

Skill – Reading Comprehension

A Chat with Dog Trainer Gail Mirabella

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Gail Mirabella used to train her dogs to do tricks when she was a kid. Eventually, her hobby turned into a career. Today, Mirabella works as a dog trainer for Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey circus. Backstage before a recent show, she talked to Time Magazine Kid Reporter, Cameron Young, about why she chose this career path, how the dogs are trained and her overall love for dogs.

Reporter: Did you always want to be a dog trainer in the circus?

Mirabella: When I was a little kid, I think I was about 9 or 10. I did my first dog show, a kid's dog show, and I actually took first place with the best tricks. From then on, I kind of realized I wanted to work with dogs, but who would have thought I'd be in the circus?

Reporter: Did you have any dogs growing up?

Mirabella: Absolutely. I had a white shepherd when I was a little baby. And then when he passed away, we got a couple of family dogs. When I was 14, I got my first dog for myself for my birthday. He was a big shepherd and reminded me of the shepherd I had when I was a baby. That dog actually lived to be 14 years old, and he went to college with me too.

Reporter: How long does it take to train a dog?

Mirabella: That depends on the dog. For some of the dogs that I rescued or adopted, it may take up to a year. First and foremost, I develop a bond with the dog. I become like their best friend. I have thirteen dogs and I let them all play together, but I do a lot of individual work with each dog. They know that I am the one in charge because I do all the feeding, and it keeps everyone pretty well balanced.

Reporter: If you weren't a dog trainer, what would you be?

Mirabella: A dog. Just kidding. I would probably still work with animals. I would probably be a dolphin trainer.

Read the story. Use the information in the story to answer the questions below.

1. What made Gail Mirabella decide she wanted to work with dogs?

- A. She joined the circus
 - B. She took first place in a kid's dog show
 - C. She didn't have any dogs when she was little
 - D. She always knew she would be in the circus
2. Gail got a shepherd for her 14th birthday.

2. Why might this be a special gift?

- A. She had never had a dog before
- B. She loved dogs
- C. She knew she would work for the circus
- D. It reminded her of the shepherd she had when she was a baby

3. How long does it take to train a dog?

- A. One week
- B. One month
- C. One trick
- D. It depends on the dog

4. How do the dogs know that Gail is in charge?

- A. She is the one who feeds them
- B. The dogs will listen to her
- C. There are thirteen other dogs
- D. She wears a clown outfit

5. How can you tell from the story that Gail really loves dogs?

- A. She had thirteen dogs when she was a baby
- B. She made a joke that she wants to be a dog
- C. She can bark like a dog
- D. She is very serious

