Summary of the story

Pongo and his wife, Missis, live happily in London with their owners, Mr and Mrs Dearly. One day, the nasty Cruella de Vil moves into the neighbourhood. She likes fur coats and takes an unhealthy interest in the Dalmatians’ beautiful coats. Pongo and Missis become parents which is a happy time until the puppies go missing. Pongo and Missis set out to save their puppies from Cruella de Vil, helped by friendly dogs along the way. They discover that Cruella has stolen many, many other puppies. The adventure ends happily when the Dearlys agree to take care of all the rescued Dalmatians and Cruella goes away.

Background to the Reader

Dodie Smith (1896-1990) was the pseudonym sometimes used by C. L. Anthony. Born in Manchester, Smith wrote children’s stories and novels and also plays and several volumes of an autobiography. The Hundred and One Dalmatians was published in 1956 and remains popular until this day. It was made into a Walt Disney film, ‘One Hundred and One Dalmatians’, in 1961 and re-made in 1996 as ‘101 Dalmatians’. In 2000 a new film ‘102 Dalmatians’ was released. Dodie Smith herself continued to write into the 1980s.

Topics and themes

Animals Dogs are the main theme of the book. The story, which is told by two dogs, Missis and Pongo, describes life for pet dogs. Other themes are: Missis and Pongo have puppies; the different breeds of dogs; dogs in town; dogs in the country or on a farm. With older pupils work can be done on the use of animals for their fur.

Colours The dogs and Cruella’s clothes are black and white. The dogs become dirty and look black, when they are washed they are white again. Are black and white colours or are they the absence of colour? Are they opposites?

The country The story takes place in both town and country, which can be contrasted from the illustrations.

Family The Dearly family have no children, but they have two dogs, which begin their own family when the puppies arrive. How are dog families different from human ones?

Film/media/TV The story has also been filmed by Disney, which many pupils may have seen. It may be available for classrooms.

Friendships Missis and Pongo meet other dogs when they look for their puppies. They don’t know one another, but help them find their puppies. How have pupils found their friends?

Numbers The story is full of numbers. It provides pupils with practice in counting. Many pages could be used for speed counting – who are the first pair to count the dog/spots on the page?

Making use of the Reader

Invent-a-Pet Begin by asking the pupils to describe the dogs in the Reader. There are, of course, lots of Dalmatians plus, on pages 15, 17, and 18 there are illustrations of different breeds (Labradors, Corgis, Pekinese). Following on from vocabulary work, for example, black or brown, spotty or plain, large or small, long- or short-haired, ask the pupils to give a description of their ideal dog and then draw it. The Yes-No game Prepare some questions beforehand on the characters in the story. Tell the pupils you are thinking of one of the characters from the story and they have to ask questions to find out which one. Tell them you will only answer yes or no. Give the pupils examples: is it a man? Is he a good man? for example.

Dalmatian Hand-Puppets Give the pupils one white sock (or white paper bag) each. Using a black felt-tipped pen, the pupils work together to decorate their Dalmatian hand-puppets. Then, in pairs, one can be Missis and the other. From short prompts such as, ‘what do Missis and Pongo say to each other when they find that their puppies are gone?’; ‘What do Missis and Pongo say to each other when they are in Cruella de Vil’s house?’ their puppets talk to one another.
A Day in the Life... After the reading, the pupils work together with you, to compose a day in the life of the Dalmatians. This can be done in timetable form (8am: the Dalmatians wake up, for example) which can go up on the wall. This is a fun way to revise past simple verb forms, useful day-to-day vocabulary, telling the time, and writing skills.

Using the accompanying audio cassette

During listening Let half the class put up their hands when they hear humans who are talking and the other half when it is the dogs.

Sound effects Ask pupils to join in with the sound effects: growling, barking, ‘help’, beep, wow, etc

Chants

The language in each chant recycles language from the Reader, so it is best to do activities with the chants after pupils have read the book.

- pupils listen to the chant on cassette one or two times, clapping their hands or tapping their desks in time with the rhythm
- pupils then say the chant, verse by verse, together with the cassette, beating the rhythm as they speak, until they are familiar with the words and the rhythm
- you can then split the class into 2 or 3 groups and each group can say one verse of the chant in turn

Chant 1
Beep, beep, hellowoo!
I’m Cruella de Vil
Beep, beep
And I’m always cold

Chant 2
’Grrr!’ said Lucky
’Grrr!’ said Cadpig
’Grrr!’ said Roly Poly
’Help!’ said Missis

’Help!’ said Missis
’Help!’ said Pongo
’Hahahah!’ cried Cruella
’Grrrr!’ said the puppies

’Wooow!’ the dogs whispered
’Aargh!’ cried Cruella
’Jump!’ said Pongo
’Off they go!"

Chant 3
One, two, three, four
How many puppies?
Five, six, seven, eight
How many more?
Fifty-one, fifty-two
Whew! I’m tired!
Fifty-three, fifty four
How many more?
Ninety-eight, ninety-nine
Nearly there
One hundred, one hundred and one
But how many spots?!

Notes on the activities in the Factsheet

1. Spot the difference. The pupils circle the differences in box B. You could also encourage them to write the differences between the two pictures.
2. The pupils answer the questions ‘true’ or ‘false’.
3. The pupils fill in the blanks once they have decided on the correct answer. They may need some guidance with this if it includes new vocabulary, but there are illustrations to help.
4. The pupils follow the numbers to make a picture from the book. Encourage them to colour it in and to write about it.

Answers to the activities

In the Back of the Reader
3. a. There are six people in the story (nine in the illustrations).
   b. There are other dogs on pages 15, 17, and 18.
4. a. 2, b. 15, c. 7, d. 100, e. 101.

In the Factsheet
1. In box B. the differences are as follows: Cruella’s boots are a different shape, Mr Dearly does not have an umbrella, Cruella’s necklace is missing, some of the Dalmatians’ spots on head are missing, the Dalmatians are not on leads.
2. a. false, b. false c. true, d. false e. true, f. true, g. false
3. a. cow, b. chicken, c. cat, d. sheep, e. lion.
4. The picture is of Pongo from page 16 of the Reader.
Activity 1

Spot the Difference
Find five differences between the two pictures.

A
B

Activity 2

Read the sentences and write ‘True’ or ‘False’.

a. Missis and Pongo are cats.
   [ ]

b. They live in Australia.
   [ ]

c. Cruella de Vil is always cold.
   [ ]

d. Missis and Pongo have five puppies.
   [ ]

e. Dalmatians have spots.
   [ ]

f. Cruella de Vil steals the puppies.
   [ ]

g. Mr and Mrs Dearly are very angry when Missis and Pongo return.
   [ ]
Activity 3

Finish the sentences. The pictures can help you.

Example: A puppy is a young dog.

a. A calf is a young ________________.
b. A chick is a young ________________.
c. A kitten is a young ________________.
d. A lamb is a young ________________.
e. A cub is a young ________________.

Activity 4

Follow the numbers with a pencil to make a picture. Who is it? Write the name and a sentence about them.