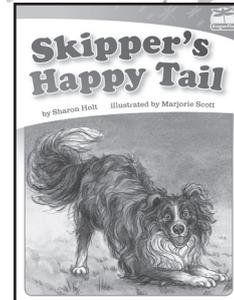


# Skipper's Happy Tail

by Sharon Holt

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## Overview

In this humorous narrative, Skipper's tail causes all kinds of trouble but finally comes in useful. The dramatic events and lively dialogue encourage expressive reading.

## Suggested purposes

This text supports the comprehension strategies of making connections to real-life experiences and making and confirming predictions. It is useful for monitoring children's integration of reading strategies at the end of the Blue level. There is another Dragonflies early book about this character, *No, Skipper!*

## Text features (Focus on only one or two per session.)

- the variety of initial consonant blends
- the digraphs -ch – *children*; -ph – *Sophie*; -sh – *brushed, crash, shed, shopping, shouted*; -th – *the, there, they*
- the repeated rimes – *here, there; get, wet; flicked, pick, tickled; out, shouted*
- the strong narrative structure with a clear sequence of events
- the dramatic style
- the characterisation of Skipper
- the expressive illustrations
- the possessive apostrophes in “Greg’s”, “Skipper’s”, and “Sophie’s”
- the lively verbs
- the expressive dialogue, including imperative language
- the use of exclamation marks for emphasis
- the use of onomatopoeia – *crash!*

## Setting the scene

The students may be familiar with Skipper through the book *No, Skipper!* Tell them you have another book for them to read about this character. Review what the students know about him. Talk about the students' experiences of pet dogs. *What does your dog do when it sees you coming home? How do you know when it's happy? Look at the cover illustration. What might Skipper be thinking?*

## The first reading

Ask the students to read the title. *Use one of your arms to show me what a happy tail might be like.* Read the names of the author and the illustrator.

**Back cover** – Read aloud the preview question. Discuss the students' predictions.

**Title page** – *What's happening here? Does this fit with your ideas from the cover?* Listen to the students read the text themselves, offering support as necessary.

**Pages 2 and 3** – *Where have the family been? What's Skipper doing?*

**Page 4** – Observe how the students attempt “tickled”, prompting them if necessary and encouraging them to cross-check. You may need to reassure them about the “illed” sound at the end of “tickled”. You could link the “le” in “tickle” to the students' knowledge of the words “little” or “apple”. *Why is Skipper wagging his tail? What does Sophie think of that?*

**Page 5** – *What’s the problem here? What will Dad say?*

**Page 6** – *Is Dad really mad? How do you know?*

**Page 7** – Some students may say “come” for “came”. *Does “come” sound right? Does it look right? What do you think is going to happen?*

**Page 8** – *How would Greg say this? How is Skipper feeling now? How do you know?*

**Page 9** – *What are they all looking at? What is it doing?* Check that the students are saying “around” not “round”. *What would you do if a bee was buzzing around you? What might happen next?* Note whether the students make the link back to the title page.

**Page 10** – Encourage expressive reading!

**Page 11** – If necessary, prompt the children to attend to the “fl” blend and the “ick” rime in “flicked”. Show me how you would flick a bee away. *Were you right about Skipper?*

**Page 12** – *How is Sophie feeling now? What will Skipper do next? What does the family think about having Skipper as a pet?*

**Ideas for revisiting the text** (Choose only one or two per session.)

- Listen as the students reread the text with a partner, observing their attention to visual information and their fluency and expression.
- Focus on any initial consonant blends or digraphs that the students may have been unsure of. Locate examples in the text and make a list of other words that start the same way. Look at the use of the digraph “sh” as a medial and final sound in “brushed” and “crash”.
- Write “flicked”, “pick”, and “tickled” on the board. *What is the same about all of these words?* Show the students how to generate other words using the “ick” rime. Repeat the activity with other rimes from the text.
- Focus on the narrative structure of the story. Identify the introduction, the problem, and the happy ending. Talk about how the repeated examples of the problems caused by Skipper’s tail (like the repeated incidents in a fairy tale) make the story more exciting because the reader starts to anticipate what will happen next.
- Talk about how the author makes this story exciting. You could talk about the lively verbs, the expressive dialogue, the imperative language, the use of exclamation marks for emphasis, and the use of onomatopoeia.
- Focus on the illustrations, particularly those of the characters, and talk about how they support the ideas in the text.
- Reread page 3 to the students. *What sound can you hear at the end of “helped”?* Write “help” on the board. *Show me how you would make “help” into “helped”.* Confirm the students’ attempts by referring back to the text. Repeat the activity with “brushed”, “flicked”, “landed”, “shouted”, or “walked”.
- Look at the word “Skipper’s” in the title. Explain that the possessive apostrophe is there to show that the tail belongs to Skipper. Find other examples of possessive apostrophes (on pages 4, 8, 10, and 12) and talk about why they are there.

## **Suggestions for further activities**

- Read the other Dragonflies early book about Skipper, *No, Skipper!*
- Reread other Dragonflies books about dogs, for example, *Training Ruby* and *Walking the Dog* (both at the emergent level).
- Have the students think, pair, and share about what they would do if a bee landed on them.
- Add thought bubbles to the illustrations of Skipper on pages 3, 8, or 12.
- During shared writing, construct a narrative based on an incident involving a pet. Make it more dramatic by incorporating such features as lively verbs, onomatopoeia, or dialogue. Encourage the students to use these features in their own writing.

- BLM word activity: identify rhymes

The students can read the words in the bee shapes. They can then join the words that rhyme, as has been done for “look”, “book”, and “took”.

- BLM comprehension activity: illustrate a story and sequence the events to support the meaning of a text

The students can read the captions and draw the appropriate illustrations in the boxes. They can then cut each caption out and stick them in the correct order on a piece of paper.