

Read and Synthesize

Academic Language VOCABULARY

VOCABULARY

► Rate your knowledge of each word. Then write its meaning and an example sentence.

Word	Meaning	Example
EXPERT WORDS Use these words to write and talk about the workshop topic.		
hologram <i>hol•o•gram (noun)</i> ① ② ③ ④	a three-dimensional image created by laser beams	This hologram shows how the rocket ship looks both inside and out.
sensor <i>sen•sor (noun)</i> ① ② ③ ④		A sensor beeped when Tess walked through the security gate.
virtual <i>vir•tu•al (adjective)</i> ① ② ③ ④	generated by a computer; not real	
ACADEMIC WORDS Use these words in all your subject classes.		
function <i>func•tion (noun)</i> ① ② ③ ④		
modify <i>mod•i•fy (verb)</i> ① ② ③ ④		
CONTENT AREA WORDS Use these words to talk and write about science.		
dome <i>dome (noun)</i> ① ② ③ ④		
interaction <i>in•ter•ac•tion (noun)</i> ① ② ③ ④		
sterile <i>ster•ile (adjective)</i> ① ② ③ ④		



Word Families

WORD ANALYSIS

A **word family** is a group of words that share a common base word.

A **base word** is the part of a word to which prefixes, suffixes, and other endings are added.

► Three of the words below are in the same word family. Circle them.

exit

exciting

unexcited

excitement

exterior

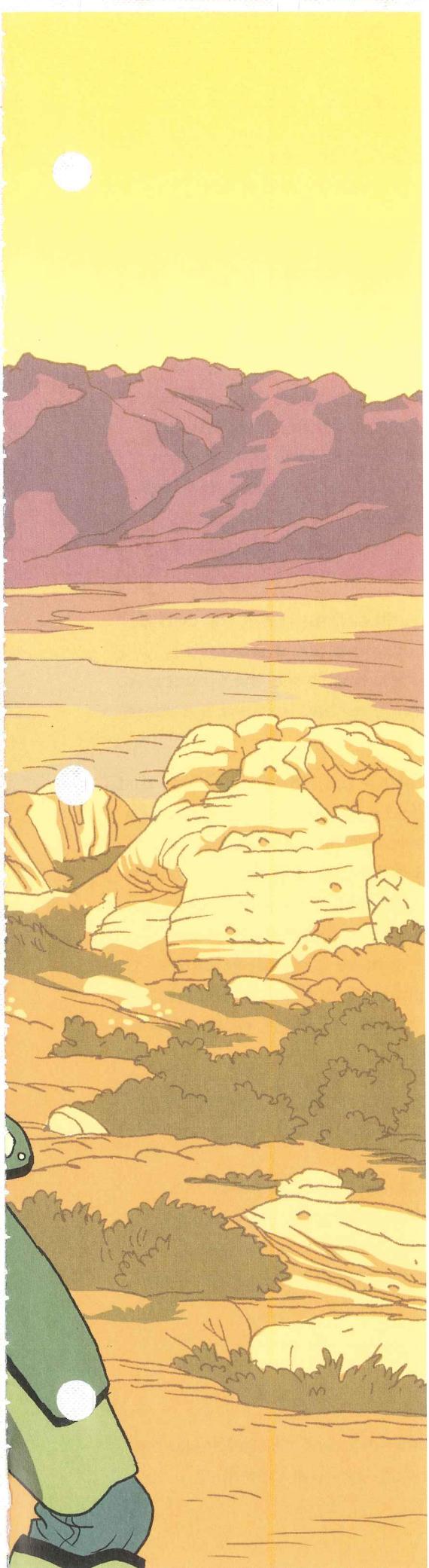
excess

Now write the base word that all three words have in common.

The Last Dog

By Katherine Paterson

*To find meaning in an
empty, futuristic world,
a teen boy decides
to do the unthinkable.*



Brock 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....”

“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.”

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

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

“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?”

“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 from Research. Did they think he was a deviant? Deviants sometimes disappeared. The word was passed around that they had “gone outside,” 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.

disembodied (*adj.*) not having a physical body
parched (*adj.*) dry

It was, he pulled the scanner from his outside pouch and checked it, “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 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. 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
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had all those
who had dared
to venture
out perished,
discouraging
further forays?**

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 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. They were even a little scary. It was their insides. Their insides were very loud. But even 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.

Question
What questions might Brock ask the people of this other world?

Perhaps, once he 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.

irreparable (*adj.*) not able to be repaired
evasive (*adj.*) avoiding something

Read and Synthesize

LITERARY ANALYSIS

Plot and Conflict

What is Brock's conflict so far?

What kind of conflict is it?

COMPREHENSION

Problem and Solution

 **Underline** the problem you would consider ordinary that Brock encounters when he is outside the dome.

- How does he solve the problem in an unusual way?

VOCABULARY/WORD ANALYSIS

Word Families

 Find and **circle** the word *perished* in the second paragraph on page 92.

- What is the base word in *perished*?
- Draw a box around the word that is in the same family as *perished*.

died fished
shed perishable

He 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.

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 this 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.

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

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.

requisitioned (v.) requested that something be supplied
interfacing (v.) connecting with a different thing

There were actual trees growing on the first hill. Not the great giants of virtual 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 his pack to study later. He didn't want anyone accusing him of losing his scientific objectivity. 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.

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 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.

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 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 robopet that would, no doubt, be yanking at his suit already, urging him back toward the dome.

It was then, in the middle of the 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 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

**Would the
atmosphere
poison him if he
unscrewed his
helmet to take
a sniff?**

malfunctioned (*v.*) broken down
conditioned (*adj.*) established by learning

Read and Synthesize

COMPREHENSION

Summarize

Write a summary of what Brock has experienced since he left the dome. Use no more than one sentence to summarize each paragraph that describes his experiences.

LITERARY ANALYSIS

Plot and Conflict

Which of these is the most important plot event that occurs on pages 94–95?

- Brock picks a leaf from a tree.
- Brock discovers a puppy.
- Brock has a “pecnec” in the woods

Why is this event significant to the plot?

CRITICAL THINKING

Analyze

 Review the first full paragraph on page 95. **Circle** the proverb.

- What does this paragraph tell you about the qualities that dome dwellers value?

- **Box** evidence in the paragraph that supports your answer.

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 extradominal 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.

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?

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

“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.

presided (v.) controlled or guided

foresighted (adj.) able to think about the future

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.

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.

"It's all right, fellow. You can eat it."

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.

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? 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 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 got stronger. Even the ancient scientist Darwin knew that. And Brock had come upon one of these magnificent mutants.

Question

What other questions might Brock ask about the foreign environment?

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.

tentatively (*adv.*) with uncertainty or hesitation
deliberate (*adj.*) thought out carefully



Read and Synthesize

COMPREHENSION

Problem and Solution

What problem does finding the puppy present for Brock?

What is Brock's solution?

LITERARY ANALYSIS

Plot and Conflict

As the plot develops, how does Brock's knowledge of the outside world start to change?

What conflict does this knowledge cause for Brock?

21 SMALL GROUPS/INDEPENDENT

COLLABORATE

Debate In your group, debate whether it was wise for Brock to leave the dome. Develop arguments for and against leaving. Brainstorm reasons to support each argument.

COMMUNICATE

React and Write Is the environment actually poisonous? Jot down details you read about it. Then, write a paragraph expressing your view.



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 . . .

"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."

Which is why Brock appeared at the customs portal after dark, the front of his dry suit stained, carrying a wriggling *Canis familiaris* 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. 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.

"Repeat."

"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, they knew they should

transitional (*adj.*) acting as a means of passing between two places

sterilization (*n.*) the process of making something free of microorganisms

Read and Synthesize

COMPREHENSION

Problem and Solution

What problem does Brock solve by bringing the puppy back to the dome?

What potential problems might this action cause?

LITERARY ANALYSIS

Plot and Conflict

How might having Brog inside the dome advance the plot?

CRITICAL THINKING

Analyze

 Review pages 98–99. Why do the researchers allow Brock to keep the puppy?

- Circle passages in the text that support your answer.

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.

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

"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 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 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.

hermetically (adv.) being airtight
indisputably (adv.) without doubt

**Cloning—it's
the only thing
to do. If she's
the last, we
owe it to
posterity to
keep the line
going.**



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 learned to obey Brock’s commands, but it wasn’t the automatic response of a robopet. Brog delighted in obedience. She wanted to please Brock, and those few times when she was busy nosing around 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 to Old Yeller. He hugged her. There was no other way to explain it. He simply put his arms around her and helped 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.

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.

“Cloning—it’s the only thing to do. If she’s the last, we owe it to posterity to keep the line going.”

“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?”

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

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

Question

What questions do you have about the argument Brock overhears?

posterity (*n.*) all future generations
primordial (*adj.*) characteristic of an early state

Read and Synthesize

VOCABULARY/WORD ANALYSIS

Word Families



Circle the word in the fourth paragraph on page 100 that is in the same word family as *reality*.

- What base word do both words share?

LITERARY ANALYSIS

Plot and Conflict

How does the conversation Brock overhears add to his internal conflict?

Why does Brock love the “terrible smell” of Brog’s breath and her snoring?

COMPREHENSION

Problem and Solution



Describe the problem that develops on pages 100–101.

How does Brock plan to solve it?

- Underline the sentences that helped you figure out Brock’s solution.

“Shh. Not now. The speaker is—” The system clicked off.

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 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 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* 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 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.

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.

distemper (n.) an infectious disease of canines
provocation (n.) the act of annoying or angering

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 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.

Question

What question do you have about what Brock is trying to do?

"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.

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.

"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 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. 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.

solemnly (*adv.*) gravely or seriously
enraged (*adj.*) marked by extreme anger

Read and Synthesize

LITERARY ANALYSIS

Plot and Conflict

How does Brock finally resolve his conflict?

CRITICAL THINKING

Evaluate

Review page 103. What does Brock discover about the world outside the dome community? Should he return to explain his discovery to the dome dwellers? Why or why not?

21 SMALL GROUPS/INDEPENDENT

COLLABORATE

 **Compare Perspectives** Compare Brock's perspective at the end of the story with that of the dome dwellers. What has he learned? Why do the dome dwellers believe differently?

COMMUNICATE

 **React and Write** Imagine what happens next to Brock and Brog. Outline your thoughts. Then write a paragraph that describes what they encounter after leaving the dome.



READ ONLINE

 **expert space** Go to www.expert21.com/student to learn more about [Katherine Paterson](#); [Futurism](#).

delirious (*adj.*) in a state of wild excitement
frisking (*v.*) leaping or jumping

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



Katherine Paterson

BORN October 31, 1932, Qing Jiang, China

INSPIRATION FOR "THE LAST DOG" While staying at a hotel in Melbourne, Australia, Paterson noticed a little dog trotting behind the groundskeeper. Paterson was impressed by how faithful the dog appeared and decided that someone should write a story about it.

AUTHOR FILE

MOST FAMOUS WORKS *Bridge to Terabithia*, *The Great Gilly Hopkins*, *Lyddie*

FAVORITE PART OF WRITING

Rewriting. "First drafts are usually painful, but a good rewrite morning is bliss."

AWARDS Hans Christian Andersen Medal for Writing, Scott O'Dell Award for Children's Literature, ALA Best Books for Young Adults



Before Reading 2

Magazine Feature

EXPOSED to the MAX

How safe and private are emails, text messages, and social networking Web sites? Not as safe—and certainly not as private—as you might think. Learn about some Internet privacy pitfalls and how to avoid them.



QuickWrite

What sort of personal data and information would you consider safe to post on a Web site? What information would you *never* post? Explain your reasoning.

Make Inferences COMPREHENSION

When you **make an inference**, you make a logical guess based on information in a text and your own knowledge and experience.

Making inferences can help you figure out what an author does not state directly.

- Read the passage. Then complete the step-by-step chart to make an inference about what the character is doing.

Martin flipped open his cell phone and studied the screen. A smile spread across his face. He pressed some keys on the keypad and hit a button. "Great!" he said to himself. He ran to his room and grabbed some clothes from the closet.

What does the text directly state that Martin is doing?

What personal experience or knowledge helps you infer what Martin is doing?

What can you infer about how Martin is feeling? Underline the words that helped you infer this.

Analyze Evidence NAVIGATING TEXT

Authors of nonfiction text often include specific facts, or **evidence**, to support their ideas.

As you read, identify and analyze the evidence the author cites.

- Read the passage. Draw one line under the main point the author makes. Draw two lines under the evidence she gives to support it.

The Internet has changed the way newspapers report breaking news. In the past, newspapers were printed once a day. A story that occurred after the paper's deadline could not be printed until the next day. But now that newspapers are on the Internet, breaking stories can be published in minutes.