



## **The Dog at the Gate** **How a Throwaway Dog Becomes Special**

### **Discussion Topics for** **Parents, Teachers, & Counselors**

#### **Introduction**

*“A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man.”*

*---Joseph Campbell*

*Scholar, mythologist, writer, & lecturer*

*The Dog at the Gate: How a Throwaway Dog Becomes Special* is an elementary introduction to the “Hero’s Journey” narrative style that has been passed down for thousands of years, transcending cultures, religions, and spoken/written record-keeping through drama, storytelling, myth, religious ritual, and psychological development. It is considered “the ultimate narrative archetype” of storytelling.

In *The Dog at the Gate*, Max’s story features many key elements of the human archetype but by featuring a dog protagonist, children will more easily identify with the challenges, emotions, and ultimate outcomes that Max undergoes. By identifying with a non-threatening main character,

children will understand that all creatures have life stories and when given power, can make decisions based on learned, as well as emotional, criteria. This will empower children to reach for their own ability to develop choices, from which they will then make decisions that affect their individual journey of growing up.

Decision-making is a crucial part of growing up. Accepting the consequences of personal decisions, and then taking responsibility for those decisions and consequences reflects the level of maturity each person attains. Facing conflict, having hope, and maintaining the will to succeed and triumph are classic attributes of positive expanding character, which will ultimately contribute to all societies.

Children are perfectly capable of learning through storytelling and Max can be a guide and fictional friend who teaches through his willingness to share his perceptions, insecurities, fears, desires, goals, and joys with young readers.

Children will also experience the world through a dog's eyes. This unique vision will hopefully elicit empathy, respect, and compassion for animals and their environment, as the young reader travels Max's life journey with him. Being able to see the world through others' eyes is a decisive reflection of mature cognitive functionality, emotional stability, and will ultimately determine if the child will be a contributor or a detriment to his society.

*“The greatness of a nation can be judged by the way its animals are treated.”*

*--Mahatma Gandhi*

*Champion of nonviolence and truth*

## Using This Guide

This discussion guide is provided to enhance the communication between trusted adults and children who, like many dogs, may feel overwhelmed and/or intimidated by the world they inhabit. By active, sensitive, and kind exchange of thoughts, children can further trust adults in their lives and feel safe turning to those adults in times of challenge, rather than being blindly lead by their (also naive) peers.

When challenges arise (such as ridicule, insecurity, rejection, neglect, abuse, cruelty, illness, abandonment, isolation, or depression) which darken the young mind and heart, every child should find they have an advocate in their parents, teachers, and counselors. Every child deserves to have such advocacy, as Max deserved and finally found.

Please use this guide as your starting point for communication with the child in your life. Please do not let it end with this guide or Max's book. Only with leadership, safe environments, and trust in others can children move on in life and grow into respectable, honorable, hard-working, humane, contributory citizens of integrity, who then pass on the positive attributes of what good humans should be. Max can teach what a special dog is, and being a special human is not that different!

*"You become responsible forever for what you have tamed."*

*--Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, The Little Prince*

## Discussion Questions by Chapter

### Chapter One: *My First Home*

1. What do you think the puppy Max's relationship was like with his mother? How could you tell?
2. What was Max's feeling about his mistress? His master?
3. Why was Max uneasy about the new people?
4. What did you think about the little girl's personality?
5. Do you think he understood why they took him away? How do you think he felt?

### Chapter Two: *My Second Home*

1. What did you think about puppy Max's new relationship with his children?
2. Who was Max's favorite family member? Why?
3. Do you think Max was okay with being alone?
4. What did Max need that he did not have in his second home?
5. What do you think were Max's thoughts as he got to know his new family and home?

### Chapter Three: *Snatch*

1. Why do you think Max was so excited to hear someone talking to him?
2. Were you surprised to find a bird was interested in a friendship with a dog? What other interesting friendships between animals have you heard of or seen?
3. Why do you think Snatch liked Max? Why did he like foil? Why did he like girl birds? Why did he like worms? What kinds of things do you like that are in your life?
4. Why do you think Max liked Snatch?
5. Do you think Max and Snatch helped each other? How?

### Chapter Four: *Yard Dog*

1. How old was Max in this chapter? How did his views change by this time?
2. Do you think Max enjoyed the children and the snowman? Why?
3. Why was Max confused about the children's mother?

4. Why was Max concerned about his little boy?
5. Have you ever seen a raccoon? Do you know why Max was afraid?
6. How did Max try to communicate with his master? How is dog language different from human language?
7. Why did Max feel betrayed by his master? Is anger an acceptable reaction to misunderstanding? Is physical violence acceptable if you do not like/do not understand why someone is doing something? Did this scene make you sad/angry/concerned? Why?
8. Do you feel it is bad or helpful to be a “tattle-tail”? Why or why not?
9. Do you feel it is bad to be a “scaredy-dog/cat”? Why or why not?
10. What good did Snatch do for Max?

### **Chapter Five: *Life Lessons***

1. What mean thing did the master do to Max? How did you feel about it? What would have been a better, nicer thing to do to stop his barking?
2. Do you approve of using pain to control somebody? Why or why not?
3. How did you feel about how Max decided to change his attitude towards grown-up people? Were there other options for him?
4. What did Snatch contribute to Max after he had to whisper his sadness?
5. What did you think about the dog who did not like Max? Is there anyone who does not like you? Do you understand why? How do you handle the situation?
6. Do you think you can feel sorry for someone who does not like you, or who you do not like? Why?
7. What was Max’s reaction to winning his first dog fight? Do you think he was confused by what started it? Were there any other options for him besides fighting?
8. Do humans have more options to fighting when they have conflict with other humans? Like what?
9. What made Max finally growl at a human, despite his mother’s command that he obey people? How did you feel about this scene?
10. Did it seem that Max understood the different personalities of the people in his life? What do you think about his decisions in how he would feel about each one?

11. What do you think about Snatch's advice to Max? Do you feel he was a good friend? Why?

### **Chapter Six: *Rejected***

1. Do you think Max's change in attitude towards his master was justified? Why?
2. Why did Max decide he could not follow his mother's directive to obey his people anymore? How do you feel about his decision?
3. Do you think running away is a good way to deal with problems you cannot solve by yourself? What other options would you have if you were stuck in a terrible situation/place?
4. How did you feel when Max's master took him away and Max saw his little boy crying and Snatch playing for the last time?
5. Did you understand Max's realization that the world was bigger than his little backyard? How did his discovery make you feel? Could you relate it to your own world? What lies outside your home, yard, school, and general life area?
6. Why was Max nervous about the shelter? Do you think he knew what it was?
7. Do you think Max felt betrayed again by his master when he was abandoned at the shelter?

### **Chapter Seven: *Shelter Dog***

1. So you know what an animal shelter is? Why are pets taken and left at those places? Do you think they are good or bad places? Why?
2. Did you feel Max's confusion and anxiety when he was left in his shelter enclosure by the nice lady? What did you think he felt? Why?
3. Could you understand why Max was hesitant to make friends with Puddin'? What made him change his mind?
4. What kind of dog was Puddin'? Did her size affect Max's opinion of her? How?
5. How did Max's lack of a tail affect his communication with Puddin'?
6. What were some of the things Max and Puddin' did not like about their enclosure at the shelter? Do you think having a friend helps you deal with unpleasant things? Why?

7. Why does sharing your life experiences with someone who likes you make your relationship better?
8. Why do you suppose there were so many dogs in the shelter? What kind of stories do you think they shared with each other about the behavior of their former owners?
9. Even though Max was bigger than Puddin' he understood her fear of big things and people. How important is it that you are able to see another's point of view of things? Why?
10. Why did Max feel happy for Puddin' when she was adopted? How did he feel about being left behind? Have you ever had conflicting feelings like Max did? How did you handle them?

### **Chapter Eight: *Butch***

1. Why do you think the ragged black dog would not talk to Max? Do you feel sorry for the ragged black dog? Why?
2. How did you feel when the Doberman started a fight with Max? Do you think it's fair to start a fight or be mean before you know someone? Would taking time for information about a new acquaintance help you understand them better? How would this affect your reactions to them?
3. What did you think about Max's decision to not be mean, if he could help it? Do you think he was relieved when the shelter people took the Doberman away? Was he sad to lose the company?
4. What kind of guy did you think Butch was a first? Did his appearance influence your initial impression? How important or accurate is a conclusion about someone based on their looks?
5. Is it interesting to have friends who are older and wiser than you are? Why?
6. Even though they did not know each other well, Butch and Tiger became friends quickly. What drew them together? Why was Butch so sad to lose Tiger's friendship?
7. Why do you suppose Butch trusted the strangers who caught him and then the vet who took care of him—especially when his former master was so cruel to him? Why was he willing to give people more chances to be in his life?

8. Do you think Max and Butch trusted each other? Why? How did this affect their relationship? How important is it to trust your friends?
9. How do you think Max felt when he finally figured out his family was not going to come back for him and that he was truly homeless?
10. Why do so many homeless dogs get killed? Is there some way people can stop this? How important is spaying and neutering dogs so they do not have more homeless babies?
11. What do you think Max felt when he found his friend was gone? Did you feel sad too?
12. Do you often feel trapped and helpless like Max did? He felt people had all the power over dogs. Do you feel anyone has power over you? Do you feel you have your own power to make your life the way you want it?

### **Chapter Nine: *"Time's Up"***

1. Did you understand Max's decision to not trust people again? Could you feel his sensation of being trapped? Do you ever feel this way? What do you do about it?
2. How did Max feel about his first bath? What ruined it for him?
3. Why do you think the red-haired shelter girl liked him? Why did she want to save him? Why didn't he want to trust her, although he was kind to him?
4. How did Max feel about his time being up in the shelter? Do you think he understood what awaited him? Do you think his memories of his mother helped?
5. Why did Max go with the blonde lady when he did not know her? Do you think it was a good decision? Would you go with a stranger? Why or why not?
6. How did Max feel when he saw the other lady and the cage? Why did he decide to take the risk and go with them? What would motivate you to trust someone you did not know well?

### **Chapter Ten: *Rescued***

1. How did the sights, smells, sounds, and the ladies' voices make Max feel when he arrived at the white house? Did you think these were helpful sensations? Why?
2. Max did not know how to walk on a leash and had never been outside his first tiny backyard. What do you think were his impressions on his first walk down the street?

3. Ever since Max lost Snatch, Puddin,' and Butch, he refused to make friends to protect himself from the pain of further losses. What made him like Miles?
4. After all the mean dogs Max knew, why did he decide not to argue with Muffin?
5. What kinds of things did Miles say and do that restored Max's desire for a dog friend? Did Miles show respect for Max? How? Why would that sort of treatment be important to a friendship?
6. What kinds of things did Muffin do to bully and pick on Max? How would that sort of treatment affect a new relationship?
7. Did the Mistress treat Max kindly? Did she respect him? How did he know she would be the kind of human he could trust? Do you think it was hard for him to let down his guard and like her?
8. Why is humor an important part of family and friendship? How do you share humor with your friends and family? Is anyone a "stick-in-the-mud" like Muffin? How do you handle them?
9. Why did Max want to be polite to the cats? Why didn't he chase them?
10. Why did Max fight the peacefulness in the house that first night? What made him finally fall asleep, even though he was physically uncomfortable and emotionally unsure?

### **Chapter Eleven: *My New Life***

1. What was Max's first morning in his new house like? How do you think he felt as he discovered the parakeets, the morning yard, and his reunion with Miles and Muffin?
2. Do you think it was hard for Max to not pee all night?
3. Why did Max try to steal Muffin's food? Why did he not fight with her when she bit his nose?
4. How did the new mistress treat Max? Did she remind him of anyone from his past? Who?
5. After being confined by himself in a small yard for two years, how do you think Max felt when he discovered the dog door? Have you ever felt stuck somewhere and then suddenly found out you had a choice of freedom? What was it like?
6. Do you like nature? Could you see why Max loved the grass, trees, and big yard? Did the new birds make Max miss Snatch?

7. How was Max's second bath even better than the first one? What gift did he receive from the mistress?
8. How did Max and Miles develop their relationship? Do you think listening, sharing, spending time, showing respect, and being kind to someone enhances trust and caring?
9. How did Max and Muffin deal with their conflicts? How was Muffin's treatment of Max different than Miles'? Do you think she was justified or just a brat?
10. How did Max and the new Mistress develop their relationship? Does teaching someone things that make understanding easier help? The mistress taught Max rules but was patient with him when he goofed up. Do you think he was learning to trust her to not hurt him? Why?
11. Why do you think rules help a family live together more harmoniously? Do you have rules in your family? What are they? Why do you think your parents and teachers have rules you have to follow?
12. How important is it to respect and learn about other species? Should domestic animals like dogs and cats be treated the same as wild animals like coyotes and prairie dogs? Do birds deserve kindness and respect as well as larger animals? Why?
13. Why was Max so distressed to learn he was being fostered, and not a permanent member of the family he lived with?

### **Chapter Twelve: *Special Dog***

1. What goals did Max set for himself and what actions did he take to accomplish his goals?
2. What is the difference between a "working dog" and a "pet dog?" Do you have a dog? What type of personality does your dog have?
3. Why did the gruff school man think Max was "special?"
4. Did the family treat Max differently after they decided to keep him? Did Max feel differently about them? How?
5. What does "adoption" mean? How is adopting a dog different than "buying" a dog?
  - Hint: Would you adopt a car? A couch? No! You **buy** a car and a couch because they are *inanimate* things that take no emotional care.
  - You **adopt** a brother, sister, or pet because they are *living beings* who have specific needs to thrive and when you add them to your family, you make the

**commitment** to provide whatever they need, such as: food, water, shelter, exercise, toys, medical care, and LOVE.

- You keep your family members forever, even if they sometimes annoy you or you get mad at them. Your underlying love keeps you together through thick and thin.
6. Do you think Max understood that he finally had a family of his own who loved him?
  7. How had Max grown in the two years since he was taken away from his mother? What were his bad decisions? What were his good decisions? Was he becoming a good and special dog? How?

### **Chapter Thirteen: *Dog Shows***

1. How did Max learn about dog shows?
2. Do you think Max was excited to be included at school and at the shows with Miles, Muffin, and the Mistress?
3. Do you think his motivation to do well was because he might win a ribbon? Or were there bigger motivations? What were they?
4. What happened in Max's second show?
5. Do you think Max felt embarrassed? Sad? Scared? Why?
6. How do you think Max's failure affected his relationship with the Mistress? Was she mad at him for goofing up? What happens to you when you goof up? How do you feel about yourself?
7. How did Max practice his concentration skills at home? When you fail at something do you work harder or give up?
8. Max found a fun way to increase his concentration—what was it? When you have to work to improve at something can you find ways to make it fun?
9. Why did Max still worry about failure? Was it a realistic fear?

### **Chapter Fourteen: *The Big Time***

1. How did Max feel about going to the big dog show alone with his Mistress?
2. What did he see, smell, and hear there?
3. Why was Max shocked to realize the Mistress was nervous before their contest? How did he react? How did she reassure him and herself?

4. What was the experience of teamwork with his Mistress like for Max?
5. Why was Max intimidated by the Border Collies? How did he rationalize his life, deal with their ridicule, and build his own self-confidence back up? Have you ever felt intimidated by some who made fun of you or cut you down? How did you deal with it? Were you able to retrieve your self-confidence? How?
6. How do personal experiences, whether easy or difficult, contribute to personality? What is “strength of character?” Do you think Max had it? Did he always have it or did he develop it? What experiences in his life made him unique and more interesting than the pampered Border Collies?
7. How did Max’s memories of his life experiences help him appreciate all the goodness he had attained? How did thoughts of his mother, Butch, and his Mistress play into Max’s conclusions that he was a good dog who deserved love, respect, and admiration—regardless of his looks, background, former rejection, and whether or not he won more ribbons?
8. What happened to interrupt his mental musings?
9. How did the Mistress surprise him in the show ring?
10. When Max won and was declared the best dog in the country, how did he react? Did it change his personality? Did he become a snob? Did he remain humble, appreciative, and happy to have pleased his best friend, his Mistress? How would you react to a large win?

### **Chapter Fifteen: *Teamwork***

1. What did Max observe in Nature during his walks with his family? Do you take the time to observe and appreciate Nature where you live? What natural things and animals live near you?
2. Why was it important that the Mistress paid attention to the dogs, instead of listening to music or playing on her phone during their walks? Why was it important that she treated them equally?
3. Why did Max alert to Miles? What was it in their relationship that made them so attuned to each other?

4. When everyone was gathered together to face the dangerous Chow dog, why did Muffin disobey and try to start a fight? Do you think fear may have made her fake bravery? What could be the consequences of a bad decision due to fake bravery?
5. What does an aggressive dog look like? How do they move? Should you run away from an aggressive dog? (NO! Do exactly what the Mistress does)
6. How important was it that Max had decided to only fight when he had to—even though other dogs “asked for it?”
7. What made Max so determined to protect his family?
8. Why was Max shocked to find his leader, Miles, trusted Max’s experience in dog fights and was now looking to Max as an equal leader? How did Max feel about this? Have you ever found that someone who taught and lead you, became an equal? Was it a strange sensation? Did it build your confidence in yourself?
9. Why are dog fights so dangerous for dogs and people? Why is it important to know how to act and try to avoid conflict? Do you think it is wise to try to avoid conflict in other areas of your life? How could you do it? Would you still respect yourself if you chose to avoid conflict where you could?
10. The Chow dog was a garden-variety bully. He had no respect for anyone and Max wisely spotted this. He knew if he stood up to the bully, time would buy a positive result. Even though the Chow bragged about his control over his people, it turned out he was under their control. Have you ever experienced a bully? Has a bully lied to you? How did you behave as a result of the bully’s rudeness? Did you find support from others to help you?
11. Muffin’s reaction was interesting—why did she suddenly respect and admire Max? How was she different than Puddin’ had been? Max’s ability to see the differences between the two little dogs did not change his love for them both. Did you find that intriguing? Have you ever been surprised by your own feelings of affection for two very different people?
12. Did you feel the Mistress showed good leadership and protection of her dogs? Are you able to protect and lead your own dogs when situations require it? Do you feel protected by your parents and teachers? How can you ask for advocacy when you need it?
13. Irresponsibility can have disastrous consequences. How did you feel about the selfish Chow owner who did not protect his dog from danger that the dog was too arrogant to

realize? Could you understand Max's fear of his own death when he saw what a dead dog looked like?

### **Chapter Fifteen: *Visiting***

1. Why was the new experience of visiting an old folks' home unnerving for Max?
2. Once again Max depended upon Miles and the Mistress to guide him. Even though his self-confidence in the dangerous dog fight scene was high, he remained humble enough to learn from those with more experience in new situations. Are you flexible like Max?
3. Have you ever known an old person who lives in a fantasy world? Why do you think Mr. Whistler thought Max was his Shep? Do you think the Mistress was kind to let him think so?
4. Max was obedient and patient with the old man—even though he did not understand, he decided to be gentle. Many incidents in your life can contribute to your ability to grow into a kind, understanding person. What times have you had that brought out your own kindness, gentleness, and patience with another? Did you find it rewarding in your heart?
5. Did you think Max was brave to face all the noisy equipment around Mr. Whistler in his room after his stroke? What did you think of Max's independent decision to kiss Mr. Whistler and be kind to him in his last moments? Does being around sick people require a unique kind of courage?
6. Max's fear of death now extends to people after he loses Mr. Whistler. Do you think his fear is the idea of death or the fear of the unknown?

### **Chapter Seventeen: *Home Life***

1. What did you think about Max and Muffin creating a "silent truce?" Have you ever quietly accepted someone's faults out of kindness?
2. What did you think about Max's life with his final family after all his years of hardship and sadness? Do you feel hopeful that things will get better for you when you experience times of disappointment and heartache? Is there someone you can turn to to help you deal with hard times?
3. What people and animals are in your life that contribute peacefulness, contentedness, and quality to your times at home?

4. Have you found that as your relationships with friends, family, and pets evolve and grow, that you find more self-confidence, as Max did? Do you appreciate time alone? Can you stay off devices, turn off TV, and simply be quiet? Are you comfortable with only yourself for company? Why is this ability important?
5. Are there goals that you have set for yourself that you have accomplished, like Max did? How do you feel in those times? Can you appreciate each accomplishment or must you always want more?

### **Chapter Eighteen: *Mariah***

1. Why did Mariah and Max share such a special bond?
2. Sometimes it is good to not push or be nosy. Max allowed Mariah to share her life story when she felt ready. Do you have friends like this? Are you a supportive, but not pushy, friend? Can you mind your own business and not gossip?
3. Why do people do mean things to animals, especially babies? Would you be brave enough to save a kitten like Mariah if you saw someone mistreating her? Would you know who to call for help? (such as your city animal control police, parents, teachers, other adults)
4. Being naughty can be funny or it can be deadly. Poor Mariah taught the other animals the high price of being naughty—even though she did not know how bad it could be. Rules for children and pets are made to protect them from danger. What rules do you have in your family, school, clubs, etc. that you think might protect you? What rules do you make for your pets to protect them (for example: cats always indoors, dogs always on leashes, pet birds always safe in their cage)?
5. If someone you are protected by (parents or teachers) loses their ability to look after you, especially if they suffer a big loss, like the Mistress did, are you able to be responsible and help them? Are you unselfish enough to turn your concern to their needs, as Max's animal family tried to help the Mistress in her time of grief? What are some things you could do to help?
6. Max's own fear of death was overshadowed by his concern for his dear Mistress. Do you think this attitude reflects his growing maturity and wisdom? How has he grown up from

his puppy feelings, teen arrogance, and young adult insecurities? Do you see yourself maturing like Max has?

### **Chapter Nineteen: *Lifesaver Dog***

1. Are you able to laugh at yourself? Can you take others laughing at you in stride? Do you enjoy making others laugh?
2. Do you have someone in your life who steals attention that you would like to have focused on yourself? Muffin always tried to steal attention from Max—how does he deal with it? Does his self-confidence play a part?
3. Can blind competition with a rival be dangerous? Can someone pressure you into doing things you should not do? Max learned to ignore Muffin’s goading. Can you independently ignore someone who tries to get you to do things that could get you in trouble?
4. Muffin was always trying to trick Max. In this chapter she wants him to take on Emily’s attention for two reasons—to get Emily away from her, and to steal Max’s chewie. How does Max’s grown-up thinking avoid both of these dilemmas?
5. Even though Max was content and had won the chewie competition, he felt compelled to leave his comfortable situation when he realized the child was missing. Was this a conscious decision to do what was needed? Was his worry about the child more important to him than his competition with Muffin?
6. Did Max depend more on his nose or his eyes as he searched for Emily?
7. Max feels it is important to protect Emily from the danger he already knows about. What made him persist in taking care of her, even after she hit him? He had run away from his first master after he hit him, why did he remain with Emily?
8. When Emily fell into the water, what were Max’s options? Why did he choose the one he did?
9. How can you face fear to help someone else? Why would you risk injury to yourself to help another?
10. What motivated Max to finally let go of Emily when he could not see or smell anything but murky, muddy water?

11. Do you think it was good that Max was rewarded for his unselfish bravery? Are rewards always necessary to make you do something admirable?

### **Chapter Twenty: *Sick Dog***

1. How old is Max now? How does his age affect his relationship with the Mistress?
2. How important is it to seek medical advice when you find something unusual either physically or behaviorally in your pet?
3. How do the cats and dogs show Max how they feel when he comes home from the hospital?
4. Do dogs handle physical discomfort differently than people? How? Do you think they feel less pain or complain less? Are they more courageous?
5. Why did Max think his Mistress had given him away at the second hospital?
6. Have you had to be in the hospital? Have you been sick? Who do you wish to be with when you do not feel good?
7. How does Muffin show her concern for Max? Has her personality changed?
8. What is Max's concern when he sees his Mistress cry after his second surgery?

### **Chapter Twenty-one: *Caring and Concern***

1. How do Max's family members show their individual concern for him? How do your friends and family show concern for you?
2. What activities did Max have to give up because of his illness? Have you had to give up activities due to illness or disability? How do you cope with limitations?
3. How did Max deal with the losses in his life due to his illness? What is the one treat he can still have?
4. Does Max still fear that the Mistress will give him away or kill him if he cannot win any more ribbons in dog shows? What does he now see in her love for him? Do you think self-confidence helps you see yourself as loveable? Did Max finally arrive at that place in his personality?

### **Chapter Twenty-two: *Christmastime***

1. What did the Mistress try to tell Max under the Christmas tree? Do you think he understood? What were his feelings?
2. What comforts did Max have as his illness progressed? What would make you feel better if you were sick?
3. Why did Max dream of his mother? Of Mariah? Have you had vivid dreams about those you love? Do you think dreams have meanings?

### **Chapter Twenty-three: *Time to Go***

1. Why does Max sleep so much now?
2. How does Max cope with his pain? Does he stay positive and look for good things to appreciate?
3. Does Max feel safe when his Mistress cares for him? Do you think he is fearful or only sleepy?
4. When Max reflects upon his life does he focus on the negatives or the positives? How do you think this affects his mental perception of physical pain?
5. When Max relaxes into his Mistress' arms do you think he is ready to go away from her? Why must he go?
6. How do Max's memories comfort him? How does it feel to be accepted for the good person you have worked hard to become? Is it rewarding to remember all the goals you set, worked for, and accomplished? Do you think Max feels he has accomplished everything he wanted to in his life?

### **Chapter Twenty-four: *Mysterious Journey***

1. Do you think Max's last memory of his Mistress was positive? Why?
2. Max was always afraid of the dark. Are you? What scares you about it? How do you deal with it?
3. How did you feel about Max's mysterious journey? Did you remain hopeful that something good would happen eventually? Why or why not?
4. Why did Max find the distant light hopeful? Why did he try to go there?

5. Would you be afraid if you were all alone? Did you feel the same excitement that Max did when he saw the figure in the light? What did you think it was?
6. What was your reaction when Max found his Mother? Why did you think she was there?
7. Why do you think Max's cancer suddenly went away?
8. Was it surprising to you when Max saw his Mistress at the bottom of the tunnel? What do you think she was holding and crying over?
9. Why did the Mistress disappear when Max's Mother did not?
10. Could you understand Max's turmoil and how he felt conflicted about choosing his Mother over his Mistress? How would you have reacted to such a dilemma?
11. When Max realized he was dead but he felt so wonderful, what was your reaction? Have you heard of the Rainbow Bridge? Have you heard about the ornate Gate?
12. Why did Mariah know Max's Mother? How did you feel when his siblings and many of his past friends greeted him at the Gate? Why was he still afraid to follow them?
13. Who did you think the old man was? Does it matter? Why was Max's mother so happy to see the old man?
14. Why did Max obey the old man?

**Epilogue: *Forever Home***

1. How did you feel when Max decided to accept the loss of his Mistress?
2. Max made a courageous decision when he chose to go ahead with his life journey, even beyond his death. Do you think you could do that?
3. What do you think the colored sparkles from the man's walking stick did?
4. Why did Max decide the old man deserved respect? Why did he stop feeling afraid in this new place?
5. What did you think about the old man's review of Max's life? Did you agree that Max had made many good decisions that had positive results for other people and animals? Do you agree that our lives are meant to help others? What can you do now to make more of an impact towards helping others you know?
6. How does Max's new job continue to help people and animals?
7. How did you feel when Max told about his new life?

8. Why is life beyond the Gate Max's true forever home?
9. Do you think a beautiful experience like Max's might happen to you someday too?
10. Is the Gate a religious place to you? Is it another place for you to go to continue your own life journey?

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