

# Tale of Consequences

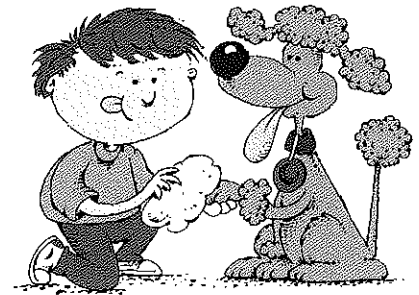
*The moral of the story? Take responsibility for your pets.*

## Character concept:

Being responsible includes planning ahead, thinking before we act, and taking care of those who depend on us. Acting irresponsibly usually has negative consequences for us and others.

## Objective:

Students will understand that there are many responsibilities in caring for a pet and that there are negative consequences when we neglect those responsibilities.



## Curriculum connection:

Students will demonstrate understanding of cause and effect (the relations between events) and sequencing by putting events in temporal order. They will use technology to produce communication and exchange information. (language arts, technology)

## National standards addressed:

language arts/English (communication skills NL-ENG.K-12.4), technology (basic operations and concepts, NT.K-12.1)

## Materials:

- computers with e-mail access (optional)

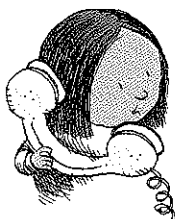
## Activity:

Students will write or tell a chain story about a pet caregiver who acts irresponsibly. Each student will contribute a consequence to the caregiver's actions.

## Procedure:

1. Guide students in recognizing the risks in being irresponsible and the value of acting responsibly. Remind them that there are *consequences* for all of our actions. When we act irresponsibly, the results are usually negative and may compound into even worse, unexpected outcomes. Offer a few examples:

*Devin's dad asks him to shovel snow and ice from the sidewalk in front of their home. Devin decides to go sledding with his friends instead. What might happen? First, Devin could be grounded for disobeying his father. Even worse, someone could slip on the ice and get hurt.*



*Cara's mother asks her to walk to the pharmacy to pick up medicine for her grandmother. Cara gets caught up talking to her friend on the phone and forgets. An hour passes, and the pharmacy closes. What could happen? Not having her medicine could cause Cara's grandmother a lot of stress and worry. Worse, without her medicine, Cara's grandmother could get very sick.*

2. Next, lead a class discussion about responsible pet care. What are some responsibilities of having a pet? Write students' answers on the board. Here are more than a dozen quick examples. Include any your students might have overlooked.

- Think carefully before getting a pet. Make sure you have the time, space, and money to take good care of an animal.
- Get a pet for the right reasons. Wanting a pet just to entertain you, to guard your home, or to show off to friends is a bad plan. Pets are living beings, not belongings.
- Give your pet fresh food and water every day.
- Exercise your pet.
- Play with your pet.
- Take your pet to a veterinarian for regular check-ups.
- Train your pet to be calm and friendly around people and other animals.



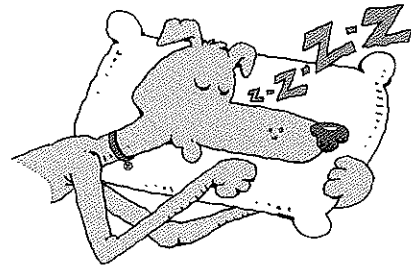
- Make sure your pet always wears a license tag or other form of identification, in case he or she ever slips away from you and gets lost.



- Prevent your pet from getting outdoors without you. Close gates, doors, and windows that could provide an escape for curious cats and daring dogs.
- Don't allow your pet to roam outdoors alone; walk your cat or dog on a leash.
- Pick up after your pet, especially on walks. Your pet's

doody isn't your neighbors' duty!

- Give your pet a warm, quiet place indoors to relax.
- Groom your pet to keep him healthy and clean.
- Spay or neuter your pet.
- Pay attention to your pet. Cats and dogs are very social animals.
- Prepare for your pet in case of emergency. Have a plan—and supplies—in place.



3. Go through your list and have students suggest what might happen when someone fails to meet those responsibilities. *How would the pet be affected? What would be the impact on the family? Neighbors? Animal shelters? Other animals?*

4. Reinforce by engaging the class in several chain stories about irresponsible pet caregivers. A chain story is begun by one person and continued by others.

Seat students in a circle and start in such a way: "The king's servant forgot to feed the horse." Have the child closest to one side of you finish the sentence, telling what happened as a result of the horse not being fed. Each student should add to the story, beginning with the word "so" and describing yet another consequence. Answers should be creative and exaggerated. For example:

"The king's servant forgot to feed the horse..."

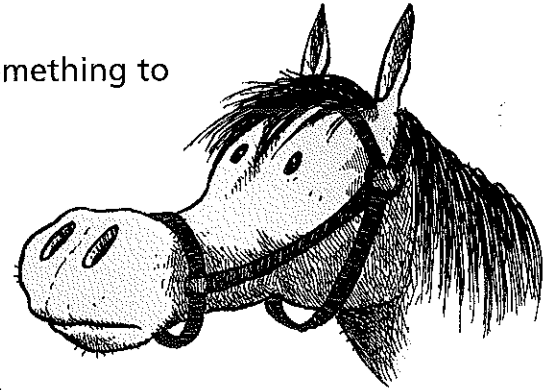
"So the horse wandered into the countryside to find something to eat..."

"So he ended up lost in the mountains..."

"So he accidentally fell down a steep mountainside..."

"So he made a loud, crashing sound..."

"So the people in the valley below thought their village was being attacked..."



Continue until every student has had an opportunity to contribute to this tale of consequences. Wrap up by providing a suitable ending, also beginning with, "So..."

**Other possible story starters are as follows:**

- *The cat-sitter left the back door open...*
- *My neighbor refused to walk his dog on a leash until...*
- *Messy Mrs. Muttonhead never brushed her poodle's head...*
- *Idle Mr. Adelaide forgot to have his poodle spayed. Now he has oodles of poodles...*
- *Lazy Jane wouldn't train her pup, Shane (who was part Great Dane). He jumped all over everyone who knocked upon their door. One morning, a man came to fix Jane and Shane's leaky roof...*

### **Variation:**

Give students practice in computer skills by having them type out their portion of the chain story and e-mail it to a classmate until everyone has had a chance to contribute.

### **Extension:**

What happens when someone demonstrates good character through an act of charity, citizenship, loyalty, courage, respect, or responsibility? Play a game of "Pay It Forward" by having students generate a chain story of positive outcomes that started with one simple act. Possible story starters:



- I introduced myself to the new girl in class...*
- I smiled and waved to my neighbor...*
- I picked up a piece of litter in the park...*
- I stuck up for my friend...*
- I gave my week's allowance to a fund for needy children...*

