Ginger Pye
By Eleanor Estes

Dictation Passages
The one thing that Jerry Pye wanted more than anything else in the world right now was a dog. Ever since he had seen the new puppies over in the Speedys’ barn, he was not only more anxious than ever to have a dog, he was most anxious to have one of these Speedy puppies. He had the particular one picked out that he would most like to have as his own. This was not easy to do for they were all wonderful.

(Chapter one, pages 1-2)
Week One

Premise of the novel:

The one thing that Jerry Pye wanted more than anything else in the world right now was a dog. Ever since he had seen the new puppies over in the Speedys’ barn, he was not only more anxious than ever to have a dog, he was most anxious to have one of these Speedy puppies. He had the particular one picked out that he would most like to have as his own. This was not easy to do for they were all wonderful.

(Chapter one, pages 1-2)

Why this passage:

This passage establishes the mission of the novel. Also, there’s a fabulous use of the plural and possessive in the same word! Tricky punctuation for most kids.

What to note:

The plural of “puppy” is “puppies” (changing the ‘y’ to ‘ies’). The plural of the family name “Speedy” however is “Speedys.” The reason for this difference is that the ordinary rule of “changing a ‘y’ to ‘ies’” does not apply with a proper noun. The proper noun retains its spelling and adds ‘s’ to become plural.

To make the plural form of “Speedy” possessive, there is no need to add another ‘s.’ All that is needed is an ending apostrophe. The punctuation rule is that if you make a plural possessive, you only need to add an apostrophe to the end of the word to indicate possession.

The word “anxious” is tricky to spell so be sure to learn it this week!

The comment “more than anything else in the world right now” implies that the novel is set in the present. The story unfolds in the present tense of the story, but what time period does it actually take place? Look for clues that tell you that the story is from a bygone era. (One clue is the first publication date, but even then, the story is set earlier than that date.) How might a child discover clues to the time period?
In chapter one, we find out the price of the puppy. One dollar! The children react as though that’s an unobtainable sum. But for present-day readers, that amount of money sounds hardly worth worrying about.

How long ago was it that a dollar seemed a lot of money to a child? Discuss.

How to teach the passage:

To teach this passage, go over the plural possessive. Then look at challenging spelling words (like anxious, particular, picked, wonderful). The passage is not difficult in content but is very long to write in one sitting. Break it into shorter pieces for copywork and possibly only use a portion of it for French dictation or straight dictation. There’s no reason to tire your young writers. I included the whole passage so that you can have the context for the ideas.
Was there a catch now to this Ginger Pye, Gingerbread business? Jerry couldn’t see a catch to it. So he said happily, “Ginger is sort of a good name for him, isn’t it? Sort of a just right name? We’ll call the puppy Ginger. All right.”

“Ginger Pye, not Gingerbread,” murmured Rachel dreamily.

(Chapter four, page 86)
Week Two

Naming:

Was there a catch now to this Ginger Pye, Gingerbread business? Jerry couldn’t see a catch to it. So he said happily, “Ginger is sort of a good name for him, isn’t it? Sort of a just right name? We’ll call the puppy Ginger. All right.”

“Ginger Pye, not Gingerbread,” murmured Rachel dreamily.

(Chapter four, page 86)

Why this passage:

This is the significant passage where the Speedy puppy is named! Also, we have the benefit of a bit of dialog.

What to note:

“Ginger Pye” is a first name and a surname (last name). But juxtaposed with “Gingerbread,” the “Pye” takes on a double meaning (as in “pie,” the dessert). Help your kids to see the word play.

“Sort of a just right name?” is a fragment, but suits the way we speak where we trace back over our words to expand their meaning, without restating everything from the start.

When the dialog switches from Jerry to Rachel, the passage indents to a new paragraph.
How to teach the passage:

Note that there are several uses of question marks! This is a rare opportunity in dictation to practice hearing the intonation of a question and then to put the mark in the right place.

Notice the way commas are also throughout this passage. When a statement is made followed by “isn’t it?” a comma is needed preceding the question to separate the statement from the question. If you leave the “isn’t it?” out, the preceding part is a complete sentence, not a question.

There are two contractions: “isn’t” and “we’ll.” See if your child can figure out what two words each of these represent. Try saying the sentences with the two words to see if they still sound right.

Gingerbread is not usually capitalized but in this instance it is because it is being considered for a name, which is a proper noun.
Ginger jumped into the room, dropped Jerry’s pencil at his feet and looked up at Jerry. He was inviting him to throw it so he could run after it and bring it back, the way they played the rock game at home, or ball, or stick.

Jerry picked up his pencil. “He even found my pencil I lost on the way to school this morning,” he said in greater astonishment than ever. “What a smart dog!”

(Chapter six, page 140)
Ginger Pye

Week Three

Ginger visits school:

Ginger jumped into the room, dropped Jerry’s pencil at his feet and looked up at Jerry. He was inviting him to throw it so he could run after it and bring it back, the way they played the rock game at home, or ball, or stick.

Jerry picked up his pencil. “He even found my pencil I lost on the way to school this morning,” he said in greater astonishment than ever. “What a smart dog!”

(Chapter six, page 140)

Why this passage:

This triumph of Ginger’s loyalty to Jerry deserves to be noted!

What to note:

The first sentence is a group of three actions by Ginger. The first is separated from the second with a comma, however the third is set apart by the conjunction “and.” We don’t use a comma when “and” holds the list together. The last line of the first paragraph has three commas between each of the “or” items.

The second paragraph is Jerry’s bit of dialog (which is a shift in viewpoint since the above paragraph is told more from Ginger’s point of view).

How to teach the passage:

This is a long passage. Break it up into multiple sittings to copy or use only a portion for dictation. Read it through for context and to analyze how the paragraphing contributes to understanding whose viewpoint we are experiencing.
“Astonishment” is a tricky spelling word for this age group. Put it on a note card if your child can’t manage it just yet. Or spell it for the child in dictation.

Lastly, pay attention to that exclamation point. You can read the dialog aloud with book in hand and then jump when you get to the exclamation point as a way to emphasize that it is there. Kids often love that reminder.
Ginger twitched his ears and the loose skin on his back and legs to let Jerry know he was here and he was happy. Then he lowered his head down on his paws again and he let out a deep sigh that sounded almost like a sob, there was so much relief and pain and pleasure and remembering.

(Chapter 14, page 306)
Week Four

Last lines:

Ginger twitched his ears and the loose skin on his back and legs to let Jerry
know he was here and he was happy. Then he lowered his head down on his paws
again and he let out a deep sigh that sounded almost like a sob, there was so much
relief and pain and pleasure and remembering.

(Chapter 14, page 306)

Why this passage:

I love the description of Ginger’s “sob.” It’s so the way a dog sounds at the end of a
long day and excitement.

What to note:

Estes does a great job of describing the experience of the dog from inside the dog’s
point of view. Viewpoint is the literary element that describes whose perspective is
being related to the reader. In this novel, we are usually privy to Jerry’s viewpoint.
But there are a couple of distinct places where the reader gets inside of Ginger Pye’s
mind. See if you can look back through the book and find those spots.

How to teach this passage:

There is nothing special about the punctuation. The use of the conjunction “and”
throughout, however, gives a nice rhythm to the paragraph. The continuity of feelings
and actions, all held together by “and” create a feeling of release. Ginger is finally
home. All the experiences pile up on each other in a single expression of “home.”
Note the difficult spelling words:

- twitched
- loose (as opposed to “lose”)
- lowered
- sigh
- pleasure
- remembering
Personification:

When human qualities are attributed to animals or inanimate objects, we call that figure of speech: personification. If you take the word apart, you can see that its root is “person.”

Personification is a powerful tool for writing. Kids fall into it naturally! They love to write stories from the point of view of an animal. Ginger Pye is a delightful example of personification. For instance, when the pup Ginger discovers himself in the mirror, Estes (the writer) talks about Ginger’s discovery of the “enemy dog.” Estes is observing the behavior of dogs when they bark at their reflections and then investing it with a human quality: naming the mystery dog an “enemy.”

Ginger exhibits many human qualities in the few chapters he’s in.

Ginger has feelings: “Ginger’s feelings were hurt, being deserted this way...” (page 122)

Ginger asks questions: “Where could he go anyway?” puzzled Ginger.

Ginger was calculating: “He was winning, he thought. Mrs. Pye no longer looked so stern; her eyes were laughing in fact. But to assure victory, Ginger cringed.”

In each of these examples, Ginger exhibits thoughts and behaviors ordinarily assigned to humans. We don’t have access to the thought lives of animals. We don’t know if they reason and think about whys and wherefores. Yet when we write about them, we find it pleasant to imagine that they have human-like thoughts and feelings. This is partly how we come to love them so much! We project our own imagined inner lives onto our pets and love them for their devotion to us.

See if you can find other examples of personification in this novel.

Personification is used in poetry, short stories, movies (think of all those Disney movies with talking animals!), and even television ads. Remember this ad? Oreo: Milk’s favorite cookie. How can milk have a favorite cookie? The ad implies that milk, like people, show preferences—personification of milk!
Here are some other common examples of personification:

- My computer hates me.
- The camera loves me.
- Opportunity knocks.
- Time never waits for anyone.
- The tree limbs danced in the wind.
- Snow wrapped a blanket of white around the house.
- The moon smiled down on the town.
- Don’t let life pass you by.
- The fire ran wild.
- The tornado devoured everything in its path.

Poems often make use of personification:

**The Railway Train**
by Emily Dickinson

I like to see it lap the miles,
And lick the valleys up,
And stop to feed itself at tanks;
And then, prodigious, step

Around a pile of mountains,
And, supercilious, peer
In shanties by the sides of roads;
And then a quarry pare

To fit its sides, and crawl between,
Complaining all the while
In horrid, hooting stanza;
Then chase itself down the hill

And neigh like Boanerges;
Then, punctual as a star,
Stop - docile and omnipotent -
At its own stable door.
April Rain Song
By Langston Hughes

Let the rain kiss you
Let the rain beat upon your head with silver liquid drops
Let the rain sing you a lullaby
The rain makes still pools on the sidewalk
The rain makes running pools in the gutter
The rain plays a little sleep song on our roof at night
And I love the rain.

Two Sunflowers Move in the Yellow Room
By William Blake

“Ah, William, we’re weary of weather,”
said the sunflowers, shining with dew.
“Our traveling habits have tired us.
Can you give us a room with a view?”

They arranged themselves at the window
and counted the steps of the sun,
and they both took root in the carpet
where the topaz tortoises run.

Nursery Rhyme
Hey diddle diddle,
The cat and the fiddle,
The cow jumped over the moon,
The little dog laughed to see such sport,
And the dish ran away with the spoon.

Read these poems during your poetry teatime and discuss all the uses of personification. You might try highlighting all the words that reveal personification with a yellow highlighting pen. Give a copy of the poems to each child and then look for the ways the poets cause these non-human characters to adopt human characteristics.
**Writing Exercise**

**Playing with personification:**

Children love to write about animals. This month, write a journal from the perspective of the family pet. (If you don’t have a family pet, your child can certainly pretend to have one or can select a wild animal!)

Spend one day observing and one day writing a journal entry (if this goes well and the child wants to continue, you can make a week’s worth of entries). Write the entries in first person. This kind of journal will require that the child be attentive to how your pet spends the day. Keep a clipboard with a sheet of paper on it in an easily accessible location. Over the course of a day, the child should take notes:

- Roger (the dog) is lying on the fluffy lambskin in front of the fire, licking his left paw.
- Roger begged for a treat by jumping in the air and jingling his collar.
- Roger ran outside to chase a squirrel up the tree and didn’t catch him.
- Roger licked my hand.
- Roger barked when the UPS man brought us a package.

After a day of notes, on the following morning, write an entry about how the dog spent the day. It will go something like this:

_**I heard a noise outside while it was still dark. I know it’s that pesky squirrel trying to dig up my bone. I barked to wake up Mrs. Smith, but she just banged on my crate and told me to sleep. The nerve! Doesn’t she realize what’s at stake? If I don’t have my bone, I can’t chew on it this afternoon. If I don’t chew on it this afternoon, I’ll have to pace by the window for half an hour. If I pace, I’ll need to take a nap. Why does she insist on sleeping when squirrels want my bones?**_

_**I’ll just lick my paw instead.**_

And so on.

Alternatively, the child can write the narrative in third person (like Estes did in Ginger Pye). In this case, the narrative would not be a journal entry but a report from an observer’s position (telling a story).
Roger heard a loud noise outside while it was still dark! A squirrel, he thought! My bone! He fretted, whimpering and whining, willing Mrs. Smith to get out of bed to let him race around the yard. She banged on his crate and Roger whined at her, wishing she’d understand what was at stake. He worried that if he didn’t have his bone later in the day, he’d have to pace under the window for a long time. As he thought about it, he licked his left paw soothingly...

The idea is to live inside the pet and think from the pet’s point of view, but making use of personification as the method of conveying the inner life of the animal. Have fun with it!