



Sam Hannigan's Woof Week

Alan Nolan

Teaching Guide

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RATIONALE & THEMES

Sam Hannigan has a passionate love of animals and a keen sense of justice, both of which are being sorely tested by the obvious mistreatment of the dog next door by its callous owner.

Assisted by her friend Ajay, Sam decides to use one of her grandfather's incredible and, more importantly, untested inventions, to teach the neighbour a lesson, and correct his horrid behaviour towards his long suffering dog.

Overlooking a simple but vital factor in their plan, they find themselves dealing with a series of unexpected consequences that provide Sam with a closer than expected opportunity to experience the world from a dog's perspective.

The themes explored are:

- Courage
- Self-esteem
- Bullying
- Friendship
- Loyalty
- Responsibility
- Animal welfare

SUMMARY

Upset by her neighbour Mr Soames's mistreatment of his dog Barker, and tormented by the tricks her older brother Bruno enjoys playing on her, Sam is literally floored by the latest gadget he has managed to smuggle from their grandfather's invention shed.

The Brain Swap 3000 has extracted Sam's brain from her body, leaving her stretched rigid and lifeless on the floor. Unfortunately, Bruno's panicked attempt to control the gadget manages to transmit Sam's brain first to Rover the goldfish, and then to an inoffensive mouse in the corner of the room, before he manages to restore Sam and she disarms him.

When her friend Ajay comes around later to practise for an Irish dancing competition, Sam has an idea how she might teach her neighbour a lesson about his meanness and animal cruelty, and persuades Ajay to retrieve the Brain Swap 3000 from her grandfather's shed.

Transported into the poor mistreated dog's body, Sam delivers a stinging rebuke to Mr Soames for his mistreatment of his pet.

However, when Ajay attempts to return Sam to normal, they discover that the gadget's power supply is exhausted and it will now take four days to recharge.

With Sam trapped in Barker's body, they contrive a convincing lie that she has undertaken a four-day charity challenge, dressed in a dog costume to raise money for an animal shelter, to explain her unusual appearance.

Unfortunately, driven by the school's enthusiasm, the lie grows, and they find themselves at the centre of a media storm of interest.

The media exposure attracts the attention of a collector of unusual animals, and Sam is kidnapped. However, aided by one of his collection, his plans are thwarted, Sam is restored, and her dream of opening an animal shelter is realised using the money that has been donated.

APPROACH

This story is lighthearted and entertaining, bubbling with infectious humour, as it explores the comic consequences of cyanthropy (*transforming into a dog*), when Sam is forced to live for four days inside the body of her neighbour's dog Barker.

This guide is divided into three sections to accommodate the development of the story. The themes will provide the opportunity for considerable imaginative discussion.

Section 1 It's a Dog's Life Pages 6–35

SUMMARY

Her sleep disturbed by the howls of their neighbour's dog Barker, Sam peers from the window. When she sees a shoe fly across the garden to silence the dog, she is incensed by the mistreatment of the poor animal, and she hurls an outraged riposte at Mr Soames.

Barely returned to sleep, she is woken again when her older brother Bruno bursts into the room to impress her with a display of flatulence, a ritual he uses regularly to annoy her.

Bruno has managed to gain access to their grandfather's shed, and delights in trying out on Sam some of the more exotic inventions he finds there, including a device that changes her hair to a fluorescent green colour.

Still smarting from Bruno force-feeding her dog biscuits, Sam watches Mr Soames berate his dog with a sweeping brush and promises revenge.

In the kitchen, Sam shares her annoyance with her granny, who, before she trots upstairs for a bath, agrees that their neighbour is a mean bully.

The peace of the kitchen is shattered when her brother Bruno crashes through the door, intent on testing the latest gadget from the shed that has roused his curiosity.

Both heedless and ignorant of the consequences, Bruno fixes Sam in the Brain Swap 3000's sights, and catches her in a blast of blue light, only to watch her fall rigid and lifeless to the floor. Unsure how to undo his action, a clumsy shake of the gadget activates it again and he realises that he has transferred Sam's brain into Rover, the goldfish.

Recognising the potential of the gadget and ignoring Sam's pleas, he transfers her brain again, this time to an unsuspecting mouse in the corner, where she has to face the attention of Chairman Miaow, the cat.

In exasperation, Sam punches the cat on the nose, and scampers up Bruno's leg, biting him sharply on the knee to force him to restore her back to her human body.

When her friend Ajay calls around to rehearse their Irish dancing routine, Sam has a brainwave that they could use the gadget to transport her into Barker's body, to deliver a shocking lesson to the dog's cruel owner.

The plan works splendidly until Ajay attempts to reverse the operation only to discover that the power supply is empty and it will take four days to recharge. In the meantime, Sam is trapped inside Barker, the neighbour's dog.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- **Read pp7:** Sam's granny, Nanny Gigg, lives in poverty. There are many things that they are unable to buy or repairs that they cannot afford. What are the main signs of poverty? How should we behave when we see those signs around us?
- **Read pp11–12:** Bruno comes into Sam's room to break wind deliberately and noisily. It is something that he does regularly, and he finds it amusing. Is this type of behaviour ever acceptable or amusing? Why do you think this type of behaviour is more common with boys?
- **Read pp15–17:** Bruno takes delight in being cruel to his little sister, tormenting her with a series of mean tricks. Why do brothers and sisters behave towards each other in this way? How should he be more protective of her?
- **Read pp22–23:** Sam's granny is very eccentric and foolish. Is it reasonable for her to behave in this way? Is she giving a good example to Sam? How should adults behave? Are there things that they should really never try to do?

ACTIVITIES

1. I'm Awake (read p6)

Sam describes those few seconds as her brain adjusts from sleep and dreaming to being awake, still remembering the unusual thoughts that were in her mind.

This is something we all experience, and the things we remember are often strange and sometimes amusing.

Remember an experience you had as you woke from a dream. Describe how you

felt and what you saw as you became fully awake.

2. It's Really Me (read p9)

When their teacher, Ms Sniffles asks the class to name an animal they would like to be, Sam chooses to be a dog.

As she sits in class, she can even see the type of dog she would like to be, and is able to imagine how her face would look, smiling from where the dog's face should be.

Choose an animal you would like to be. Create an illustration of the animal with your face where its face should be.

3. The Gadget (read p14)

Daddy Mike's shed is a treasure store of strange gadgets, each of them with an awesome power. Bruno has discovered some of them, using them to annoy Sam, and make a nuisance of himself.

Before he left, Daddy Mike wrote a note to Nanny Gigg, explaining his last invention, and warning that it must never be used, except in the most frightening emergency.

Make a copy of the note he left her, and include a diagram and description of his gadget, explaining its power and what it should be used for.

4. Sam's Revenge (read p18)

Sam has been teased and tormented by her brother Bruno, and promises revenge.

However, she is not mean enough to think of anything suitable. She needs your help!

Use your imagination to plan an awesome reprisal for her, explaining how she might put it into action.

5. The Weekly Menu (read p24)

Nanny Gigg is an eccentric, and this applies both to the clothes she wears and the food she cooks.

Sam loves her granny dearly, but sometimes wishes her cooking was more conventional.

For a week, Sam keeps a record of all the strange food combinations on the menu each day.

Can you recreate the menu of Nanny's meals? You can include some illustrations and, perhaps, the tasting notes and comments that a food critic might use.

6. What Would You Be? (read pp31–35)

Bruno manages to transport Sam's brain into both Rover, the goldfish, and then an unsuspecting mouse.

In both situations, Sam has to adapt very quickly to her new circumstances, size and skills, in order to survive.

Use your imagination to describe the comic consequences if someone shape-shifted you into two separate animals, one you like and the other you loathe.

Section 2 The Battery Died Pages 55–99

SUMMARY

Wakening in the morning from a strange dream, Sam is deflated, realising that she is still a dog. However, she has a plan to deal with her first challenge, the Irish dancing competition.

At breakfast, her granny seems not to notice Sam's strange appearance, reminiscing instead about her own days as a dancer.

Ajay's dad drives them to the competition venue without comment. However, when they enter the hall, Sam's appearance causes uproar with the rest of the team, and Ajay rescues the situation with a plausible explanation.

He announces that Sam has undertaken a four-day sponsored 'dress-up' to raise money for a dog shelter. After some initial trepidation, the idea is welcomed, and the judges allow her to dance.

With the benefit of her new canine skills, and the novelty effect of her 'costume', Sam and her team win the competition comfortably.

Meanwhile, two suspicious characters are prowling the area, intent on capturing interesting animal specimens.

Waking up on day two presents the next challenge for Sam. It is Monday and that means school.

Ogg, the school caretaker is unconvinced with the costume explanation. However, her teacher Ms Sniffles thinks it's a wonderful idea, and makes an immediate donation.

When the principal is told, events accelerate, and very soon a radio interview has been organised.

The clip of the interview is uploaded to social media where it becomes a sensation, attracting the attention of one of the researchers for 'Hooley's' prime time television show. They want Sam to appear, and very soon an invitation has been arranged for Sam and Ajay to appear on *Bryan Hoolihan's Midweek Madness*.

Day three of her ordeal continues the media hysteria, while the accumulating pile of money donations, delivered by the postman, bemuses Nanny Gigg.

Confessing the truth, Sam is reassured by her granny, who is already distracted by her anticipation of meeting her idol, the television presenter, Hooley.

Meanwhile, at the other end of town, Roger Fitzmaurice, dog food manufacturer and collector of exotic animals, has been alerted to the hype surrounding Sam.

Carefully examining a picture in the newspaper, he realises that Sam is not wearing a costume but is actually a dog.

Determined to secure her for his private collection, he dispatches two of his henchmen to capture her as she leaves the television studio after her appearance on Hooley's show.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- **Read p160:** Both Sam and Ajay like to visit the zoo and watch the animals. Is this strange behaviour for animal lovers, to keep large animals that are used to open spaces, caged in a smelly enclosure, just so that they can be stared at? Is a zoo a suitable place to keep large animals? Why do people enjoy watching animals that are kept in cages?
- **Read pp78–79:** The radio DJ Liz Anya is effusive in her language, creating new words like 'fantabulous' to exaggerate what she wants to say. Is she really sincere when she uses language like this? Is it necessary for one event to have to be more exciting than the previous one? How can you decide if you are hearing an accurate description of something?
- **Read p80:** Ms Sniffles is overwhelmed with excitement at the news that the video clip of Sam talking on the phone is an Internet sensation attracting more than 200,000 views. What does this really mean? What type of article usually attracts this type of attention? Are they sensible or sensational? What does this say about people who use social media regularly?

ACTIVITIES

1. Was That Sam? (read pp58–59)

When Sam comes down for breakfast, her granny makes no comment on her appearance, and Sam believes that Nanny Gigg hasn't noticed.

Of course, she does notice, but decides to

wait until Sam tells her what is going on.

When Sam leaves, Nanny Gigg tries to understand what it was she saw.

The author thought he would add a short paragraph here to describe what Nanny Gigg thought and said to herself.

Try to write the paragraph in about 150 words.

2. Dinners for Dogs (read pp64–65)

Ajay suspects that it might be difficult to persuade Ms Clancy to believe their story about a challenge to raise money for a dog charity, so he decides to prepare a small A5 poster beforehand, giving all the necessary detail.

Unfortunately he is very short of time and needs help.

Use your skills to create a poster for him. What information and illustration would be useful to include?

3. The Last Dance (read pp66–67)

The last dance of the competition between Sam and Rachael is a sensation; the audience gives the judge's decisions a thunderous round of applause.

Also in the hall is a young reporter from the *Clobberstown Herald*. The editor has told her to scoop an interesting human-interest story from the competition, and she decides to write her story on Sam and the final jig.

Create the reporter's article. What angle should she take and whom should she interview for extra comment?

4. Twitter Sphere (read pp78–79)

As the interview with DJ Liz Anya begins, the station's Twitter feed springs to life, building to a tsunami of comment as the listeners argue about Sam and her interview.

Recreate the stream of discussion that the first 7 people in the audience have about Sam and her interview.

Do they all agree with each other?

5. F.A.B. (read pp78–79)

After her programme, DJ Liz Anya has one last job to complete before she leaves the station to go home. She has to put a post on the station's Facebook page describing Sam and the interview. She also has to email a report to the station director with the same information.

For the Facebook post, she uses the effusive hyperbole (*exaggerated language*) she used

when she was on air. For the email to her boss, she simply gives the facts without any exaggeration.

Recreate both texts.

6. Bryan Hoolihan (read pp80–81)

Ms Hennigan is breathless with excitement at the prospect of one of her pupils appearing on Bryan Hoolihan's television show.

She has just spoken to one of the researchers from the programme who was not really convinced that Sam's story was suitable for inclusion. Ms Hennigan had to work very hard to convince her that Sam would be perfect for the show.

Recreate the conversation they had. What arguments do you think Ms Hennigan used to convince her? How do you think she flattered the researcher?

7. Jolly Roger. Ha! (read p99)

When Mr Wilson and Ms Pike leave the room, they are both very cross with Mr Fitzmaurice, and their comment that he is not very jolly quickly develops into a rant about their boss and how he treats them.

Recreate the conversation between them and the comments they made about him. Perhaps Mr Wilson is cross because he likes Ms Pike, and he is annoyed at the way she is being treated?

You could perform your dialogue for the rest of the class.

Section 3 Noah's Ark Pages 100–147

SUMMARY

The excitement builds for Sam, Ajay and Nanny Gigg, chauffeured to the studio in a white limo, where Bryan Hoolihan welcomes them before they are 'made-up', miked and finally seated on the famous pink sofa, ready to begin.

Ajay is stage-struck and leaves Sam to reply to Hooley's questions.

Leaving the studio and congratulating their achievement, Sam bounds into the back seat of the limo without waiting for Ajay.

Suddenly, the door slams shut and the limo screeches off without Ajay, leaving him to explain to Bruno and Nanny Gigg that Sam has been kidnapped.

Wakening next morning in a tumbledown warehouse, Sam meets the smallest and

smelliest dog imaginable, who introduces himself as Stinker, revealing that Sam has been captured and brought to the dog biscuit factory.

A short inspection tour reveals the full horror of the place. Captured animals are worked to exhaustion as production slaves, before being fed into the ingredient mix and then baked into Jolly Roger dog biscuits.

When Sam meets Mr Fitzmaurice, he reveals his plan to force her to lead an advertising campaign for his dog biscuits. Sam refuses and a scuffle ensues. Stinker manages to steal Fitzmaurice's phone, and Sam uses it to summon help.

Crashing through the factory gates in another of Daddy Mike's inventions, the amphibious behemoth, Big Bertha, Ajay and the gang are just in time as Sam is muzzled and about to be tossed into the dog biscuit mixture.

Wriggling, Sam manages to bite Fitzmaurice and slip her muzzle, before Bruno uses the Brain Swap 3000 to transfer her to a horse where she is able to overcome Fitzmaurice. Ajay helps with his pet tarantula, taking advantage of Fitzmaurice's fear of spiders.

A final brain swap sees Sam take control of Fitzmaurice and issue orders to reverse all his mean treatment to staff and animals.

Restored, Sam and Ajay are surprised both at the number of donations and Fitzmaurice's transformation. His generosity enables them, at last, to realise their ambition to set up their own animal shelter.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- **Read p100:** The limo driver confesses that his children watched the clip of Sam's interview repeatedly on social media. Why did they have to watch it more than once? What extra would they learn? Was this a learning experience or a distraction? Why do so many believe what they view on social media?
- **Read pp103–107:** Bryan Hoolihan welcomes Sam and Ajay with great charm. Does he speak to all his guests this way? Was he really pleased to see them? Was his manner sincere? What clues were there to show if he was sincere or not?
- **Read pp117–118:** Sam is horrified at the treatment that the animals in the dog biscuit factory have to endure. However, the cosmetics industry and medical researchers both test their products on animals to make sure they are safe for us to use. Is this also animal abuse? Do we have the right to use animals to safety test products for our own use?
- **Read p144:** The community has been

very generous with its donations towards Sam's animal shelter. Charity donations usually raise lots of money. Should we support charities in this way? How do charities persuade us to give them money? Which charities do you think get the most money? How would you choose a charity to support?

ACTIVITIES

1. Guess Who (read p102)

Ajay has insisted on full facial makeup, to the point where Hooley thinks he looks ridiculous.

If you had the opportunity for a professional studio makeover, how would you ask them to change your appearance?

Draw a large illustration of your face after you have been made-up, and include a brief description of who you are meant to resemble and why.

2. Brain Swap (read pp105–107)

After the interview, Sam wonders what Hooley's reaction would have been if she had mentioned the Brain Swap 3000 and described its capabilities.

Look carefully at the language he uses to describe Sam's costume, and then use your imagination to create the descriptions he might have used, if he had been aware of its existence or Daddy Mike.

Use the same style to exaggerate his words to show his shock. Perhaps you could perform it? What type of voice would he use?

3. The Capture (read pp109–111)

Surprised that her plan has worked, Ms Pike and Mr Wilson speed off to deliver Sam to the biscuit factory.

The editors at The O'Brien Press like the way the cartoons show the kidnapping. However, they think there needs to be another cartoon page to show what happened as the limo sped across town to deliver Sam to the factory.

Lots of exciting things could have happened. Can you help the author to create another cartoon page?

4. Missing Person (read p119)

Distraught, Ajay sits in the Garda station trying to remember the details of what happened, while a sympathetic Garda makes notes on his answers to her questions.

In small groups, decide on five questions she might have asked.

Then individually create Ajay's answers.

Now compare your answers with the rest of your group. Are there any important differences?

The Garda now has to create a missing person poster.

Help her to create the poster, and choose the important facts to appear on the poster.

5. Memories (read pp141–143)

In the morning when Sam wakes, safely back in her own body, she remembers each of the brains she was transferred into.

She remembers one memory and one fear from each of her host brains.

She decides to record these in her diary, along with a short account to describe how she felt in each of their bodies.

Use your imagination to help her to create the diary page.

6. Daddy Mike (read p146)

Daddy Mike has read about Sam's adventure on the Internet, and realises that someone has been rummaging around in his shed.

Although he hasn't seen her for years and years, he decides to write to Sam.

What type of letter would he write? What explanations could he offer for his disappearance?

Can you help him to find the best words and thoughts to include in his letter?

7. Barker (read p147)

For four days, Barker's body was forced to experience the world through Sam's brain.

Now that his own brain is back in control of his body, he has time to reflect on his experience.

There were four things about the time that Sam's brain was in control that he found particularly strange.

Use your imagination to decide what these were and then write a brief description of what Barker thought of the experience.

Also by Alan Nolan

