

Fleet

The wind whistled loudly over the bleak Yorkshire moors. The temperature was below freezing and the skies were leaden. As usual, whenever he was not at school, Billy accompanied his father out onto the fields to work with the sheep.

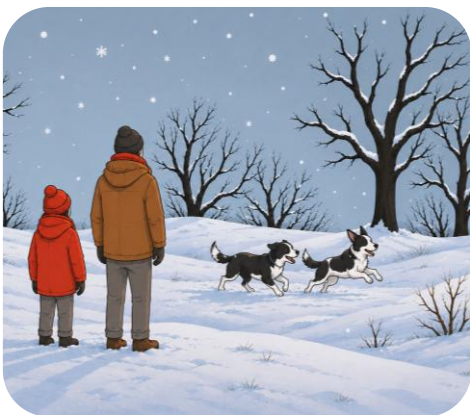
The sheepdogs, Ben and Tess, were scurrying around obeying the whistles of Billy's father. They listened carefully and watched their master intently, waiting all the time for their next instruction. Despite the weather, Billy loved to watch the dogs work. They moved the sheep calmly and without fuss with only a few whistles and hand signals to guide them.

Both Tess and Ben were traditional sheepdogs, black and white border collies, and they were brother and sister, aged about four years old. A few weeks earlier, Billy's dad had commented that he should start to plan for the future. He thought that he should get another dog soon and start to train it so that if either of his dogs were ever injured or ill, there would be a replacement ready. The new dog could also help out more as the dogs got older.



Later that evening, sitting snugly indoors around the roaring log fire, Billy gave his father's words some thought. He wondered wistfully whether his father would let him have his own sheepdog to train. Maybe he could even enter some sheepdog trials where he could compete against other dog handlers and shepherds. However, when Billy voiced his ideas, his hopes were soon dashed!

His father said, "I think that'll be a great idea in few years time, Billy, but you're still so young. No-one as young as nine years old has ever competed in the local shows."



So, Billy was resigned to a long wait. As Christmas approached, the weather grew cold and became harsh once again. Snow lay thick on the fields, but Billy still went with his father every day to watch the dogs at work. He learned a lot by just watching quietly and he began to realise how intelligent Ben and Tess really were.

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A few weeks later, Christmas morning dawned crisp and bright. As usual, Billy was really excited to receive lots of lovely presents in his stocking and he even found some more under the twinkling Christmas tree! At breakfast, Billy's father asked if he would give him a hand in the barn with a poorly lamb after they had finished eating. Billy agreed reluctantly; he had been hoping to try out his new computer game.

As he approached the barn, Billy heard a strange sound that he could not identify. He went inside. As he peered through the gloom, he could make out his father clutching a wriggly sheepdog puppy with a black patch over one eye!

"Surprise!" Billy's dad said. "I changed my mind after seeing how keen you are on training a dog and working with the sheep. This is your very own puppy. His name is Fleet and you must take complete responsibility for him and become his master."



Billy was overjoyed and picked up the puppy who licked his face with enthusiasm! "I won't let you down, Dad. Fleet will be a champion one day!" He really hoped that his prediction would come true.

As weeks turned to months, Fleet steadily grew and so his training began. With a little help from his father, Billy spent hours and hours practising with Fleet and the sheep until he was as good as – maybe even better than – Tess and Ben. Fleet was Billy's constant companion and they were rarely apart.

The following year, Billy decided the time had come to fulfil his Christmas promise and he entered a local sheepdog competition. On the day, Billy was petrified with nerves, but Fleet performed to perfection, achieving a clear round and winning his first ever competition!

"I am really proud of you, son," Billy's dad whispered as he gave him a hug.

Billy whispered back, "Thanks for the best Christmas present ever!"

Fleet admired his new red rosette.



Fleet

1. Why did Billy enjoy watching the sheepdogs at work?

2. What made Billy start to think about training his own dog?

3. Why did Billy’s father say no to his idea at first?

4. How did Billy feel about this refusal?

5. What made Billy’s father change his mind about getting a puppy for Billy?

6. Write down three adjectives which describe Fleet.

7. Did Billy have any idea that he was getting a puppy? How do you know?

8. Which word in the text shows how Billy felt about receiving Fleet?

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9. How did Billy decide to pay back his father for giving him such a special Christmas present?

10. How do you know that Billy and Fleet’s win was unusually good?

11. What would you like as a special present? Why?

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Comprehension

1. He loved how calm the dogs were when they worked and how clever they were.
2. When his father spoke about getting a new dog.
3. He thought Billy was too young to train a dog.
4. Really upset at first, then resigned to the idea.
5. He saw his son out in all weathers eager to watch and learn.
6. Wiggly, lively, excitable, soft, cuddly, hard-working.
7. No, his father had hidden the surprise.
8. Overjoyed.
9. He decided to work really hard and train Fleet to win sheepdog competitions.
10. Billy's father had said that no-one as young as Billy had ever entered the competition.
11. Personal response.

Vocabulary 1

bleak: dull, dark

leaden: grey, looking like metal

accompanied: joined by, with

scurrying: rushing, hurrying along

intently: earnestly, with concentration

commented: spoke, expressing an opinion

snugly: cosily, comfortably

petrified: astonished with emotion, scared

wistfully: wishing or yearning with sadness

dashed: defeated

resigned: give up

dawned: at the first light of the day

reluctantly: agree to do something but you don't really want to

gloom: darkness

prediction: guess as to what will happen in the future

Vocabulary 2

1. quickly

2. happily

3. slowly

Answers

Year 1 Mastery/Year 2 Secure/Year 3 Emerging (Gold)