

## The Last Dog

Short Story by Katherine Paterson

# Why are pets good COMPANIONS?

### COMMON CORE

**RL1** Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support what the text says explicitly.

**RL3** Analyze how particular elements of a story interact (e.g., how setting shapes the plot). **L4** Clarify the meaning of multiple-meaning words.

**L4d** Verify the meaning of a word.

For many of us, pets are an important part of our lives. We feed them and care for them and often consider them to be a part of the family, but what do we get in return? Some would say that pets reward us with their companionship—their affection, loyalty, and good company. In “The Last Dog,” a boy’s powerful bond with a puppy helps teach him an important lesson.

**LIST IT** In a small group, make a list of reasons pets are good companions. To get started, use a list like the one shown. Then share your list with other groups.



## Meet the Author

### ● TEXT ANALYSIS: SETTING

**Setting** is where and when a story happens. Sometimes the setting is a small part of a story. At other times, the setting has a major effect on the plot events. In the story you are about to read, look for details to help you understand the setting and its influence on plot development. Look for:

- details about scenery and weather
- details about buildings, clothing, culture, and technology

As you read, note these and other details about where and when the story takes place.

### ● READING SKILL: IDENTIFY SEQUENCE IN PLOT

A plot is made up of many events. The **sequence**, or order, of the events is important to understanding the story. These words and phrases are often clues to the sequence of events:

**first      then      later      in the past**

While events are often presented in the order in which they occur, sometimes the action is interrupted to present a scene from an earlier time. This is called a **flashback**, and it may include important new information.

As you read, keep track of the sequence by recording important events on a sequence chart like the one shown.



### ▲ VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

Katherine Paterson uses the following words in her story about a futuristic world. In a three-column chart, define the words you know in the first column. In the second column, list the words you do not know. In the last column, provide dictionary definitions of all the words. Then use each word in a sentence.

|             |             |             |           |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|
| <b>WORD</b> | copious     | foray       | posterity |
| <b>LIST</b> | disembodied | foresighted | reproof   |
|             | evasive     | languish    |           |

## Katherine Paterson

born 1932

### “A Weird Little Kid”

Sometimes an outsider has an interesting way of looking at things. Katherine Paterson is convinced that as the child of U.S. missionaries in China, she learned valuable lessons about life. But being an outsider wasn't always easy. After returning to the United States at the age of five, Paterson and her family moved 18 times. She remembers feeling “small, poor, and foreign” on the playground. She was, in her own words, “a weird little kid,” but she states today that “there are few things, apparently, more helpful to a writer than having once been a weird little kid.”

### BACKGROUND TO THE STORY

#### Science Fiction

In a work of science fiction, a writer combines real scientific information with elements from his or her imagination to create an altered universe. Science fiction stories typically take place in the distant future—in outer space or on a changed Earth. Plots often center on challenges characters face in these unusual settings.



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# THE LAST DOG

KATHERINE PATERSON

**B**rock approached the customs gate. Although he did not reach for the scanner, a feeling it might have labeled “excitement” made him tremble. His fingers shook as he punched in his number on the inquiry board. “This is highly irregular, Brock 095670038,” the **disembodied** voice said. “What is your reason for external travel?”

Brock took a deep breath. “Scientific research,” he replied. He didn’t need to be told that his behavior was “irregular.” He’d never heard of anyone doing research outside the dome—actual rather than virtual research. “I— I’ve been cleared by my podmaster and the Research Team. . . .”

10 “Estimated time of return?” So, he wasn’t to be questioned further.

“Uh, 1800 hours.”

“Are you wearing the prescribed dry suit with helmet and gloves?”

“Affirmative.”<sup>1</sup>

“You should be equipped with seven hundred fifty milliliters of liquid and food tablets for one day travel.”

“Affirmative.” Brock patted the sides of the dry suit to be sure. **A**

“Remember to drink sparingly. Water supply is limited.” Brock nodded. He tried to lick his parched lips, but his whole mouth felt dry.

“Is that understood?”

20 “Affirmative.” Was he hoping customs would stop him? If he was, they didn’t seem to be helping him. Well, this was what he wanted, wasn’t it? To go outside the dome.

“Turn on the universal locator, Brock 095670038, and proceed to gate.”

Why weren’t they questioning him further? Were they eager for him to go? Ever since he’d said out loud in group speak that he wanted to go outside the dome, people had treated him strangely—that session with the podmaster and then the interview with the representative

## Analyze Visuals ▶

How would you describe the **setting** shown in this painting?

### disembodied

(dĭs’ēm-bŏ’dēd)

*adj.* separated from or lacking a body  
*v.* **disembody**

## **A** SETTING

Reread lines 1–16.

What does the unusual technology in the dome suggest about the time in which the story takes place?

1. **affirmative** (ə-fŭr’mə-tĭv): formal or scientific word for yes.



from Research. Did they think he was a deviant?<sup>2</sup> Deviants sometimes disappeared. The word was passed around that they had “gone outside,”  
30 but no one really knew. No deviant had ever returned.

The gate slid open. Before he was quite ready for it, Brock found himself outside the protection of the dome. He blinked. The sun—at least it was what was called “the sun” in virtual lessons—was too bright for his eyes even inside the tinted helmet. He took a deep breath, one last backward look at the dome, which, with the alien sun gleaming on it, was even harder to look at than the distant star, and started across an expanse of brown soil [was it?] to what he recognized from **holograms** as a line of purplish mountains in the distance. **B**

It was, he pulled the scanner from his outside pouch and checked it,  
40 “hot.” Oh, that was what he was feeling. Hot. He remembered “hot” from a virtual lesson he’d had once on deserts. He wanted to take off the dry suit, but he had been told since he could remember that naked skin would suffer irreparable burning outside the protection of the dome. He adjusted the control as he walked so that the unfamiliar perspiration would evaporate. He fumbled a bit before he found the temperature adjustment function. He put it on twenty degrees centigrade<sup>3</sup> and immediately felt more comfortable. No one he really knew had ever left the dome (stories of deviants exiting the dome being hard to verify), but there was all this equipment in case someone decided to venture out.  
50 He tried to ask the clerk who outfitted him, but the woman was **evasive**. The equipment was old, she said. People used to go out, but the outside environment was threatening, so hardly anyone (she looked at him carefully now), hardly anyone ever used it now.

Was Brock, then, the only normal person still curious about the outside? Or had all those who had dared to venture out perished, discouraging further **forays**? Perhaps he *was* a deviant for wanting to see the mountains for himself. When he’d mentioned it to others, they had laughed, but there was a hollow sound to the laughter.

If he never returned, he’d have no one to blame but himself. He knew  
60 that. While his podfellows played virtual games, he’d wandered into a subsection of the historical virtuals called “ancient fictions.” Things happened in these fictions more—well, more densely than they did in the virtuals. The people he met there—it was hard to describe—but somehow they were more *actual* than dome dwellers. They had strange names like Huck Finn and M. C. Higgins the Great.<sup>4</sup> They were even a little scary. It was their insides. Their insides were very loud. But even

## VISUAL VOCABULARY



**hologram** *n.* a three-dimensional picture made by laser light

## **B** SEQUENCE IN PLOT

What happens after Brock goes through the customs gate? As you read, use your chart to record the events described.

**evasive** (ĭ-vā'sĭv) *adj.* tending or trying to avoid

**foray** (fôr'ā') *n.* a trip into an unknown area

2. **deviant** (dē'vē-ənt): a person who does not follow customary or accepted behavior.

3. **twenty degrees centigrade**: a temperature equivalent to 68 degrees Fahrenheit.

4. **Huck Finn and M. C. Higgins the Great**: the main characters in two books that are often read by young adults.

though the people in the ancient fictions frightened him a bit, he couldn't get enough of them. When no one was paying attention, he went back again and again to visit them. They had made him wonder about that other world—that world outside the dome. **C**

Perhaps, once he had realized the danger the ancient fictions posed, he should have left them alone, but he couldn't help himself. They had made him feel hollow, hungry for something no food pellet or even virtual experience could satisfy. And now he was in that world they spoke of and the mountains of it were in plain view. **D**

**H**e headed for the purple curves. Within a short distance from the dome, the land was clear and barren, but after he had been walking for an hour or so he began to pass rusting hulks and occasional ruins of what might have been the dwellings of ancient peoples that no one in later years had cleared away for recycling or vaporization.<sup>5</sup>

He checked the emotional scanner for an unfamiliar sensation. “Loneliness,” it registered. He rather liked having names for these new sensations. It made him feel a bit “proud,” was it? The scanner was rather interesting. He wondered when people had stopped using them. He hadn't known they existed until, in that pod meeting, he had voiced his desire to go outside.

The podmaster had looked at him with a raised eyebrow and a sniff. “Next thing you'll be asking for a scanner,” he said.

“What's a scanner?” Brock asked.

The podmaster requisitioned one from storage, but at the same time, he must have alerted Research, because it was the representative from Research who had brought him the scanner and questioned him about his expressed desire for an Actual Adventure—a journey outside the dome.

“What has prompted this, uh—unusual ambition?” the representative had asked, his eyes not on Brock but on the scanner in his hand. Brock had hesitated, distracted by the man's fidgeting with the strange instrument. “I—I'm interested in scientific research,” Brock said at last. **E**

So here he was out of the pod, alone for the first time in his life. Perhaps, though, he should have asked one of his podfellows to come along. Or even the pod robopet. But the other fellows all laughed when he spoke of going outside, their eyes darting back and forth. Nothing on the outside, they said, could equal the newest Virtual Adventure. He suddenly realized that ever since he started interfacing<sup>6</sup> with the ancient fictions, his fellows had given him that look. They did think he was odd—not quite the same as a regular podfellow. Brock didn't really vibe with the pod robopet.

**C SETTING**

Reread lines 54–70. What do these details tell you about the place where the story is set?

**D SETTING**

Why does Brock leave the dome?

**E SEQUENCE IN PLOT**

Reread lines 81–97. What information revealed in the **flashback** helps you better understand Brock and his present actions?

5. **vaporization** (vā'pər-ī-zā'shən): the process of making a thing disappear by changing it into a fog or mist.

6. **interfacing** (ĭn'tər-fā'sĭng): making connections.

It was one of the more modern ones, and when they'd programmed its artificial intelligence they'd somehow made it too smart. The robotpet in the children's pod last year was older, stupider, and more "fun" to have around.

110 He'd badly underestimated the distance to the mountains. The time was well past noon, and he had at least three kilometers to go. Should he signal late return or turn about now? He didn't have much more than one day's scant supply of water and food tablets. But he was closer to the hills than to the dome. He felt a thrill ["excitement"] and pressed on.

There were actual trees growing on the first hill. Not the great giants of virtual history lessons, more scrubby and bent. But they were trees, he was sure of it. The podmaster had said that trees had been extinct for hundreds of years. Brock reached up and pulled off a leaf. It was green and had veins. In some ways it looked like his own hand. He put the leaf in  
120 his pack to study later. He didn't want anyone accusing him of losing his scientific objectivity.<sup>7</sup> Only deviants did that. Farther up the hill he heard an unfamiliar burbling sound. No, he knew that sound. It was water running. He'd heard it once when the liquid dispenser had malfunctioned. There'd been a near panic in the dome over it. He checked the scanner. There was no caution signal, so he hurried toward the sound. **F**

It was a—a "brook"—he was sure of it! Virtual lessons had taught that there were such things outside in the past but that they had long ago grown poisonous, then in the warming climate had dried up. But here was a running brook, not even a four-hour journey from his dome. His  
130 first impulse was to take off his protective glove and dip a finger in it, but he drew back. He had been well conditioned to avoid danger. He sat down clumsily on the bank. Yes, this must be grass. There were even some tiny flowers mixed in the grass. Would the atmosphere poison him if he unscrewed his helmet to take a sniff? He punched the scanner to read conditions, but the characters on the scanner panel danced about uncertainly until, at length, the disembodied voice said "conditions unreadable." He'd better not risk it. **G**

He pushed the buttons now for liquid and pellets. A tube appeared in his mouth. It dropped a pellet on his tongue. From the tube he sucked  
140 liquid enough to swallow his meal. What was it they called outside nourishment in the history virtuals? *Pecnec*? Something like that. He was having a *pecnec* in the woods by a brook. A hasty consulting of the scanner revealed that what he was feeling was "pleasure." He was very glad he hadn't come with an anxious podfellow or, worse, an advanced robotpet that would, no doubt, be yanking at his suit already, urging him back toward the dome.

### Language Coach

**Prefixes** A prefix is a word part added to the beginning of a word to form a new word. In line 110, the prefix *under* is added to the word *estimated*. *Estimated* means that he made a careful guess. What, then, does *underestimated* mean?

### **F** SETTING

**Compare and contrast** the setting outside the dome with the natural setting where you live. How familiar does the setting outside the dome seem to you?

### **G** SETTING

Reread lines 126–137. Notice how Brock reacts to nature. In what ways has the setting inside the dome influenced Brock's reactions?

7. **scientific objectivity:** a way of looking upon a situation and remaining true to scientific facts.



It was then, in the middle of post-*pecnec* satisfaction, that he heard the new sound. Like that programmed into a robopet, yet different. He struggled to his feet. The dry suit from storage was certainly awkward when you wanted  
150 to stand up or sit down. Nothing on the scanner indicated danger, so he went into the scrubby woods toward the sound. And stopped abruptly.

Something was lying under the shadow of a tree. Something about a meter long. It was furred and quite still. The sound was not coming from it. And then he saw the small dog—the puppy. He was sure it was a puppy, nosing the stiff body of what must once have been its mother, making the little crying sounds that he'd heard from the brook. Later, much later, he realized that he should have been wary. If the older dog had died of some extradomal disease, the puppy might have been a carrier. But at the time, all he could think of was the puppy, a small creature who had lost its mother.

160 He'd found out about mothers from the Virtuals. Mothers were extinct in the dome. Children were conceived and born in the lab and raised in units of twelve in the pods, presided over by a bank of computers and the podmaster. Nuclear families, as everyone knew, had been wasteful of time, energy, and space. There was an old proverb: The key to survival is efficiency. So though Brock could guess the puppy was “sad” (like that fictions person, Jo, whose podmate expired), he didn't know what missing a mother would feel like. And who would whimper for a test tube? **H**

Brock had never seen a dog, of course, but he'd seen plenty of dog breed descriptions on the science/history virtuals. Dogs had been  
170 abundant once. They filled the ancient fictions. They even had names

### ▲ Analyze Visuals

What do the details in the painting tell you about the **setting**?

**COMMON CORE** RL.3

#### **H** SETTING

Remember that setting is where and when a story happens, and that it can influence a story's plot. As you read about Brock's exploration of the world outside the dome, notice the sights and sounds that he discovers. Reread lines 147–167. In what way does this setting influence what happens next? Explain.

there—Lassie, Toto, Sounder. But now dogs were extinct, gone during the dark ages when the atmosphere had become warm and poisonous. The savages who had not had the intelligence or wealth to join the **foresighted** dome crafters had killed all animals wild or domesticated for food before they had eventually died out themselves. It was all in one of the very first virtual lessons. He had seen that one many times. He never confessed to anyone how, well, sad it made him feel.

But obviously, dogs were not quite extinct. Cautiously, he moved toward the small one.

180 “Alert. Alert. Scanning unknown object.”

Brock pushed the off button. “Are you sure you want to turn off scanner?”

“Affirmative.” He stuck the scanner into his pouch.

The puppy had lifted its head at the sound of his voice. It looked at him, head cocked, as though deciding whether to run or stay.

“It’s all right, dog,” Brock said soothingly. “I won’t hurt you.” He stayed still. He didn’t want to frighten the little beast. If it ran, he wasn’t sure he’d be able to catch it in his clumsy dry suit.

Slowly he extended his gloved hand. The dog backed away anxiously, but when Brock kept the hand extended, the puppy slowly crept toward him and sniffed, making whimpering sounds. It wasn’t old enough to be truly afraid, it seemed. The pup licked his glove tentatively, then backed away again. It was looking for food, and plasticine gloves weren’t going to satisfy. ◆

190 Brock looked first at the dead mother whose source of nourishment must have long dried up, then around the landscape. What would a dog eat? A puppy on its own? He took off his glove and reached through his pouch into the inside pocket that held his pellet supply. Making every move slow and deliberate so as not to startle the dog, he held out a pellet. The dog came to his hand, licked it, then the pellet. It wrinkled its nose. Brock laughed. He didn’t need the scanner now to tell him that what he felt was “pleasure.” He loved the feel of the rough tongue on his palm and the little furred face, questioning him.

200 “It’s all right, fellow. You can eat it.” I

As though understanding, the pup gulped down the pellet. Then looked around for more, not realizing that it had just bolted down a whole meal. When the dog saw there was no more coming, it ran over to the brook. Brock watched in horror as it put its head right down into the poisonous stream and lapped noisily.

“Don’t!” Brock cried.

210 The puppy turned momentarily at the sound, then went back to drinking, as though it was the most normal thing in the world. Well, it was, for the dog. Where else would a creature in the wild get liquid? If the streams were not all dried up, they must have learned to tolerate the water. But then, it was breathing the poisoned atmosphere, wasn’t it?

**foresighted** (fôr’sī’tīd)  
*adj.* having the ability to anticipate the future and prepare for it

◆ **GRAMMAR IN CONTEXT**

Look at lines 188–192. Notice that Paterson uses punctuation marks and the coordinating conjunctions *but* and *and* to make her sentences clear and easy to understand.

I **SEQUENCE IN PLOT**

What sequence of events leads to Brock’s touching the puppy?

Why hadn't it hit Brock before? This was a fully organic creature on the outside *without any life support system*. What could that mean? Some amazing mutation<sup>8</sup> must have occurred, making it possible for at least some creatures to breathe the outside atmosphere and drink its poisoned water. Those who couldn't die, those who could survive and get stronger. Even the ancient scientist Darwin<sup>9</sup> knew that. And Brock had

220 come upon one of these magnificent mutants! ❶

The puppy whimpered and looked up at Brock with large, trusting eyes. How could he think of it as a mutant specimen? It was a puppy. One who had lost its mother. What would it eat? There was no sign of food for a carnivore.<sup>10</sup> Perhaps way back in the mountains some small mammals had also survived, keeping the food chain going, but the puppy would not live long enough to find its way there, much less know how to hunt with its mother gone. For the first time in his life something deep inside Brock reached out toward another creature. The thought of the puppy **languishing** here by the side of its dead parent until it, too . . .

230 “Your name is Brog, all right?” The ancient astronomers had named stars after themselves. He had discovered something just as wonderful. Didn't he have the right to name it sort of after himself while preserving the puppy's uniqueness? “Don't worry, Brog. I won't let you starve.”

**W**hich is why Brock appeared at the customs portal after dark, the front of his dry suit stained, carrying a wriggling *Canis familiaris*<sup>11</sup> of uncertain breed.

If there had been any way to smuggle the dog in, Brock would have. But he couldn't for the life of him figure out how. As it was, every alarm in the area went off when he stepped into the transitional cubicle.<sup>12</sup>

240 The disembodied voice of the monitor queried him:

“Welcome back, Brock 095670038. You're late.”

“Affirmative.”

“And you are carrying contraband.”

“I pulled a leaf.”

“Deposit same in quarantine bins.”

“Affirmative.”

“Sensors denote warm-blooded presence not on official roster.”

“I found a dog,” Brock mumbled.

## ❶ SETTING

Reread lines 209–220. How is finding the puppy changing what Brock has always believed about the outside?

**languish** (lǎng'gwǐsh) v. to remain unattended or be neglected

8. **mutation** (myōō-tā'shən): a change within a creature's genes that results in a new trait or characteristic.

9. **Darwin**: Charles Darwin (1809–1882) was a British naturalist who founded the theory of evolution based on natural selection.

10. **carnivore** (kār'nə-vôr'): a flesh-eating animal.

11. **Canis familiaris** (kǎ'nīs fə-mīl-ē-ār'əs): the scientific name for the domesticated, or household, dog.

12. **transitional cubicle**: a small compartment where one is examined before moving from one environment into the next.



“Repeat.”

250 “A dog.”

“*Canis familiaris* is extinct.”

“Well, maybe it’s just a robopet that got out somehow.”

“Correction. Robopets are bloodless. Leave dry suit for sterilization and proceed to quarantine inspection.”

The officials in quarantine inspection, who rarely had anything to inspect, were at first nervous and then, as they watched the puppy happily licking Brock’s face, interested despite themselves. An actual dog! None of them had ever seen one, of course, and Brock’s dog was so much, well, more vital than a robopet. And although, on later reflection,  
260 they knew they should have terminated or expelled it, they couldn’t quite bring themselves to do so that night.

“It will have to go to Research,” the chief inspector finally declared.

“Permission requested to hand carry the dog known as Brog to Research,” Brock said. There was a bit of an argument about that. Several inspectors sought the honor, but the chief declared that Brock, having shed his dry suit and being already contaminated, should be placed with the dog in a hermetically sealed air car and transported to Research. **K**

The scientists in Research were predictably amazed to see a live *Canis familiaris*. But being scientists and more objective than the lower-grade  
270 quarantine inspectors, they kept a safe distance both physically and psychically<sup>13</sup> from the creature. Only the oldest scientist, dressed in proper protective clothing, came into the laboratory with Brock and the dog.

### ▲ Analyze Visuals

Look at the boy’s expression. What can you infer about his feelings toward the puppy?

### **K** SEQUENCE IN PLOT

What events happen after Brock finds the puppy? As you read, record the sequence on your chart.

13. **psychically** (sī’kīk-lē): in a manner related to the mind or spirit.

He scanned and poked and prodded the poor little fellow until it began to whimper in protest.

“Brog needs to rest,” said Brock, interrupting the scientist in the midst of his inspection. “She’s (for by this time gender had been indisputably established) had a hard day. And if there’s some actual food available—she’s not used to pellets.”

280 “Of course, of course,” said one of the researchers through the speaker in the observation booth. “How thoughtless. Send someone out for a McLike burger without sauce. She may regard it as meat. Anyhow, it will seem more like food to her than a pellet, affirmative, Brock?”

The scientists, Brock soon realized, were looking to him for advice. He was, after all, the discoverer of the last dog. It gave him sudden scientific status. Brock had sense enough to take advantage of this. After Brog had swallowed the McLike burger in three quick gulps, Brock insisted that he be allowed to stay with Brog, so that he might interact and sleep with her. “She’s not like us,” he explained. “She’s used to tumbling about and curling up with other warm bodies. In the old myths,” he added, “puppies  
290 separated from their litters cried all night long. She will need constant interaction with another warm-blooded creature or she might well die of,” he loved using his new vocabulary, “loneliness.”

The scientists agreed. After all, research was rather like quarantine, and since Brock had touched the dog ungloved and unprotected, he might well have picked up some germ from her. It was better to keep them both isolated in the research lab where proper precautions would be taken.

For nearly a week, Brock lived with Brog in the research center, eating McLike burgers, playing “fetch,” teaching Brog to “sit,” “heel,” “come”—all the commands he could cull from the ancient texts. The dog quickly  
300 learned to obey Brock’s commands, but it wasn’t the automatic response of a robo-pet. Brog delighted in obedience. She wanted to please Brock, and those few times when she was too busy nosing about the lab and failed to obey instantly, those times when Brock’s voice took on a sharp tone of **reproof**, the poor little thing put her tail between her legs, looked up at him with sorrowful eyes, begging to be forgiven. Brock was tempted to speak sharply to her even when there was no need, for the sight of her drooping ears and tail, her mournful eyes was so dear to him that he did what Travis Coates had done to Old Yeller.<sup>14</sup> He hugged her. There was no other way to explain it. He simply put his arms around her and held  
310 her to his chest while she beat at him with her tail and licked his face raw. Out of the corner of his eye he was aware that one of the scientists was watching. Well, let him watch. Nothing was as wonderful as feeling this warmth toward another creature.



## Language Coach

### Word Definitions

The word *indisputably* means that something is known for sure; it cannot be doubted.

Reread lines 275–277.

What do the scientists know *indisputably* about Brog? (Hint: *gender* means either male or female.)

**reproof** (rĭ-prōōf') *n.*  
criticism for a fault

14. **Travis Coates . . . Old Yeller:** In the novel *Old Yeller*, Old Yeller is a stray dog who becomes friends with 14-year-old Travis.

For the first week, the researchers seemed quite content to observe dog and boy from their glass-paneled observation booth and speak **copious** notes into their computers. Only the oldest of them would come into the lab and actually touch the alien creature, and he always wore a sterile protective suit with gloves. The others claimed it would interfere with objectivity if they got close to the dog, but they all seemed to behave positively toward Brog. No mention was made to Brock of his own less than objective behavior. So Brock was astounded to awake in the middle of the night to the sounds of an argument. Someone had forgotten to turn off the communication system. **L**

**copious** (kō'pē-əs) *adj.*  
more than enough;  
plentiful

“Cloning<sup>15</sup>—it’s the only thing to do. If she’s the last, we owe it to **posterity** to keep the line going.”

**L SEQUENCE IN PLOT**

How long have Brock and Brog been living in the dome when the argument occurs?

“And how are we going to raise a pack of dogs in a dome? One is nearly eating and drinking us out of test tube and petri dish. We can’t go on this way. As drastic as it may seem, we have to be realistic. Besides, no one has had the chance to do actual experiments since the dark ages. Haven’t you ever, just once, yearned to compare virtual research with actual?”

**posterity** (pō-stēr'ī-tē)  
*n.* future generations

“What about the boy? He won’t agree. Interfacing daily with the dog, he’s become crippled by primal urges.”

**M SEQUENCE IN PLOT**

What are the scientists planning to do to Brog? As you read, note on your chart the events that follow.

“Can you think what chaos might ensue if a flood of primordial emotions<sup>16</sup> were to surface in a controlled environment such as ours?” another asked. “Apparently, emotions are easily triggered by interactions with primitive beasts, like dogs.”

“Shh. Not now. The speaker is—” The system clicked off. **M**  
But Brock had already heard. He knew he had lost anything resembling scientific objectivity. He was no longer sure objectivity was a desirable trait. He rather enjoyed being flooded by “primordial emotions.” But he was more worried for Brog than for himself. It wasn’t hard to figure out what the scientists meant by “actual experiments.” Cloning would be bad enough. Ten dogs who looked just like Brog so no one would know how special, how truly unique Brog was. But experiments! They’d cut her open and examine her internal organs, the way scientists had in the dark ages. They’d prod her with electric impulses and put chips in her brain. They’d try to change her personality or modify her behavior. They’d certainly try to make her eat and drink less!

In the dark, he put his arm around Brog and drew her close. He loved the terrible smell of her breath and the way she snored when she slept. They’d probably fix that, too.

The next day he played sick. Brog, faithful dog that she was, hung around him whimpering, licking his face. The scientists showed no

15. **cloning**: the scientific process of creating several identical plants or animals from a single ancestor.

16. **primal urges . . . primordial** (prī-mōr'dē-əl) **emotions**: feelings or desires that have existed from the beginning of humankind.

particular concern. They were too busy plotting what they might do with Brog.

Brock crept to the nearest terminal in the lab. It was already logged in. The scientists had been doing nothing but research on *Canis familiaris*. COMMON CANINE DISEASES. Brock scrolled down the list with descriptions. No, *distemper* wouldn't do. The first symptom was loss  
360 of appetite. He couldn't make Brog fake that. On and on it went—no, *heartworms* wouldn't do. What he needed was a disease that might affect *Homo sapiens*<sup>17</sup> as well as *Canis familiaris*. Here it was! “Rabies: A viral disease occurring in animals and humans, esp. in dogs and wolves. Transmitted by bite or scratch. The early stages of the disease are most dangerous, for an otherwise healthy and friendly appearing animal will suddenly bite without provocation.”

Rabies was it! Somehow he would have to make Brog bite him. There was no antirabies serum in the dome, he felt sure. There were no animals in the dome. Why would they use precious space to store an unneeded  
370 medication? So they'd have to expel him as well as Brog for fear of spreading the disease. He shivered, then shook himself. No matter what lay on the outside, he could not stand to go back to the life he had lived in the dome before he met Brog. **N**

He crept back to bed, pulling the covers over Brog. When one of the scientists came into the observation booth, Brock pinched Brog's neck as hard as he could. Nothing. He pinched again, harder. Brog just snuggled closer, slobbering on his arm.

Disgusted, Brock got out of bed. Brog hopped down as well, rubbing against his leg. Pinching obviously was not going to do it. While the  
380 scientist on duty in the booth was bending over a computer terminal, Brock brought his foot down on Brog's paw. A tiny *yip* was all he got from that cruel effort—not enough sound even to make the man look up.

“Feeling better, Brock 095670038?” The oldest researcher had come into the lab.

“Affirmative,” Brock answered.

“And how are you, puppy-wuppy?” The old man tickled Brog under her chin with his gloved hand. *If I were a dog, I'd bite someone like that*, thought Brock, but Brog, of course, simply licked the researcher's glove and wagged her tail.

390 That was when he got his great idea. He waited to execute it until the proper moment. For the first time, all the scientists had gathered in the lab, all of them in protective garb, some of them twitching nervously in their chairs. They were sitting in a circle around Brock and Brog, explaining what must be done.

#### **N** SETTING

How does the setting inside the dome help Brock make his decision?

---

17. *Homo sapiens* (hō'mō sâ'pē-enz): the scientific name for the species of human beings now on Earth.



“It has to be done for the sake of science,” they began. Then they went on to, “For the sake of the dome community, which is always, as you well know, short on food, and particularly short on water.” Brock listened to their arguments, nodding solemnly, pretending to agree. “It won’t be as if she’ll really be gone, you know. We’ve made virtuals of her—a special series  
400 just for you to keep. You can virtually play with her whenever you like.”

That was the cue. Brock turned and bit Brog on the tail so hard that the blood started. Brog, surprised and enraged, spun around and bit Brock on the nose.

There was a shocked silence. Every scientist leaned backward, body pressed hard against his or her chair back. Every eye was on the two of them.

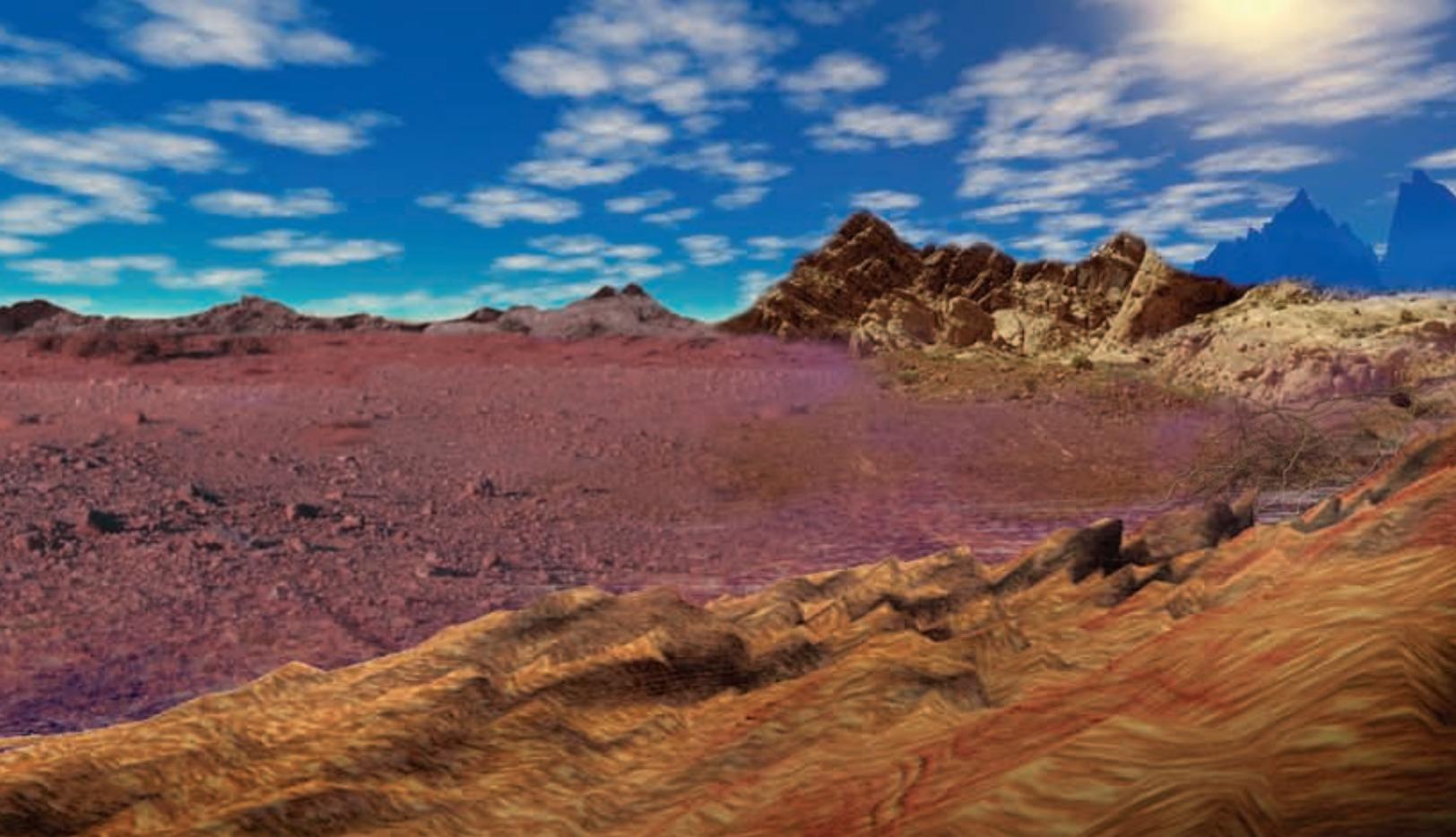
“I—I don’t know what got into me,” Brock said. “I’ve been feeling very weird.” The scientists continued to stare. “I was checking the historical records. . . .”

All of the scientists fled the room. Someone ran to a computer terminal.  
410 When Brock offered to take Brog out of the dome and let her loose in the mountains, no one argued. Neither did they say, “Hurry back,” or even, “Take care.” No one came close as he loaded his pouch with water and food pellets. The customs gate monitor asked no questions. ◻

Out of sight of the dome, Brog was delirious with joy, jumping and running about in circles around Brock’s boots. Why wasn’t the

#### ◻ SEQUENCE IN PLOT

How does Brock get the scientists to release him and Brog?



atmosphere choking Brog if it was as poisonous as the dome dwellers claimed? His heart beating rapidly, Brock unscrewed his helmet just enough to let in a little of the outside atmosphere. Nothing happened. In fact, he seemed to be breathing perfectly normally. He took off the  
420 helmet entirely. He was still breathing freely. But his heart was beating so hard, he couldn't be sure. He waited for the choking sensation he had been warned of. It didn't occur. Could they be wrong? Could the outside world have healed itself? Perhaps—perhaps the reason the scanner had so much trouble reading the outside atmosphere was because it wasn't within the range of computerized expectations.

Could it be? Could it be that fear had kept the dome dwellers prisoner many years longer than a poisoned environment would have?

He unfastened the dry suit and slowly stepped out of it into the sunlight.

It was wonderful how much faster he could walk without the clumsy suit.  
430 “Who knows?” Brock said to a frisking Brog. “Who knows, maybe out here you aren't the last dog. Your mother had to come from somewhere.”

Brog barked happily in reply.

“And maybe, just maybe, where there are dogs, there are humans as well.”

They stopped at the brook where they'd met, and both of them had a long drink. Brock no longer carried a scanner, but he knew what he felt was excitement. The water was delicious.  **P**

 COMMON CORE L4

### Language Coach

**Multiple-Meaning Words** Multiple-meaning words have more than one meaning. The word *range* can mean a line of mountains, a geographic distance, or to be within certain limits. Which meaning of *range* is correct in line 425?

**P** **SETTING**

How are Brock's questions about the world outside the dome beginning to be answered?

## Comprehension

- Recall** In the first half of the story, how does Brock know what emotions he is feeling?
- Clarify** Why does Brock fool the scientists into thinking he and Brog have rabies?
- Summarize** How does meeting Brog change Brock's life?

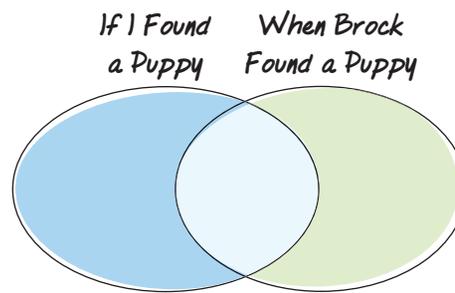
### COMMON CORE

**RL 1** Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support what the text says explicitly. **RL 3** Analyze how particular elements of a story interact (e.g., how setting shapes the plot). **W 7** Conduct short research projects to answer a question.

## Text Analysis

- Make Inferences** What would you say is the **setting** of the story? Give details from the text about both the time and the place.
- Identify Sequence in Plot** Review the chart you created as you read. Identify which events in the plot occur in a **flashback**. What new information about the people in the dome do you learn in the flashbacks?

- Analyze Setting** One way to consider the importance of setting to a story's plot is to imagine the same story happening in a different time or place. Think about what might happen if you found a puppy. How would your experience be different from Brock's? Use a Venn diagram to **compare and contrast** which details might stay the same and which details might be different. Explain what your diagram suggests about the influence of setting on a story's plot.



- Draw Conclusions** Why do you think the people in the dome live the way they do? Think about their food, their fears, and their attitude about the outside world. Then consider how their history and their environment might be affecting them. Support your answer with details from the story.

## Extension and Challenge

- SCIENCE CONNECTION**  Read the article "'Spot' Goes High-Tech" on page 65. Then do research to find out what other kinds of tasks or functions robots are being asked to perform. Note at least three. In a small group, discuss how new technologies might have both a positive and a negative impact on our lives.

### Why are pets good COMPANIONS?

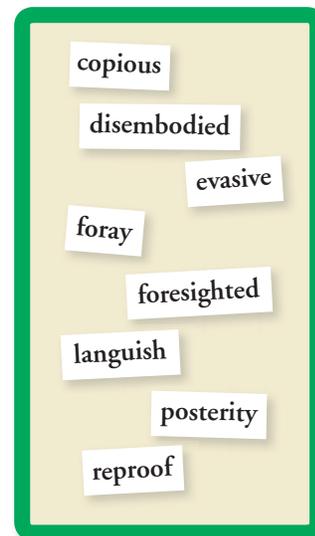
Go back and review the list you created to answer the question on page 46. How do you think Brock might answer this question? Explain why you think Brog's companionship was important to Brock.

## Vocabulary in Context

### ▲ VOCABULARY PRACTICE

For each item, choose the word that differs most in meaning from the other words.

1. (a) journey, (b) expedition, (c) foray, (d) climb
2. (a) perceptive, (b) foresighted, (c) careless, (d) prophetic
3. (a) evasive, (b) clever, (c) bright, (d) knowledgeable
4. (a) numerous, (b) copious, (c) plentiful, (d) thin
5. (a) trail, (b) ail, (c) languish, (d) suffer
6. (a) separated, (b) apart, (c) disembodied, (d) together
7. (a) ancestor, (b) posterity, (c) grandfather, (d) veteran
8. (a) blame, (b) reproof, (c) position, (d) criticism



### ACADEMIC VOCABULARY IN SPEAKING

• contemporary • element • identify • influence • structure

Which idea from “The Last Dog” most reminds you of life in **contemporary** society, or where you think society is heading? Discuss the positive and negative aspects of this idea with a small group. Use the Academic Vocabulary words in your discussion.

### VOCABULARY STRATEGY: ANTONYMS AS CONTEXT CLUES

**Context clues** can often be found in the words and sentences that surround an unfamiliar word. These clues can help you figure out the meaning of the word. **Antonyms**, or words that mean the opposite of each other, can be one kind of context clue. For example, a sentence in “The Last Dog” talks of “actual rather than virtual research.” The words *rather than* signal that *virtual* is an antonym of *actual*. Since you know *actual*, you can figure out *virtual*.

**PRACTICE** Identify the antonym of each boldfaced word. Then define the word.

1. Though he tried to **facilitate** the cleanup process, he complicated it instead.
2. Her costume was **ostentatious**, but her cousin’s was quite plain.
3. You should praise your brother, rather than continually **disparaging** him.
4. Unlike Isabel, who had an **antipathy** to snakes, Luisa seemed to love them.
5. Jeremy was as **pugnacious** as his brother was peace loving.

### COMMON CORE

**L 4a** Use context (e.g., a word’s function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word. **L 5b** Use the relationship between particular words (e.g., antonym) to better understand each of the words.

Interactive Vocabulary **THINK** central  
Go to [thinkcentral.com](http://thinkcentral.com).  
KEYWORD: HML7-63

# Language

## ◆ GRAMMAR IN CONTEXT: Use Correct Punctuation

A run-on sentence, sometimes simply called a run-on, is two or more sentences written as though they were a single sentence. Use one of these methods to correct a run-on:

- Insert an **end mark** and start a new sentence.
- Insert a **coordinating conjunction**, such as *and*, *but*, or *so*, after a **comma**.
- Change a comma to a **semicolon**.

*Original:* Some people like having an animal companion, others may think a robot is just as good.

*Revised:* Some people like having an animal companion, **but** others may think a robot is just as good.

**PRACTICE** Use the correct punctuation and coordinating conjunctions, as necessary, to rewrite the following run-on sentences.

1. Both types of pets make people feel needed people like feeling needed.
2. Animal pets really do need us, robot pets are just machines.
3. How can a metal dog take the place of a furry one, you can't hug a robot.
4. It might help to have a robotic dog it can't take the place of a real one.

For more help with run-ons, see pages R64–R65 in the *Grammar Handbook*.

## COMMON CORE

**L1** Demonstrate command of the conventions of grammar and usage. **L2** Demonstrate command of the conventions of punctuation. **W2** Write explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas.

## READING-WRITING CONNECTION



Explore the ideas presented in “The Last Dog” by responding to this prompt. Then use the **revising tip** to improve your writing.

### WRITING PROMPT

**Extended Constructed Response: Across Texts**  
Look again at “Spot’ Goes High-Tech” on page 65. Both Brock and the elderly people in the article enjoy having the **companionship** of a pet, be it an animal pet or a robot. Is a robot pet as good as an animal pet? Using examples from both selections, write a **two- or three-paragraph response**, describing the benefits of each pet.

### REVISING TIP

Review your response. If you have any run-on sentences, revise them by using the correct punctuation or by adding a coordinating conjunction and the correct punctuation.

Interactive Revision **THINK** central  
Go to [thinkcentral.com](http://thinkcentral.com).  
KEYWORD: HML7-64

**ONLINE ARTICLE** Robotic pets, such as the ones in the dome, are not just futuristic fantasy. This news article describes a contemporary project that is testing whether robotic dogs can bring joy to senior citizens.

The image shows a screenshot of a web browser window. At the top, there is a menu bar with 'File', 'Edit', 'View', 'Tools', and 'Help'. Below the menu bar is a toolbar with icons for Back, Forward, Stop, Refresh, Home, Search, Favorites, Mail, and Print. A purple navigation bar contains four green buttons: 'E-mail This', 'Print This', 'Save This', and 'Subscribe'. The main content area has a large purple heading: **'Spot' Goes High-Tech**. Below the heading is a sub-heading: **Researchers Try Robotic Pets as Companions for the Elderly**. The article text begins with: 'Researchers in Indiana are trying to find out if robots—which no one has to feed or walk—can do the same job as flesh and blood animals.' It then describes a community in Lafayette, Indiana, where residents meet a robotic dog named Aibo. A quote from Alan M. Beck is included: 'Do you like me? Do you like me?' Lawson asked Aibo. The robot responded with an electronic 'Ohhh,' winning a big smile from Lawson. A sub-heading asks: **Can Robots Make People Happier?** The text continues: 'The robotic dogs were brought to Rosewalk by researchers at Indiana's Purdue University as part of a project to determine whether robots can make people happier.' Another quote from Alan M. Beck is provided: 'We find people who in nursing home settings might be socially isolated and don't routinely chat with each other have something to talk about together, to have fun, to have reminiscences,' said Beck. . . . A second sub-heading asks: **Programmed to Generate Human Feelings**. The text explains: 'Robotic dogs are programmed to respond to commands, to wag their tails if told they are "good." All of this is supposed to lull humans into feeling . . . attached—to a robot.' A quote from sociologist Sherry Turkle is included: 'The very concept of robots that seduce people into thinking they are real is just too much for sociologist Sherry Turkle, director of the Initiative on Technology and Self at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.' Another quote from Nancy Edwards is provided: 'I think we should take it as a wake-up call and really say, "Now, why are we giving robot pets to old people?" And the answer, I think, is that we really have been struggling to figure out how to give enough people to old people.' A final quote from Alan M. Beck is included: 'You can see smiling, laughing, remembering of good things, and talking among each other,' said Beck. 'This is more than just diversion. This is kind of a therapeutic event, where people really, I think, benefit from the experience.'