

Banjo and Ruby Red Teacher's Notes

Written by Libby Gleeson
Illustrated by Freya Blackwood
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SYNOPSIS

Banjo is a chook dog. Not just any chook dog. He's the *best* chook dog the farm has ever had. It's Banjo's job to get all of the chooks into the chook yard but there is one pesky chook called Ruby Red who always gives Banjo a hard time. Whenever Banjo has to round up the chooks, Ruby Red just sits on the woodheap and refuses to move. Banjo has to bark and bark, and leap and leap, to get her to move to her perch in the chook shed.

But one morning Ruby Red isn't sitting on her woodheap. Banjo searches for her everywhere. Eventually he finds her in the woolshed but she is very sick, so he takes her back to his kennel to look after her. For two days he watches over her, wrapping his body around hers to keep her warm. After three days Ruby Red lifts her head and looks out of the kennel. After four days she stands up and pecks at some seeds. After five days she is feeling even better and can go as far as the fence.

Once Ruby Red is fully recovered she no longer gives Banjo any trouble. But she still doesn't go back into the chook yard. She now has a special place with Banjo, safe and warm in his kennel.

THEMES

Farm life
Antagonism
Compassion
Responsibility
Friendship

COMPREHENSION

Banjo is described as a 'chook dog'. What does this mean? What is his special role on the farm?

Why is Ruby Red such a problem for Banjo?

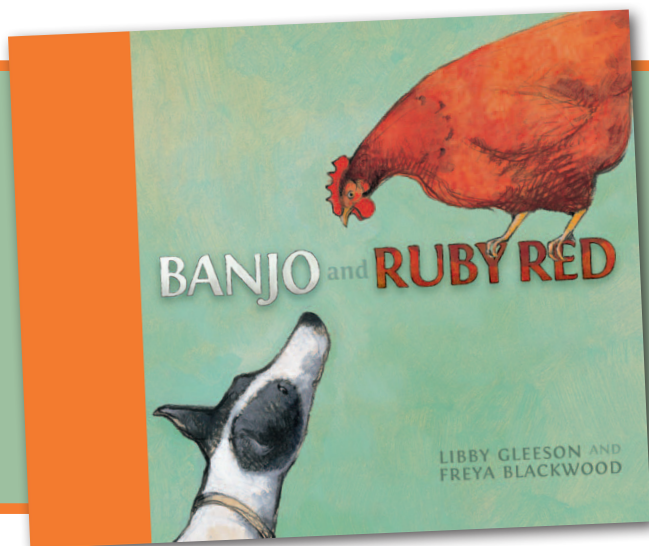
Why do you think Ruby Red refuses to move from the woodheap?

How do you think Banjo feels when he can't find Ruby Red? Why do you think that?

Even though Ruby Red always causes a problem for Banjo he still helps her. Why do you think he does this?

Once Ruby Red is better what changes between her and Banjo?

Ruby Red still doesn't go into the chook shed, but it's not a problem for Banjo anymore. Why is that?



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ACTIVITIES

1. Banjo is described as 'the best chook dog we've ever had'. As a class, discuss the important role dogs play on farms and research the different types of jobs (not necessarily on a farm) that working dogs can do. After this research, get the students to imagine and draw a working dog of their own. Get them to give the dog a name and write a short description about what their dog's particular job is and why it is so important.
2. As a class, think of other animals that you might find on a farm and make a list. Then get students to pick an animal from that list to write a short report about. The report should include an image of the animal and information about their features, diet and why they are found on a farm. Get students to read out their reports and then play a game of *Who Am I?* using hats with photos of the animals attached. Encourage students to formulate questions based on the class research.
3. Organise an excursion to a children's farm. After the excursion, make notes together as a class about all of the interesting things you have learnt. Turn these notes into a big poster to hang in the classroom.
4. Before Ruby Red gets sick she refuses to do what Banjo wants her to do. Get the students to think about a time in their own lives when someone has refused to do something they have asked. Ask them to write a journal entry about this experience that details what the disagreement was about, why it happened, each side of the argument and how it was resolved. Could the situation have been resolved differently? Can they now understand the other person's point of view?
5. Go through the book with the class and talk about the way the illustrations show action and movement through time (good pages to look at are: the page where Banjo is running, jumping and barking; the page where Ruby Red flies through the air; the page where Banjo is looking for Ruby Red; and the page where Banjo takes Ruby Red to his kennel). Then get the each student to think of a simple action scene (e.g. walking to school, kicking a goal, washing the dog or dancing across a stage) and draw that scene on a single sheet of paper, just like the illustrations in the book.