

Sarah Mook Poetry Contest 2017, Grades 3-5 Third place, "Coming Home to Digby"

This delightful poem celebrates owning a dog, Digby," who has come to live with the family of a previous dog who has died. The poem offers poetically expressed examples of gratifying activities that both dog and owner enjoy.

The enjoyment the speaker has in Digby is apparent in the opening of the poem. The speaker arrives home from school and "the screen door opens, and Digby / runs toward me. / I drop everything and hug him." Exuberantly, the speaker feels as if he or she "won the jackpot" and "as if all the stress is pressed out of my body."

The two enjoy a myriad of activities that warms any heart in the next grouping of lines. Dog and young owner run down "our old dirt hill" where "Digby looks like a snowball in the summer" and stops and "gazes" at his owner "with his / eyes filled with stars and wonder." This dog's energetic and enthusiastic behavior at being outside rollicking with his owner infuses the poem with light.

The next set of lines juxtaposes the love the speaker has for Digby with the love for the former pet, Bec. Their actions are similar and the speaker takes great joy in observing the following:

[Digby] looks out at the water
Like our old dog Bec used to do.
I smile,
As if some of Bec's spirit is in him,
I feel as if Bec is smiling from the clouds
Of heaven through Digby.
I miss Bec, but am glad to have Digby
now running through a path
of blackberries and blueberries
that opens to a grassy area
where he rolls and rolls and rolls.

One can easily visualize this animated scene. Happy dog and young owner relish the outside world running, rolling, throughout. The addition of Bec to the poem lifts this piece beyond simply a description of energy. Bec demonstrates that the young owner has heart; he or she sees beloved Bec in this new dog, Digby, and is comforted by this.

The last section of the poem zeroes in on Digby's and the speaker's pleasure in this outside world. The distinct specifics end the poem well. Digby rolls in grass that "crunches under his back" as the speaker "rub[s] his belly and feel[s] / his soft fur through my fingers." The speaker welcomes this "loving dog's energy / into my life."

The poem, "Coming Home to Digby" relishes all things that give pleasure in owning a dog, especially one who is so happy to see its owner. I so enjoyed reading this poem!

Thank you for the pleasure of reading your work!

Marie Kane, Final Judge,
Sarah Mook Poetry Contest, 2017
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