



Unit 2 - Non-Chronological Texts

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1

This Happened

There was once a boy who turned into a dog. This doesn't happen every day. If it did, the world would be soon short of boys and overrun with dogs. What's more, it would hardly be a story worth telling. It would be like: There was once a boy who had his breakfast; or: There was once a boy who walked down the road. Luckily – for storytellers, at least – that isn't the way of it. There are common happenings in this world, and uncommon. So...



There was once a boy who turned into a dog. The boy's name was Eric Banks; he was ten years old. The dog he turned into was a Norfolk terrier.

Eric Banks was a quiet boy, most of the time: 'steady worker', 'methodical', his school reports said. He was the kind of boy who didn't make a rush for the back seat of the bus, or go mad when the first snow fell. He was left-handed, right-footed and rather small for his age. He had freckles.

Eric lived with his parents and his little sister; her name was Emily, she was three. His dad was a postman; his mum had a part-time job in a shop. Eric himself had a paper-round which he shared with his friend, Roy Ackerman. (Actually, he was too young to have the round. It belonged to his cousin. But she had broken her arm, and Eric's dad was a friend of the newsagent...so, Eric was standing in.) Eric first turned into a dog a little at a time in his own bed. His parents were downstairs watching television. His sister was fast asleep in the next room. The time was ten past nine; the day, Wednesday; the month, June. Until then it had been a normal day for Eric. He'd done his paper-round with Roy, and gone to school. He'd had two helpings of his favourite dinner.

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He'd played with Emily before tea, and Roy after. He'd watched television, had a shower and gone to bed. Now he was in bed and turning into a dog.

It happened like this. Eric was lying on his side with his eyes closed. He was almost asleep. Suddenly, he felt an itch inside of his pyjama jacket. This – although he didn't know it yet – was the fur sprouting. He felt a curious tingling in his hands and feet. This was his hands and feet turning into paws. He felt his nose becoming cold and wet, his ears becoming flappy. Eric opened his eyes. He didn't panic straight away. This was his nature, partly, but also he was still half-asleep. The thought in his mind was: 'I'm turning into a dog!'

That was another thing about Eric: he was a good guesser. When Emily first learned to talk, it was usually Eric who guessed what she was trying to say. He could guess the mood his teacher was in, just from the way she held her hymn-book in assembly. Now – on the evidence of a furry paw where his hand should have been – he guessed he was turning into a dog. He didn't suppose he was turning into a *were-wolf*, for instance, which is what Roy Ackerman would have thought. He didn't suppose he was dreaming, either, which he was not.

The time it took Eric to turn into a dog – his shape blurring and rippling like a swimmer under water – was about fifteen seconds. The time it took to become frantic was about five seconds after that. His first action was to begin scrabbling in the bed, trying to get a better look at himself. His thoughts were in a turmoil: 'I'm a dog!' A *dog!*' The next thing he did was try to get out of bed. This wasn't easy for a dog in pyjamas; besides, they were baggy on him now. Eric leapt, and landed in a heap. He kicked his way clear of the trousers and backed out of the jacket. He resisted the urge to growl when one of his claws got caught in a buttonhole. He sat on the floor and thought: 'I'm a dog!'

It was now a quarter past nine. The last of the evening sunlight was shining through the green curtains. Everything in the room – furniture and wallpaper, Eric's books and toys, his junior science kit, his clothes laid out on a chair beside the bed – was tinged with green light. Birds were chirruping outside the window. Next door, Mr Phipps was mowing his lawn. Eric got to his feet – all four of them – and walked uncertainly across the room. He put his front paws on the dressing-table and stared into the mirror. A furry, rather surprised-looking face stared back. 'I don't believe it,' he thought, and then: 'I look like a Norfolk terrier.' Eric knew a bit about dogs. He'd done a project on them with Roy in the second year.

Once more Eric sat on the floor. He was bewildered, to say the least. A confusion of questions jostled in his head: 'How did it happen? What's the cause of it? Why me?'

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He went to the window, put his paws on the sill, ducked his head under the curtain and looked out. Mr Phipps was emptying the grass cuttings onto a compost heap. A whisp of blue smoke was rising from a bonfire in the next garden along. Eric left the window open, and – with no clear aim in his mind – nudged open the bedroom door with his head. He went onto the landing. He couldn't see much – it was gloomy – but he could smell all kinds of things. There were biscuit crumbs in the carpet. There was talcum powder. He felt the urge to sniff around. Soon he came upon a chocolate button which his sister must have dropped.. She had been eating them earlier this evening. Eric studied the button. At that moment the thought in his mind was: 'Being a dog might not be *all* bad.' And he ate it up.

2

Shoo!

Eric sat at the top of the stairs. He had sniffed around for other chocolate buttons without success. He'd been tempted to try his luck in Emily's room – her door was ajar as usual – but decided not to risk it. Besides, the prospects weren't good. Emily dropping her sweets was common; Emily leaving them was rare.

Now Eric cocked his head on one side. From the room below he could hear the television. In the kitchen his dad was making supper. There was a smell of coffee and cold meat. Eric felt his mouth watering, and – all at once- came to a decision: he would tell his mum and dad, that was the thing to do! After all, it wasn't as if he'd done anything wrong; wrong had been done to him.

Eric began to go downstairs. The thought occurred to him: 'I wonder what's on?' And then: 'Perhaps I can stay up, since I'm a dog.' But going downstairs isn't easy for a dog, especially an inexperienced one. Eric found his stomach was dragging on the steps and being tickled by the carpet. What was worse, his back legs kept catching up with his front. On the last few steps he took a tumble, skidded on the hall mat and bumped into the coat-stand. After that, the sitting-room door opened, the hall light went on – it was gloomy there, too – and Eric's mum appeared. Mrs Banks looked down at him. 'Charles!' she called. 'We've got a dog in the house!'

A moment later Mr Banks appeared in the kitchen doorway. He saw a worried-looking Norfolk terrier on the hall mat. (Mr Banks knew about dogs. He was a postman, remember.) He crouched down and held out a hand. 'Now then,' he said; 'how did *you* get in?'

Eric peered up at his parents. He was surprised to see how enormous they were.

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Their feet were huge; their heads reached up near the ceiling. And he was surprised that they didn't know him. Of course, there was a good reason for this, but even so... Eric advanced towards his father's outstretched hand and began to speak. 'I didn't get in, Dad – it's me, Eric – I've turned into a dog!'

Well, that's certainly what Eric meant to say. It's what was in his mind. However, what came out was just a string of barks and yelps. Eric tried again. It was no use. The trouble was, he had the brains of a boy, the thoughts of a boy, but the vocal chords of a dog. Mr Banks patted his head. It occurred to him that he had seen this dog before. Its expression was...familiar.

Now Eric, in desperation, began prancing about. He had the idea of somehow *miming* who he was, or at least showing his parents that here was no ordinary dog. The effect was convincingly dog-like. Mrs Banks patted him also. 'It's almost like he was trying to tell us something,' she said. (She was a good guesser, too; unfortunately, on this occasion, not good enough.)

'Yes,' said Mr Banks. 'Perhaps he's trying to tell us how he got in.' He took hold of Eric by the scruff of the neck and began leading him towards the door. 'Come on, out you go!' Eric didn't like the sound of this. He barked and whined. He dragged his feet. 'Sh!' said Mrs Banks. 'Bad dog – you'll wake the children!'

'I *am* the children!,' barked Eric, 'or one of them – or I was!' He struggled on a little longer. Then, sensing the hopelessness of the situation (he could hardly bite his own father), Eric gave up. He allowed himself to be led from the house and down the front path. Mrs Banks went on ahead and opened the gate. Mr Banks pushed him out onto the pavement. 'Off you go,' he said, and clapped his hands. 'Shoo!' Reluctantly, Eric shuffled off a few steps, then sat down. When his parents' backs were turned, he pushed his head through a gap in the fence. He watched them as they returned to the house. He heard his mum say, 'I wonder how he *did* get in?' He saw the front door close.

Eric rested his muzzle on the bottom rail of the fence, and felt hard done by. A warm breeze ruffled the fur along his back. Garden smells assailed his nose. He pricked his ears to catch the distant chiming of an ice-cream van. Someone across the road was playing a piano; someone was laughing. Eric stared forlornly at his own front door. He began to think of ways to get back in.

Just then a young cat came sauntering round the corner out of Clay Street. The cat saw Eric and Eric saw the cat more or less at the same time. The cat, though inexperienced, knew what was called for: it turned and ran. Eric didn't hesitate either. Here he was, a dog; abandoned on the street by his own parents *because* he was a dog. What else could he do? It wasn't his fault. He ran after the cat.

Choosing a Dog



Getting a dog for the first time? **STOP!** Think! Thousands of dogs are abandoned by their owners every year because the owners didn't consider what would be involved. Here are some questions to ask yourself:

- Does everyone in the family want a dog? Sit down first and discuss who will exercise it, etc.
- How old are the children in the family? If children are under six it may be difficult for them to understand the animal's needs: e.g. to sleep for long periods, to feed undisturbed, etc.
- Will the dog live in the house? A dog that is confined to the back garden is not being treated as a family pet: he will become bored, lonely, may bark all the time and may try to escape. A live-in dog that gets plenty of outdoor exercise is a much happier animal.
- Is the garden secure? Your dog will probably spend a lot of time there, especially in the summer. If he escapes he may be killed or injured.
- Have you thought about the cost? Dogs are very expensive. They need food, injections, vet care when they are ill and looking after when you go away. That is on top of items such as beds, feeding bowls and leads, etc.

If you have carefully considered all of the above and are prepared to welcome a dog into your home, then you and your family are set to begin a rewarding relationship with your new pet. You will need to research the various breeds available in order to pick the one best suited to your family's needs.

A Guide to Dog Breeds

IRISH SETTER



General Appearance:

Stands over 40 cm tall at the shoulder. The dog has a glossy rich red coat which is longer on the ears, chest and tail.

Care:

The coat needs weekly brushing to avoid knotting. The Irish Setter likes lots of exercise and needs long walks. It often requires more training than many other breeds.

Did You Know?

The first Irish Setters were not plain red, but red and white.

BASSET HOUND

General Appearance:

It is a short-legged dog standing about 25-30 cm tall at the shoulder. It has very distinctive long ears, a long nose and is usually brown and white in colour.

Care:

The Basset Hound is a natural hunter and should never be allowed to roam without supervision. When there is nothing better to do, Bassets sleep and do not mind being left alone. They like food but not necessarily exercise. They are a great dog for adults and children of all ages.



Did You Know?

The Basset's nose is second only to the Bloodhound for trailing ability.

ST BERNARD



General Appearance:

Powerful, tall, heavy and muscular, it stands about 65 cm or more at the shoulder. It has a large, powerful head and an intelligent expression.

Care:

St Bernards need lots of room and exercise. Their size could lead to an unintentional accident while playing. If you have space and time to exercise your dog then St Bernards make good house dogs.

Did You Know?

St Bernards are used in Switzerland to find people who have been buried in snowfalls

COLLIE

General Appearance:

About 60 cm at the shoulder, the Collie is lean and active. Most Collies are black and white although some also have brown on them.

Care:

The collie is an alert watchdog, very protective of his family, although he is not an aggressive dog. Both rough and smooth coats need weekly brushing. Renowned for his loyalty, the Collie makes a great companion and friend.



Did You Know:

Collies are the original sheepdogs and are often used to work on farms.