

# Reflecting on Marley: Textual Evidence

ACTIVITY  
2.17

## Learning Targets

- Identify and interpret textual evidence.
- Write a response to a prompt, using textual evidence to support a thesis.

## Preview

In this activity, you will read a memoir and use textual evidence in response to a writing prompt.

## Setting a Purpose for Reading

- You will next read a newspaper column written by John Grogan about the death of his dog Marley. Mark the text by underlining or highlighting phrases, sentences, and clauses that tell why Grogan loved his dog despite his many faults.
- Circle unknown words and phrases. Try to determine the meaning of the words by using context clues, word parts, or a dictionary.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John Grogan (1957 – ) is a newspaper columnist and the author of the bestselling memoir *Marley and Me*, a book based on the ideas in the article you are about to read. *Marley and Me* has been adapted into a young reader’s edition, several children’s books, and a major motion picture. Grogan says he began writing in school because he “was so bad at everything else.” In addition to *Marley and Me*, he has written articles for numerous magazines and newspapers.

### Memoir

# Saying Farewell to a Faithful Pal

by John Grogan, Inquirer Columnist

**1** In the gray of dawn, I found the shovel in the garage and walked down the hill to where the lawn meets the woods. There, beneath a wild cherry tree, I began to dig.

**2** The earth was loose and blessedly unfrozen, and the work went fast. It was odd being out in the backyard without Marley, the Labrador retriever who for 13 years made it his business to be tight by my side for every excursion out the door, whether to pick a tomato, pull a weed, or fetch the mail. And now here I was alone, digging him this hole.

**3** “There will never be another dog like Marley,” my father said when I told him the news, that I finally had to put the old guy down. It was as close to a compliment as our pet ever received.

**LEARNING STRATEGIES:**  
Marking the Text, Graphic Organizer

My Notes

## ACTIVITY 2.17

### PLAN

**Materials:** highlighters  
**Suggested Pacing:** 1 50-minute class period

### TEACH

**1** Read the Preview and Setting a Purpose for Reading sections with your students.

### TEACHER TO TEACHER

You may want to show a clip from the film *Marley and Me* or show the movie trailer (available on YouTube) to engage the class. Also, you could make copies of the young reader’s version (*Marley: A Dog Like No Other*) available as an independent reading option for students who want to learn more.

**2 FIRST READ:** Based on the complexity of the passage and your knowledge of your students, you may choose to conduct the first reading in a variety of ways:

- independent reading
- paired reading
- small group reading
- read aloud

 **Text Complexity**

**Overall:** Complex

**Lexile:** 1100L

**Qualitative:** Moderate Difficulty

**Task:** Moderate (Analyze)

**3** As students are reading, monitor their progress. Be sure they are engaged with the text and annotating for words and phrases that tell why Grogan loved his dog despite his many faults. Evaluate whether the selected reading mode is effective.

### COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS STANDARDS

#### Focus Standards:

**RI.6.1:** Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

**W.6.9:** Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

**W.6.9b:** Apply *grade 6 Reading standards* to literary nonfiction (e.g., “Trace and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, distinguishing claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from claims that are not”).

#### Additional Standards Addressed:

**RI.6.3; RI.6.4; RI.6.5; RI.6.6; RI.6.8; W.6.2a; W.6.2b; W.6.10; L.6.5c; L.6.6**

ACTIVITY 2.17 continued

4 Based on the observations you made during the first reading, you may want to adjust your reading mode. For example, you may decide for the second reading to read aloud certain complex passages, or you may group students differently.

ACTIVITY 2.17 continued

Reflecting on Marley: Textual Evidence

**gusto:** hearty enjoyment

My Notes

**bounded:** moved by leaping or jumping

**despite:** in spite of



WORD CONNECTIONS

Etymology

The word *hallmark* is built from the words *hall* and *mark*. *Hall* refers to Goldsmiths' Hall in London, where gold and silver were tested for purity and stamped. *Hallmark* means "a mark of excellence, quality, or purity."

**optimism:** the tendency to see the best in all things

4 No one ever called him a great dog—or even a good dog. He was as wild as a banshee and as strong as a bull. He crashed joyously through life with a **gusto** most often associated with natural disasters.

5 He's the only dog I've ever known to get expelled from obedience school.

6 Marley was a chewer of couches, a slasher of screens, a slinger of drool, a tipper of trash cans. He was so big he could eat off the kitchen table with all four paws planted on the floor—and did so whenever we weren't looking.

7 Marley shredded more mattresses and dug through more drywall than I care to remember, almost always out of sheer terror brought on by his mortal enemy, thunder.

CUTE BUT DUMB

8 He was a majestic animal, nearly 100 pounds of quivering muscle wrapped in a luxurious fur coat the color of straw. As for brains, let me just say he chased his tail til the day he died, apparently he was on the verge of a major canine breakthrough.

9 That tail could clear a coffee table in one swipe. We lost track of the things he swallowed, including my wife's gold necklace, which we eventually recovered, shinier than ever. We took him with us once to a chi-chi outdoor café and tied him to the heavy wrought-iron table. Big mistake. Marley spotted a cute poodle and off he **bounded**, table in tow.

10 But his heart was pure.

11 When I brought my wife home from the doctor after our first pregnancy ended in a miscarriage, that wild beast gently rested his blocky head in her lap and just whimpered. And when babies finally arrived, he somehow understood they were something special and let them climb all over him, tugging his ears and pulling out little fistfuls of fur. One day when a stranger tried to hold one of the children, our jolly giant showed a ferocity we never imagined was inside him.

12 As the years passed, Marley mellowed, and sleeping became his favorite pastime. By the end, his hearing was shot, his teeth were gone, his hips so riddled with arthritis he barely could stand. **Despite** the infirmities, he greeted each day with the mischievous glee that was his hallmark. Just days before his death, I caught him with his head stuck in the garbage pail.

LIFE LESSONS LEARNED

13 A person can learn a lot from a dog, even a loopy one like ours.

14 Marley taught me about living each day with unbridled exuberance and joy, about seizing the moment and following your heart. He taught me to appreciate the simple things—a walk in the woods, a fresh snowfall, a nap in a shaft of winter sunlight. And as he grew old and achy, he taught me about **optimism** in the face of adversity.

15 Mostly, he taught me about friendship and selflessness and, above all else, unwavering loyalty.

SCAFFOLDING THE TEXT-DEPENDENT QUESTIONS

1. **Craft and Structure (RI.6.5) How do the first two sentences of the memoir contribute to the text? What is the effect of these sentences on the reader?** What information does the title add to understanding the action in the first two sentences?

2. **Key Ideas and Details (RI.6.3) What kind of personality does Marley have? What details**

**in the text illustrate his personality?** Reread the section "Cute But Dumb" for details about Marley's personality. How does his behavior show his strong personality?

3. **Knowledge and Ideas (RI.6.8) Which evidence supports the statement that Marley's heart was pure?** Reread the paragraph following the sentence that states Marley's "heart was pure." What actions show his love and loyalty to the family?

16 When his time came last week, I knelt beside him on the floor of the animal hospital, rubbing his gray snout as the veterinarian discussed cremation with me. No, I told her, I would be taking him home with me.

17 The next morning, our family would stand over the hole I had dug and say goodbye. The kids would tuck drawings in beside him. My wife would speak for us all when she'd say: "God, I'm going to miss that big, dumb lug."

18 But now I had a few minutes with him before the doctor returned. I thought back over his 13 years—the destroyed furniture and goofy antics; the sloppy kisses and utter devotion. All in all, not a bad run.

19 I didn't want him to leave this world believing all his bad press. I rested my forehead against his and said: "Marley, you are a great dog."

lug: an awkward, clumsy fellow

devotion: dedication

**Second Read**

- Reread the memoir to answer these text-dependent comprehension questions.
- Write any additional questions you have about the text in your Reader/Writer Notebook.

1. **Craft and Structure:** How do the first two sentences of the memoir contribute to the text? What is the effect of these sentences on the reader?

The first two sentences explain the setting, which sets the tone for the memoir. The tone seems dark because the author is digging in the gray of dawn. The sentences also make the reader wonder why the author is digging and what will happen next. RI.6.5

2. **Key Ideas and Details:** What kind of personality does Marley have? What details in the text illustrate his personality?

He is loyal, wild, energetic, and joyful. The text says that Marley "crashed joyously through life" and explained that he chewed couches, slashed screens, slung drool, tipped trash cans, and ate from the kitchen table when no one was looking. RI.6.3

3. **Knowledge and Ideas:** Which evidence supports the statement that Marley's heart was pure?

The author says that Marley comforted the author's wife after a miscarriage. Marley was also tolerant of the author's children and protective of them around strangers. RI.6.8

4. **Craft and Structure:** In paragraphs 13 and 14, what are the connotations of the words *loopy* and *unbridled*? How do these words help the reader understand Marley?

These words give a picture of Marley being both silly and unrestrained, like a big kid. RI.6.4

My Notes

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**5 SECOND READ:** During the second reading, students will be returning to the text to answer the text-dependent comprehension questions. You may choose to have students reread and work on the questions in a variety of ways:

- independently
- in pairs
- in small groups
- together as a class

**6** Have students answer the text-dependent questions. If they have difficulty, scaffold the questions by rephrasing them or breaking them down into smaller parts. See the Scaffolding the Text-Dependent Questions boxes for suggestions.

**SCAFFOLDING THE TEXT-DEPENDENT QUESTIONS**

4. **Craft and Structure (RI.6.4)** In paragraphs 13 and 14, what are the connotations of the words "loopy" and "unbridled?" How do these words help the reader understand Marley? Ask students to examine the meanings of "loopy" and "unbridled" in a dictionary and describe how they might describe the behavior of Marley as he has been presented so far.

5. **Craft and Structure (RI.6.6)** What was the author's purpose for writing the memoir? How is the author's purpose conveyed in the text? Notice that Grogan starts the memoir with the burial of Marley, then tells stories of Marley's long life. What are his final words to Marley?

## ACTIVITY 2.17 continued

**7** Students will prepare for the writing prompt by copying into the **graphic organizer** the textual evidence they highlighted as they read the text.

**8** Remind students to add their own commentary and explanations of the textual evidence that they use in their response to the writing prompt.

### Leveled Differentiated Instruction

In this activity, students may need support with organizing their evidence for their writing. Have students complete the **Key Ideas and Details** graphic organizer in order to organize their ideas.

**L2–L3** After students have completed their graphic organizers, ask students basic questions about why explanatory writing is organized in this way.

**L3–L4** After students have completed their graphic organizers, ask them to explain why explanatory writing is organized in this way.

**L4–L5** After students have completed their graphic organizers, ask them to present an argument about why explanatory writing should be organized in this way.

**9** Have students choose an appropriate **word map graphic organizer**, copy it into their Reader/Writer Notebooks, and explore the concept of textual evidence. Add this to the Word Wall.

### ASSESS

Check the writing prompt responses for the elements of an effective explanatory essay or paragraph as well as for the integration of textual evidence.

### ADAPT

If students need additional help finding and citing textual evidence, narrow their search to a single paragraph of the article and have them identify one piece of textual evidence. Then have them explain how that piece of textual evidence supports the thesis.

## ACTIVITY 2.17 continued

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### My Notes

**5. Craft and Structure:** What was the author's purpose for writing the memoir? How is the author's purpose conveyed in the text?

The author wrote the memoir as a tribute to his dog Marley. They author gives details about how Marley was actually a good dog even though he was clumsy and destructive. RI.6.6

### Working from the Text

6. Copy your textual evidence into the graphic organizer below.

Textual Evidence	Importance: What does the evidence tell you about Grogan's feelings for his dog?
"Marley taught me about living each day with unbridled exuberance and joy."	Grogan values the energetic exuberance of his wildly uncontrollable pet.

### Writing to Sources: Explanatory Text

Why do people have pets? Using John Grogan and Marley as examples, explain what human beings love about and learn from their pets. Be sure to:

- Write a thesis statement (or topic sentence if the response is only one paragraph) including the topic and your opinion.
- Use textual evidence and supporting details from the newspaper column.
- Add personal commentary.