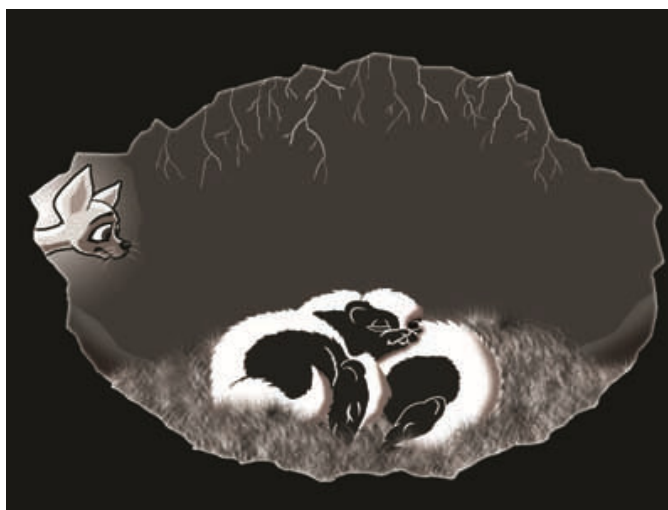
- Version
- Hibernation
- Miracle

1. What are Mr. Abram and the dogs raising funds for this time?
2. Who are the skunks looking for?
3. If being useful is not what keeps humans and dogs together, what does?
4. Why do you suppose the final chapter is called "Miracles"?

## Review Questions

1. Describe one of these characters:

- Pierre
- Dare
- Mouse
- Mew
- Pepper
- Cinnamon
- Old Sam
- Sadira
- Colleen Calloway



2. Describe an interesting fact you learned about prairie animals.
3. Pierre is determined to have his puppies become Assistance Dogs when they grow up. What is an Assistance Dog? What kinds of jobs do they do?
4. Pierre learns that he can't help someone who doesn't want to be helped. Give an example of someone the Prairie Dogs *have* helped in the story.
5. Describe an example of a "miracle" from the story.

## Suggested Projects

1. Draw a picture of your favourite character. 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, including the animals in the museum.
3. Put on a skit based on one of the chapters of the book.
4. Send an email or letter to the author. Describe what you enjoyed about the book.  
Email: [ggoertzen@sasktel.net](mailto:ggoertzen@sasktel.net)  
Mailing address: 254 Cambridge Street, Prince Albert, SK S6V 2Y3
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. Create a fundraising project to collect money to donate to Telemiracle.

# Miracle Dogs Trivia Challenge

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

**What does Pierre do to let his puppies know he's upset with them?**

- A) Nip them
- B) Bark at them
- C) Sneeze at them
- D) Tell them they're grounded

**Why does Mew think humans use wheelchairs?**

- A) Their legs don't work
- B) They're lazy
- C) To run over misbehaving dogs
- D) It's faster than walking

**How much money has Telemiracle raised by the time the dogs arrive?**

- A) Two thousand dollars
- B) Twenty thousand dollars
- C) Two hundred thousand dollars
- D) Two million dollars

**What does Mr. Abram forget to bring onstage at Telemiracle?**

- A) Mouse
- B) The cheque
- C) The Hoop of Death
- D) His dentures

**What do the dogs discover after arriving at Colleen's house?**

- A) Bonnie is going to have puppies
- B) Mr. Abram is going to become a grandfather
- C) Pierre was once a circus dog
- D) Mr. Abram and Colleen Calloway are going to be married

**What does Pierre want the puppies to do when they grow up?**

- A) Become Assistance Dogs
- B) Become scent collectors
- C) Join the circus
- D) Join the Bull Dogs

**What do the Prairie Dogs have to do to get the puppies back?**

- A) Find a home for some skunks
- B) Find a home for a kitten
- C) Join the Pride
- D) Ride a snowmobile

**What is a miracle?**

- A) A mirror that tells your future
- B) A telethon
- C) When something wonderful happens that you didn't think was possible
- D) A new breed of dog

**What kind of flower do the dogs discover grows in snow?**

- A) Prairie lily
- B) Crocus
- C) Rose
- D) Daisy

## Miracle Dogs Trivia Challenge Answers

Many wild prairie mammals and birds are mentioned or illustrated in the book. How many can you name?

Badger

Beaver

Bison or buffalo

Burrowing owl

Chickadee

Coyote

Deer

Fox

Frog

Gopher

Hawk

Meadowlark

Mouse (actual mice, not just Mouse the Chihuahua)

Porcupine

Prairie dog (actual prairie dogs, not just the Prairie Dogs)

Rat

Rattlesnake

Pheasant

Skunk

Snowy owl

Waxwing

Weasel

Wolf

Woodpecker



What does Pierre do to let his puppies know he's upset with them?

C) Sneeze at them

Why does Mew think humans use wheelchairs?

B) They're lazy

**How much money has Telemiracle raised by the time the dogs arrive?**

D) Two million dollars

**What does Mr. Abram forget to bring onstage at Telemiracle?**

C) The Hoop of Death

**What do the dogs discover after arriving at Colleen's house?**

B) Mr. Abram is going to become a grandfather

**What does Pierre want the puppies to do when they grow up?**

A) Become Assistance Dogs

**What do the Prairie Dogs have to do to get the puppies back?**

B) Find a home for a kitten

**What is a miracle?**

C) When something wonderful happens that you didn't think was possible

**What kind of flower do the dogs discover grows in snow?**

B) Crocus





# Prairie Dogs Word Search

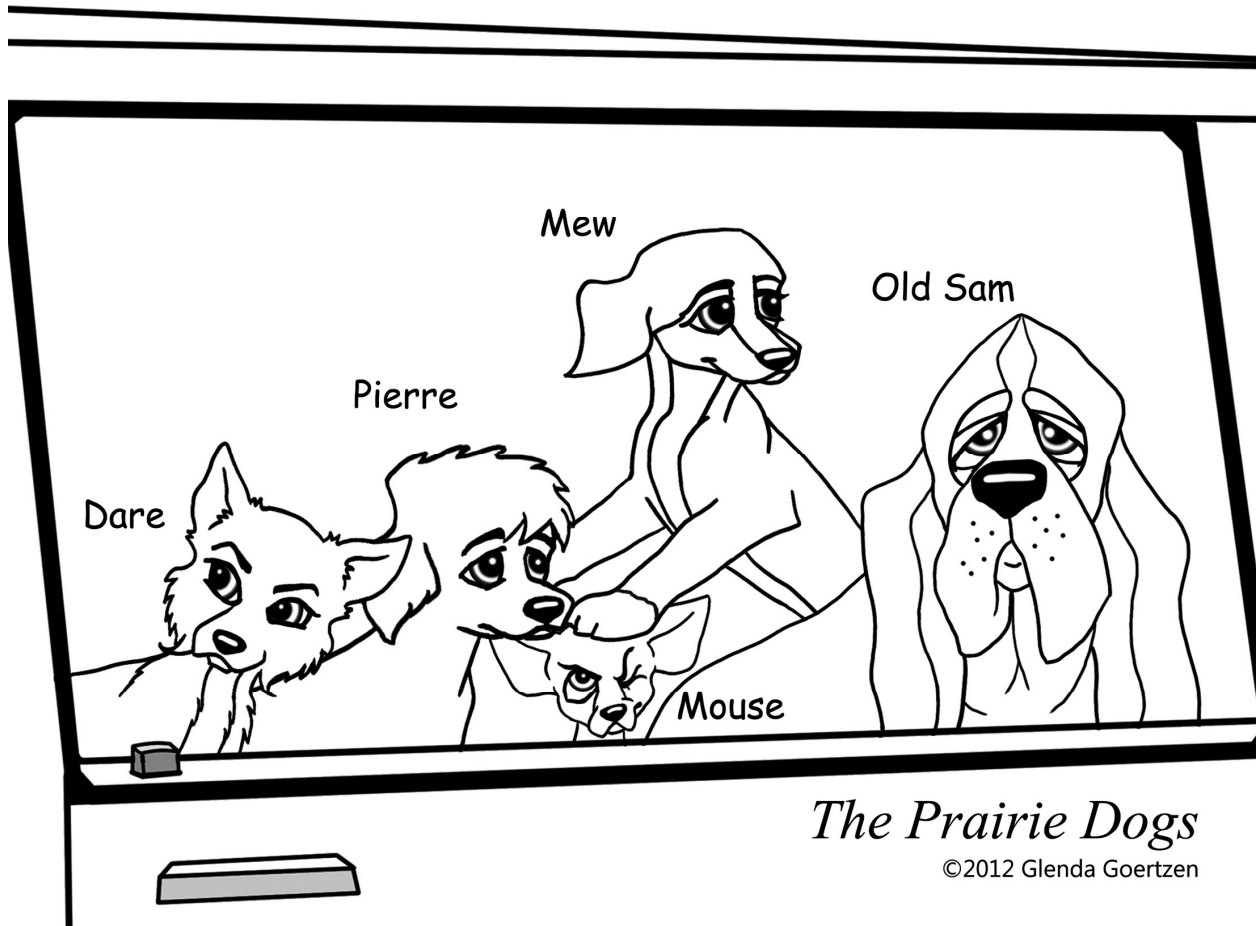
Circle the letters of the hidden words!

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

# Colouring Page



*The Prairie Dogs*

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