

**Minnesota Storytime
Reading Guide**

Title: *The Best Pet of All*
Author/Illustrator: David LaRochelle/Hanako Wakiyama

**Publisher and
Copyright Date:** Dutton Children's Books, 2004

**Connection to
Minnesota:** Minnesota author

Summary: This is a story about a boy whose mother won't let him get a dog—until she discovers that a dog would make a far better pet than a loud, messy, disobedient dragon.

Suggested ages: 4-6, 7-10

Tips for Reading:

- Notice that the language has a repetitive structure that builds from page to page. Think about how you will read each group of pages.
- Be sure that the children can see the pictures—large groups may have trouble seeing the details, and the picture of the dragon and the boy exchanging the thumbs-up sign adds a layer of meaning to the story.
- Ask Questions as you read—for example, before you read about the boy looking for a dragon, ask: "Where would you look for a dragon?"

**Questions before
reading?**

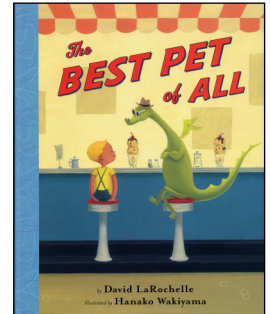
- Do you have a pet?
- What kinds of animals make good pets? (Does an alligator make a good pet? Does a cat make a good pet?)

**To introduce this
story say:**

This story is called *The Best Pet of All*, by David LaRochelle. It is about a boy who gets a dragon for a pet, but who really wants a dog. Let's see what the best pet of all turns out to be....

**Questions after
Reading:**

- Would you rather have a dragon or a dog for a pet? Why?
- The dragon was a badly behaved pet. Do your pets ever do things you wish they wouldn't?



RELATED ACTIVITIES

- Art:**
- Draw a picture of your pet, or the pet you would like to have.
- Language:**
- Read the poem “Mother Doesn’t Want a Dog” by Judith Viorst (from *If I Were in Charge of the World and Other Worries.....*)
- Math:**
- Make a graph of the different kinds of pets children have and how many pets they have.
- Music:**
- If you can find a functioning turntable and records, spin some tunes and have your own dragon dance party. Sing “Puff the Magic Dragon” and “How Much is That Doggie in the Window?”
- Science:**
- Talk about the different needs different pets have and the responsibilities pet owners have.
- Other:**
- Take a field trip to a pet store to see the variety of pets. Or, ask an animal specialist (veterinarian/zoologist/etc.) to visit you.
 - The pets in this story don’t have names. Talk about what you would name them. Make a list, alphabetize it, and/or vote on the best name.
- Suggestions for English Language Learners:**
- Discuss the different kinds of pets people have in other countries. For example, in Japan, people keep birds and crickets as pets, and animals are rarely kept as pets in Africa. Ask children about the pets/animals they have had.
 - Make a picture dictionary by writing down all the animals they children can think of on individual blank pages, then having the children illustrate them.
- Related Books:**
- ***A Boy Wants a Dinosaur*** by Hiawyn Oram, illustrated by Satoshi Kitamura (Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1991)
 - ***Daddy, Could I Have an Elephant?*** by Jake Wolf, illustrated by Marilyn Hafner (Greenwillow, 1996)
 - ***An Octopus Followed me Home*** by Dan Yaccarino (Viking, 1997)
 - ***Perfect Pet*** by Margie Palatini, illustrated by Bruce Whatley (HarperCollins, 2003)
 - ***I wanna Iguana*** by Karen Kaufman Orloff, illustrated by David Catrow (G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 2004)
 - ***The Perfect Puppy for Me*** by Jane O’Connor and Jessie Hartland, illustrated by Jessie Heartland (Viking, 2003)
 - ***Can I Have a Tyrannosaurus Rex, Dad? Can I? Please!?*** By Lois G. Grambling, illustrated by Penny L.C. Hauffe (BridgeWater Books, 2000)
 - ***The Stray Dog*** by Marc Simont (HarperCollins, 2001)
 - ***My Life with the Wave*** (based on a story by Octavio Paz) by Catherine Cowan, illustrated by Mark Buehner (HarperCollins, 1997)

