



Marley & Me

LIFE AND LOVE WITH THE WORLD'S WORST DOG

Discussion guide developed by Heartland Truly Moving Pictures to accompany *Marley & Me*, a Truly Moving Picture Award-winning film. A Truly Moving Picture Award winner is a film that unlocks the vast potential of the human spirit and enables us to view stories that display courage, integrity and hope, taking entertainment to a higher level.

www.TrulyMovingPictures.org



One Film Can

Heartland Truly Moving Pictures, a non-profit organization, recognizes and honors films and filmmakers whose work explores the human journey by expressing hope and respect for the positive values of life. We believe that one film can move us to laughter, to tears, or to make a difference. *Marley & Me* is a movie that demonstrates that *One Film Can*.

Synopsis

As the snow falls on their wedding night, newlyweds John and Jenny Grogan (OWEN WILSON and JENNIFER ANISTON) decide to leave behind the harsh winters of Michigan and head south to begin their new lives in West Palm Beach, Florida. They obtain jobs as journalists at competing local newspapers, buy their first home, and begin to make their way through the challenges of a new marriage, new careers and, possibly, the life-changing decision to start a family.

Unsure of his preparedness for raising children, John confesses his fears to his friend and fellow journalist Sebastian, who comes up with the perfect solution: John should get Jenny a puppy. "There's nothing to it," says Sebastian. "You walk 'em. You feed 'em, you let 'em out now and then."

Then came Marley.

The Grogans adopt the cute, twelve pound yellow Labrador, who in no time at all, grows into a 100-pound steamroller of unbridled energy that turns the Grogan home into a disaster area. He flunks obedience school, chews off dry-wall, takes a bite out of the sofa, overturns garbage cans, steals a Thanksgiving turkey, consumes pillows and flowers, drinks toilet water, and chases the UPS guy. Even a newly-purchased, expensive necklace isn't safe from Marley's voracious antics.

Amidst the mayhem he generates through the years, Marley sees the Grogans through the ups and downs of family life, through job and home changes, and most of all, through the myriad challenges of a growing family. As John and Jenny come to realize, Marley - "the world's worst dog" - somehow brings out the best in them.



Marley & Me is based on the book of the same name by columnist John Grogan. Grogan wrote the non-fiction book based on thirteen years of life with Marley, a rambunctious yellow Labrador. He was inspired to write the story after receiving an outpouring of responses from readers of his column when he wrote a eulogy in the “Philadelphia Inquirer” for Marley after he died.

This poignant story is one with which many can identify, whether or not they have a pet. More than simply a story about having a pet, it is a story about having a family.

Discussion Questions

- If you have read the book *Marley & Me*, discuss the similarities and differences between the book and the movie. How did these differences impact your movie-viewing? Were there certain scenes in the movie that impacted you differently than the scenes in the book or vice versa? Why?
- *Marley & Me* was John Grogan’s first book and it remained number one on the “New York Times” Bestseller list for 23 weeks in 2006. Since its debut, Grogan has developed an adaptation of *Marley & Me* to engage younger audiences ages 8-13: *Marley: A Dog Like No Other*. These adaptations can be good ways to talk with young people about the loss of an animal or even a loved one. If you saw this movie with children, how did they react? Did the youth react to the same instances in the movie that moved you? Why do you think this is?
- What about the story most spoke to you? Was it the relationship between Marley and John, or the relationship between John and Jenny? Why?
- In what ways did Marley bring John and Jenny closer to one another and help grow their relationship? Identify certain instances from either the book or the movie as you discuss this question.
- How do you think John and Jenny’s relationship would have been different without Marley?



Marley ... taught me about friendship and selflessness and, above all else, unwavering loyalty. *Marley & Me*, John Grogan, p. 279

While *Marley & Me* is a story about love and family and can appeal to everyone, it is undeniably a story that has strong appeal for those who are pet owners.

Use the following questions to discuss pets and the impact they can have on the lives of individuals and families.

Discussion Questions

- Marley is credited in the book and movie titles as being “The World’s Worst Dog.” Do you agree with this sentiment? Have you experienced a dog like Marley? Take this time to share some of your favorite pet memories, whether they are sweet or terrible.
- Grogan describes in the book that the destructive qualities Marley had were made up for by the affection and loyalty he shared with the Grogan family. Is this true with your pet? What bad qualities does your pet have? What traits does your pet have that make up for these bad qualities?
- Did you grow up having a family pet? If so, was having a pet as an adult a different experience? Likewise, if you did not have a pet as a child, is having a pet as an adult what you envisioned?
- Have your pets taken on the personalities of your family? In what ways do your pets act as the rest of your family?
- For those without pets, have you ever been confused by the relationship that pet owners often have with their pets? If so, did *Marley & Me* help you better understand that bond between humans and their pets? How?
- Have you ever had to deal with the death of a pet like the Grogan family experienced? How is euthanasia for different for animals, particularly those that are an integral part of a family such as Marley, than for a person? Do you agree with euthanasia? Why?



Marley & Me is a movie that, among other things, celebrates the impact that animals can have in the lives of people. If you were inspired by Marley and the impact he had on the Grogan family, you might want to take action in your community so you can make sure that as many people as possible can benefit from the impact animals can have on them.

Here are some ideas to help you get involved in your community AND spend some time with animals that can bring some much needed joy into your life.

Take Action

- Volunteer at your local animal shelter.
Learn more about shelters in your area and how to get involved starting with the Humane Society, www.humanesociety.com, and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, www.SPCA.com.
- Become a caretaker for foster animals.
You can help nurture these homeless animals in need of a home until they find their permanent families. Learn more about becoming a foster home for animals at www.pets911.com/services/foster/whatisfostering.php
- Train your pet to be a therapy animal if your pet enjoys the company of people.
Therapy animals can be used in nursing homes, schools, and other institutions. Visit www.dogplay.com/Activities/Therapy/join.html to search therapy programs in your area.



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Truly Moving Moments

Marley & Me has been honored as a Heartland Truly Moving Picture Award-winning film. This award was created to honor films released theatrically that align with Heartland’s mission to recognize and honor films and filmmakers whose work explores the human journey by artistically expressing hope and respect for the positive values of life.

These award-winning movies are made up of moving and inspiring moments – those moments that cause you to think, see something in your life differently, be inspired to do something. It’s what makes the movie and its message remain with you well after you’ve left the theatre.

Think about *Marley & Me*. What were the moments that stood out to you? How did they make you feel? How will they cause you to think about things differently in the future? Share those Truly Moving moments with others at www.TrulyMovingPictures.org. Simply create a membership or login if you already have one and then search the movie list for *Marley & Me*. You can leave your review of the movie or thoughts about your Truly Moving Picture in the “Thoughts and Reviews” section.



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