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WWW



Virginia Woolf

# Flush

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1 The pictures below show three different types of dog. Match the dog to the picture.



1. spaniel    2. bloodhound    3. greyhound

2 The following description is about a dog called Flush that you will read about in the story. Check the meaning of the underlined words in a dictionary. Then answer the questions.

Flush had a beautiful, thick dark reddish-brown coat with flashes of gold. His eyes were bright and shiny with a touch of green. His ears were long and soft and his feet were covered in fur like tiny shoes of the softest material. If we know nothing else about Flush, one thing was certain – he was an excellent example of his breed.

- From this description, which breed do you think Flush is? Choose from the dogs above.
- Have a look at the picture on page 13. Describe Flush using your own words, either in writing or by describing him to a partner.
- Do you know of any other dog breeds? What are they called in English?

3 Match the verbs in the box to an animal. Some verbs can be used for more than one animal and most of them sound like the noises the animals make. Make a note of any new words to help you when you read the story.

dash sniff whimper hum gnaw snarl whine shriek howl  
bark flutter jump buzz growl hop cry

rabbit	dog	bird	bee
.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....	.....

4 Odd one out! Answer the questions and find the odd one out. The words in this exercise are all in the story. Use a dictionary to find any new words and make a note of them.

Which of these words...

- ... is not a servant?  
a butler    b maid    c prince
- ... cannot be removed from a dog?  
a colour    b lead    c fur
- ... does not describe a smell?  
a scent    b taste    c perfume
- ... is not connected to a spider?  
a paw    b web    c crawl
- ... is not used to talk about puppies?  
a litter    b wings    c breed

5 Look at the chapter titles in the book you are going to read (a-i). Sentences 1-9 describe an event in each chapter. Can you guess what happens in these chapters?

- |                              |                 |
|------------------------------|-----------------|
| a Three Mile Cross           | f To the rescue |
| b The invalid                | g A new arrival |
| c Letters                    | h Fleas         |
| d The man with yellow gloves | i Spirits       |
| e Flush is stolen            |                 |

- Flush is surprised to see a new animal in the house.
- A London gang asks for money for Flush's return.
- Flush's new owner writes to someone.
- A well-known poet spends all her time in one room.
- Flush is worried that no one will come to rescue him.
- Flush lives happily in a small village of this name.
- There are strange appearances.
- Flush is determined to defeat his enemy.
- Insects makes Flush's life miserable.

Three  
Mile Cross

called a spaniel because it is from Spain. A fact of much greater importance is that a spaniel was not just any dog. The spaniel was a distinguished<sup>1</sup> dog. It had its place by the king's side. And when a dog is distinguished, there are rules. His eyes should not be too light in colour. His ears must be long and straight and not curled. He should be intelligent and gentle. He should have a wide forehead to show the size of his incredible brain. For a spaniel, these qualities mean everything.

Our story begins with the family of the Mitfords. Doctor Mitford came from a long line of the aristocratic family of the Mitfords of Bertram Castle in the far North of England. His wife, meanwhile, was the daughter of the Duke of Bedford. However, if Doctor Mitford had been judged<sup>2</sup> in the same way as a spaniel, he would not have had many good characteristics. His eyes were light, his ears were curled, his forehead was shallow.<sup>3</sup> In terms of his character, he drank and ate too much, and he lost most of his money on gambling.<sup>4</sup> In short, he was selfish and dishonest. Despite this, he did have one good quality. He loved dogs. His family before him owned many generations of spaniels. A tradition he continued because he bred<sup>5</sup> some of the best spaniels in the land, including the latest arrival in a litter of four handsome puppies. The exact date of Flush's birth is not known, but at some time during the year of 1842, a young spaniel called Flush came into the world. Flush had a beautiful, thick dark reddish-brown coat with flashes of gold. His eyes were bright and shiny with a touch of green. His ears were long and soft and his feet were covered in fur like tiny shoes of the softest material. If we know nothing else about Flush, one thing was certain – he was an excellent example of his breed.



Many years ago, before humans existed, the world was full of trees and plants. And where there are plants, often there is grass; and where there is grass, there are rabbits; and where there are rabbits, there are dogs to chase the rabbits. At some point in history, we know that the dogs



that chased the rabbits became known as 'spaniels', but the reasons for this are not so certain. Let us start then with the land of Spain. Some historians say that as the rabbits dashed here and there across the fields people used to shout '*Span! Span!*', because *span* is the old Spanish word for rabbit. So the land became known as *España*, or 'rabbit land'. And the dogs, with their long fur and their long ears, were known as spaniels.

Others say that this is nonsense. *España*, they say, comes from a northern word meaning 'border'. It has nothing to do with romantic ideas about rabbits or dogs. However, let's not become fixed on a name. Most people agree that the spaniel is

1. **distinguished** : famous or admired.

2. **judged** : to think better or worse of someone.

3. **shallow** : not deep.

4. **gambling** : to put money on something you think will happen (for example: in a game or a race).

5. **bred** : (to breed) to produce animals from a male and a female.

The first three years of Flush's life were passed happily at a small cottage in a village in the South of England called Three Mile Cross with Doctor Mitford's daughter, Miss Mitford. As I have already mentioned, Doctor Mitford did not know how to spend his family's money wisely. He now had just one servant and the furniture in the house was old and in need of repair. In the afternoon, Miss Mitford used to read to her father or play cards with him. Then, later, when her father was asleep, she wrote for hour after hour, trying to find the money to pay the bills and pay back the debts the family owed.<sup>6</sup> Once all of this was done, there came the moment in her day that she looked forward to the most. It was the moment when she could push her papers to one side and take her hat from the hat stand. Miss Mitford's appearance changed almost immediately. Her eyes were alive and her face looked like a new adventure might start. She put her umbrella under her arm and she called Flush to her side.

Flush watched how his mistress sniffed the air as soon as they stepped outside for their walk together across the fields. He saw how relaxed she was as she felt the wind on her face. He ran and jumped excitedly beside her because seeing her happy made him happy. He felt every part of the path with his paws. Here it was hard, there it was soft. He smelt the flowers, fresh from the rain and the sweet smell of beans<sup>7</sup> growing in the fields. He knew they were closer now to the place where he could run. In the distance he could smell something else. Was it a rabbit? Was it a fox? And then, off he went, far from Miss Mitford. He flashed<sup>8</sup> like a fish through the long grass. He ran further and further away. He heard the cries of ancient men pointing at rabbits and shouting: 'Span! Span!' He dashed this way and that, he ran and played. And then he heard his

6. **owed** : had to pay back because they had borrowed money.

7. **beans** : small green vegetables that grows on tall sticks.

8. **flashed** : moved very quickly (like a 'flash' of light).





mistress calling. The spell was broken and he returned once again to the village of Three Mile Cross.

Once, on one of these walks, he became lost in the bushes<sup>9</sup> and he did not come back for a long time. A new scent was in the air! He did not understand this new curiosity, but he knew he must follow the scent and find its owner. A few days later, Miss Mitford received some news. Flush, although he was still very young himself, was going to become a father of a litter of puppies.

Now, it is important to remind the reader that this is the biography of a dog. If Flush had been a man, there might need to be a little more explanation as to why and how he had become a father. If Flush had been a woman, the news would have been shocking. Indeed her name might be deleted from this page. But Flush was a dog, and a dog that can produce a good litter of puppies is excellent business.

A local doctor, who had a female spaniel of his own, asked Miss Mitford if he could buy Flush. Miss Mitford refused, even though she had not bought a single hat or even a pair of gloves in four years.

'No,' she said. She could not sell Flush!

To even think of selling Flush was impossible. Flush was a rare type of dog and he did not have a price. However, in her heart, Miss Mitford knew that things were about to change, and perhaps for a friend he would make an excellent gift. Moreover, this friend was no ordinary friend, but a wonderful intelligent, sensitive friend. She was a friend who was living in the back bedroom of a house in London, in Wimpole Street, where she stayed for months in this one room. This lady, this kind friend, needed a companion.<sup>10</sup>

These were the thoughts of Miss Mitford as she sat quietly one morning in the room of one of England's best loved poets: Miss Elizabeth Barrett.

10. companion : someone to be with him/her for company.

9. bushes : short thick plants or small trees.

**THINK!**

In Chapter 1, dogs and humans are compared to each other. Some characteristics are similar, but others are different. Find adjectives to describe: Miss Mitford, Doctor Mitford and Flush.

Which do you consider to be positive or negative characteristics?

- selfish dishonest lazy hardworking soft gentle
- generous adventurous kind intelligent

Think about the value of equality. Find the word in a dictionary and write a definition. Do people think men and women should behave differently in certain situations? Give examples.

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