

Marley & Me

LEVEL 2

LEVEL 2

A young husband and wife buy a puppy and call him Marley. Marley gets bigger and bigger, and he is not an easy dog. He eats everything. He breaks things. He doesn't listen. But he loves John and Jenny and they love him. Is this really the story of the world's worst dog?

Series Editors: Andy Hopkins and Jocelyn Potter

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Marley & Me

John Grogan

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Introduction

A dog isn't interested in fast cars or big houses or expensive clothes. Give a dog your love, and he will give you his.

Marley and Me is about a dog, but it is also about a family and their love for their dog. Marley. John Grogan and his wife, Jenny, are young and in love. They have good jobs on newspapers. Then, one day, they go out and buy a puppy. From that day, their lives are never the same again.

Marley is not an easy dog. He isn't obedient and he doesn't listen. He pushes things off tables with his strong, heavy tail, and he eats everything—flowers, pens, and bottle tops. He goes crazy in thunderstorms, and he breaks things in the home.

But life with Marley is never boring. Many funny things happen when he is there. And, most important, he brings John and Jenny a lot of love. He helps them understand the important things in life.

The story follows Marley's life from a puppy to an old dog. In that time, we see many changes, not only in Marley but in the family, too. At the start, John and Jenny are living in a busy city in Florida. Thirteen years later, they have three children and are living a quieter life in Pennsylvania.

John Grogan worked on newspapers for more than twenty-five years. When he wrote funny stories about Marley, readers wrote to him about their love for their dogs—and their problems, too. Later, John made his stories into a book, *Marley & Me*. Then, in 2009, a film company made a movie of the book, with Jennifer Aniston and Owen Wilson. Now people around the world are enjoying the story of “the world's worst dog.” You can find out more about John Grogan—and his dogs—on www.johngroganbooks.com.

Chapter 1 The New Puppy

My name is John Grogan and I love dogs. When I was ten years old, my father gave me my first dog. I called him Shaun.

Shaun was my best friend. He went everywhere with me and he was very obedient. When I called him, he came to me. He played with me and he walked next to me without a leash. In the car, he sat next to me quietly.

After many years, Shaun died. He was fourteen years old. By that time, I wasn't a boy; I was a man. I had my first job.

Shaun was a great dog. I wanted to get another dog, but it had to be as wonderful as Shaun.



Some years later, I moved to Florida and married Jenny. Jenny and I had jobs with newspapers. We were very happy. We were young and in love, and life was wonderful.

One day, I bought a plant for Jenny. It was very large, with beautiful white flowers. Jenny loved it—maybe too much. Every day, she gave it water. In the end, the plant got sick and died.

Some days later, I woke up early. Jenny wasn't in bed. I found her at the table with a newspaper. She had a red pen in her hand.

“Jenny,” I said, “what are you doing?”

She showed me the newspaper. It was open at a page of ads.

“Look at this, John,” she said.

I saw an ad with a big red line under it:

Beautiful Labrador puppies. Five weeks old.*

“I can't forget about that plant,” Jenny said. “Why couldn't

* Labrador: a kind of large dog. Labradors are usually black, yellow, or dark brown, and are good pets.

I look after a plant? I only had to give it water, but I killed it." She looked sad, but then she smiled. "I can't look after a plant, but maybe I can look after a dog. And later, maybe I'll be ready for a baby."

I thought about that. Jenny and I wanted to have children one day, but we loved dogs, too. Our little house was a good place for a dog. We lived near a park and near a beach. And the house had a big yard with lots of trees.

"OK," I said. I put my arms around Jenny. "Let's get a dog."

So some days later, we drove to the address in the ad. The house was in the middle of some woods. A woman came to the door and there was a beautiful yellow Labrador with her.

"I'm Lori," said the woman. "And this is Lily. She's the puppies' mother."

"Where's the father?" I asked.

"Oh," said Lori. "Sammy Boy? He's—er—around here somewhere." Then she said quickly, "Do you want to see the puppies?"

Lori took us into a room behind the kitchen. There were a lot of newspapers on the floor, and a large box by the wall. In the box were nine yellow puppies.

"Oh!" cried Jenny. "Aren't they beautiful?"

We sat on the floor with the puppies. One little puppy really liked us. He climbed up our shirts and looked into our eyes.

"The puppies are \$375 each," said Lori. "But you can have that puppy for \$350."

I stood up and turned away from the puppies. Then I turned back quickly and shouted loudly. The other puppies ran away. But the little puppy ran to me and climbed over my shoes.

"That's our puppy," Jenny laughed.

I held him in front of my face. I looked at him and he looked at me. He had very large brown eyes. I gave him to

Jenny, and she held him, too.

"I think he likes us," I said.

We paid Lori for him.

"Come back for him in three weeks," she said. "He'll be eight weeks old, so you can take him then."

We thanked Lori and said goodbye. On our way to the car, I put my arm around Jenny.

"Isn't it wonderful?" I said. "We got our dog."

"Yes," she said. "I can't wait to bring him home."

Suddenly, we heard a loud noise in the woods. Something ran out of the trees—something large and yellow. It was a big Labrador. But this dog was very different from Lily. This dog was wild and dirty. It had a crazy look in its eyes. It ran quickly past us, and around the back of the house.

"I think," I said slowly, "that's Dad."



Jenny and I tried to think of a name for our puppy, but each of us liked different names.

One morning, we heard a song by Bob Marley, the Jamaican singer, on the radio. Bob Marley was dead, but people played his music everywhere in Florida. Jenny and I liked his music, too.

Suddenly, at the same time, we shouted, "Marley!"

"That's it!" I cried. "That's his name. Marley!" Jenny smiled.

Some days later, Jenny's sister called her from Boston.

"We're visiting Disney World next week with the children," she said. "Would you like to come with us?"

Jenny wanted to go to Disney World very much. "But I won't be here when Marley comes home," she said.

"That's OK," I said. "I'll go and get Marley."

A week later, Jenny left for Orlando. That evening after work, I drove to Lori's house. Marley was a very large puppy now.

“He eats a lot,” said Lori.

“Are you ready for your new home, Marley?” I said. I used his name for the first time and it felt right.

Marley sat next to me in the car. He tried to climb on me, but each time, he fell back on the floor. In the end, he climbed up and sat on me. He wagged his tail happily.

When we got home, I took off his leash. Marley began to sniff. He went around the house and sniffed everything. Then he sat back and looked at me with his large brown eyes.

I could read Marley’s thoughts: *This place is great. But where are my brothers and sisters?*

I took Marley to the garage, next to the house. It was a warm, dry room.

“Marley,” I said. “This is your room now.”

I put some newspapers down on the floor. I put some playthings down, too. Then I put some water in a bowl and made a bed from a large box.

“You’re going to sleep here,” I said. I put Marley into the box. He looked sadly up at me. I went back into the house and closed the door. I stood and listened. I could hear nothing. Then I heard a cry—and then another cry. The cries got louder and louder.

When I opened the door again, Marley stopped crying. I petted him for some time. Then I left again and closed the door. Marley started to cry again.

I was very tired, so I went to my bedroom. My bedroom wasn’t near the garage, but I could hear Marley’s cries. I felt sorry for him. His family wasn’t there.

After I got into bed, I listened to Marley’s cries for half an hour. Then I got up and went back to the garage. Marley stopped crying and wagged his tail. I carried his box into my bedroom and put it on the floor next to my bed. Then I got into bed and put my hand down into the box.

Some minutes later, Marley was asleep. I slept, too.



Marley tried to understand us.

Chapter 2 Life with Marley

For the next three days, I played with Marley. I lay on the floor and he climbed on me. He followed me everywhere, and he tried to chew on everything.

When Jenny came back from Disney World, she played with Marley, too. She held him and petted him. She got up in the night and took him outside. Most of all, she gave him food. Marley ate three large bowls of puppy food every day. He got bigger all the time. His head and his paws were very large, and his tail was thick and heavy. When he wagged his tail, he pushed everything onto the floor—magazines and glasses, and photos.

Marley loved to grab things and hold them in his mouth. He

grabbed things from the floor and from the dining-room table. He grabbed shoes, pens, bottle tops, and many other things.

"All right, what have you got this time?" I asked. When I opened his mouth, I always found something new inside.

Every morning, I took Marley for a walk on the beach. Then I put him in the garage with a bowl of water and some playthings. After that, I went to work. I always said, "Be a good boy, Marley!" Jenny came home at lunchtime and gave him food.

In the evenings, we took Marley down to the beach again. But our walks weren't easy. Marley ran in front of us and pulled on his leash. We pulled him back, then he pulled us again. He went this way and that way, and he sniffed everything.

We tried to teach Marley, "Come! Stay! Sit! Down! No!" But he didn't listen to us. He wasn't obedient. He was like an excited child. But every day he got bigger and stronger.

"I killed the plant, but I'm good with Marley," Jenny said happily.

One day, Jenny invited a friend to our house. Her friend brought her old dog, Buddy, with her. Buddy and Marley ran and played. Then they were tired, so they lay down in the yard.

Some days later, Jenny was with Marley when she said, "Come and look at this, John!"

I looked, and I saw something small and black in Marley's fur.

"Oh, no!" I said. "Marley has fleas."

They were on his paws, inside his ears, and under his tail.

"Buddy had fleas and he gave them to Marley," said Jenny angrily.

She ran out and got into her car. Half an hour later, she came back with bags of chemicals. First, she washed Marley's fur with the chemicals. Then she put him in the garage and cleaned the house carefully. I cleaned the yard. Every day after that, we looked in Marley's fur, but we couldn't see any more fleas.



Some weeks later, Jenny said, "John, I'm going to have a baby!" "That's wonderful," I said. I was very happy. We were ready for a baby now.

Then Jenny said, "But will those chemicals be a problem?"

"What chemicals?" I asked. "What do you mean?"

"Don't you remember? I used very strong chemicals when Marley had fleas. They can't be good for a baby," she said.

She talked to her doctor about the chemicals.

"It's all right, Jenny," he said. "Everything will be OK."

Jenny got up early every day and took Marley for a walk. She ate lots of fruits and vegetables. After ten weeks, she and I saw the doctor again.

"Would you like to see your baby?" he asked.

"Yes, please," we said. We felt very excited.

The doctor took us into a room at the back and Jenny lay down. He moved something over Jenny. On a machine next to him, we could see something like a small gray bag. But we couldn't see a baby inside.

"Is there anything in there?" asked Jenny.

After a time, the doctor said quietly, "I'm very sorry, Jenny. Your baby's dead."

I felt sick. I sat and held Jenny's hand. We didn't say anything for a long time. When the doctor left, I put my arms around my wife. Later, I took her home. She was very quiet in the car. Her eyes were red, but she didn't cry.

Back home, Jenny went into the dining-room and sat down quietly on a chair. I got Marley from the garage. He was very excited. He jumped up and wagged his tail. He wanted to play.

"Not today, Marley," I said sadly.

Marley ran into the yard. He came back into the house and drank water from his bowl. Then he ran into the dining-



Marley loved to chew on his leash.

“Here,” said the teacher. “I’ll show you.”

She took Marley’s leash and started to walk with him. Marley pulled the chain, and the teacher pulled him back. But then Marley pulled the chain again. This new game was great!

Then Marley saw me. He started to run to me and he pulled the teacher after him. Marley was bigger and stronger than the teacher, so she couldn’t stop him. She was very angry.

After class, the teacher said, “Your dog isn’t ready for this class. He’s too young. You can bring him back in six or eight months.”

“Are you telling us that we have to leave the class?” I said.

“That’s right,” she said. “You have to leave.”



Because Marley couldn’t go back to the class, I started to teach him at home. But it was difficult. Marley wasn’t a fast learner.

We had another problem with Marley. In Florida, there were often thunderstorms. Marley was afraid of loud noises. He went crazy in a storm. He broke things and made everything dirty.

After each storm, Marley quickly forgot about it. He was happy again and wanted to play. But in the next storm, the same thing happened. He was afraid, so he went crazy again.

We talked to Dr. Jay about the problem. Dr. Jay was young and he understood dogs very well.

“What can we do?” we asked. “When Marley gets crazy, he breaks things. One day, he’ll get hurt in a storm.”

“Marley is seven months old,” said Dr. Jay. “I’ll neuter him. Then he won’t get so excited. He’ll be a quieter, happier dog.”

I thought about that. “Oh,” I said. “I don’t really know ...”

“Yes!” said Jenny. “That’s a great idea!”

“Bring Marley here on your way to work,” said Dr. Jay. “It doesn’t take long. He’ll be ready by the afternoon. You can get him again on your way home.”

A week later, we took Marley to Dr. Jay. Marley ran from the house and jumped into the car. He was very happy. He