

The Broom Dog

Canton is badly shaken after his mother is involved in an accident.
How can an old broom help him feel better?

About the Story

Lexile: 660L

For qualitative complexity factors, go to Scope Online.

Learning Objectives:

to describe the central conflict of a work of fiction and explain how that conflict is resolved

Key Skills:

author's craft, metaphor, text structure, simile, setting, character, inference, symbolism, central conflict

Essential Questions:

- Where can we find comfort when we are in distress?
- How can we help someone who is suffering?
- How can one thing be many things?

Standards:

The text and lesson support these Common Core anchor standards: **R.1, R.2, R.3, R.4, R.5, W.2, W.9, SL.1, L.4, L.5, L.6.** For more standards information—including TEKS—go to Scope Online.



Your Teaching Support Package

Find your full suite of materials at
scope.scholastic.com.

Audio:

- Hear Jason Reynolds read the story aloud.

Literature Connections: Ideas for connecting to curricular texts

Skill Builders to print or project:

- Close Reading and Critical Thinking
- Preparing to Write: How Canton Overcomes His Fear
- Quiz*
- Literary Elements: Character Thinking Tool
- Contest Entry Form

* Available on two levels

Step-by-Step Lesson Plan

Close Reading, Critical Thinking, Skill Building

1 Preparing to Read

Do-Now: Write Metaphors

(5 minutes, activity sheet online)

- On the board, write: “A school bus is _____.” Invite students to come up and write an ending for the sentence so that it becomes a metaphor for the experience of riding the bus. You might give students an example from the story they are about to read, such as: “A school bus is a talent show.”
- Invite a few volunteers to explain their metaphors.

2 Reading and Discussing the Story

(30 minutes, activity sheet online)

- Read the story once through as a class.
- Divide students into groups to read the story again, pausing to discuss the close-reading questions that appear in the margins. Have students write their answers in the margins or on the **Close-Reading Questions** handout.

Answers to Close-Reading Questions

1. Author’s Craft (p. 27) *Students might note the heavy repetition of words, phrases, and sentence structures. Students might also note the use of fragments. The repetition and the use of nontraditional sentence structure, as well as the large number of metaphors and the highly rhythmic quality of the writing, make the introduction similar to a poem.*

2. Metaphor (p. 27)

Answers will vary.

3. Text Structure (p. 27) *The sentences serve as a transition: The author moves from writing about a school bus in general to*

writing about what a school bus is to Canton in particular. These sentences also introduce Canton and the central conflict of the story, and they draw the reader in by raising questions about how a school bus almost made Canton motherless.

4. Simile (p. 29) *These similes help you understand how absolutely terrified Canton feels when he learns that his mother was hit by a bus—how suddenly, everything in his world disappears except the accident. The whistle is like the one that Ms. Post uses in her job as a crossing guard, and yellow is the color of the bus that hit her; it’s as if Canton looks at his own skin and sees yellow because his mind is so overwhelmed by the thought of the bus.*

5. Setting (p. 29) *The author includes these details to create a sense of place and bring the school and the other students to life. They help the reader picture the school hallways as Mr. Munch and Canton walk through them.*

6. Character (p. 29) *Mr. Munch is kind, thoughtful, and compassionate. He might have a slightly grumpy exterior (p. 28 suggests that he complains a lot), but the way he squats on the bathroom floor and calms Canton down, as well as the way he takes Canton to his mother and then steps in for Ms. Post, reveal that he is very kind. The love Mr. Munch expresses for his family, the story he tells about getting his wife a dog, and, most of all, the broom dog he makes for Canton also show Mr. Munch to be thoughtful and compassionate.*

7. Inference (p. 31) *Answers will vary. Students might offer that the broom dog is like a security blanket or a beloved stuffed animal*

for a young child—it is a familiar object that offers security and boosts confidence just because it has been assigned that job. Students might also say that the broom dog reminds Canton of Mr. Munch’s affection and concern for him.

8. Text Structure (p. 31) *The introduction is, like Canton’s assignment, a record of “human environmental interaction.” The introduction describes the many ways that kids on a school bus interact; Canton observes the many ways his classmates interact at the street corner.*

9. Symbolism (p. 31) *Canton has gone from being skeptical of the broom dog to being dependent on the broom dog to no longer needing and almost forgetting about the broom dog. The changes in Canton’s feelings about the broom dog reflect his feelings about his mom and the accident: He’s gone from constantly worrying to feeling more secure. The fact that by the end of the story, the broom dog has come to resemble a school bus is significant: It’s as though the bus and the broom dog have morphed, symbolizing that the bus has lost its terrifying grip on Canton, becoming, like the broom dog, just another thing.*

• As a class, discuss the following questions.

Critical-Thinking Questions

(15 minutes, activity sheet online)

The story ends with these lines: “Canton smiled, knowing a school bus is many things. So is a walk home.” What are some things Canton’s walk home might be? *Canton’s walk is, for one thing, when he realizes he no longer needs the broom dog. It might also be an opportunity to spend time with his mom and to observe the world around him. (Answers will vary.)*

The broom dog helps Canton cope after his mother’s accident. What are some other things that might help someone in Canton’s situation? *Answers will vary. Students might suggest talking about his or her own feelings with a trusted friend, family member, counselor, or therapist.*

3 Skill Building and Writing

(15 minutes, activity sheet online)

Have students work in groups to complete **Preparing to Write: How Canton Overcomes His Fear**. This activity will prepare them for the writing prompt on page 31. *For alternate culminating tasks, see the box below.*

Differentiate and Customize

For Struggling Readers

Write a paragraph to support the following statement: *The broom dog helps Canton overcome his fear of his mom being hit by another bus.* Use details from the story.

For Advanced Readers

Choose a character from a novel you’ve read who also overcomes a fear. Compare how that character overcomes his or her fear with how Canton overcomes his fear.

For Artists

Create a video for the introduction to “The Broom Dog.” Include a recording of yourself or someone else reading the intro, background music, and images or footage to go with the text.

For Creative Writers

Complete Canton’s assignment to write about “human environmental interaction.” You can use the story’s introduction and what Canton observes at the street corner for inspiration.