

Gus Dog Goes to Work

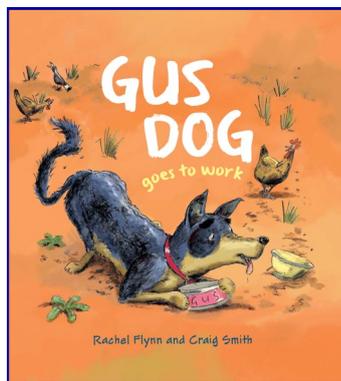
By Rachel Flynn & Illustrated by Craig Smith

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Every day Gus Dog goes to work in the back of the Ute with his owner, Tom the shearer. But one morning Gus wakes up to find Tom and the Ute gone. So Gus Dog decides to go to work on his own. Gus Dog Goes to Work is the warm and comical story of a not-so-usual day in the life of a sheep dog, by the top author/illustrator team of the best-selling title *I Hate Fridays*.



Teacher notes have been based on those supplied by the publisher, Working Title Press. A full version is available on our website.

Themes:

- Working dogs
- Relationships with animals
- Country Australia

Discussion Questions & Activities:

- Much of the pleasure and humour of this story is achieved through dialogue. Before sharing the story with children, practice reading the dialogue aloud so that you can capture 'the peculiarly Oz country drawly way that Tom and everyone else use to talk - or yell - at Gus'.
- Gus is a working dog. Have a chat about what kind of work he does – helping Tom round up the sheep. Show a video of a dog rounding sheep – preferably one where the owner uses 'working dog' language.
- The story has a pattern of moving from one incident to the next, starting on the morning there was NO TOM, NO UTE, NO BREAKFAST.
- With the children talk about how each incident is a little story. How does each story-within-a-story start? What does Gus listen to, smell, and look at along the way? Why does he get into trouble? Why do people yell at him? What words do they use that Gus understands? How does he leave each story and where does he go next?
- Many tiny details in the illustrations add interest to the story. Look through the illustrations to find other, separate stories going on: the magpies in the red gum, the girl in the school office, any of the children in the playground, the woman with the white chooks, the hippy in the van playing the guitar, stickers on the purple Ute, and Tom in his white Ute.
- Gus doesn't know where Tom is and sets off on his own. The text doesn't tell us but there are clues in the pictures as to Tom's whereabouts. Ask the children if they can find these clues? Are they on every page or just some?
- When the real Tom told Rachel the story about the day the real Gus went missing, she asked him, 'Why would he think the purple Ute was yours?' Tom said, 'Dogs are colour blind.' You might want to find out more about how and what dogs see. Is it true that they are colour blind and what does this mean? Talk about how colour blindness affects some people.
- Ask the children to create their own pictures using the colours and style of illustrating - drawing with pencils, charcoal, and watercolour using paints and brushes, or digitally with drawing programs that are available.
- Look carefully at how Craig uses line, colour, light and shade, to show how Gus is feeling throughout the story. Look for examples of happiness, fear, contentment, joy, uncertainty.