

D-39: A ROBODOG'S JOURNEY

by Irene Latham



ABOUT THE BOOK:

Set in a dystopian future where the United States is in the midst of a civil war, this novel in verse tells the story of a girl and her robodog. Each poem, or block of text, is linked to the next, pulling the reader into a story which explores the themes of survival, family, and friendship. The place setting is familiar enough to add to the authenticity of the story, while the time setting, a possible future, is strengthened by the unique words used throughout.

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COMMON CORE CONNECTIONS

This teachers' guide, with connections to the Common Core Standards, provides a variety of ways for students in grades 3–8 to interact with and enjoy this story. In addition, it provides opportunities to make connections to current and past events and to related texts.

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

Watch the [book trailer](#). How do the visuals create the tone or mood of the story?

Look at a variety of verse novels in order to understand, at least visually, the verse novel format.

Investigate a variety of poetic forms.

Look into what robots are and how they are used now and might be used in the future (definition, industrial, toys, research, the future via [Britannica](#)).

Discussion Questions

LANGUAGE ARTS

Try not to peek at the glossary as you read! Use clues from the text to infer the meaning of the invented words the author includes. Are the words mostly nouns, verbs, adjectives or adverbs? Are they all compound words?

This book is classified as a Novel in Verse. What characteristics of poetry can you find as you read? How does this book differ from other verse novels you've read?

Study the small illustrations at the beginning of every section. Predict why the illustrator chose that image for the section. At the end of the section, look back and reflect on the illustrator's choice. What would you have chosen to represent that section? Make small sketches as you read to capture the events or the emotions of the story.

Choose one section and carefully study the poem titles. How do the titles set the tone or mode for the poem? How often does the title contrast with the topic of the poem?

CHARACTER, SETTING, AND PLOT

The main character, Klynt, exhibits a wide variety of character traits throughout the story. Is there one more than all the others that is responsible for the choice she makes at the end of the story?



What does Klynt discover about being a hero? What does being a hero mean to you?

There are many surprises in this book. Each time you are surprised, stop and think about all the clues you could find earlier in the book that led up to that surprise.

Using clues about the physical setting in the story, identify places in the world with similar characteristics. In real life, **where** could this story have taken place? Although the story is set in a possible dystopian future, the plot is similar to events of the past in different parts of the world. In real life, **when** could this story have taken place?

How do Klynt's feelings about where she lives and the work she and her father do there change over the course of the book? What causes her feelings to change?

THEMES:

Robert Frost said, "Freedom lies in being bold." How does this quote apply to the choices made by each of the characters in response to the government and the society? Using books of quotes or online resources, find a quote that each of the main characters might hang above their desk or workbench.

This story explores the themes of family, survival in a time of conflict, and the importance of pets. Have you ever felt connections to absent or dead family members? What kind of a burrow or safe place do you have that keeps you safe or gives you comfort? If you found a robodog, would you want to keep it? What value do pets have in your own life?

What other themes can you identify? Which theme resonates with you the most?



USE OF ROBOT DOGS

Read and share about the latest robot dog technology and applications:

[BostonDynamics](#) (website)

[Robotic dog in the ER](#) (CNN Business)

[Robotic Dogs May Soon Be Heading to Mars](#) (Dogonews)

[Robot Dogs Join US Airforce Exercise](#) (CNN Business)

[Robot "Dog" Tries Out Sheep Herding in New Zealand](#) (ABC News)

[Robodogs to Replace Seeing Eye Dogs](#)

[Robodogs as Therapy Pets for Alzheimer's Patients](#)

Spot's Rampage [website here](#) double standard [here](#) how it turned out [here](#)

Classroom Connections

READING

Explore one or more of these ten Poem Friends for D-39:

Perhaps the World Ends Here by Joy Harjo

Where does Klynt's world begin?

The Outcry by William Bronk

How is Klynt's world breaking?

In Blackwater Woods by Mary Oliver

The poem says to live in this world, you must do three things. What are those things for Klynt? What are those things for you?

Those Winter Sundays by Robert Hadyn

The speaker in the poem is recognizing the concrete ways his father loved him. What does Klynt learn about the way her father loves her?

Mother to Son by Langston Hughes

In what ways has life been difficult for Klynt? In what ways does she carry on?

The Way it Is by William Stafford

What is Klynt's "thread"?

Out of the Mist by Lahab Assef Al-Jundi

How does this poem apply to Klynt and her mother?

We Are of a Tribe by Alberto Rios

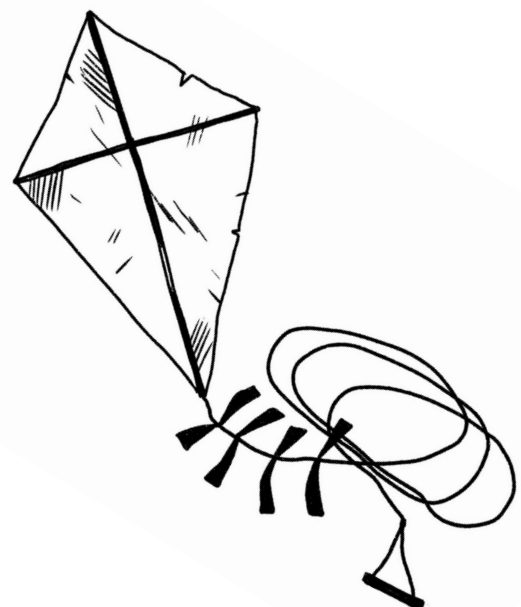
In what ways does Klynt find a "dream of sky"?

A Center by Ha Jin

In what ways is D-39 a center for Klynt?

The Journey by Mary Oliver

How does this poem relate to Klynt's journey?



Pair one or more of these titles with D-39:

NONFICTION

A Land of Permanent Goodbyes by Atia Abawi

Awesome Robotics Projects for Kids by Bob Katovich

Enrique's Journey (The Young Adult Adaptation): The True Story of a Boy

Determined to Reunite with His Mother by Sonia Nozario

"From War to America" by Kristin Lewis (Scholastic's *Scope Magazine*)

The Girl from Aleppo: Nujeen's Escape from War to Freedom by Nujeen

Mustafa and Christina Lamb

REALISTIC FICTION

Alone by Megan E. Freeman

A Long Walk to Water by Linda Sue Park

Escape from Aleppo by N. H. Senzai

Nowhere Boy by Katherin Marsh

Other Words for Home by Jasmine Warga

Refugee by Alan Gratz

SPECULATIVE FICTION

A Whisper of Horses by Zillah Bethell

City of Ember by Jeanne DuPrau

Dreambender by Ronald Kidd

Forgotten City by Michael Ford

Outwalkers by Fiona Shaw

Parched by Melanie Crowder

Pax by Sara Pennypacker

The Fog Diver by Joel Ross

The Giver by Lois Lowry

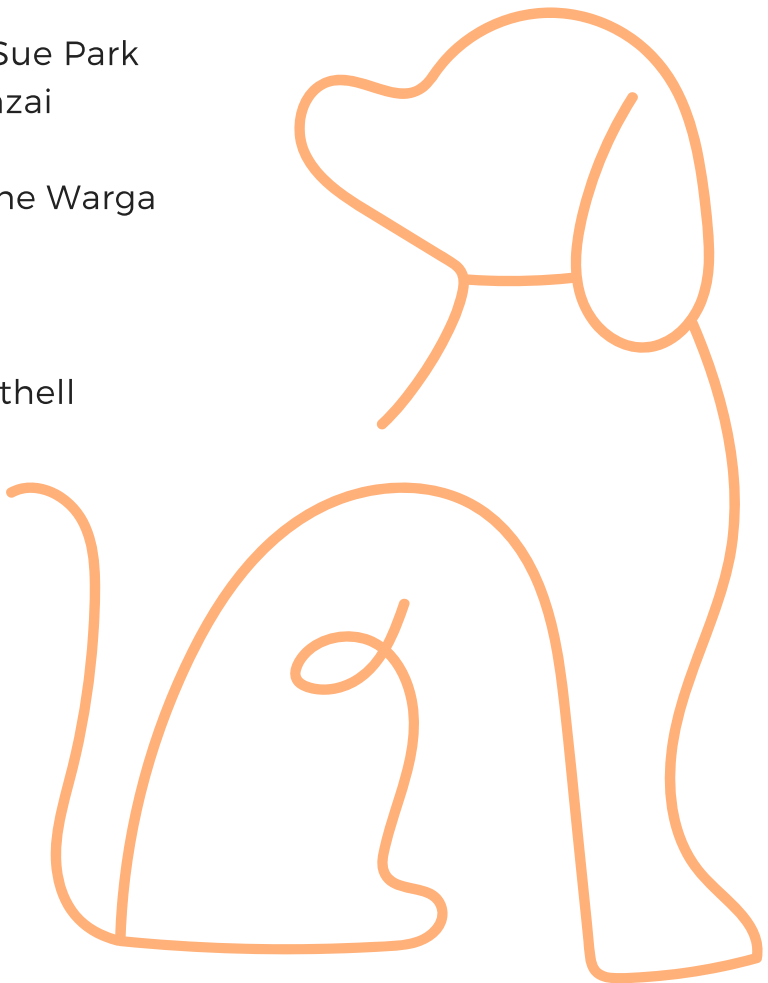
The Last Human by Lee Bacon

The Last Wild by Piers Torday

The Line by Teri Hall

The List by Patricia Forde

The Wild Robot by Peter Brown



PICTURE BOOKS

My Beautiful Birds by Suzanne Del Rizzo

The Journey by Francesca Sanna

The Unwanted: Stories from the Syrian Refugees by Don Brown

WRITING

Make a list of common objects, emotions, places. Try creating new words for each by putting two words together.

Write a series of poems or scenes that are linked the way the poems in the book are, with the last word or phrase of one becoming the title of the next.

Research the ways robotic dogs are being used in a variety of settings. List the pros and cons for using robots vs real dogs in each setting.

SPEAKING

The book begins and ends with a radio broadcast from Klynt. Think of a time in your life when you most needed to be heard. Write the script for your broadcast and record it on a voice memo app. Perhaps you will share your broadcast, or maybe it's just for you.

Choose a favorite part of the story. Alone or with partners, perform that part as readers' theater.

Hold a debate: should robots be used to replace humans in the workforce?

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, ART, & MATHEMATICS

Build a working robot from a kit.



Take apart discarded household appliances and build a model of a robot from the pieces.

Using clay, scraps of wood and metal, paper, paint and other art supplies, Create an artistic representation of a robot.

Use this [activity sheet](#) to draw and label an ideal robodog.

Create a "Museum of Fond Memories" either from your own past, or with objects in your present that will become the fond memories of your future.

Jopa loves ants. Make a no staples zine and collect Jopa's ant facts into a small booklet. What insect or animal fascinates you? Research that insect or animal, find amazing information, and make a zine for your findings.

COMMON CORE CONNECTIONS

Reading questions and activities correlate to Common Core ELA Reading: Literature Standards for
Key Ideas and Details RL.3–8.1
Craft and Structure RL.3–8.4
Integration of Knowledge and Ideas (visuals-tone/mood) RL.3–5.5

Speaking and listening activities correlate to Common Core ELA Speaking and Listening Standards for
Comprehension and Collaboration SL.3–8.1
Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas SL.3–8.4

Writing activities correlate to Common Core ELA Career and College Readiness Writing Standard for
Production and Distribution of Writing CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.4 (clear and coherent; appropriate to the task, purpose, and audience)



ABOUT THE CREATORS

AUTHOR

Irene Latham is a grateful creator of many novels, poetry collections, and picture books, including the coauthored *Can I Touch Your Hair?: Poems of Race, Mistakes, and Friendship*, which earned a Charlotte Huck Honor, and *The Cat Man of Aleppo*, which won a Caldecott Honor. Irene lives on a lake in rural Alabama with her husband and an energetic Aussie named Rosie. irenelatham.com



ILLUSTRATOR



Jamie Green is an illustrator/curious person based in Greenville, SC and recent graduate of Ringling College of Art and Design. When they aren't working they can be found climbing rocks, venturing through the woods or scouring the ground for mushrooms to study and catalogue. jamiegreenillustration.com

Mary Lee Hahn, a teacher-poet who practices her crafts in central Ohio, wrote this guide.