

Dog Stories Study Guide

Dog Stories by James Herriot

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Plot Summary

James Herriot, the famed veterinarian whose "All Creatures Great and Small" has enthralled PBS viewers, confesses that his first love always was, and is, dogs. Although a country veterinarian in Darrowby, Yorkshire County, England, whose practice was mainly focused on farm animals, it is canines that capture his heart. In this collection of stories, told with warmth, humor and irony, Herriot establishes himself as a keen observer of both human and animal nature. More importantly, perhaps, he understands and shares the special chemistry between man and dog that has existed for probably thousands of years.

During his boyhood in Glasgow, Scotland Herriot was very much involved with dogs—his own and other people's. He spent many hours trekking Kilpatrick Hills, Campsie Fells, Barrhead and Neilston Pad with a variety of dogs, and especially with his favorite Irish setter, Don. Although drawn to the humanities and literature, Herriot decided rather late in his academic career to pursue veterinary medicine. He graduated from the Veterinary College of Glasgow. He learned his trade from tough, experienced veterinarians who impressed upon him that the profession demanded long hours and complete dedication. Its financial rewards would be modest, but its emotional and human compensation great.

Herriot joined the veterinary practice of Siegfried and Tristan Farnon, in the remote village of Darrowby, where he lived alongside the people and animals who appear in the pages of his books. Here's how he describes his feelings about being a veterinarian:

"I know I am lucky in my job because I get a kick out of just seeing the dogs and cats that come into our surgery. Apart from the medical aspect, there is a constant pleasure for the animal lover in observing the differing personalities of people's pets. Because vets are animal lovers—that's why they become vets in the first place. A lot of people think we are detached and have only a clinical interest in our profession, but it is not so. Ours is a caring profession."

Siegfried Farnon is the senior veterinarian on the staff of Skeldale House; his younger brother, Tristan, acts the part of the younger sibling, enjoying long nights of drinking and socializing. Herriot is somewhat alone in his desire to combine small animal with farm animal veterinary medicine. He earns a kind of respect from the other two vets because of his willingness to work hard for the benefit of the dogs and cats that come to him, while also being deployed to the horses, oxen, cattle, sheep, and pigs of Yorkshire County. It becomes apparent that no one without a warm heart and a strong constitution could survive as a veterinarian in Darrowby.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary and Analysis

One of James Herriot's first customers is Mrs. Pumphrey, whose Pekingese, Tricki Woo, is forever coming down with exotic complaints such as flop-bott and crackerdog. Herriot is convinced these ailments are mere symptoms of over-indulgence and pampering. When "Uncle Herriot" arrives to check on Tricki Woo, he relieves the flop-bott by evacuating the little dog's impacted anal glands—probably related to his diet and lack of exercise.

When the veterinarian remonstrates with her for feeding the dog cream pies, chocolate fudge, and pwtly on thin biscuits, she admits how challenging it is to provide her dog with an interesting diet. They sit by the fire and sip expensive sherry in her comfortable home.,Mrs. Pumphrey informs Herriot that Tricki has written a letter to the editor of Doggy World, enclosing a donation and asking if the editor could help find Tricki a pen pal. For that purpose, she says, the dog has adopted the nom de plume of Mr. Utterbunkum.

Not only that, but the amazing Tricki advised her how to place horse racing bets and won his mistress nine shillings. According to Mrs. Pumphrey, Tricki later had a spell of crackerdog, during which he stopped playing with his toys, began spinning around in circles, then dropped to the ground as if dead., Again, Herriot tells her this behavior is probably related to his poor diet and strongly urges her to put him on a high protein feed.

When Herriot receives the basket of Christmas gifts from Mrs. Pumphrey, instead of calling her to offer thanks he writes a thank you note to Master Tricki Woo. Mrs. Pumphrey tells him the dog was pleased with his note, but that he prefers to be addressed as "Mister" Tricki Woo. When he returns to Skeldale House, Herriot agrees with the other two veterinarians that the fine Christmas sherry is good enough reason to give the best of care to Mister Woo. He notes also that Tricki Woo, who won the affection of readers worldwide, lived a long and happy life.



Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary and Analysis

Pleased with his success in removing a benign tumor from the chest of a large black Labrador, Herriot sits down to lunch with his fellow vets, Siegfried and Tristan. As they begin to eat, a blood-curdling shriek, somewhere between a moan and a howl, reaches their ears from the operating room where the dog is recovering. Realizing that some dogs become quite vocal during the post-operative period, the three quickly finish their lunch. Siegfried instructs his younger brother to remain in the clinic to watch over the dog until he regains consciousness.

At 6 o'clock Herriot looks in on Tristan to see how things are going. Once again he hears the frightful howling as he approaches. He finds Tristan standing in the middle of the room, hands in pockets, oblivious to the sound, as he's stuffed his ears with cotton balls. Siegfried joins the two for supper. He reminds Herriot that they are scheduled to attend a veterinary lecture that evening, leaving Tristan alone with the dog once again. When they return around midnight, they find Tristan sitting straight up in a chair, surrounded by mountains of empty beer bottles.

Tristan asks his brother to sleep with the Lab in his room, adjoining Herriot's room on the top level of the house above the clinic. Exhausted, they all fall into bed. Herriot is awakened a few times by the Lab's howling, but falls into a deep slumber. Toward morning, he is awakened by the sounds of scratching from the dog's nails as he paces about the room. Opening the door to Tristan's room, Herriot finds the Lab's huge paws on his chest and his tail wagging energetically.

As Tristan groans, he reports he's not had a wink of sleep; and Herriot detects a slight grin of pleasure on Siegfried's face.



Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary and Analysis

Herriot encounters Mrs. Pumphrey and Tricky Woo walking while he's driving. He pulls over and can't believe his eyes. The little Pekingese had become extremely obese, with bloodshot eyes and his tongue hanging out. Mrs. Pumphrey tells Herriot she's been giving Tricky extra treats, as well as sweets, because she thinks he might be malnourished. Herriot scolds Mrs. Pumphrey once again for over-feeding the dog; and the pair trundle off, Tricky Woo wearing one of his many tweed coats.

Within a few days, Mrs. Pumphrey calls Herriot to report that Tricky has stopped eating, vomits frequently, and just lies on a rug, panting. Herriot tells her that the only way he can treat the dog is to have him lodged in the animal clinic for at least two weeks. Tearfully, Mrs. Pumphrey arrives with Tricky Woo and piles of tweed jackets, pillows, cushions, toys and three food dishes. For two days, Herriot gives Tricky only water and keeps a close eye on him. Then he lets Tricky outside to play with Joe the Greyhound and his friends.

By the second day, Tricky has joined the active pack of dogs, running around all day and eating a healthy diet. Mrs. Pumphrey brings cartons of fresh eggs to supplement Tricky's diet, as well as several bottles of fine sherry. For a time, the vets have extra eggs for breakfast and delicious sherry at night. Tricky continues to thrive. When Herriot calls Mrs. Pumphrey to tell her Tricky is fine and ready for discharge, she arrives in her large limousine and delightedly takes her dog in her arms. She thanks Herriot profoundly for the "triumph of surgery."



Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary and Analysis

Summoned to the home of Mr. Dean to check on his old crossbreed Labrador, Herriot finds a small, white-haired old man wearing tattered clothing and living in poverty, evident from his shabby home and paltry supper.

When he examines the old dog, Herriot discovers an enormous and inoperable tumor. He tries successfully to convince Mr. Dean that the best thing would be to put the dog to sleep, before the cancer causes even greater pain and eventual death. Once the dog is peacefully put to sleep, Mr. Dean asks what the charges are for his services; and Herriot answers nothing. Mr. Dean, who is obviously penniless, insists on paying something.

As the veterinarian gets into his car, he hears a scuffling sound approaching. Mr. Dean rushes up and hands him a battered object, "tattered but just recognizable as a precious relic of a bygone celebration." Mr. Dean smiles, "Go on, it's for you. Have a cigar."



Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary and Analysis

Harold Denham is an eccentric millionaire who lives in a large turreted Victorian mansion in Darrowby. He is fond of placing bets on football games, although he really knows nothing about either football or betting. Impressed that Herriot had won a football pool when he first arrived in Yorkshire (the only win in his life), Mr. Denham believes the veterinarian to be a gambling guru, of whom he always asks advice whenever Herriot comes to see his dog.

On this occasion, Denham had called Herriot to see his Great Dane, that had just delivered a litter of pups, but who now was making a dark discharge of some kind. Convinced that large dogs, such as Great Danes and Labradors are gentle, easygoing canines, Herriot expects and finds no trouble in examining the bitch. Confounded, he asks Denham to bring him a bowl of hot water, soap and a towel so he can explore to see if there might be yet another puppy lodged inside the mother.

While his host is gone, Herriot closely observes the historic prints in the small room, while the bitch watches over her six blind puppies. Soon, however, he hears a menacing growl behind him and turns to see a ferocious Great Dane rise up on her feet and fix a pair of burning eyes on him. Sensing an attack, Herriot moves slowly toward the door and then bolts his hand suddenly for the lock. The sudden motion triggers an attack, and suddenly the Great Dane's teeth are sinking into his wrist. He hits the dog on top of the head with his right fist, but she continues and clamps her mouth on his thigh.

Stumbling backwards, Herriot feels a chair that he brandishes in front of himself like a lion tamer, but the bitch continues to attack and the chair soon begins to disintegrate. Once again, Herriot makes a move for the door and this time is successful in freeing himself. He sits on the floor, pants around his knees, leaning against the door as the dog's assaults pound and push from the other side. Denham appears with the requested items, evidently having become lost for 10 or 15 minutes in his own house.

In an after note, Herriot reflects that bitches with their pups can sometimes be unpredictable and present one of the dangers veterinarians must sometimes face.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary and Analysis

For the second time Herriot encounters Helen Alderson, the young woman who is to become his wife, when she brings in her sheepdog, Dan, who's been yelping whenever he walks. Herriot asks Ms. Alderson to walk with the dog ahead of him to the examining room so he can observe the dog's gait.

After watching Helen walk, Harriot drags his attention back to the patient and discovers a dislocated hip. When he asks her to wait while he summons another vet to help put the hip joint back together, Helen asks to help, telling him she loves animals and is quite strong.

He gives the dog an anesthetic and they begin wrestling the joint into place. As Helen starts to leave with her dog, a friend brings in a tray and two teacups for the pair. Herriot immediately suspects Tristan of conspiring with Mrs. Hall to play Cupid. As they sip tea, Herriot notices more details about Helen: "Her mouth turned up markedly at the corners as though she was just going to smile or had just been smiling; also the deep warm blue of the eyes under the smoothly arching brows made a dizzying partnership with the rich black-brown of her hair."

When Herriot calls Helen to see how Dan is doing, he learns that the dog is back to his old tricks. Then, with trembling hand, Herriot asks her if she'd like to go to a movie. She accepts.

Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary and Analysis

On a cold, snowy winter morning, Herriot steers his car down an almost-invisible country road to a farmhouse, where he's caring for a bullock that had eaten some frozen turnips. As he knocks on the door in the pre-dawn light, Herriot notices something moving about and heaving in the snow—probably a creature from the wild. Peter Trenholm and his wife open the door and invite Herriot inside.

Trenholm answers that it's his dog, Tip, that sleeps outside the door. Amazed, Herriot looks over the sheepdog, which is big-boned, thick-coated and more vivacious than most 15-year-old dogs. Tip's eyes are clear; and he moves with a bounce that belies old age.

As he finishes his work with the bullock, Herriot watches in amazement as the old dog bounds around the farmyard. Herriot notes that Tip is one of a class of Yorkshire dogs that live their lives outdoors, eat a diet of cornmeal and milk, and are extremely energetic and healthy.



Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary and Analysis

Mr. Herriot learns a bit of how the English feel about animals. He stops at the home of Miss Stubbs, a bedridden old lady who has three dogs and two cats. Miss Stubbs lives on a small family inheritance, and is assisted by a housekeeper, Mrs. Broadwith. Hanging on the wall, next to her bed, is a simple sign in large capital letters: GOD IS NEAR.

The veterinarian finds that Prince, an Irish Setter crossbreed, is wheezing as a result of profound valvular incompetence. As he moves his stethoscope over the old dog's chest, Herriot hears a symphony of pain emanating from Prince's lungs. He injects the dog with digitalis for his heart, along with morphine for any pain.

For the second part of his visit, Miss Stubbs brings all her animals round the bed where she and Herriot are gathered. The menagerie includes (in addition to Prince): Ben, a Sealyham; Sally, a Cocker Spaniel and the cats, Arthur and Susie, flowing closely behind. On his next visit, a month later, Herriot finds that Ben has died beside Miss Stubbs' bed. She touches his head briefly before he's taken away for burial. She asks Herriot whether he believes animals have souls that will be reunited with those of their owners after death. Herriot says he agrees.

About a month later, Herriot hears that Miss Stubbs has died. He finds Mrs. Broadwith's house and drops by for a visit. He asks what's happened to the animals. She tells him she's taken them and will provide a good home as long as she lives. Whether or not animals have souls, Herriot muses, they do well in England; because there are so many people who have compassion for animals.



Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary and Analysis

Clancy might not be the largest dog in the world, but he certainly is the biggest one seen at Skeldale House. Siegfried once observed that Clancy looked like a cross between an Airedale and a donkey. Clancy belongs to Joe Mulligan, a transplanted Irishman who is still very Gaelic after many years in England. One afternoon they appear at the clinic with the complaint that the huge dog is vomiting badly.

As Herriot runs his stethoscope over the animal's chest, he hears a deep rumbling sound; and the longer he touches the dog the more his upper lips starts to curl up. The veterinarian decides to take his temperature by grabbing his tail and putting a thermometer into his rectum. Once again, he produced a blank canine stare, a recurrence of the rumbling sound and another quivering lip that exposes huge white teeth. Herriot gets him a bottle of the usual medication.

A few days later, Siegfried asks Tristan how Clancy appeared when he recently treated him. "Lively," Tristan answers. He asks the same question of Herriot and gets a similar answer. Frustrated, Siegfried tells them that he will conduct a thorough examination of Clancy. Then he encounters Mulligan at the market, asks about his dog, and is told Siegfried gave him some more of the same medicine.

"He didn't find anything else when he examined him?" Herriot asks. "No, he didn't," Mulligan replies. "Saw all he wanted in tree second, so he did. As he came in he was pullin' the thermometer out of its case. Clancy was lyin' by the fire and he rose up in a flash and he gave a bit of a wuff, so he did. Well, Mr. Farnon just put the thermometer straight back in its case, turned round and went out the door."



Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary and Analysis

Herriot becomes aware of a shadow presence, a quack veterinarian who goes about Darrowby dispensing free advice and free nostrums to the local citizens — all of which are useless, and some of which is dangerous. The veterinary witch doctor is one Mrs. Donovan, widow of a deceased Irish farm worker who left her a small inheritance. This gives her the freedom to meddle in the affairs of anyone with an animal, which is everyone in the community.

Wherever there was a sick dog in Darrowby, Mrs. Donovan was usually there with her homemade nostrums. Mrs. Donovan had her cadre of followers and believers, especially because her services were free.

Astoundingly, Mrs. Donovan rushes into the surgery clinic one day, begging for emergency care for her dog, which had been run over by a car. They raced to her house to find her dog in very serious condition with glazed eyes, gasping breaths and discolored mucous membranes. Herriot tells her the dog has suffered massive internal injuries and might not live. As they talk, the dog dies.

Not long afterwards, Herriot gets a call from Inspector Halliday, of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA), asking him to come and see an abandoned Golden Retriever that had been found in a shed, close to starvation. A crowd had gathered at the shed where the poor animal was found, including Mrs. Donovan.

Herriot tells Inspector Halliday the dog needs a good shampooing and strong conditioning powders, but laments aloud that those could hardly be found and that he'll have to put the dog to sleep. When Herriot returns to the shed, he finds Mrs. Donovan in an emotional state. She pleads with Herriot to let her have and care for the dog. Mrs. Donovan takes excellent care of the dog, which fully recovers. From this point she no longer meddles in the business of trained veterinarians.

Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary and Analysis

Siegfried persuades James Herriot to take one of his tickets to the annual Darrowby Show, a rural festival where each year a veterinarian is on hand if needed for sick animals and to judge the Family Pet contest. Siegfried describes it as a day of fun and frivolity in seducing Herriot to take his place. So he goes to the fair with Tristan..

Little does Herriot realize he is being drawn into a web of petty rivalries, old resentments and social ostracism. The Saturday of the show begins with excellent, sunny weather. The setting for the show is a spot of classic rural England:

Herriot spies Helen, the object of his affections, with another young man named Richard Edmundson, walking very close to her. Irritated, he turns to look for Tristan, whom he discovers in the refreshment area, a glass of ale in one hand, chatting amiably with the folks.

A voice over the public address system pages Herriot and he feels a jolt of pride for having been identified publicly by his profession. Directed to one of the cattle, which was injured coming off the wagon, Herriot notices a broken horn hanging off her head by a slight strand of tissue. Flailing its head about, the cow splashes him with blood. He stanches the blood, but advises the farmer to have the animal de-horned. After a hearty luncheon, Herriot is summoned to examine a terrier by a judge. Suspecting distemper, he disqualifies the dog from the show and incurs the wrath of the owner.

His next run-ins are with an attractive blonde owner of a pony, which Herriot judges to be too big and disqualifies; the father and son owners of a dog, which he also disqualifies; and a shadowy figure whom Herriot calls "the gnome", whom he suspects of trying to rig the horse races. By the afternoon, the tired veterinarian wonders why he ever came to the event and is anxious to go home. When he again sees Helen with her date, he goes in search of Tristan and a glass of beer.



Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary and Analysis

James Herriot and Helen Alderson finally break through the obstacles of time and circumstance to connect with each other, as he makes a house call to help expedite a bitch's stalled whelping.

They encounter each other once again at the Daffodil Ball, one of the social "musts" for young singles in the Darrowby area. Herriot arrives with a group of young men and women in a party and enjoys the conviviality, as well as dancing with the voluptuous Daphne. Tristan takes his usual place in the bar, preferring beer to dancing. In the din of the big band booming and the fog of cigarette smoke, he makes out Helen arriving with his *bete noir*, Edmundson.

Herriot gets a phone call from Mrs. Hall and decides he has to leave the party. On his way out, he encounters Helen, who tells him she's sorry to see him go. Their hands interlock on the doorknob, and impulsively he asks her to come with him on his house call. Helen runs upstairs to get her coat. Herriot has to stop at Skeldale House to get the proper instruments, and they go inside.

At last, Herriot kisses Helen. Admitting that he had never driven slowly to a case, Herriot describes traveling at 10 mph with Helen's head on his shoulder, stopping now and then to kiss. Bert Chapman, who often brings Susie into the clinic, seems worried about the litter dog.

Herriot examines Susie, gingerly discovers that a large pup is in a breached presentation, and carefully turns the pup so he can deliver normally. Relieved, Susie then delivers five more puppies by 2 a.m., three bitches and three dogs. As they wearily saw farewell to the Chapmans, Herriot puts his arm around Helen's shoulders.



Chapter 13

Chapter 13 Summary and Analysis

On a call about an injured foal at the farm of Robert Corner, Herriot notices the sheepdog, Jock, that has a habit of chasing Herriot's car every time he leaves after a visit. More persistent and energetic than most car-chasing dogs, Jock is serious about chasing cars. As he finishes stitching the foal's leg, Herriot notices Jock pacing about and waiting for his departure to give chase.

Because Jock is an outstanding sheepdog, his owner purchases a bitch for breeding. On subsequent visits, she joins in the car chasing, too, as if to humor her new mate. About 10 months later, Herriot makes another visit to the farm where Corner tells him the pups had started trying to round up the sheep and cattle almost as soon as they could walk. Not only did the puppies resemble Jock, but they also seem to have learned the trick of chasing cars.

As he prepares to leave, Herriot senses that the pups are crouched in waiting. He slams the accelerator down and the clutch up and roars off, quickly realizing that he is being pursued by a pack of dogs. The puppies, with Jock's same determination and expression, have the same fanaticism combined with the speed and agility of youth. Jock is strained to keep up with them, and gets tumbled by the onrushing pups. He soon gets back on his feet. As Herriot departs, he sees in the rear-view mirror that Jock has regained the lead and his dignity—still top dog.



Chapter 14

Chapter 14 Summary and Analysis

Darrowby artist, Roland Partridge, notices that his beloved white-haired mongrel, Percy, is walking strangely, and calls Herriot to examine him. The veterinarian finds a slightly enlarged testicle, but suggests a wait-and-see approach because of Partridge's obvious fear of surgery. Because they are near neighbors, Herriot sees Percy almost every day as he comes and goes and assumes that his condition hadn't worsened. Several weeks later, Partridge again brings his dog into the clinic. The tumor has grown.

Again, the artist resists the idea of surgery although the tumor is quite large and conspicuous. One day Partridge brings his dog to Skeldale House in tears, but still rejects the notion of surgery.

Several weeks later, Herriot sees the small man and little dog walking; but now Percy must swing one of his rear legs out to clear the massive growth. He rushes up to Partridge and practically demands to remove the cancerous testicle. Finally, the dog comes in for surgery; but in removing the tumor Herriot notices there has been some involvement of the scrotum because of the delay. Herriot begins treating Percy with the hormone, stilboestrol. He grits his teeth and congratulates the artists on taking action. Then, Partridge notices that male dogs are lining up in groups outside his door, trying to get at Percy.

For some reason he had taken on the attributes of a bitch in heat, Herriot observes. The Sertoli Cell tumor occasionally made dogs attractive to other male dogs and the new drug was said to have a feminizing effect; but Herriot is puzzled. Gradually, the mob of dogs constantly following the vet and Percy begins to thin, as Percy's condition improves. Herriot notes that the growth did not recur and the male dogs did not reappear.



Chapter 15

Chapter 15 Summary and Analysis

Faced with a bitch suffering pyometritis (infected uterus) and aware of his own limited surgical experience, Herriot contacts famed small animal specialist, Granville Bennett. Dinah, the 12-year-old bitch, is quite ill when brought in by her owner, Mrs. Barker, and she has heart valve insufficiency. Granville, a large and gregarious man, is pleased to meet Herriot by phone, and even more enthused about helping with one of his patients.

Granville operates a modern veterinary hospital at Hartington, about 25 miles from Darrowby, along the lines of a human hospital. Bennett was already a legend in northern England for specializing only in small animals, at a time when most vets looked down their noses at small animal practice. When he meets Bennett, Herriot is impressed:

After a few pleasantries, they proceed into surgery, where Bennett's two amazingly efficient nurses have already anesthetized Dinah. He deftly slices through skin, muscle, and peritoneum and into the pus-swollen uterus. His massive fingers work "tenderly" around the area, tying it off, quickly removing the entire uterus and placing it in an enamel bowl. Watching him work, Herriot recalls his original goal to work only on small animals; but decides he's happy with his practice of both large and small animals.

Herriot compliments his tobacco, and when he tells Bennett the brand he uses, he tosses him a bag of the good stuff. Then Bennett spirits Herriot off to the local club where he treats him to drinks, but Bennett finishes four ales to every glass of Herriot's. Tipsy, Herriot rides in Bennett's elegant Bentley to his home, where he watches the big man plunge handfuls of picked onions in his mouth. Struggling to keep up, Herriot begins to feel a little nauseous. Bennett eats an enormous roast beef sandwich and admonishes his guest for not touching his whisky.

Zoe Bennett arrives with the couple's two dogs, and remarks on the "little sandwich" her husband has made for Herriot. Granville tears open a package of shirts his wife has bought for him, and tosses one to Herriot, who is embarrassed to take it. Herriot also feels uncomfortable sitting next to the gorgeous Mrs. Granville because his stomach has begun to make loud, disturbing noises. After a final check on Dinah by Bennett, Herriot and the dog head back to Darrowby. Herriot is pleased to have gotten good care for the dog, and to have made a lifelong friendship.



Chapter 16

Chapter 16 Summary and Analysis

What could be more heartbreaking than an abandoned dog running frantically along the highway, hoping to be reunited with the humans who'd driven off and left him? Probably nothing, as James Herriot discovers one day on the way to an appointment. The Border Terrier passes his car, eyes wild, and tongue lolling about. He turns around, catches up with the dog, and gets out of the car to wait. The little dog peacefully comes into his arms with no collar, but evidence of hair matted down where there had once been a collar. Each time a car passed the dog searched it hopefully, but sank as it zoomed by.

Angry and disgusted, Herriot takes the dog home. He gives him a shot of morphine to calm him so he can sleep. Despite the fact he and his wife, Helen, already had fallen in love with the pudgy pooch. He calls Sister Rose, a nurse at Topley Banks Hospital, who runs an animal adoption shelter that she largely finances herself. He visits her and decides to leave the dog, who they name Pip, with the shelter for adoption and companionship with the other dogs. After a week of wondering and worry about Pip, Herriot stops by the animal shelter and finds that the terrier has already found a new home with a retired civil servant and his wife.

His curiosity about Pip's new family is satisfied when Mr. Plenderleith brings Pip to the clinic for a checkup. Herriot is satisfied that Pip's new family will take very good care of him.



Chapter 17

Chapter 17 Summary and Analysis

Mrs. Flaxton brings her poodle, Penny, to the animal clinic because the dog is having a practically non-stop series of intestinal spasms. They are marked by drinking copious water, then vomiting and diarrhea. Herriot gives the dog several different remedies—including a mixture of bismuth, kaolin, and chlorodyne—but nothing seems to provide relief. Late one night, Mrs. Flaxton calls Herriot at home and beseeches him to come see Penny, whom she believes is close to death.

Faced with the possibility of euthanizing this emaciated, two-year-old dog, Herriot balks. Through his fatigue he remembers when he'd given a ewe what he thought would be a lethal dose of barbiturates. The ewe slept deeply for 48 hours, then awakened and was recovered. Herriot tells Mrs. Flaxton he wants to put Penny to sleep, not euthanizing her, but to anesthetize her. The veterinarian believes that if she has a rest from the stomach contractions she might improve.

Reluctantly, the Flaxtons agree and Herriot gives Penny a small dose of Nembutal. The next afternoon, when she begins to awaken, he gives her another shot. She sleeps for 48 hours and when she awakes heads, not for the water bowl, but outside to play with the other dogs. As a result of this cure, Herriot decides to use the same treatment for other cases of gastroenteritis because it puts a brake on the exhausting cycle and numbs the accompanying pain and fear.



Chapter 18

Chapter 18 Summary and Analysis

Cindy is a tale of everything gone wrong, at least from Herriot's perspective. He visits Lilac Cottage, where Mrs. Cook is anxiously awaiting the birth of puppies by a terrier named Cindy. Her anxiety stems from the fact the whelping is late, according to her calendar. Herriot carefully examines the bitch and finds she is not even close to delivery.

Mrs. Cook persists, and asks if Herriot can give the dog an injection to induce delivery. He refuses on grounds an injection at this stage might threaten the life of mother and puppies. However he offers to give her some tablets (vitamins) that he says should help matters. Irritated, the woman tells him her name isn't Cook. Once outside, Herriot calls to a farm hand that her name is not Cook.

He answers that he must have misunderstood; she's the cook over at the house. Herriot realizes the scrawled note he was given had wrong information. Herriot calls out to the farm hand to ask her real name, and he shouts "Booby." He gives her the vitamin pills and says goodbye to Mrs. Booby. The next day, Herriot gets a call from Mrs. Booby to come see Cindy. She asks if he can give her the injection. "But Mrs. Booby..." he protests. "My name's not Booby," the woman answers. "It's Dooley," she says, very irritated.

The next day when there is no telephone call, he stops by Lilac Cottage to find the pups delivered and Cindy outside to greet him with a bite on the ankle. "When they said you'd be a long time, I rang Mr. Farnon. He came right away and d'you know he gave Cindy that injection." She berates him, and he draws himself up: "Mrs. Dooley..."

"My name's not Mrs. Dooley. It's Miss."



Chapter 19

Chapter 19 Summary and Analysis

Farmer Sep Wilkin, a big, brusque man in his 40s with a reputation as a tough man, calls Herriot to his farm to check on Gyp, a sheepdog who has occasional convulsions. Herriot diagnoses epilepsy, adding that there's nothing that can be done for it. Two or three fits a year would be part of the package of an otherwise excellent sheepdog called Gyp, he says. Wilkin, who loves to show his dogs in trials, had given Sweep — Gyp's brother and companion — to George Crossley, a friend who lost his best dog. Gyp carries on alone, without his brother.

Expecting Wilkin to ask that he put Gyp down, Herriot is surprised when he says he'll keep him for a pet and asks for any medicine to control his seizures. Besides his convulsions, Wilkin says, Gyp has the distinction of never having barked... not once. Months later, Herriot encounters Wilkins and Gyp at a sheepdog trial at the Mellerton Agricultural Show. As they are chatting, they notice George Crossley and Sweep entering the ring. Sweep performs like the champion Wilkin always said he was. As they leave, Sweep and Gyp notice each other, and Gyp lets out a single, resounding bark: Woof!

The men let the brothers play and romp together for a while before leaving. Later, on another visit to the Wilkin farm, Herriot asks Mrs. Wilkin whether Gyp has ever barked again. Never again, she says. Eight years old and only one bark.



Chapter 20

Chapter 20 Summary and Analysis

James Herriot meets the Dimmocks, a large, penurious family of animal lovers, when called to visit Bonzo, who has been hit by a car. The veterinarian is ushered into their ramshackle residence by a horde of children, talking and gesticulating enthusiastically. Herriot counts 11 little Dimmocks, and another soon to arrive. The children were dressed in ragged clothing, but happy

After an examination, Herriot determines that Bonzo probably suffered, at worst, a bruised shoulder in the car accident, but is otherwise fine. He meets little Nellie Dimmock with a tiny puppy on her knee. The flaxen-haired, blue-eyed girl with slightly crossed eyes quickly becomes Herriot's favorite. Nellie has a limp from a bout of infantile paralysis and is heart-breakingly sweet and frail. She tells him that her dog, Toby, can't seem to keep his food down. Suspecting worms, he gives them tablets; but a week later despite the removal of a few worms, the dog is still ill.

Finally Herriot contacts Granville Bennett, who agrees to see the puppy that same day at no cost to the poor Darrowby family. Quickly, deftly, the large and confident veterinary surgeon opens the pup's stomach to correct a pyloric stenosis, and is finished in mark time. Bennett drives Herriot to the local pub in his Bentley for a beer, then home for an enormous lunch of roast beef and Yorkshire pudding served by Zoe, Bennett's wife.

In an afterword, Herriot says the Dimmocks were true animals lovers who spread a great deal of warmth whenever he went to call on their animals.



Chapter 21

Chapter 21 Summary and Analysis

As a demonstration of the gratitude Herriot feels to be able to mingle small animal (dog) care with his large (farm) animal veterinary medicine, he shares several stories about helping dogs that didn't necessarily want to be helped. The first is a six-pound miniature Dachshund named Magnus, who comes to the clinic for a nail trimming. His owner, Mr. Beckwith, warns Herriot that Magnus once bit another veterinarian's fingers down to the bone; so he clamps a muzzle on the snarling dog and proceeds to clip the nails. When he's finished, Herriot removes the muzzle. Magnus gives him a dirty look that signals he'll wait for the right opportunity to get revenge by biting him.

Mrs. Hammond's beautiful Irish Setter, Rock, has gotten one front paw caught in an animal trap and gone missing for 48 hours. When he comes into the clinic, Rock's bloody foot is swollen; but the leg isn't broken. Herriot washes the injury and clips away the dead tissue. This routine continues on a daily basis, dusting sulfanilamide on the areas where damaged tissue had pulled away, exposing the bone. Gradually, the new tissue covers the exposed area, Rock's paw healed. Whenever he saw Herriot, Rock smiled and offered him his regenerated paw.

Timmy Butterworth, a wire-haired Fox Terrier, ingests some rat poison and Herriot responds to an emergency call around lunchtime. Fighting to restrain the uncooperative dog, the veterinarian pours a strong emetic down his throat, and fortunately the rat poison quickly comes up. Later, while strolling in the neighborhood, Herriot is attacked by "a white missile" from out of nowhere. Timmy runs up and gently nips his heel, a behavior he repeats every time he sees him. Perhaps, Herriot speculates, the terrier wants to make him pay for the indignity of coming into his house, a stranger, and thrusting an unpleasant liquid down his throat that made him vomit.



Chapter 22

Chapter 22 Summary and Analysis

Herriot receives his military draft notice on his birthday, as Europe is descending into the depths of World War II. Before he leaves, he is called to yet another farm to tend to an ailing dog. Benjamin, a massive old English sheepdog, belonging to Arnold Summergill, has dislocated a rear leg while jumping over a fence. Herriot describes him as "a walking hearthrug; it took a second look to decide which end of him was which." Benjamin is very agreeable to an examination, and even to Herriot's efforts to twist the limb back into its socket. Time and transportation limits mean that the work be done at Summergill's home, rather than at the surgery clinic.

Wrestling with the leg while Benjamin looks off into the distance, Herriot suddenly realizes he's popped the joint back together. Herriot is elated that he was able to fix the injury so effortlessly. On the way home, Herriot drives and hikes over hills and beside the lake. He realizes what gift it is for him to be able to practice the veterinary profession.



Chapter 23

Chapter 23 Summary and Analysis

Mrs. Rumney calls Herriot to her home to see about Cedric, a bounding Boxer who is full of energy and, well, gas. His flatulence has become a problem in Mrs. Rumney's well ordered, upper class home. He prescribes a kaolin antacid mixture twice a day; but the remedy does nothing. On his second visit, Herriot is appalled when Cedric jumps on several of Mrs. Rumney's cocktail guests, then breaks wind in the parlor where they are gathered.

Herriot prescribes changes in diet and more medications, to no avail. Finally the veterinarian suggests that Cedric isn't the right dog for Mrs. Rumney. He suggests she give him to Con Fenton, an older man who has admired the dog and could give him space to play and run. Con Fenton jumps at the opportunity to have the Boxer, and Mrs. Rumney gets a Poodle puppy. Herriot drops by to say hello to Mrs. Rumney then visits Con Fenton, who is delighted with Cedric. Herriot compliments him on a nice bouquet of carnations. The old man replies that he loves flowers, but can't get the full benefit of them because an operation for adenoids left him without a sense of smell.



Chapter 24

Chapter 24 Summary and Analysis

Skeldale House suffers an onslaught of firecrackers in the mail slot, pulled up flowers and general mischief at the hands of Wesley Binks, a 10-year-old who is the town bad boy. Herriot sometimes sees Wesley out fishing with his chums when he should be in school; and on one occasion Wesley removes the grating from the coal cellar at Skeldale House.

Wesley removes the grating on the day of the Darrowby Gala, a day of parades, festivities and general civic merriment. As Herriot strolls in front of Skeldale House with his wife, he steps into the chute once covered by the grating—and slides all the way down to the coal bin. His head and shoulders protrude just above street level, causing finger pointing and much laughter at his expense.

The following week, Wesley brings in his mixed-breed puppy, sick with distemper. Herriot treats him and gives some medicine for home treatment. "As I studied him [Wesley], any aggressive feelings I may have harbored evaporated quickly. The imp of hell appeared on closer examination to be a neglected child. His elbows stuck out through holes in a filthy jersey, his shorts were similarly ragged, but what appalled me most was the sour smell of his unwashed little body. I hadn't thought there were children like this in Darrowby."

Not having the heart to tell a 10-year-old boy that his pet would probably die, Herriot tells Wes that he'll do the best he can for his dog, Duke. Wes replies proudly that he can pay for the vet's services and plunks down three pound six, about the average charge for such a visit. In the next three weeks, Wes goes furiously to work digging gardens, delivering papers, driving animals at the auctions mart—to afford the care for his dog. Duke improves. Herriot puts the matter out of his mind; but the dog gets worse and comes in again. Harriot tells Wes the dog has chorea, and offers to put him to sleep.

Wes digs his knuckles into his eyes, sobs heavily, and then wipes the tears away as Herriot drives off with the body of Duke in the back seat. From that point, Wes returns to his delinquent ways—no jobs, no useful activities. Herriot hears of Wes's further misdemeanors, car thefts and, finally, his disappearance from the district.



Chapter 25

Chapter 25 Summary and Analysis

While castrating pigs on a local farm, Herriot accidentally makes a deep and bloody cut into his own forefinger. He finally stanches the flow of blood and puts a huge white bandage on the finger. Driving off into the night with the finger sticking out from the steering wheel, he peers ahead into the gathering darkness. A couple in a car stopped by the side of the road flags him down and asks him to help with their dog, that has a ball caught in his throat.

Herriot can hear a chorus of wailing children's voices coming from the back seat, "Oh Benny, Benny, Benny!" He quickly pulls the dog onto the pavement and into the beam of the headlights, aware that time is crucial. After probing in the Collie's throat with his finger unsuccessfully, Herriot places his thumbs behind the angle of the lower jaw and pushed. The ball pops out and rolls over the icy road to the curb. The dog's eyes are still glazed, with no breathing. An examination reveals the faintest of heartbeats; Herriot blows down the dog's throat until he begins to breathe again.

They all watch in amazement as the Collie resumes breathing and struggles to his feet. When Herriot struggles to his feet, he realizes they are frozen to the highway pavement. The family pays him, and joyously and gratefully drives off into the night. He later gets a thank you note from the mother that begins: "Dear vet with the bandaged finger."



Chapter 26

Chapter 26 Summary and Analysis

Called to Mr. Bailes' place to see an ailing cow, James Herriot approaches the modest house, preoccupied by what sort of obscure digestive ailment could be causing the ailment. As he nears the house, a huge dog, much larger than the average Collie and probably part Alsatian, leaps out of the garden, barks a loud WOOF and then disappears.

His nerves shattered, Herriot gets the bad news from Mr. Bailes that the cow is still blocked. Realizing that the laxative oil he'd given the cow had proven ineffective, the veterinarian gets his gastric lavage from the car, a long rubber stomach tube through which two gallons of a solution of warm water, salt and formalin. The next day he returns to the farm in a hopeful mood as he walks across the soft summer landscape, absorbing the sights and smells. As he heads to the barn to see Mr. Bailes, Shep makes another of his sneak attacks.

Once again, Shep leaps toward Herriot, lets out a might roar then disappears quickly toward the gate." Shock morphs into despair when he sees that the cow's condition has worsened. He tries the lavage treatment once more, with two pounds of treacle added. When he stops by the next day, the cow has miraculously recovered.

Mr. Bailes says he just galloped the cow around for a while until she improved, on the advice of his postman, Jim Oakley. As he listens to the farmer, Herriot distractedly soils his hands while scratching the cow's tail. He heads for the house to wash and is once again caught unawares by Shep, who leaps at him while shackled to his kennel at the back door. Herriot drags Shep by his chain out of the kennel, screaming and berating him. The big dog rolls on his back and smiles peacefully. When he turns to leave, he realizes that Shep has decided not to attack him again. He realizes that the barking is Shep's hobby, sort of like a boy with a yo-yo.

Later that summer, while driving through the neighborhood, Herriot watches as a tinker approaches the Bailes' home with an armload of pots and pans. Shep lurches, barks, the man shouts, drops his wares and runs off at top speed. Herriot stops at the tinker's shop to tell him Shep is just a big, playful goofball. Herriot realizes that his kamikaze barking is his form of entertainment.



Chapter 27

Chapter 27 Summary and Analysis

Driving home on a dark, wet night at 9 p.m., Herriot decides to stop for a pint of beer at the Fox and Hounds pub. The warmth of the light inside helps to assuage his self-pity that he chose such a rigged profession as veterinary medicine. After a few sips, he notices old Albert Close, a retired shepherd, sitting by the fire with his dog, Mick, under his chair. Herriot says hello to Close. The old dog stirs, opens his eyes briefly, then closes them right away. Pus is caked on the eyelids and streams of discharge flow down from Mick's eyes in dark rivulets.

He shouts at the deaf old man, asking how long Mick's eyes have been in that condition. The old man nods, then answers. Mr. Close says the dog just has a cold; but Herriot protests that it's a serious ailment called entropion that needs treatment. Cowman Ted Dobson raises the pound needed for the surgery, and another friend takes Mick in his van to have the surgery. Herriot feels that putting the dog to sleep for a while would give him a rest from the scratching and discomfort of his eyes.

Ten days later, the men bring Mick back for removal of the sutures. His lashes are clean and dry, and his eyes have the appearance of that of a young puppy. They go with Mick to the pub to celebrate. Herriot buys Mr. Close a drink, and tells him Mick's eyes are much better. Mr. Close toasts Herriot for curing what he still believes is just a cold. Herriot observes that few procedures produce such complete and speedy relief as surgery for entropion — curled inward eyelids — and provide such satisfaction to the veterinarian.



Chapter 28

Chapter 28 Summary and Analysis

A psychopath starts poisoning the dogs of Darrowby, and Herriot is amazed to see seven cases of strychnine poisoning in one week. He asks the local newspaper to run an item, warning people to keep their dogs out of places where they might get poisoned. He also calls the police to ask them to investigate. Sometimes used by farmers to eliminate rodents and other pests, strychnine causes muscle spasms that lead to death. The only possible treatment is barbiturates, to relax the muscles and end the spasms. Still, Herriot notes, there is no guarantee that it can save a life.

In one case of poisoning, Herriot answers a call from a concerned couple about their dog; but actually hears of the animal's death over the phone before he can get dressed to make a call. Johnny Clifford brings his seeing-eye dog, Fergus, into Skeldale House for a checkup. The Alsatian had literally saved Clifford's life when, in his early 20s, he began to go blind. His despair became absolute, until he went to train with Fergus. His love for the dog was obvious.

Then there is a call that Fergus has been poisoned. Herriot races to Clifford's house, and injects the big dog with barbiturates to prevent muscle spasms that can lead to asphyxiation. Because of Fergus' size, he has to double the dose and administer yet another dose. The dog relaxes, and then begins to breathe again. Several times, Fergus shows signs of going into spasm; and Herriot gives him more anesthetic. Sleepless after sitting up with the dog practically all night, Herriot stops by to check on Fergus, now up and walking around, much to Herriot's delight and Clifford's gratitude.

Chapter 29

Chapter 29 Summary and Analysis

At the request of Siegfried, Herriot agrees to take over the veterinary practice of a friend, Stewie Brannan, for two weeks in the small town of Hensfield, close to a heavily industrialized area in Yorkshire County. Brannan, who has a wife and children, barely ekes out a living and has never taken his family on holiday.

The grubby vet clinic is located in the dank industrial heart of Hensfield, where Stewart Brannan ekes out a living caring for the animals of poor people. There is only one of everything: one straight suture needle, one curved suture needle, one pair of scissors, one syringe, and so on. Herriot watches at 5:50 p.m. as Brannan tackles a mixed breed dog with an injured leg, brought in by a couple of school girls. Stewie tells them it's just a sprained shoulder. He tells them to let the dog rest for a couple of days and gives them a liniment. The girls want to pay him sixpence, but he insists on three pence. The bidding goes on until he settles for five pence.

As Herriot tackles running the clinic, his major obstacle is the examination table that has an irritating habit of collapsing whenever an animal is laid out. He is rattled out of his calm when a young couple brings in a dog that has been hit by a car. Its hind leg is hanging by a shred of skin, with the bones of the joint exposed.



Chapter 30

Chapter 30 Summary and Analysis

Smiling Harry Syphilis?

That's what the housekeeper, Mrs. Holroyd, writes in a telephone message to James Herriot as he maintains the veterinary practice of Stewart Brannan in Hensfield. Gingerly he approaches the gruff, cigarette smoking, ash dropping domestic for clarification. She insists she has spelled "syphilis" correctly, and he agrees. "It's just the smiling and the Harry..." he protests. "Well, that's what t'feller said. Repeated it three times. Couldn't make no mistake," she answers.

When Herriot arrives at Mr. Johnson's farm, he leads the vet directly to his pigsty. "It's me pig, guvnor," Johnson says. "Covered wi' big red spots. Reckon it's Swine Erysipelas." In another message, the irascible housekeeper mentions an ailing Bulldog that belongs to a Mr. Piummarov. "Was he a Russian gentleman?" Herriot inquires. "Dunno, luv, never asked 'im," she answers. This puzzle is solved when the dog owner, Mr. Pym, calls back and gives directions to his home in Roff village. "Now you know me," he says to Herriot. "Pym o' Roff."

Meanwhile, Herriot cares for Kim, the Golden Labrador hit by a car that suffers a mangled leg with exposed tibio-tarsal joint. Frantically, he searches for ointments and bandages. As Herriot and the young couple who own the dog lift him onto the examining table, the legs collapse and he slithers to the floor. They right the table; and he cleans and dresses the wound, stitching together tendons, torn joint capsule and fascia. He then covers it in plaster bandages. Herriot suggests they take the dog to their own vet, since they are just traveling through. They respond, they will wait a week to have Herriot check on Kim.

A week later, Herriot again changes the dressing, cleans the wound and reapplies plaster bandages. The young couple, Peter and Marjorie Gillard, will remain for another week to have their dog re-examined.



Chapter 31

Chapter 31 Summary and Analysis

On his last day in Hensfield, managing the practice of fellow veterinarian Stewart Brannan, Herriot has a final visit with Kim, the injured Golden Retriever. Herriot is cheered when the Gillards arrive and Kim walks, albeit with a slight limp, into the clinic. With the help of the couple, he gets the big dog safely onto the crippled exam table. His hopefulness is rewarded when he opens the bandage and finds healthy granulation and healing.

Herriot is delighted to see new flesh healing over the original injury. He removes the old bandage and applies a fresh one, directing the Gillards to see their own veterinarian in two weeks.

Before he leaves, though, Herriot visits the local greyhound track where Brannan had a practice of inspecting the dogs every other Friday. He finds his brush with bookies, serious gamblers and possibly the doping of the dogs very unpleasant; and he is more than happy to return to Darrowby.



Chapter 32

Chapter 32 Summary and Analysis

Mr. Pinkerton, a local farmer, brings his young collie into Skeldale House to see Herriot because, although he's healthy, there's "summat comin' from 'is pencil." Herriot looks at the dog, but can't see anything wrong. The farmer, nervously eyeing the secretary, Miss Harbottle, gently flicks his forefinger in the direction of the dog's underbelly. "It's 'is pencil." Again Herriot looks and sees a small blob of semen on the end of the dog's penis. He points to it. Mr. Pinkerton nods and blushes.

Herriot says the situation is because the dog is 18 months old, has an excellent diet and probably not enough exercise. He recommends cutting back on the dog's food and increasing his exercise. He also gives Mr. Pinkerton some mild sedative to help. Mr. Pinkerton's face continues to register nothing but misery; and Herriot tries once again to explain the situation as they head toward the door. The farmer goes outside a few steps, then turns back to ask: "But Mr. Herriot, 'ow about 'is pencil?"



Chapter 33

Chapter 33 Summary and Analysis

An old pensioner brings his aging mongrel dog into the clinic, walking him on a tattered string. Herriot asks what is the matter. Mr. Bailey says the dog has a chronic cough. After an examination, Herriot agrees that the dog has a chronic cough and gives him an injection, as well as 20 pills. As he hands over the pills, Herriot notices the hole in Mr. Bailey's trousers, and the pink kneecap visible.

Herriot refuses to take money from Mr. Bailey for his services. Gratefully, Mr. Bailey thanks Herriot and ambles out of the clinic. Then Siegfried berates him for giving free medical care, even if the client is an old age pensioner.

About a week later, Mr. Bailey returns and Siegfried gives him an injection. Herriot watches through a side window as they both head for the front door. Siegfried gives Mr. Bailey the same lecture about the cough, and hands the old man 100 of the tablets. When Mr. Bailey asks what the charge is, Siegfried tells Mr. Bailey there is no charge, and to be sure and bring his dog back whenever he needs care. When he notices Mr. Bailey struggling with arthritis, Siegfried even gives him and the dog a ride home.

Herriot says he's fond of this vignette because it illustrates chronic bronchitis in old dogs as well as Siegfried's basic generosity and compassion



Chapter 34

Chapter 34 Summary and Analysis

The importance of companionship in animal relationships becomes apparent in the story of Jingo, a three-year-old, vigorous white Bull Terrier and the aging Corgi, Skipper. They are inseparable, despite the difference in their ages, and Skipper good-naturedly endures the almost constant nibbling and hectoring of the terrier. When James Herriot examines Jingo for a cut caused by an encounter with a barbed wire fence, their master, Jack Sanders, lifts them both to the examination table.

The Corgi was 11 years old and beginning to show his age in stiffness of movement and impairment of sight. The Bull Terrier was only three, at the height of his strength and power. When the ear chewing becomes unbearable, the Corgi simply takes the pup in its mouth and gently moves him away.

When Sanders returns 10 days later with both dogs, he tells Herriot that Jingo has stopped eating and isn't well. Herriot rules out infection, but suspects liver disease. When the ailment continues, he then decides the dog has contracted leptospirosis from rats on the farm. Herriot injects both dogs with an antiviral drug, but Jingo worsens and dies. Skipper becomes morose, then ill. Ruling out leptospirosis, Herriot gives Skipper digitalis for a heart murmur but his condition worsens, and the vet warns Sanders and his wife the Corgi is dying. The childless couple then accepts a Bull Terrier puppy from a neighbor whose bitch has just had a litter.

The decrepit Skipper begins to eat a little, shows an interest in the puppy, and before long is bounding around, bright-eyes and plump, playing with Jingo the Second.



Chapter 35

Chapter 35 Summary and Analysis

Snuggled in the local tavern one night with a pint of ale on his way home from a long day, Herriot hears Seth Pilling telling his friends "that young Herriot's a bloody thick-'ead. The large, red-faced laborer is a self-styled expert on everything—especially dogs. Seth tells his friends he takes his dog to Dennaby Broome, a well-known quack. As Pilling tells his mates, Herriot has something wrong, while tapping his head, the veterinarian rushes from the pub in anger.

A few days later, Herriot encounters Pilling and his Keeshond at a bus stop in town, and stops in his tracks because the dog looks so different. The characteristic ruff and lustrous coat is dull and falling off. Pilling asks Herriot why he's looking at his dog. He replies that the dog has a skin condition. Pilling tells Herriot he's on his way to take the dog to Dennaby Broome. Herriot wishes him well, but continues to notice the animal's decline whenever he sees him on the street.

A while later, Mrs. Pilling (Seth's wife) shows up at Skeldale House with the ailing dog. Herriot tells her the dog has myxoedema, caused by hypothyroidism, and gives her some pills to correct the thyroid condition. Mrs. Pilling, who was known to be ruler of her roost, turns purple with rage and says she'll deal affirmatively with Seth when he gets home.

Herriot encounters Seth with the dog, miraculously and beautifully restored to health and with a fine coat, on the street one day; and Pilling beats a hasty retreat. He then learns that Seth has changed his pub. Mrs. Pilling comes in again to thank Herriot and tells him she'll never forgive Seth for what he did to her dog.



Chapter 36

Chapter 36 Summary and Analysis

Siegfried and Herriot, making the rounds at the weekly farmers' market, notice a little stray dog taking food offerings from people but slipping quickly out of sight whenever anyone gets too close. Next Friday, Siegfried and Herriot are to attend the annual Hunt Ball where socializing with large animal owners is an important aspect of running a veterinary clinic. As they're about to leave, dressed in uncomfortable tuxedos, Herriot gets a call from the police officer who noticed the little dog at the market telling him that he has custody of the stray.

Herriot learns the little dog has been in an accident. He asks Siegfried if he can go look at the dog. His boss reluctantly agrees. Herriot's heart sinks when he sees that the dog's right eye is hanging out of its socket, there is blood all over his mouth, and one of his legs is broken. The sensible thing would be to put the dog to sleep, but Herriot and Siegfried take him to the clinic and work all night to save him—passing over the Hunt Ball.

The police officer offers to take the stray because he's promised his two little daughters they could have a dog. In a few weeks, the dog recovers well enough to have the officer and his two children bring him in for the plaster cast removal.



Chapter 37

Chapter 37 Summary and Analysis

Mrs. Ridge ushers Herriot into her house with a big smile. When she tells him with a big smile that someone has stolen their car, Herriot is puzzled.

Just 10 days previously, Mrs. Ridge had run in tears into Skeldale House to announce that her beloved Cairn Terrier, Joshua, had been run over by a tractor. The injured dog rested on a blanket in the back seat of her car while the veterinarian examined him very gently. Joshua seemed to have survived without internal hemorrhage or broken limbs. An X-ray confirmed a pelvic fracture, for which the only treatment is rest.

When Herriot visits the dog two days after the accident, he finds the dog listless and—worst of all—silent. "Oh, if only he'd bark," Mrs. Ridge says. "Just once! I think it would mean he was getting better." Herriot agrees, examines Joshua again and finds nothing new or notable.

On his current visit, the veterinarian and Mrs. Ridge sit down in the lounge. Herriot says she must be upset about the car theft. She replies not at all. She says she's delighted because, for the first time, Joshua barked.



Chapter 38

Chapter 38 Summary and Analysis

Theo is Paul Cotterell's constant companion at the Drovers' Arms pub where he sits placidly under his master's stool every evening from 8 p.m. until closing time. Theo is what might be called in Yorkshire a pub terrier, Herriot muses, noting that Cotterell is a bachelor in his late 30s with a good education. Herriot admits to a bit of dismay that the young man seems to be wasting his time and life.

When Herriot encounters Cotterell at the pub, he asks the veterinarian to look at Theo's foot because of a limp. Herriot quickly snips off a broken claw. He concludes, because of Cotterell's insouciant mannerisms, that the pub habituy really didn't care about much of anything, including his dog. When Theo starts to lose weight, Herriot gives his owner some worming pills; but he continues to lose weight. A subsequent exam reveals enlarged lymph glands, symptomatic of Hodgkin's disease.

When he learns of Theo's prognosis, Cotterell concludes that putting him to sleep is the humane thing. Herriot agrees. A few days later, Herriot hears that Paul Cotterell has committed suicide because of the loss of his dog, that he had been a longtime sufferer of depression and was under a doctor's care.



Chapter 39

Chapter 39 Summary and Analysis

Haunted by Paul Cotterell's death, Herriot is alarmed when Andrew Vine brings his fox terrier, Digger, into the veterinary clinic because of vision problems. He says that if anything happens to Digger, he'll kill himself. Also a bachelor in his 30s who lives alone, Vine seems a shy, diffident man with a stooped frame and pallid face. An eye exam is inconclusive, although Herriot sees no serious damage to the deeper tissues of his eyes. The veterinarian gives Vine some lotion for Digger's eyes and asks that he return for another exam.

Herriot later observes a dark pigmentation clouding the little dog's eyes, although he still has no clue what the diagnosis is. Herriot treats the eyes with: oxide of mercury, chinosol, zinc sulphide, ichthyol and other measures now considered obsolete; but nothing seems to help. Eventually, Herriot realizes that Digger has pigmentary keratitis and tells Vine his dog will soon go blind. Vine gasps and says he can't face the inevitable, but Herriot tells him he can't take his own life because he must take care of the dog that has cared for him.

A few months later, he encounters Vine with Digger. Both dog and master appear well and happy. Vine thanks Herriot and says taking care of Digger has helped him climb out of the pit of despair, especially with the realization that his dog is not seriously handicapped by his blindness. Herriot is pleased to report a different outcome than the situation with Paul Cotterell.



Chapter 40

Chapter 40 Summary and Analysis

Tristan and Herriot are operating one morning on a swollen ear of Hamish, a Scottish Terrier, when Siegfried enters the clinic and upbraids his younger brother about keeping late hours, drinking and chasing women. Tristan nods in agreement as Siegfried tells him to stay home that evening, study his veterinary books and look after the recovering Hamish until his owner, the retired schoolteacher Miss Westerman, comes to pick him up.

As Herriot starts to leave the clinic, Tristan tells him he plans to bring his girlfriend Lydia into Skeldale House after making a quick read of his veterinary textbooks to keep him company while he watches the dog. Before Herriot can depart, he hears a horrific crashing and groaning sound. During a groping session on the couch, Lydia has fallen out of the window and into the bushes. Angry but unhurt, she storms off. Then the two vets noticed that Hamish has disappeared during the fracas.

Tristan and Herriot run and walk for miles up and down the roads of the village, looking and calling for the escaped dog. Finally, Herriot tells Tristan he must leave and Tristan must face his brother's and Miss Westerman's wrath alone. As he crosses the front porch, he sees Hamish resting peacefully on a rug, and takes the Scotty in the car with him on his evening call.

When Herriot returns, Tristan is an emotional wreck; but he is greatly relieved to see the patient returned. He pulls out his textbooks and pretends to be studying when his older brother returns. A grateful Miss Westerman retrieves her pooch. When he returns, Siegfried tells his brother he's envious that he had a nice quiet evening at home alone.



Chapter 41

Chapter 41 Summary and Analysis

One morning, while driving through the hills above Darrowby, James Herriot approaches a tanned, fit, pleasant man pushing a rusty tram along the frozen roadway with a big "Lurcher," or greyhound cross-breed inside. They smile, nod and say hello. Herriot drives on until he stops at a farm where he has been called to inoculate sheep. He asks about the man with the pram and dog. The farmer tells Herriot the man is Roddy Travers, the dog Jake, his only family.

Roddy is an itinerant laborer who neither drinks nor smokes cigarettes. His face radiates strength and serenity. The farmer's wife tells Herriot that Roddy usually sleeps either in barns or in the open when he is working in the district, only occasionally coming inside. When he next encounters Roddy and Jake on the road, Herriot notices that the dog is walking and stops to chat. Roddy tells Herriot that sometimes the dog likes to walk, sometimes to ride.

Just as Roddy is about to leave town, he appears one evening at Skeldale House with Jake in the pram, worried and anxious. The Lurcher has developed coughing, gasping, fainting spells. The two men lift him onto the examining table where Herriot sees a pebble lodged in his windpipe. Reassuring Roddy that immediate surgery is the only answer, the veterinarian quickly opens his larynx and removes the pebble. Jake has no more fits and heals quickly, then leaves with his owner 10 days later after the sutures are removed. Herriot notes that this was the only instance in his veterinary career when he removed a foreign body from a larynx.



Chapter 42

Chapter 42 Summary and Analysis

Whenever possible, Herriot likes to take his beagle, Sam, for a walk by the river at lunchtime. There he sometimes encounters Mr. Potts, a retired farmer who loves to engage the veterinarian in conversation as his elderly sheepdog, Nip, romps with Sam. Mr. Potts always wants to know what Herriot is doing, which farms he's visiting and what kinds of animal diseases he's combating. On their last encounter, Mr. Potts, wheezing and weak, talks about the time when Herriot, as a new veterinarian, helped a Clydesdale mare foal at his farm.

Mr. Potts asks Herriot whether those weren't good days, and he responds affirmatively. After not seeing him walk his dog for a while, Herriot learns of Mr. Potts' death. He visits Mrs. Potts to express his sympathies and to ask whether he could walk Nip, since the dog wouldn't walk without his master. With her blessings, the three set off for their usual walk by the river, dogs' tails wagging.

Herriot reflects that dogs love a regular routine and to look forward to something, whether a meal or the homecoming of a member of the household. With Nip, it was his daily walk by the river with his master.



Chapter 43

Chapter 43 Summary and Analysis

Herriot meets Judy, the sheepdog, while treating Eric's bullock for wooden tongue, or actinobacillosis, which causes swelling of the tongue, excess salivation and protrusion of the dry tongue out of the mouth. Treatment with injections of sodium iodide in clear water, the preferred therapy, involves a prolonged IV drip. As Herriot rigs up his apparatus Judy comes close, licks the young bull's face then plants herself directly in front of him, eyes fixed on the patient.

Herriot returns in five days, and finds the bullock somewhat improved and able to eat gruel and hay. He sets up another injection of sodium iodide, and Judy once again takes up her position of vigilance. Herriot learns from Eric that Judy also gives every newborn calf a thorough licking over when it's born, as well as kittens. The sheepdog actually prefers to sleep in the straw with the animals instead of her warm kennel. On his third visit for another treatment, a jubilant Judy greets Herriot with a newborn chick in her mouth.

Judy has taken ownership of the chicks and decided they should be lodged in the stable. As soon as Judy deposits one of the chicks in the stable, another runs out; so she is kept constantly in motion trying to herd the baby chickens—which keeps her happy and occupied.



Chapter 44

Chapter 44 Summary and Analysis

James Herriot is awakened at 1 a.m. with the wailing, tearful voice of Humphrey Cobb calling for him to come and see Myrtle, his beagle, who was—according to Cobb—panting, gasping and close to death. When he arrives, Herriot checks out the dog and finds nothing wrong with her; although Cobb obviously feels guilty about having left her alone most of the day while he went gambling on horses. Pressured to do something, Herriot gives the soul-eyed bitch a vitamin tablet and turns to leave when Cobb asks him to share a drink of whisky. As they chat, it becomes obvious that the rotund Mr. Cobb is getting very sentimental, and drunk.

Several times thereafter, Herriot sees Cobb and Myrtle romping in the fields. Whenever they meet, Cobb thanks him profoundly for saving his dog. Then Herriot receives another early-morning call from Cobb, moaning and groaning that his beloved dog is dying. Several times over the course of the next few months, the scenario is repeated—always between midnight and 1 a.m. and always after a day at the races. Herriot always gives the dog vitamins and has a whiskey with Cobb. Herriot concludes he is treating Humphrey, not Myrtle.

When he gets another midnight boo-hoo call, Herriot finally puts his foot down and refuses to come. He tells Cobb there is nothing wrong with his dog and that he should go to bed. Then Herriot lies awake pondering the situation, suddenly coming to the realization the dog—now the mother of a litter of five puppies—has eclampsia, which can prove fatal. He throws his clothes on and races to Cobb's house, where he finds Myrtle in a tetanic spasm, gasping for breath, quivering violently and heavily salivating. He administers an IV drip of calcium, the only known treatment. As Herriot and Cobb have their ceremonial glass of whisky, Myrtle gets up, walks calmly to her litter, then over to the veterinarian to say hello.



Chapter 45

Chapter 45 Summary and Analysis

Anyone who wandered around Darrowby on a Sunday or Monday morning would likely encounter a few men with interesting haircuts, Herriot says. These are the result of discounted trims provided by the barber, Josh Anderson, in the Hare and Pheasant pub. Josh, like most bibulous Yorkshiremen, likes to take a pint or two; but on the weekends his consumption shoots up to 10 or 12. The quality of his haircuts is an indication of his condition when he gives them.

So Herriot explains he only goes for a haircut on weekdays. Each time he goes to the barbershop he quietly endures the yanking and pulling of hair out by the roots, which is always a feature of one of Josh's haircuts. The barber brings down his prized possession — a young bitch of indeterminate lineage, named Venus, and shows her off. Within two weeks, Josh Anderson shows up at Skeldale House with Venus in his arms, frantically explaining that she's choking to death on a chicken bone.

The veterinarian tries to calm the barber, but finds that the dog doesn't like the idea of having her mouth examined. So he sedates Venus, deftly removes the bone from her front teeth, and is joined by his son, Jimmy while he waits for the anesthetic to wear off. When the dog seems to be slipping deeper into her sedation, Herriot becomes concerned and spins her around his head by the hind legs. This is an old-fashioned method of treating drug overdose. Jimmy, of course, laughs and is delighted. A grateful Josh picks up his dog with a sigh of relief.

Next time Herriot is in the barber's chair, he tries to distract himself from the rough clipping and cutting by thinking of his garden. Josh says he likes to garden, and Herriot agrees. Josh says he knew that already, because peoples' thoughts come through their hair while he's cutting it. Herriot tells him his theory is preposterous, but makes a vow never to think about Venus's anesthesia while getting a haircut.



Chapter 46

Chapter 46 Summary and Analysis

Sister Rose, who operates a kind of humane shelter for animals at her home when she isn't nursing sick patients at the hospital, calls Herriot to ask him to come and check on an abandoned dog. Amber is of mixed breed with a trace of hound. Amber has hairless, irritated areas on her paws, around her eyes and her cheeks. At first guessing eczema, Herriot leaves Sister Rose with a box of zinc oxide and lanolin. A few days later, he receives another call from the sister telling him that Amber's condition has worsened. He sniffs her hairless areas and detects an odor characteristic of demodectic mange—a condition that can't be adequately treated and that often results in putting the dog to sleep.

A scraped specimen of skin from the affected areas, viewed under the microscope, confirms the diagnosis. Herriot tries to be upbeat and vows to try everything in the book to cure the mite infection. A different medication does nothing to arrest the spread of the skin condition, Herriot visits Amber again and tells Sister Rose he's determined to take her home and give her regular attention. He made a kennel for Amber in the barn, and each night in the headlights of his car he applied creams, ointments, drugs and shampoos—to no avail. Finally, he calls Sister Rose and tells her he's failed and must put the dog to sleep.

As he watches Amber sink into the sleep of death, his heart is blackened with grief. Herriot ends with the admission that he has carried a weight around for many years, because Amber was born before the advent of effective drugs to cure demodectic mange.



Chapter 47

Chapter 47 Summary and Analysis

A paralyzed man with a paralyzed dog. That's what Herriot encounters when he arrives at the home of Ron Cundall and his wife. Cundall was paralyzed from the waist down and suffered internal organ damage from a mining collapse. However the cause of the Dachshund, Hermann's ailment was a mystery. Herriot tells the bedridden man and his doting wife that the paralyzed rear legs could be caused by anything from an injury to degenerative spinal disease. The low-slung dog might even have slipped under the fence, run into the road and been hit by a car, Herriot speculates.

The veterinarian and the paralyzed miner share a couple of bottles of ale and exchange philosophies. Ron says he got a broken back, crushed liver and other internal injuries but is fortunate to have a wonderful wife and dog.

An X-ray of Hermann reveals no spinal fracture, but suggests a possible disk protrusion. When Herriot returns, he finds that the Cundalls have been giving the dog a bogus quack remedy, which he encourages them to continue using. Although he knows it won't help, it can't hurt. On another visit, he finds the little Dachshund jotting merrily about, fully healed through a rare spontaneous recovery. Herriot enjoys a pint of ale with the couple, although he knows he had little to do with the dog's recovery.



Chapter 48

Chapter 48 Summary and Analysis

While tending to the cattle at Jack Scott's farm, Herriot meets the happy sheepdog, Rip, who delights in the companionship of Scott and his children who accompany their father even on veterinary visits. While irrigating a cow's uterus and treating a bullock's infection, Herriot notices Rip's tail swishing back and forth. Scott asks him to check on his dog's lameness. The right foreleg trails limply whenever Rip walks.

Learning that the limp developed after Rip was kicked in the chest by a cow, Herriot diagnoses radial paralysis because one of the nerves of the leg passes over the rib cage. He tells Scott there is no treatment for a nerve injury, although it could heal within weeks or months. Then one Sunday morning Scott appears at Skeldale House with Rip in his arms. Scott reports ruefully that Rip has been run over and gotten a broken leg, on the same side.

Herriot wraps the broken leg in a plaster cast. When he removes it six weeks later there has been no healing of the joint. Calling for Siegfried to look at the injury, Herriot decides to re-plaster the limb. When the second plaster is removed, the fracture still has not healed. Disappointed, Jack Scott nevertheless refuses to put Rip down.

Six weeks later, Herriot is called to the Scott farm to see a sick calf and sees Rip running around, herding in the cows for milking. He merely skims the earth with his right limbs, but somehow manages to maintain a graceful balance and quick movement. Herriot reflects that Jack Scott is the only farmer he knows who resolutely refused to have any animal put down; and Rip was the only dog who could run about despite two useless legs on one side.



Chapter 49

Chapter 49 Summary and Analysis

As much as he loves animals—especially dogs—Herriot says there are some dogs that are just unlovable. Such were Ruffles and Muffles, a pair of white West Highland terriers belonging to Mr. and Mrs. Whithorn. Invariably, whenever Herriot visits their home to see the dogs, he is met at the door by both dogs putting their paws on his trousers and scratching his shins, usually painfully, through his trouser legs. On one visit, he examines Ruffles' left front paw where, Mrs. Whithorn says, the dear dog is in pain.

Finding only a small cyst that really doesn't require a home visit by a vet, Herriot tells the indulgent Whithorns to bathe the paw in hot water until the cyst breaks. With some difficulty, Herriot fends off snapping teeth to examine both dogs. As he leaves, he receives the usual bites on his heels as he goes out the door, to the amusement of the Whithorns. When he discusses the situation with Siegfried, his boss says the dogs' behavior results from too much coddling by their owners. Dogs need to be obedient for their own good.

Not long afterwards, both Westies die; but the Whithorns immediately replace them with another pair of white West Highlanders. When Mr. Whithorn brings them into Skeldale House for an examination, he learns they have also been named Ruffles and Muffles and that they have already begun to demonstrate some of the same obnoxious biting and scratching. When he examines Ruffles' ear, the dog growls then turns suddenly and sinks his teeth into the ball of his master's thumb. He hangs on while his teeth grind deep. Whithorn lets out a scream before extricating himself. "You rotten little bugger!" he shouts, dancing around the room, holding his injured hand.

Herriot ponders why some owners always have friendly dogs and others nasty ones. He concludes that it isn't always the spoiled dogs that turn out nasty.



Chapter 50

Chapter 50 Summary and Analysis

Brandy is a big, lovable golden Labrador with a peculiar habit of getting his tongue stuck in tin cans after inserting it to lap any remaining food flavors. Mrs. Westby, apologetic for calling the vet once again for this recurrent problem, tried to scold her dog; but she ended up smiling at Brandy's good-natured affection. While visiting, Herriot is amazed at Brandy's unique way of stealthily positioning himself near Mrs. Westby in an effort to jump up on her knees. This is because she's wearing the same blue jeans he once jumped onto when he was a puppy.

After an afternoon spent jumping into the river with a gang of local children, Brandy develops pneumonia, which Herriot treats with penicillin. When he doesn't respond, Herriot asks Mrs. Westby to make him a "pneumonia jacket" out of a wool blanket, with holes for his feet, and tries giving Brandy sulfa drugs, which also do not clear the infection. Sadly, Herriot faces the conclusion that Brandy is going to die.

One night Mrs. Westby appears at Skeldale House with Brandy in tow, and a soup can stuck on his tongue. He's breathing heavier and healthier than ever. After Herriot removes the can he realizes that the dog has recovered. "Vis medicatrix naturae," he tells Mrs. Westby. "The healing power of nature."



Characters

James Herriot

Siegfried Farnon

Tristan Farnon

Helen Alderson

Granville Bennett

Mrs. Donovan

Stewie Brannan

Wesley Binks

Paul Cotterell

Seth Pilling



Objects/Places

Skeldale House

This is the old house in Darrowby where James Herriot practices veterinary medicine with Siegfried and Tristan Farnon. In the early days of his marriage to Helen, Herriot shares an upstairs apartment in Skeldale House with his new bride.

Yorkshire County

The county is in Northern England where Darrowby is located, a rural area far enough from London to have its own distinct character and dialect.

Glasgow

Glasgow is the capitol of Scotland where James Herriot was raised and where he had many happy experiences with dogs.

Hartington

This town is not far from Darrowby, and is where the successful and popular veterinarian, Granville Bennett, operates a modern animal clinic.

The Darrowby Show

Siegfried encourages Herriot to serve as official veterinarian at this annual event, telling him it's just a walk in the park. Herriot becomes embroiled in nasty feuds with competing farmers and spends the day trying to impose some order on this chaotic rural exposition.

Hensfield

This is an industrial town northwest of Darrowby where James Herriot goes on locum tenens to relieve fellow veterinarian, Stewie Brannan.

Strychnine

This is a poison commonly used by farmers to control pests, such as rats. In one story, Herriot is extremely distressed to find that a deranged person is using strychnine to poison dogs.



Drovers' Arms

Drovers' Arms is a popular pub in Darrowby where Herriot stops occasionally for a beer and socializing.

Fox and Hound

This is another popular pub in Darrowby where Herriot stops occasionally for a beer and socializing.

Hare and Pheasant

This is yet a third popular pub in Darrowby where Herriot stops occasionally for a beer and socializing.



Themes

Human/animal interdependence

Throughout this collection of stories — some humorous, some heart-warming, some tragic and some bizarre — runs the constant theme of human and animal interdependence. The farmers, who make up the bulk of the Darrowby veterinary practice, obviously have a significant financial investment in their large animals and depend on them for their livelihood. The farm animals depend on the farmers for their healthy existence; and both depend upon the veterinarians to maintain their health, just as the veterinarians earn their living caring the sheep, horses, goats, pigs and cows.

Yet the human relationship with dogs is even closer and less dependent overtly on economics. The dogs in all of Herriot's stories give their affection unconditionally to humans; and most of the humans reciprocate in a way that is different than caring for their farm animals. Herriot tells of the rich old woman who has invested her dog with human characteristics, including writing letters to the editor and selecting Christmas gifts. The only instance in which a dog owner seems only casually involved with his pet proves to be a facade as the young bachelor commits suicide after his dog dies. There is also a young tough, who seems headed for juvenile hall, but who temporarily turns around when given a dog to care for.

These stories demonstrate, not only the amazing capacity for canines to care about humans (even when they are treated badly), but also their intelligence, loyalty, sense of play and attachment to the simple routines of daily life. One sometimes wonders, as in the case of the shady characters who exploit and bet on racing dogs at the local track, whether humans are worthy of the kind of affection dogs offer. Herriot seems to express the view that dogs are happiest when with a stable master and in a home where their needs for nourishment, exercise and affection are met consistently. His advice to those who love dogs, and lose one, is to go right out and find another dog.

British tolerance of eccentrics

As Herriot notes in several places in the book, many of the "characters" in his narrative have since died; and Darrowby has become more homogenized with the advent of television and other culturally leveling influences. The British are known both for their eccentrics and their tolerance of those who are slightly different. In these stories, we meet Mrs. Pumphrey, a wealthy widow who treats her Pekinese like a person. This alone is nothing unusual, but she even credits him with writing letters to the editor and selecting Christmas presents. Mrs. Donovan practices veterinary medicine without a license, or even an invitation in many cases, going around Darrowby dispensing lotions, potions, shampoos, ointments and advice. This quack has her followers; but when her dog is sick and dying, she comes to James Herriot for veterinary care. Charitably, he refers to Mrs. Donovan as "an amateur healer."



Granville Bennett, a highly successful and flamboyant veterinarian who operates in the nearby town of Hartington, proves helpful to Herriot. This is despite his inflated sense of self, his over-eating and over-drinking habits. Then there's the perverse Mrs. Cook, who tries to tell Herriot her real name isn't Cook. He misunderstands it as Booby. She again corrects him, telling Herriot her name is Dooley. She then denies that, and says her name is "Miss." Mr. Pinkerton is a retired man who brings his farm collie in for a problem with his "pencil," and who can only gesture indirectly to show what organ of the body he means. Mrs. Ridge is so delighted when her dog finally begins to bark after an illness, that the dog barking is more important than the thieves driving off in her car. In each of these cases, Herriot writes about these people vividly and with a great amount of acceptance, perhaps even celebration, of their individuality.

Changes in veterinary medicine

Throughout the book, there are numerous instances where Herriot interjects his frustration in treating dogs or other animals with the tools and drugs available to him many years earlier, before the advent of super-antibiotics and other life saving therapies. Almost apologetically, he describes a treatment, drug or procedure only to remind that times have changed for the better, and to express a wish that he'd had the modern treatment available earlier. In describing his discovery that anesthetizing a dog to give it a rest from intestinal contractions caused by inflammation, Herriot muses: "Fleming discovered penicillin by accident and on a much smaller scale many vets in practice stumble on things which are of inestimable value to them in their work. My own priceless find was that relief from pain can aid an animal's recovery to a magical extent and I have used it for over 40 years. When the pain disappears, so does the fear. A sick animal doesn't know what has happened to it and the unknown is terrifying."

In the case of Amber, a dog with a terrible type of mange who had to be euthanized, Herriot writes of his sense of guilt when he realizes that better, more effective treatments exist today that would have saved the dog's life. Even the so-called wonder drugs that have helped humans are not always as effective on dogs. "Thirty years [after treating a dog for pneumonia] it is still the same," Herriot writes. "Even with the all the armoury of antibiotics which followed penicillin—streptomycin, the tetracyclines and synthetics, and the new non-antibiotic drugs and steroids—I still hate to see pneumonia in a dog."

Style

Perspective

The perspective of these stories is that of an outsider to Yorkshire County who quickly comes to know and love the people and their animals. Herriot's natural distance from his subjects, which befits a medical practitioner, permits him to see many humorous and tragic situations that might not be so apparent to people who'd spent their entire lives in Darrowby. His perspective is at once objective and subjective, since his warmth for the subjects he writes about is apparent. Herriot accords the subjects of his stories the same respect that he would show toward his animal patients. The humorous or merely bizarre episodes recounted in the book are truly shared in a spirit of "laughing with" rather than "laughing at" the actors.

The author's extensive and accurate transcription of the Yorkshire dialect makes the stories come alive, although some readers may have to ponder over that speech a few moments before grasping it. Herriot's empathy for his characters is evident in such tales as "Wes," where he writes about a troubled young man who has developed a pattern of disrespect and destructiveness directed toward adults. When Wes gets a dog to care for, his behavior completely changes to that of a caring, loving person. When he loses the dog, Wes returns to his delinquent ways. Herriot's perspective seems an ironic one, complete with empathy for the boy's difficult life and disappointment that he could not have stayed on his new course of behavior. Throughout, Herriot maintains the perspectives of a student, a pupil, the people and animals of Yorkshire County.

Tone

"Dog Stories" has a tone that is ironically humorous at times, joyful at others. Sometimes it is even angry, as when the author writes about people who abandon or mistreat a pet or other animal. The general tone is somewhat folksy, somewhat scientific, and always anecdotal. The reader quickly apprehends that these stories, ostensibly about animals, are also very much about the people who own and live with animals.

He finds as many humorous and puzzling quirks in dog owners, as he does in the dogs themselves. The tone is somewhat like that employed by the personalities of Darrowby, as Herriot describes them, when gathered for a pint in one of several pubs. The farmers delight in telling stories, both as a kind of community intelligence, but also as a form of entertainment. It is in this spirit of good-natured story telling that Herriot creates his narratives. Compassion pervades the author's tone, as when he expresses his irritation with Mrs. Donovan for going about the community offering useless quack remedies to dog owners and interfering with his practice. Herriot demonstrates his capacity to suspend judgment and realizes that Mrs. Donovan knows the difference between her nostrums and real veterinary medicine and may be posturing as a healer to satisfy her



own needs for approval. The overall tone is one of wonderment, surprise and delight at the ever-shifting challenges and adventures faced by a country vet in a small English farming community.

Structure

Structure of these stories is a loose collection of memories from a lifetime of practicing veterinary medicine in a small, rural community in Northern England. Although there is no clearly chronological narrative, many of the characters appear in several stories. Some episodes even span more than one story. This gives the reader an integrated sense of the community, its inhabitants and what it must have been like to practice veterinary medicine in Darrowby 70 years ago. Because of the many interlocking and intersecting stories, the reader experiences a sense of deeper immersion in the community of Darrowby.

The interwoven narrative structure helps to provide a forward momentum and to unify what would otherwise be merely a loose collection of anecdotes. The reader needs to finish one chapter and jump into the next to see what the results of previous chapters will be. In other words, the carefully structured narrative is a real page-turner, filled with living people and their dogs in a rich context of intersecting lives and fates. Although Tristan and Siegfried Farnon make only occasional appearances in the book, their importance to Herriot's life is obvious. This becomes an important thread in the structure providing the reader with a strong sense of who these very real people were, and are. The reader is introduced to the stories by meeting the highly eccentric Mrs. Pumphrey and her Pekinese Tricky-Woo; and the book ends with the Story of Brandy, the dog who developed a seemingly incurable case of pneumonia but experienced a spontaneous recovery. The author's resilient style of writing makes both stories plausible and logical within the context of the book. Every other story in between fits like carefully arranged rocks into one of the walls built by the Yorkshiremen who appear in "Dog Stories."



Quotes

"She could talk at length on the ailments of small animals and she had a whole armory of medicines and remedies at her command, her two specialties being her miracle working condition powders and a dog shampoo of unprecedented value for improving the coat. She had an uncanny ability to sniff out a sick animal, and it was not uncommon when I was on my rounds to find Mrs. Donovan's dark gypsy face poised intently over what I had thought was my patient while she administered calf's foot jelly or one of her own patent nostrums."

Chapter 10, pg 58)

"That night marked the birth not only of Susie's new family but of my whole married life, because up till then everything had gone wrong in my courtship of Helen. From that time on my course was set for the most important of all things, and as I look back over nearly 45 years of our life together I am thankful for the happy fate which worked for me at the Daffodil Ball." (Chapter 12, pg 87)

"So that was it. He had been dumped. Some time ago the humans he had loved and trusted had opened their car door, hurled him out into an unknown world and driven merrily away. I began to feel sick—physically sick—and a murderous rage flowed through me. Had they laughed, I wondered, these people, at the idea of the bewildered creature toiling vainly behind them?" (Chapter 16, pg 121)

"I walked along the water's edge watching the little fish darting and flitting in the cool depths. In the spring these banks were bright with primroses and in May a great sea of bluebells flowed among the trees but today, though the sky was an untroubled blue, the clean air was touched with the sweetness of the dying year. I climbed a little way up the hillside and sat down among the bracken now fast turning to bronze. The far side of the valley rose steeply to where, above the gleaming ridge of limestone cliffs, I could just see the sunlit rim of the moor." (Chapter 22, pg 183)

"Classical canine distemper is so easy to diagnose, but there is never any satisfaction in doing so." (Chapter 24, pg 199)

"I began to work on the dog with all I had. And out there in the darkness of that lonely road it wasn't much. No stimulant injections, no oxygen cylinders or intertracheal tubes. I depressed his chest with my palms every three seconds in the old-fashioned way, willing the dog to breathe as the eyes still stared at nothing. Every now and then I blew desperately down the throat or probed between the ribs for that almost imperceptible beat." (Chapter 25, pg 209)

"I have no time for people who lose their temper with animals but something snapped in my mind then. All my frustration burst from me in a torrent of incoherent shouts and I grabbed the chain and began to pull on it frenziedly. That dog which had tortured me



was there in that kennel. For once I knew where to get at him and this time I was going to have the matter out with him." (Chapter 26, pg 216)

"I never said a word as I cleaned and disinfected the area, puffed iodoform into every crevice and began to stitch, I stitched interminably, pulling together shattered tendons, torn joint capsule and fascia. It was a warm morning and as the sun beat on the surgery window the sweat broke out on my forehead." (Chapter 30, pg 250)

"I knew it even before I pulled the curtains apart. The smell of doom was everywhere, filling the premises, and when I went through the curtains it hit me: the sickening stink of putrefaction. Gangrene. It was the fear which had haunted me all week and now it was realized." (Chapter 30, pg 254)

"I ran out and jumped into my car. And as I drove to the edge of the town where the Sanders lived my heart thudded and panicky thoughts jostled around in my mind. How could he have got the infection? I had little faith in the serum as a cure but as a prevention, I felt it was safe. I had even given him a second shot to make sure. The idea of these people losing both their dogs was bad enough, but I couldn't bear the thought that the second one might be my fault." (Chapter 34, pg 279)

"Hodgkin's disease. For a few moments I was oblivious of the shouting and laughter, the muffled blare of music. Then I looked at Paul who was regarding me calmly as he puffed his pipe. How could I tell him in these surroundings? He would ask me what Hodgkin's disease was and I would have to explain that it was a cancer of the lymphatic system and that his dog was surely going to die." (Chapter 38, pg 312)

"His face held a curious fixity of expression. He put his pipe in his mouth, but it had gone out so he stuffed it into his pocket. Then he leaned forward and patted his dog once on the head. The bushy face with the funny shock of hair round the muzzle turned to him and for a few seconds they looked at each other. Then, "Goodbye old chap," he muttered, and strode quickly from the room. (Chapter 38, pg 313)



Topics for Discussion

How does James Herriot's attitude toward the people of Darrowby change throughout the course of the book?

What is the attitude of the people of Darrowby when Herriot arrives, as a new member of the established veterinary practice at Skeldale House?

What is the attitude of Siegfried and Tristan Farnon toward small animal veterinary practice? How does Bennett Granville challenge that attitude?

In several places throughout the book, Herriot expresses his frank appreciation for various attractive women besides his wife, Helen. Does this fact enhance or detract from the narrative?

What is the reader to make of the drinking and late-night behavior of Tristan? Immature fun or perhaps an omen of serious trouble ahead?

How does Herriot handle his anger and frustration as a veterinarian? Does he always maintain his professional detachment?

In general, how do the people of Darrowby feel about their animals, especially their dogs?