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IST 612

Assignment #3 – Book talks, book review, annotations

Book Review:

A Dog’s Life: the Autobiography of a Stray, by Martin, Ann M, 2005, 182 pages

Squirrel is a stray dog who was born in a wheel-barrow with her brother, Bone. She spent the first weeks of life playing as a carefree puppy. After their mother moved on, Squirrel and Bone stayed in their garden shed home, leaving when gun shots got too close. Bone and Squirrel are on the move when they suddenly find themselves rescued, only to be abandoned at a mall parking lot. Bone finds himself rescued again, and Squirrel finds herself alone.

Squirrel survives her first winter on her own, and eventually befriends another stray dog, Moon. They stick together for the summer, surviving an attack by a pack of wild dogs. Squirrel and Moon settle in the town of Claremont, where they find a safe haven and the generosity of strangers – until the dog control officers arrive. After a turn of events, Squirrel finds herself alone again and she settles into a routine. She lives near farms in the winters, and wanders around the rest of the year. She continues on in this fashion, until she finds the unlikeliest of companions.

Martin honestly depicts the best and the worst of human treatment of animals. Animal abandonment and death are part of the narrative, and may not be appropriate for younger readers. Squirrel has to hunt to survive, and although not graphic, these scenes may disturb sensitive readers. All hope is not lost though, as Squirrel’s experiences and journeys eventually lead her to a happy place. This book has definite appeal for animal lovers, and can be part of the dialogue not only on how society treats animals but also how it treats all those that live in the periphery of mainstream society.

Annotations:

A Dog’s Life: the Autobiography of a Stray; by Martin, Ann M; 2005; 182pp  
 A journey of the travels and trials of Squirrel, a stray dog who was born in a wheel-barrow.

Because of Winn-Dixie; by DiCamillo, Kate; 2000; 184pp  
 Ten year old Opal goes to the grocery store for a few items, and comes home with a dog that changes her life.

The Underneath; by Appelt, Kathi; illustrated by Small, David; 2008; 313pp  
 Dogs and cats don’t usually get along, but they do in this story. As they struggle against the evil Gar Face, this book explores relationships between unusual parties.