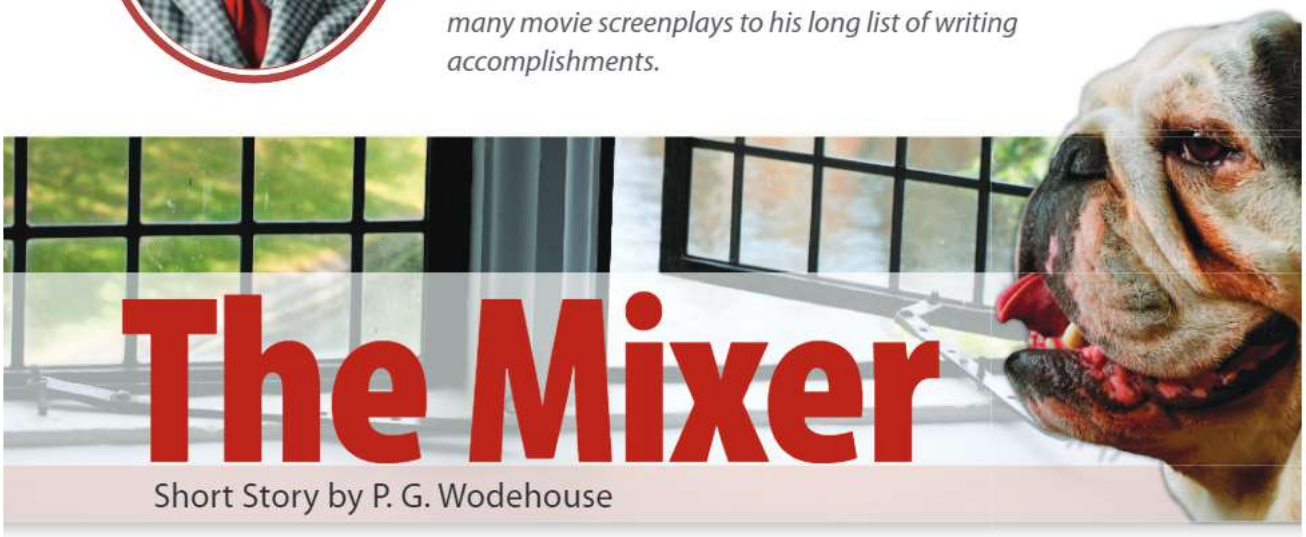
P. G. Wodehouse (1881–1975) *was born in England. Although Wodehouse always wanted to be a writer, as a young man he was forced to work at a London bank to make a living. This career did not last long. After only two years, Wodehouse left the bank and began writing full time. In 1904, Wodehouse left England for New York. There, Wodehouse began writing plays and musicals in addition to novels and short stories. Wodehouse later added many movie screenplays to his long list of writing accomplishments.*



The Mixer

Short Story by P. G. Wodehouse

SETTING A PURPOSE As you read, pay attention to how a dog's actions affect his master's plans. Write down any questions you have while reading.

Looking back, I always consider that my career as a dog proper really started when I was bought for the sum of half a crown[1] by the Shy Man. That event marked the end of my puppyhood. The knowledge that I was worth actual cash to somebody filled me with a sense of new responsibilities. It sobered me. Besides, it was only after that half-crown changed hands that I went out into the great world; and, however interesting life may be in an East End public-house,[2] it is only when you go out into the world that you really broaden your mind and begin to see things.

[1] **half a crown:** another name for a *half-crown*, a British coin that is no longer in use; was worth two shillings and sixpence, or about 30 pennies (pence).

[2] **public-house:** a place, such as a bar, that is allowed to sell alcoholic beverages.

Within its limitations, my life had been singularly full and vivid. I was born, as I say, in a public-house in the East End, and however lacking a public-house may be in refinement and the true culture, it certainly provides plenty of excitement. Before I was six weeks old, I had upset three policemen by getting between their legs when they came round to the sidedoor, thinking they had heard suspicious noises; and I can still recall the interesting sensation of being chased seventeen times round the yard with a broom-handle after a well-planned and completely successful raid on the larder. These and other happenings of a like nature soothed for the moment but could not cure the restlessness which has always been so marked a trait in my character. I have always been restless, unable to settle down in one place and anxious to get on to the next thing. This may be due to a gipsy[3] strain in my ancestry—one of my uncles traveled with a circus—or it may be the Artistic Temperament,[4] acquired from a grandfather who, before dying of a **surfeit** of paste in the property-room of the Bristol Coliseum, which he was visiting in the course of a professional tour, had an established reputation on the music-hall stage as one of Professor Pond's Performing Poodles.

surfeit
(sûr´fĭt) *n.* A *surfeit* is an excessive amount of something, such as food or drink.

I owe the fullness and variety of my life to this restlessness of mine, for I have repeatedly left comfortable homes in order to follow some perfect stranger who looked as if he were on his way to somewhere interesting. Sometimes I think I must have cat blood in me.

The Shy Man came into our yard one afternoon in April, while I was sleeping with Mother in the sun on an old sweater which we had borrowed from Fred, one of the barmen. I heard Mother growl, but I didn't take any notice. Mother is what they call a good watch-dog, and she growls at everybody except Master. At first when she used to do it, I would get up and bark my head off, but not now. Life's too short to bark at everybody who comes into our yard. It is behind the public-house, and they keep empty bottles and things there, so people are always coming and going.

[3] **gipsy** (jĭp´sē): also *gypsy* or *Gypsy*; a member of a race of people who travel from place to place, rather than living in one place.

[4] **Artistic Temperament:** a manner of thinking or acting said to be common among artists (painters, musicians, writers, actors); often used to explain traits such as sensitivity, odd or unusual behavior, or nervousness.

Besides, I was tired. I had had a very busy morning, helping the men bring in a lot of cases of beer and running into the saloon to talk to Fred and generally looking after things. So I was just dozing off again when I heard a voice say, "Well, he's ugly enough." Then I knew that they were talking about me.

I have never disguised it from myself, and nobody has ever disguised it from me, that I am not a handsome dog. Even Mother never thought me beautiful. She was no Gladys Cooper herself, but she never hesitated to **criticize** my appearance. In fact, I have yet to meet anyone who did. The first thing strangers say about me is "What an ugly dog!"

criticize
(krĭt´ĭ-sīz´) *v.* To *criticize* is to tell someone what you think is wrong with them.

I don't know what I am. I have a bull-dog kind of a face, but the rest of me is terrier. I have a long tail which sticks straight up in the air. My hair is wiry. My eyes are brown. I am jet black with a white chest. I once overheard Fred saying that I was a Gorgonzola cheese-hound,[5] and I have generally found Fred reliable in his statements.

When I found that I was under discussion, I opened my eyes. Master was standing there, looking down at me, and by his side the man who had just said I was ugly enough. The man was a thin man, about the age of a barman and smaller than a policeman. He had patched brown shoes and black trousers.

"But he's got a sweet nature," said Master.

This was true, luckily for me. Mother always said, "A dog without influence or private means, if he is to make his way in the world, must have either good looks or **amiability**." But, according to her, I overdid it. "A dog," she used to say, "can have a good heart without chumming with every Tom, Dick, and Harry he meets. Your behavior is sometimes quite undog-like." Mother prided herself on being a one-man dog. She kept herself to herself, and wouldn't kiss anybody except Master—not even Fred.

amiable
(ā´mē-ə-bəl) *n.* To be *amiable* is to be good-natured and friendly.

Now, I'm a mixer. I can't help it. It's my nature. I like men. I like the taste of their boots, the smell of their legs, and the sound of their voices. It may be weak of me, but a man has only to speak to me, and a sort of thrill goes right down my spine and sets my tail wagging.

[5] **Gorgonzola cheese-hound:** Gorgonzola is a bumpy, crumbly cheese with many swirls of blue mold in it; based on this phrase, the dog probably has a bumpy, sort of wrinkly face or body.

I wagged it now. The man looked at me rather distantly. He didn't pat me. I suspected—what I afterwards found to be the case—that he was shy, so I jumped up at him to put him at his ease. Mother growled again. I felt that she did not approve.

"Why, he's took quite a fancy to you already," said Master.

The man didn't say a word. He seemed to be brooding on something. He was one of those silent men. He reminded me of Joe, the old dog down the street at the grocer's shop, who lies at the door all day, blinking and not speaking to anybody.

Master began to talk about me. It surprised me, the way he praised me. I hadn't a suspicion he admired me so much. From what he said you would have thought I had won prizes and ribbons at the Crystal Palace. But the man didn't seem to be impressed. He kept on saying nothing.

When Master had finished telling him what a wonderful dog I was till I blushed, the man spoke.

"Less of it," he said. "Half a crown is my bid, and if he was an angel from on high you couldn't get another ha' penny out of me. What about it?"

A thrill went down my spine and out at my tail, for of course I saw now what was happening. The man wanted to buy me and take me away. I looked at Master hopefully.

"He's more like a son to me than a dog," said Master, sort of wistful.

"It's his face that makes you feel that way," said the man, unsympathetically. "If you had a son that's just how he would look. Half a crown is my offer, and I'm in a hurry."

"All right," said Master, with a sigh, "though it's giving him away, a valuable dog like that. Where's your half-crown?"

The man got a bit of rope and tied it round my neck.

I could hear Mother barking advice and telling me to be a credit to the family, but I was too excited to listen.

"Good-bye, Mother," I said. "Good-bye, Master. Good-bye, Fred. Good-bye, everybody. I'm off to see life. The Shy Man has bought me for half a crown. Wow!"

I kept running round in circles and shouting, till the man gave me a kick and told me to stop it.

So I did.

I don't know where we went, but it was a long way. I had never been off our street before in my life and didn't know the whole world was half as big as that. We walked on and on, and the man jerking at my rope whenever I wanted to stop and

look at anything. He wouldn't even let me pass the time of the day with dogs we met.

When we had gone about a hundred miles and were just going to turn in at a dark doorway, a policeman suddenly stopped the man. I could feel by the way the man pulled at my rope and tried to hurry on that he didn't want to speak to the policeman. The more I saw of the man, the more I saw how shy he was.

> "He's more like a son to me than a dog," said Master, sort of wistful.

"Hi!" said the policeman, and we had to stop.

"I've got a message for you, old pal," said the policeman. "It's from the Board of Health. They told me to tell you you needed a change of air. See?"

"All right!" said the man.

"And take it as soon as you like. Else you'll find you'll get it given you. See?"

I looked at the man with a good deal of respect. He was evidently someone very important, if they worried so about his health.

"I'm going down to the country tonight," said the man.

The policeman seemed pleased.

"That's a bit of luck for the country," he said. "Don't go changing your mind."

And we walked on, and went in at the dark doorway, and climbed about a million stairs, and went into a room that smelt of rats. The man sat down and swore a little, and I sat and looked at him.

Presently I couldn't keep it in any longer.

"Do we live here?" I said. "Is it true we're going to the country? Wasn't that policeman a good sort? Don't you like policemen? I knew lots of policemen at the public-house. Are

there any other dogs here? What is there for dinner? What's in that cupboard? When are you going to take me out for another run? May I go out and see if I can find a cat?"

"Stop that yelping," he said.

"When we go to the country, where shall we live? Are you going to be a caretaker at a house? Fred's father is a caretaker at a big house in Kent. I've heard Fred talk about it. You didn't meet Fred when you came to the public-house, did you? You would like Fred. I like Fred. Mother likes Fred. We all like Fred."

I was going on to tell him a lot more about Fred, who had always been one of my warmest friends, when he suddenly got hold of a stick and **walloped** me with it.

wallop
(wŏl´əp) v. To *wallop* is to hit or strike with a hard blow.

"You keep quiet when you're told," he said.

He really was the shyest man I had ever met. It seemed to hurt him to be spoken to. However, he was the boss, and I had to humor him, so I didn't say any more.

We went down to the country that night, just as the man had told the policeman we would. I was all worked up, for I had heard so much about the country from Fred that I had always wanted to go there. Fred used to go off on a motor-bicycle sometimes to spend the night with his father in Kent, and once he brought back a squirrel with him, which I thought was for me to eat, but Mother said no. "The first thing a dog has to learn," Mother used often to say, "is that the whole world wasn't created for him to eat."

It was quite dark when we got to the country, but the man seemed to know where to go. He pulled at my rope, and we began to walk along a road with no people in it at all. We walked on and on, but it was all so new to me that I forgot how tired I was. I could feel my mind broadening with every step I took.

Every now and then we would pass a very big house which looked as if it was empty, but I knew that there was a caretaker inside, because of Fred's father. These big houses belong to very rich people, but they don't want to live in them till the summer so they put in caretakers, and the caretakers have a dog to keep off burglars. I wondered if that was what I had been brought here for.

"Are you going to be a caretaker?" I asked the man.

"Shut up," he said.

So I shut up.

After we had been walking a long time, we came to a cottage. A man came out. My man seemed to know him, for he called him Bill. I was quite surprised to see the man was not at all shy with Bill. They seemed very friendly.

"Is that him?" said Bill, looking at me.

"Bought him this afternoon," said the man.

"Well," said Bill, "he's ugly enough. He looks fierce. If you want a dog, he's the sort of dog you want. But what do you want one for? It seems to me it's a lot of trouble to take, when there's no need of any trouble at all. Why not do what I've always wanted to do? What's wrong with just fixing the dog, same as it's always done, and walking in and helping yourself?"

"I'll tell you what's wrong" said the man. "To start with, you can't get at the dog to fix him except by day, when they let him out. At night he's shut up inside the house. And suppose you do fix him during the day, what happens then? Either the bloke[6] gets another before night, or else he sits up all night with a gun. It isn't like as if these blokes was ordinary blokes. They're down here to look after the house. That's their job, and they don't take any chances."

It was the longest speech I had ever heard the man make, and it seemed to impress Bill. He was quite humble.

"I didn't think of that," he said. "We'd best start in to train this tyke at once."

Mother often used to say, when I went on about wanting to go out into the world and see life, "You'll be sorry when you do. The world isn't all bones and liver." And I hadn't been living with the man and Bill in their cottage long before I found out how right she was.

It was the man's shyness that made all the trouble. It seemed as if he hated to be taken notice of.

It started on my very first night at the cottage. I had fallen asleep in the kitchen, tired out after all the excitement of the day and the long walks I had had, when something woke me with a start. It was somebody scratching at the window, trying to get in.

Well, I ask you, I ask any dog, what would you have done in my place? Ever since I was old enough to listen, Mother had

[6] **bloke** (blōk): a British term for a man or a fellow.

told me over and over again what I must do in a case like this. It is the ABC of a dog's education. "If you are in a room and you hear anyone trying to get in," Mother used to say, "bark. It may be some one who has business there, or it may not. Bark first, and inquire afterwards. Dogs were made to be heard and not seen."

I lifted my head and yelled. I have a good, deep voice, due to a hound strain in my pedigree,[7] and at the public-house, when there was a full moon, I have often had people leaning out of the windows and saying things all down the street. I took a deep breath and let it go.

"Man!" I shouted. "Bill! Man! Come quick! Here's a burglar getting in!"

[7] **pedigree** (pĕd´ĭ-grē´): an animal's list of ancestors, or family members; a family tree.

Then somebody struck a light, and it was the man himself. He had come in through the window.

He picked up a stick, and he walloped me. I couldn't understand it. I couldn't see where I had done the wrong thing. But he was the boss, so there was nothing to be said.

If you'll believe me, that same thing happened every night. Every single night! And sometimes twice or three times before morning. And every time I would bark my loudest, and the man would strike a light and wallop me. The thing was baffling. I couldn't possibly have mistaken what Mother had said to me. She said it too often for that. Bark! Bark! Bark! It was the main plank of her whole system of education. And yet, here I was, getting walloped every night for doing it.

I thought it out till my head ached, and finally I got it right. I began to see that Mother's outlook was narrow. No doubt, living with a man like Master at the public-house, a man without a trace of shyness in his composition, barking was all right. But circumstances alter cases. I belonged to a man who was a mass of nerves, who got the jumps if you spoke to him. What I had to do was to forget the training I had had from Mother, sound as it no doubt was as a general thing, and to adapt myself to the needs of the particular man who had happened to buy me. I had tried Mother's way, and all it had brought me was walloping, so now I would think for myself.

So next night, when I heard the window go, I lay there without a word, though it went against all my better feelings. I didn't even growl. Someone came in and moved about in the dark, with a lantern, but, though I smelt that it was the man, I didn't ask him a single question. And presently the man lit a light and came over to me and gave me a pat, which was a thing he had never done before.

"Good dog!" he said. "Now you can have this."

And he let me lick out the saucepan in which the dinner had been cooked.

After that, we got on fine. Whenever I heard anyone at the window I just kept curled up and took no notice, and every time I got a bone or something good. It was easy, once you had got the hang of things.

It was about a week after that the man took me out one morning, and we walked a long way till we turned in at some big gates and went along a very smooth road till we came to a

great house, standing all by itself in the middle of a whole lot of country. There was a big lawn in front of it, and all round there were fields and trees, and at the back a great wood.

The man rang a bell, and the door opened, and an old man came out.

"Well?" he said, not very cordially.

"I thought you might want to buy a good watch-dog," said the man.

"Well, that's queer, your saying that," said the caretaker. "It's a coincidence. That's exactly what I do want to buy. I was just thinking of going along and trying to get one. My old dog picked up something this morning that he oughtn't to have, and he's dead, poor feller."

"Poor feller," said the man. "Found an old bone with phosphorus on it, I guess."

"What do you want for this one?"

"Five shillings."[8]

"Is he a good watch-dog?"

"He's a grand watch-dog."

"He looks fierce enough."

"Ah!"

So the caretaker gave the man his five shillings, and the man went off and left me.

At first the newness of everything and the unaccustomed smells and getting to know the caretaker, who was a nice old man, prevented my missing the man, but as the day went on and I began to realize that he had gone and would never come back, I got very depressed. I pattered all over the house, whining. It was a most interesting house, bigger than I thought a house could possibly be, but it couldn't cheer me up. You may think it strange that I should pine for the man, after all the wallopings he had given me, and it is odd, when you come to think of it. But dogs are dogs, and they are built like that. By the time it was evening I was thoroughly miserable. I found a shoe and an old clothes-brush in one of the rooms, but could eat nothing. I just sat and **moped**.

It's a funny thing, but it seems as if it always happened that just when you are feeling most miserable, something nice

mope
(mōp) *intr.v.* To *mope* is to be gloomy, miserable, and not interested in anything.

[8] **five shillings:** a shilling is a coin of the United Kingdom that is no longer in use; it was worth 12 pennies (pence).

happens. As I sat there, there came from outside the sound of a motor-bicycle, and somebody shouted.

It was dear old Fred, my old pal Fred, the best old boy that ever stepped. I recognized his voice in a second, and I was scratching at the door before the old man had time to get up out of his chair.

Well, well, well! That was a pleasant surprise! I ran five times round the lawn without stopping, and then I came back and jumped up at him.

"What are you doing down here, Fred?" I said. "Is this caretaker your father? Have you seen the rabbits in the wood? How long are you going to stop? How's Mother? I like the country. Have you come all the way from the public-house? I'm living here now. Your father gave five shillings for me. That's twice as much as I was worth when I saw you last."

"Why, it's young Blackie!" That was what they called me at the saloon. "What are you doing here? Where did you get this dog, Father?"

"A man sold him to me this morning. Poor old Bob got poisoned. This one ought to be just as good a watch-dog. He barks loud enough."

"He should be. His mother is the best watch-dog in London. This cheese-hound used to belong to the boss. Funny him getting down here."

We went into the house and had supper. And after supper we sat and talked. Fred was only down for the night, he said, because the boss wanted him back next day.

"And I'd sooner have my job than yours, Dad," he said. "Of all the lonely places! I wonder you aren't scared of burglars."

"I've got my shot-gun, and there's the dog. I might be scared if it wasn't for him, but he kind of gives me confidence. Old Bob was the same. Dogs are a comfort in the country."

"Get many tramps here?"

"I've only seen one in two months, and that's the feller who sold me the dog here."

As they were talking about the man, I asked Fred if he knew him. They might have met at the public-house, when the man was buying me from the boss.

"You would like him," I said. "I wish you could have met."

They both looked at me.

"What's he growling at?" asked Fred. "Think he heard something?"

The old man laughed.

"He wasn't growling. He was talking in his sleep. You're nervous, Fred. It comes from living in the city."

"Well, I am. I like this place in the daytime, but it gives me the pip[9] at night. It's so quiet. How you can stand it here all the time, I can't understand. Two nights of it would have me seeing things."

His father laughed.

"If you feel like that, Fred, you had better take the gun to bed with you. I shall be quite happy without it."

"I will," said Fred. "I'll take six if you've got them."

And after that they went upstairs. I had a basket in the hall, which had belonged to Bob, the dog who had got poisoned. It was a comfortable basket, but I was so excited at having met Fred again that I couldn't sleep. Besides, there was a smell of mice somewhere, and I had to move around, trying to place it.

I was just sniffing at a place in the wall when I heard a scratching noise. At first I thought it was the mice working in a different place, but, when I listened, I found that the sound came from the window. Somebody was doing something to it from outside.

If it had been Mother, she would have lifted the roof off right there, and so should I, if it hadn't been for what the man had taught me. I didn't think it possible that this could be the man come back, for he had gone away and said nothing about ever seeing me again. But I didn't bark. I stopped where I was and listened. And presently the window came open, and somebody began to climb in.

I gave a good sniff, and I knew it was the man.

I was so delighted that for a moment I nearly forgot myself and shouted with joy, but I remembered in time how shy he was, and stopped myself. But I ran to him and jumped up quite quietly, and he told me to lie down. I was disappointed that he didn't seem more pleased to see me. I lay down.

It was very dark, but he had brought a lantern with him, and I could see him moving about the room, picking things up and putting them in a bag which he had brought with him.

[9] **pip:** a slang term for a minor illness; here, probably an upset stomach from being nervous or worried.

Every now and then he would stop and listen, and then he would start moving round again. He was very quick about it, but very quiet. It was plain that he didn't want Fred or his father to come down and find him.

I kept thinking about this peculiarity of his while I watched him. I suppose, being chummy myself, I find it hard to understand that everybody else in the world isn't chummy too. Of course, my experience at the public-house had taught me that men are just as different from each other as dogs. If I chewed Master's shoe, for instance, he used to kick me, but if I chewed Fred's, Fred would tickle me under the ear. And, similarly, some men are shy and some men are mixers. I quite appreciated that, but I couldn't help feeling that the man carried shyness to a point where it became **morbid**. And he didn't give himself a chance to cure himself of it. That was the point. Imagine a man hating to meet people so much that he never visited their houses till the middle of the night, when they were in bed and asleep. It was silly. Shyness had always been something so outside my nature that I suppose I have never really been able to look at it sympathetically. I have always held the view that you can get over it if you make an effort. The trouble with the man was that he wouldn't make an effort. He went out of his way to avoid meeting people.

morbid
(môr´bĭd) *adj.* A *morbid* quality or feeling is one that is unhealthy or unwholesome, like an illness or disease.

I was fond of the man. He was the sort of person you never get to know very well, but we had been together for quite a while, and I wouldn't have been a dog if I hadn't got attached to him.

As I sat and watched him creep about the room, it suddenly came to me that here was a chance of doing him a real good turn in spite of himself. Fred was upstairs, and Fred, as I knew by experience, was the easiest man to get along with in the world. Nobody could be shy with Fred. I felt that if only I could bring him and the man together, they would get along splendidly, and it would teach the man not to be silly and avoid people. It would help to give him the confidence which he needed. I had seen him with Bill, and I knew that he could be perfectly natural and easy when he liked.

It was true that the man might object at first, but after a while he would see that I had acted simply for his good, and would be grateful.

The difficulty was, how to get Fred down without scaring the man. I knew that if I shouted he wouldn't wait, but would be out of the window and away before Fred could get there. What I had to do was to go to Fred's room, explain the whole situation quietly to him, and ask him to come down and make himself pleasant.

The man was far too busy to pay any attention to me. He was kneeling in a corner with his back to me, putting something in his bag. I seized the opportunity to steal softly from the room.

Fred's door was shut, and I could hear him snoring. I scratched gently, and then harder, till I heard the snores stop. He got out of bed and opened the door.

"Don't make a noise," I whispered. "Come on downstairs. I want you to meet a friend of mine."

At first he was quite peevish.[10]

"What's the idea," he said, "coming and spoiling a man's beauty-sleep? Get out."

He actually started to go back into the room.

"No, honestly, Fred," I said, "I'm not fooling you. There *is* a man downstairs. He got in through the window. I want you to meet him. He's very shy, and I think it will do him good to have a chat with you."

"What are you whining about?" Fred began, and then he broke off suddenly and listened. We could both hear the man's footsteps as he moved about.

[10] **peevish** (pē´vĭsh): discontented or ill-tempered; cranky.

Fred jumped back into the room. He came out, carrying something. He didn't say any more but started to go downstairs, very quiet, and I went after him.

There was the man, still putting things in his bag. I was just going to introduce Fred, when Fred gave a great yell.

I could have bitten him.

"What did you want to do that for, you chump?"[11] I said. "I told you he was shy. Now you've scared him."

He certainly had. The man was out of the window quicker than you would have believed possible. He just flew out. I called after him that it was only Fred and me, but at that moment a gun went off with a tremendous bang, so he couldn't have heard me.

I was pretty sick about it. The whole thing had gone wrong. Fred seemed to have lost his head entirely. Naturally the man had been frightened with him carrying on in that way. I jumped out of the window to see if I could find the man and explain, but he was gone. Fred jumped out after me, and nearly squashed me.

It was pitch dark out there. I couldn't see a thing. But I knew the man could not have gone far, or I should have heard him. I started to sniff round on the chance of picking up his trail. It wasn't long before I struck it.

Fred's father had come down now, and they were running about. The old man had a light. I followed the trail, and it ended at a large cedar tree, not far from the house. I stood underneath it and looked up, but of course I could not see anything.

"Are you up there?" I shouted. "There's nothing to be scared at. It was only Fred. He's an old pal of mine. He works at the place where you bought me. His gun went off by accident. He won't hurt you."

There wasn't a sound. I began to think I must have made a mistake.

"He's got away," I heard Fred say to his father, and just as he said it I caught a faint sound of someone moving in the branches above me.

"No he hasn't!" I shouted. "He's up this tree."

"I believe the dog's found him, Dad!"

"Yes, he's up here. Come along and meet him."

[11] **chump:** a stupid or silly person.

Fred came to the foot of the tree.

"You up there," he said, "come along down."

Not a sound from the tree.

"It's all right," I explained, "he *is* up there, but he's very shy. Ask him again."

"All right," said Fred, "stay there if you want to. But I'm going to shoot off this gun into the branches just for fun."

And then the man started to come down. As soon as he touched the ground I jumped up at him.

"This is fine!" I said. "Here's my friend Fred. You'll like him."

But it wasn't any good. They didn't get along together at all. They hardly spoke. The man went into the house, and Fred went after him, carrying his gun. And when they got into the house it was just the same. The man sat in one chair, and Fred sat in another, and after a long time some men came in a motor-car, and the man went away with them. He didn't say good-bye to me.

When he had gone, Fred and his father made a great fuss of me. I couldn't understand it. Men are so odd. The man wasn't a bit pleased that I had brought him and Fred together, but Fred seemed as if he couldn't do enough for me having introduced him to the man. However, Fred's father produced some cold ham—my favorite dish—and gave me quite a lot of it, so I stopped worrying over the thing. As Mother used to say, "Don't bother your head about what doesn't concern you. The only thing a dog need concern himself with is the bill of fare.[12] Eat your bun, and don't make yourself busy about other people's affairs." Mother's was in some ways a narrow outlook, but she had a great fund of sterling common sense.

COLLABORATIVE DISCUSSION What was the Shy Man's plan? How does the plan go wrong and why? With a partner, discuss these questions and whether the plan made sense.

[12]**bill of fare:** a list of items that are available, as on a menu.

Describe Characters' Responses

6.RL.1.3

Every good story has strong characters and an interesting plot. A **character** is a person, animal, or even an imaginary creature who takes part in a story. A **plot,** as you already know, is the series of events in a story.

When you read a story, it is interesting to see how characters respond to events or change as the plot moves toward its resolution. Authors illustrate characters' responses through their actions, thoughts, feelings, and interactions with other characters. When Blackie, the main character in "The Mixer," is sold to the Shy Man, he is thrilled, saying that he's "'off to see life.'" Blackie's response to this event tells you that he enjoys new experiences.

Look for more examples of characters' responses to the plot as you analyze "The Mixer." Ask yourself: How does the character respond when something happens to him or her? What does that tell me about the character?

Explain Point of View

6.RL.2.6

A story's **narrator** is the voice that tells the story. Point of view is the perspective from which the story is told. A **first-person** point of view means a character from the story is the narrator. When a story is told in first-person point of view, the narrator

- may be a major or minor character
- tells the story using first-person words like *I, me*, and *my*
- tells about his or her thoughts and feelings
- does not know what other characters are thinking or feeling

Sometimes point of view can be used to create irony and humor. **Irony** is a contrast between what is expected and what actually exists or happens. For example, it is ironic that Blackie calls his new owner "the Shy Man," because the man turns out not to be shy at all.

In "The Mixer," look for ways the narrator and point of view shape the way the story is told and how the narration creates irony. Ask yourself:

- Does the narrator understand everything that is happening?
- How is my understanding of the story limited by what the narrator knows or decides to tell?
- What events in the story are surprising?

Analyzing the Text

6.RL.1.1, 6.RL.1.3, 6.RL.2.5, 6.RL.2.6, 6.RL.4.10, 6.W.1.2a–f

Cite Text Evidence Support your responses with evidence from the text.

1. **Identify** Reread lines 1–10. Identify clues that help you explain the story's point of view. What is the point of view and who is the narrator?
2. **Infer** Reread lines 72–86. Describe the dog's character. How is his personality the same as or different from any other dog's personality?
3. **Interpret** Review the events in lines 232–286. How does Blackie respond to his training? Explain what this tells you about his character.
4. **Draw Conclusions** Review lines 334–355, when Fred appears at the country house. Explain why this event helps you understand the attempted burglary.
5. **Analyze** How is Blackie affected by events in the story?
6. **Analyze** Review lines 416–438. Tell what Blackie says that illustrates how he views the Shy Man. What is ironic about Blackie's view?
7. **Analyze** What effect does Blackie's role as the narrator have on the story?

PERFORMANCE TASK

Writing Activity: Essay In "The Mixer," Blackie is mistaken about why the Shy Man seems so quiet. Write a one-page essay that explains the Shy Man's motivation for not speaking.

- Review the story. Make notes about events and situations that help you understand the man's character.
- Describe the man's character, using evidence from the text.
- Tell how the man responds to Blackie and to other characters in the story.
- Give concrete examples that illustrate why the man does not speak.
- Use appropriate transitions such as *furthermore, one reason,* and *in addition* to clarify relationships among your ideas.
- Provide a concluding statement that supports your explanation.

Critical Vocabulary

6.L.3.4, 6.L.3.4b, 6.L.3.6

surfeit **criticize** **amiable** **wallop** **mope** **morbid**

Practice and Apply Answer each question.

1. Have you ever consumed a **surfeit** of sweets? How did you feel afterwards?
2. When did you ever **criticize** someone? Why?
3. Have you ever been impressed by an **amiable** person? Why?
4. Have you ever wanted to **wallop** something? What was the result?
5. Do you ever **mope** about a situation? Tell when and why.
6. Have you ever felt that someone was being **morbid**? Tell how that person acted.

Vocabulary Strategy: Greek Suffix *-ize*

The Greek suffix *-ize* often creates a verb when it is added to a noun. For example, the vocabulary word *criticize* means "to find fault with"—in other words, to act as a critic. In this case, the suffix *-ize* means "to become or be like." If you can recognize the noun that the suffix *-ize* is attached to, you can often figure out the meaning of the verb that is formed. The chart shows some meanings of the suffix *-ize*.

Suffix	Meanings
-ize	to cause to be or to become; to cause to resemble; to treat as

Practice and Apply Complete each sentence with one of the following words. Then identify the noun in each word and its meaning. Use the information in the chart to write a definition for each boldface word.

dramatize **idolize** **authorize** **equalize** **jeopardize**

1. The store walls were plastered with posters of singers that teens _____.
2. Poor judgment and rash behavior could _____ our secret mission.
3. This note will _____ you to spend lunchtime in the library.
4. I am writing a play to _____ my grandmother's life story.
5. You need to sit on the other end of the seesaw to _____ the weight.

Language Conventions: Intensive Pronouns

6.L.1.1b

Intensive pronouns are formed by adding *-self* or *-selves* to certain personal pronouns and are used to intensify, or emphasize, the nouns or pronouns to which they refer. Like other pronouns, they also change their form to express person, number, and gender.

	First Person	Second Person	Third Person
Singular	myself	yourself	himself, herself, itself
Plural	ourselves	yourselves	themselves

Here is an example of an intensive pronoun from "The Mixer."

Then somebody struck a light, and it was the man himself.

The intensive pronoun *himself* emphasizes Blackie's surprise at seeing his new owner breaking into his own home. Here are some more examples:

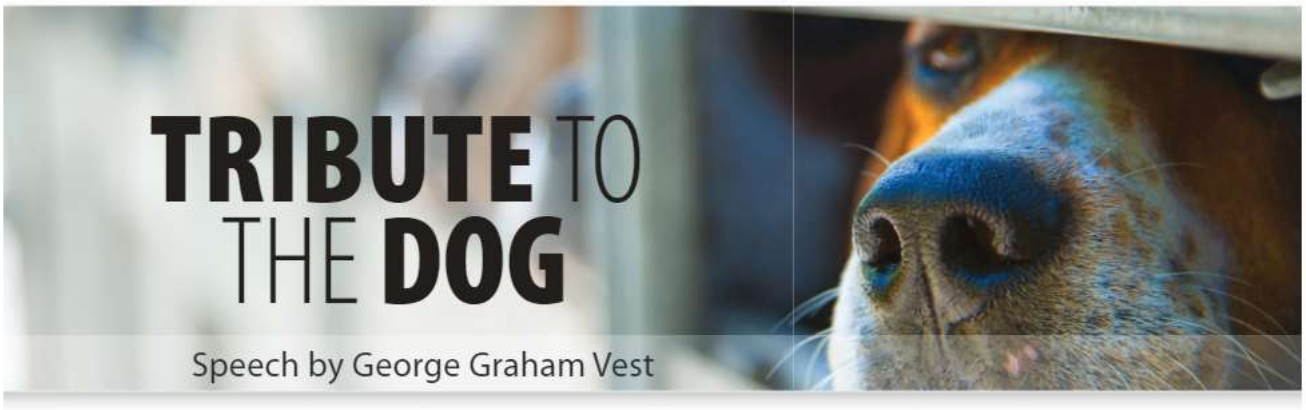
The dog itself hid the bone.
He took the car home himself.
You ate the whole cake yourself!
The scouts will clean the room themselves.

Keep in mind that standard English does not include forms such as *hisself* and *theirselves*, even though *his* and *their* are common possessive pronouns. The correct forms in these cases are *himself* and *themselves*.

Practice and Apply Complete each sentence with the correct intensive pronoun.

1. The students _____ made all the refreshments.
2. I _____ had the best audition.
3. Judith _____ is to blame.
4. You _____ have to take responsibility for this.
5. Rico will finish the diorama _____.

Background *As a young lawyer,* **George Graham Vest** (1830–1904) *represented a man seeking payment for his dog, which had been shot by a sheep farmer. In this closing speech of the trial, Vest ignores the evidence given at trial; instead, he gives a moving tribute to dogs in general. Some said it was a perfect piece of oratory; others exclaimed that the jury was moved to tears. Vest's client won the case. Eight years later, Vest was elected to the U.S. Senate. His speech is now regarded as a classic tribute to "man's best friend."*



TRIBUTE TO THE DOG

Speech by George Graham Vest

SETTING A PURPOSE As you read, look for details and ideas the author uses to convince the reader/listener of a dog's value to people.

Gentlemen of the Jury: The best friend a man has in the world may turn against him and become his enemy. His son or daughter that he has reared[1] with loving care may prove ungrateful. Those who are nearest and dearest to us, those whom we trust with our happiness and our good name may become traitors to their faith. The money that a man has, he may lose. It flies away from him, perhaps when he needs it most. A man's reputation may be sacrificed in a moment of ill-considered action. The people who are prone to fall on
10 their knees to do us honor when success is with us, may be the first to throw the stone of **malice** when failure settles its cloud upon our heads.

malice (măl´ĭs) *n. Malice* is a desire to harm others or to see someone suffer.

[1] **reared:** raised; guided to grow into an adult.