

RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS

Shu-Li and Diego

Grades 2 - 4

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1. Story Summary

Mr. Simpson must go for a hospital operation, so he asks Shu-Li to look after his dog Baxter. Shu-Li's mother won't allow it until classmate Diego, who owned but lost a dog previously, offers to help. The dog causes trouble between Shu-Li and her best friend Tamara, who fears dogs. When Baxter runs off, Shu-Li and Diego try to find him and fear giving Mr. Simpson the bad news. If his parents find out about this second lost dog, then Diego worries he won't ever get a new dog. Luckily, Diego's artistic sketch of Baxter catches the eye of a reporter, who puts the drawing in the city newspaper. This leads to Baxter's return. In the end, Shu-Li and Diego both confess how they failed to tell the truth about Baxter.

2. Themes of the Story

Keeping Friends. Children want and need friends. Over time, it isn't always easy to keep friends when changes happen and new faces appear.

Responsibility. Being responsible is about doing the right thing. Sometimes it is hard to know what the right thing is. For example, in this story, a question for Shu-Li and Diego is, "Should you tell bad news to a sick man right away?"

Being Afraid. When children are afraid of things, they should talk about them. That lets other people help them. Tamara is afraid of dogs. Diego worries his parents won't get him another dog. Shu-Li is afraid to disappoint Mr. Simpson in losing his dog.

Telling Lies. In this story, Shu-Li and Diego thought they had good reasons not to tell the truth to adults. But at the end, they both felt better telling the truth.

3. Comprehension: Questions and Answers

3.1 Why didn't Ma want to let Shu-li take care of Baxter?

Shu-li had too much homework.
Shu-li had to help in the deli.
Shu-li didn't know anything about dogs.

3.2 Why did Mr. Simpson ask Shu-li to take care of Baxter?

Mr. Simpson had to go into the hospital for an operation.
Mrs. Rossi was supposed to take care of Baxter, but she had to go to Toronto.
It was too late for Mr. Simpson to find anyone else.
He believed Shu-li could handle taking care of Baxter.

3.3 When Shu-Li and Diego took Baxter out for the first time, Shu-Li didn't have a good time. Why?

Diego knew more about taking care of a dog than she did.
She had to pick up Baxter's poop.
When Shu-Li let Baxter off the leash, they got in trouble with Constable Rooney.
The Nah-Nah girls made fun of Shu-Li and Diego because of the broken flowers.
Baxter dragged Shu-Li away, so she wasn't able to talk to Tamara.

3.4 When Shu-Li and Diego went to visit Mr. Simpson in the hospital, how did Baxter slow down the trip?

On the street, Baxter sat down and refused to move until Diego scratched behind the dog's ear.
On the street, Baxter got thirsty, and needed water to drink.
Inside the hospital, Baxter broke free and went chasing after another dog.

3.5 Why did Shu-Li decide to ask Tamara to help walk Baxter?

Shu-Li missed her best friend Tamara.
Shu-Li had been too busy walking Baxter to have time for Tamara.
Shu-Li wanted Tamara to be her friend again and to help with chores at the deli.
Shu-Li thought it was a way to help Tamara lose her fear of dogs.

3.6 On that rainy Monday, what bad things happened to Shu-Li and Diego?

In the morning, both Shu-Li and Diego were late for school because Baxter soaked them after his walk.

Shu-Li: None of Shu-Li's classmates could tell what she had drawn.

Shu-Li: Mr. Ortega said Shu-Li had not done the homework correctly.

Diego: Tamara called Diego a liar.

Shu-Li: Tamara refused to talk to Shu-Li.

Shu-Li: After school, Shu-Li had to walk Baxter by herself.

Diego: Baxter ran away when Diego was trying to dry him.

Shu-Li and Diego couldn't find Baxter.

3.7 How did the pet store owner Mr. Kogawa help Shu-Li and Diego?

He phoned the SPCA shelter (Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) to see if anyone had brought in Baxter.

He phoned Mr. Simpson's hospital to see if Baxter had gone there.

He gave Shu-Li and Diego the phone number for the newspaper, where they could run an ad for a lost dog.

He gave Diego paper and pencil crayons to draw a picture of Baxter.

He made photocopies of Baxter's picture, so Shu-Li and Diego could put them up all over the neighbourhood.

3.8 On Tuesday, the day after Baxter went missing, what bad things happened to Shu-Li?

Mr. Ortega caught her when she wasn't paying attention.

Shu-Li saw Tamara with the Nah-Nah girls, so she thought she had lost her best friend.

She couldn't find Diego, and it looked as if she would have to go by herself to tell Mr. Simpson that his dog was missing.

Shu-Li's father made it clear she had to tell Mr. Simpson about the missing dog.

3.9 Why didn't Shu-Li tell Mr. Simpson his dog had run away?

She was afraid the news might make him sicker.

She was afraid that Mr. Simpson would tell Diego's father that Baxter had run away. Then Diego would never get another dog.

She was afraid to disappoint Mr. Simpson, who had believed Shu-Li could handle Baxter.

3.10 How do we know that Tamara is a good friend of Shu-Li's?

Tamara offered to help Shu-Li find Baxter.

Tamara went with Shu-Li to the hospital to see Mr. Simpson.

When Shu-Li didn't tell Mr. Simpson about Baxter, Tamara helped keep Shu-Li's secret.

3.11 How is Diego's talent at art important to this story?

It let him show the class that he was proud of his father, a doctor.

It let him and Shu-li make the poster that they put up to look for Baxter.

A reporter saw the high quality of his drawing, and put it on the front page of the newspaper, which let the entire city know that Baxter is lost.

If Diego couldn't draw well, then he and Shu-Li may never have found Baxter.

4 Activities

4.1 Activities: Writing

4.1.1 You are Shu-Li or Diego. Write an email to Mr. Simpson, who is still in the hospital, explaining how Baxter ran away and what you are doing to find him.

4.1.2 You are Shu-Li's father or mother. Write a letter to your sister telling what Shu-Li learned from taking care of Baxter the dog.

4.1.3 You are the reporter who saw the poster of Baxter that Shu-Li and Diego put up. Write a short newspaper article telling why you decided to submit the drawing to the chief editor for publication.

4.1.4 You are Baxter. Write the missing part of this story. Tell what happened to you after you ran away from Diego, up to the time when the Danani family took you inside.

4.2 Individual Activities

4.2.1 Do the assignment that Mr. Ortega gave his class. Draw someone at work, someone that you know.

4.2.2 You are Shu-Li or Diego. Draw the poster you will put up to find Baxter.

4.2.3. Make a list of things you would put into a basket to take to cheer up someone 60 years old in the hospital. The gifts can be store-bought or home-made.

5. Discussion Activities

5.1. If you were Shu-Li would you have told Mr. Simpson that Baxter had gone missing? Why or why not?

5.2 Was Tamara right to get mad at Shu-Li? Why or why not?