Dogs: Reading

Man's best friend

Do you have a dog? Is it a big Alsatian or perhaps a cute poodle like the one in the picture? The two may be very different but in fact all dogs are related to wolves. Wolves first came into villages thousands of years ago looking for food and people began to feed and train them. The animals were used mainly for guarding, collecting sheep and hunting. So began the special relationship between dogs and humans. Although there are many kinds of working dogs (for example guard dogs, sheepdogs, guide dogs and sniffer dogs), most people have dogs as pets. All over the world dogs can be seen with humans - perhaps sitting on a motorbike in Brazil, eating in a restaurant in France or wearing children's clothes in Thailand. The following stories show the special relationship that dogs have with us and are examples of the different roles dogs play in our lives.

 A _____ Laika was just a stray dog walking the streets of Moscow when she was chosen to become one of the most famous dogs in the world. On 3rd November 1957 she was sent into space and became the first living creature to orbit the Earth. However, she did not come back to have her photograph taken and be in all the newspapers. After just a few hours in space she died aboard the spaceship Sputnik 2. It was her first and last flight but the start of many flights for humans.

B _____ Hachiko was a large hunting dog and the faithful pet of a professor at Tokyo University. Every afternoon after work the professor came back to the train station and Hachiko was waiting patiently on the platform for him. Unfortunately in May 1925 when Hachiko was only 18 months old, the professor died before returning home. Of course Hachiko did not know this and went to the station to wait for his master who did not come. Every day for the next ten years the dog continued to go to the station to meet the train. He died on the platform where he last saw the professor. Today there is a statue of Hachiko on Tokyo's Shibuya railway station in honour of his loyalty and devotion to his master.

C _____ Rob was just a working farm dog when he was chosen to become an expert parachutist during the Second World War (1939 - 1945). Along with the soldiers from his army unit he parachuted behind enemy lines and then guarded over the men while they slept. He jumped out of more than 20 planes during his time with units in North Africa and Italy.

D _____ Arcón was the name of the Jaime Parejo's dog. Arcón is also the name of Parejo's special search-and-rescue method. Dogs, like Arcón, are trained to find people who are trapped under buildings, for example after an earthquake. Since 1999 many countries which have earthquakes, such as Colombia, Turkey, Taiwan and India, have used the dog rescue teams from Spain. One of the most famous Arcón rescues took place in

Gujarat, India in 2001. Seven days after an earthquake that killed 30,000 people, Spanish dogs found a young man buried alive. Everyone thought it was impossible to find more survivors, but the Arcón dogs are very good. The rescue was on TV news programmes around the world.

E _____ Bertie is a tiny dog, the same size as a cat, but he is a wonder dog for his mistress, Gill. He wakes her up when the alarm clock goes off and tells her when she has visitors at the door. He also tells her when the telephone rings! Why? Because Gill is deaf and Bertie is her ears. He is trained to help Gill, but he also helps other people too. One day, after an operation, Bertie was sleeping on Gill's bed in hospital. But he suddenly woke up and started barking at the lady in the opposite bed. Nurses came and realized that the woman was not breathing. They gave her oxygen and, thanks to Bertie's help, saved her life. Bertie is one of over 1,100 hearing dogs in the United Kingdom living with people who have hearing difficulties.

Dogs: Reading tasks

1 Read the stories again. Which dog or dogs …

    a.   saved lives?

    b.   became famous?

    c.   flew?

    d.   worked for humans?

    e.   is the best?

2 Now answer these questions with another student.

    a.   Why did Laika die?

    b.   Why did Hachiko continue going to the station for so many years?

    c.   How did Rob jump out of planes?

    d.   Why are the Arcón dogs better than other search and rescue dog teams?

    e.   Is Bertie really intelligent?