

A Dog's Life

A celebration of our best friend



Hannah Dale

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Introduction

They are our best friends, confidants, companions, guardians, family members and playmates. They instinctively know how we are feeling and have an incredible ability to cheer us up when we feel down, or share in our delight when we are happy. What's more, they invoke in us the most powerful feelings of love and affection that are always reciprocated wholeheartedly. The relationship between us and our dogs, and our ability to communicate with one another, is as unique as it is remarkable, and it's fascinating to think about how this bond originally began to form many thousands of years ago as our hunter-gathering ancestors first made friends with wolves, never imagining we would go on to forge the relationships we have today.

My first step in researching this book was to speak to as many dog owners as possible to get a feeling for the personality and nature of each breed. This proved to be utterly fascinating – the passion and love each owner has for his or her favourite cannot be overstated. It quickly became clear that there is a perfect dog for everyone, whether your idea of heaven is to be out in the fresh air from morning until noon, or if you prefer to be snuggled quietly indoors enjoying some home comforts.

When I asked the question online, 'What are the three words that best describe your dog?' the response was overwhelming and I soon had thousands of replies, with the most diverse and wonderful array of adjectives as well as many photos of much-loved dogs, stories and anecdotes. It was so inspiring to read all of these passionate messages, and I became quite addicted. I spent most of our family holiday with my head in my laptop recording each of the 6,000 responses in a notebook for future reference. The words you see at the top of each page describing the character of each breed are taken from this work – who better to describe the breed than the people who know and love it best? I returned to my notebook each time I started work on a new breed and tried to immerse myself in the comments and words describing the dogs, spending time with the real thing too, where possible. I kept trying to pick a favourite breed, but became so involved with each new one that I kept changing my mind.



The most common word people used to describe their dog, regardless of the breed, was 'affectionate', and this probably best describes why we are so attached to our dogs. They provide us with unconditional affection and love. The need to be needed is irresistible and it's not hard to see why we humans desire these relationships, unhampered by the complications often accompanying our human ones. There's evidence to show that we choose our dogs in a

similar way to how we choose partners, love them in the same way we love our children, and even that dogs actually do look like their owners! There is little wonder that our dogs play such an important role in our lives.

This book has been an absolute pleasure to research, write and paint. I have always loved painting animals of any kind, and naturally dogs have featured heavily in my work over the years, but it has been quite an education to be focused solely on one kind of animal for so long. It's hard to imagine an animal that embodies so much personality and character as a dog, and the challenge for me was to interpret this in my paintings. I hope that I have done justice to your favourite breeds and captured some of the personality that is so abundant in our canine companions. Lastly, I owe an enormous debt of gratitude to all of my family and friends who allowed me to paint their gorgeous pooches. Thank you!



Companion Dogs





Bichon Frise

Nosy • Sociable • Alert

The diminutive white Bichon is often mistaken for a Poodle with its fluffy, powder-puff coat, but is a very old breed in its own right. As is often the case, its exact origin isn't known, but it is thought that it is related to other similar dogs such as the Maltese and the Bolognese, and that it hailed from the Mediterranean, being transported to other countries along the trade routes taken by sailors. The Bichon is a happy little dog, affectionate and gentle and loves to play. It is not aggressive so makes a wonderful family pet. It is very energetic and needs a fair amount of daily exercise.

