

[PDF] The Good Dog

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Books Details:

Title: The Good Dog
Author: Avi
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Description:

From Publishers Weekly Themes reminiscent of Jack London's *The Call of the Wild* ring throughout this vividly imagined animal story. From a canine perspective, Avi (Poppy) relates how a malamute named McKinley's life changes after he encounters a wolf. Head dog in Steamboat Springs, McKinley leads a busy life, protecting his family (including his "human pup," Jack) and keeping order among his canine compatriots in the mountain town. While trying to aid a runaway the forlorn greyhound, Duchess, whose owner offers a reward for her return McKinley encounters Lupin, a wolf who hopes to recruit dogs for her dwindling pack. Lupin's indictment of dogs ("tongue-lapping, tail-wagging slaves who take their food from bowls!") both stirs and shames McKinley; he soon finds his loyalties torn as he simultaneously tries to foil Jack's misguided plan to join the wolves, keep a wounded Lupin safe from those hunting her and fend off Redburn, a conniving Irish setter bent on usurping the hero's place as head dog. The action moves along at a crackling pace, reaching a crescendo in a dramatic moonlight confrontation. The dog's-eye point of view allows for some creative touches, including insights into animal behavior and the vocabulary McKinley uses for

various human objects ("eating sticks" for utensils; "a block of staring papers" for book; "glow box" for television), but most compelling of all is the transformation of McKinley's happy-go-lucky character into a truly majestic leader. Ages 8-12.

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From School Library Journal Gr 3-6-A story with a decidedly canine point of view that will delight dog lovers. Jack's malamute, McKinley, is the top dog in Steamboat Springs, CO. His enemy is not a cat but a sad excuse for an Irish setter, Redburn. Sedate small-town life is interrupted by the appearance of Lupin, a she-wolf that urges dogs to free themselves from the tyranny of domesticated life. The noble McKinley tries to help her, and save a mistreated greyhound, but is misunderstood and relegated to the "dog house" by rather dim-witted humans. Communication between dogs and humans is awkward at best. There is a lot of dialogue among the dogs, among the humans, and between humans and dogs. The people come off as pretty stupid and McKinley is rather tolerant of the limitations of his "human pup" owner. It is confusing that sometimes McKinley seems to understand exactly what humans think and say and at other times professes ignorance. Still, fans of the film version of *The Incredible Journey* and *Beethoven* will lap this up as it has a very cinematic feel. Many scenes seem almost written directly for film. Readers will have no problem following the rapid, almost relentless action. John Erickson's "Hank the Cowdog" series (Viking) and James Howe's "Bunnicula" series (Atheneum) are similar in tone.

Marilyn Payne Phillips, University City Public Library, MO

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