# **DISCUSSION GUIDE**

LILY UNLEASHED by J.D. Kloster

## Reading Activities

Reading Level Grades 5–10

### About the Novel

Lily Grabowski has a problem. Ever since her special dog and BFF, Ruger, died following their agility competition, Lily believes it’s her fault: she didn’t keep her furry BFF safe by ending his competition career after a mild heart murmur diagnosis. Now she’s living under a cloud of guilt. Then, Lily’s teacher shares her dilemma: she needs to find a home for her recently rescued puppy mill dog with behavior issues she’s fostering or face eviction. Lily sees a solution. She’ll take in this dog, use all she knows about dog training, and turn his behavior around so he’s the best dog he can be. Except, his behaviors are getting worse, not better, her nosy neighbor threatens to report his excessive barking, and her mother’s 30-day ultimatum looms large. What happens next challenges Lily’s dog smarts, her self-esteem, and what it means to be a true friend.

With humor and sympathy, Lily Unleashed tells the story of an adolescent girl struggling to make a difference for a tiny dog when things seemed stacked against them.

## Common Core Reading Activities Addressed in the Discussion Questions.

The Common Core asks students to read stories and literature, as well as more complex texts that provide facts and background knowledge in areas such as science and social studies. Students will be challenged and asked questions that push them to refer back to what they’ve read. This stresses critical-thinking, problem-solving, and analytical skills that are required for success in college, career, and life. Grade five is listed as an example. **Grades 6-10 are similar but on an ever-increasing scale of depth and breadth** based on texts, additional readings, and expectations.

### Key Ideas and Details:

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RL/5/1/)  
Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.2](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RL/5/2/)  
Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text, including how characters in a story or drama respond to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic; summarize the text.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RL/5/3/)  
Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).

#### Key Ideas and Details:

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.1](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RL/6/1/)  
Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.2](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RL/6/2/)  
Determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RL/6/3/)  
Describe how a particular story's or drama's plot unfolds in a series of episodes as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.

## Discussion Questions

* What dilemma does Lily face at the end of chapter two? What makes it so hard? Have you ever made a promise you found hard to keep? How did you handle it?
* Lily grapples with the concept of lying. When in the story did she lie? Is it ever okay to lie *for the right reason*, as Lily suggests? When? Why? Have you ever lied *for the right reason*? What happened?
* Characters in this story deal with loss in some way: Mrs. Hintzelman has lost her husband, her dog Goldie, and her children – who moved far away; Lily lost Ruger, her friendship with Emily, and is facing the loss of Cagney; Renzo moved away from his family in NY, and Emily’s dad is away a lot for work. Loss can make a person do things that might seem opposite to their character. What differences and similarities do these characters show in the way they handle loss? Have you ever experienced a deep loss and if so, how did you deal with it?
* The concept of friendship runs through Lily Unleashed. There’s a saying: *It takes a friend to be one*. How does this apply to Lily? If you ever restored a broken friendship with someone, as Lily did with Emily and Mrs. H, how did you handle it? What helped?
* The concept of the *underdog* is important in this story. Was Cagney truly an underdog? Explain. Would you consider any other character an underdog? Why.
* Is Olivia a product of her environment as Ms. Stadler suggests? (Children learn what they live). How or why?
* What role does Ms. Stadler play in this story? How does she move the story forward, especially how Lily is affected by Ms. Stadler’s underdog assignment? What is the purpose of Ms. Stadler’s quotes around her classroom? If they add to the story, tell how.
* Did the relationship between Lily and her mother change across the story? Explain?
* Renzo's family recipes seem to be very important. Do they represent something more than just a good meal? If you have family recipes that are important to your family, can you share why?
* Were Cagney’s behavior problems realistic? Do you know any dog(s) that behave like him? What would you do differently with Cagney to better socialize him if he were your dog? What other things might help his separation anxiety?
* How did Lily change in this story? What decisions did she come to make that might affect her future?
* What does the title *Lily Unleashed* mean to you?
* Is there a time in your life, when something happened, that you feel was a *mentabee,* like Ms. Stadler says? Explain*.*
* Discuss the symbolism of the *blooming flower* in this story. Is it a good symbol to use to represent what happens to Lily across this story? Why or why not?
* What kind of jobs do you see Lily doing as an adult? Why?

## IDENTIFYING THEME

Discuss the concept of theme with students:

* The message the writer is trying to convey through the story
* Theme: often is a broad message about life and how people behave
* Why it’s important – usually it’s part of the reason why the author wrote the story

Here is a partial list of themes to stimulate discussion, if needed:

Perseverance: Stories with characters who keep trying no matter what

Cooperation: Stories with characters who work together to solve a problem or achieve a goal

Acceptance: Stories with characters who respect and accept each other’s differences and beliefs

Courage: Stories with characters who overcome a fear or accept a risk

Compassion: Stories with characters who strive to reduce suffering in others

Loyalty: Stories with characters who never give up on their friends and family

Honesty: Stories with characters who recognize telling the truth is always best even when that’s hard to do

Explain that the theme is the main idea or underlying meaning of a fictional story. A story may have multiple themes. One way to determine a theme is to select a word that expresses a subject in a book and expand it into a message about life.

## Activity: Whole class

1. Discuss themes of books that have been completed as a whole-class read. Then, have individual students share their personal reading and what themes they think are explored with an example of how it plays out in their book.
2. Generate a list of subjectsthat are explored in Lily Unleashed and list on posted chart paper. (Possibilities : family, friendship, love, acceptance, hope, and loss.)
3. Divide students into small groups (pairs or triads). Assign a subject from the list on the chart to each group. Make sure all themes will be covered. Groups should create a **theme message** for Lily Unleashed. They should cite specific details and events from the story to support their theme.
4. Each group will create a poster or short slideshow on the computer with pictures and captions and appropriate music **illustrating their theme**. They should consider the theme they wish to convey by their music choice. Possible programs to use:

<https://www.google.com/slides/about/>

<https://www.canva.com/>

<https://icecreamapps.com/Slideshow-Maker/>

<https://www.nchsoftware.com/slideshow/index.html>

<https://www.4kdownload.com/products/product-slideshowmaker>

<http://www.photodex.com/proshow/gold>

<http://slide.ly/>

<https://www.kizoa.com/Slideshow-Maker>

<https://www.kapwing.com/>

1. Each group shares its results with the whole class. Discuss the effectiveness of each presentation. What elements were particularly successful in relaying the theme chosen?

## Common Core Activities - Writing

The following standards offer a focus for instruction each year to help ensure that students gain adequate mastery of a range of skills and applications. Each year in their writing, students should demonstrate increasing sophistication in all aspects of language use, from vocabulary and syntax to the development and organization of ideas, and they should address increasingly demanding content and sources. Students advancing through the grades are expected to meet each year’s grade-specific standards and retain or further develop skills and understandings mastered in preceding grades.

### Text Types and Purposes:

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.1](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/W/5/1/)  
Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.1.A](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/W/5/1/a/)  
Introduce a topic or text clearly, state an opinion, and create an organizational structure in which ideas are logically grouped to support the writer's purpose.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.1.B](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/W/5/1/b/)  
Provide logically ordered reasons that are supported by facts and details.

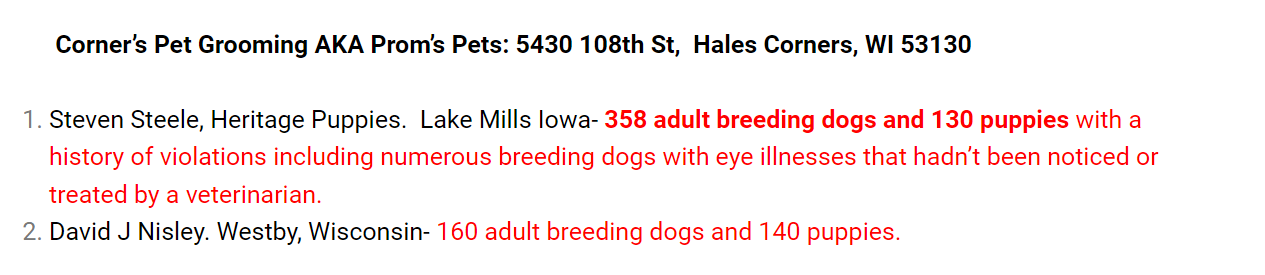
[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.1.C](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/W/5/1/c/)  
Link opinion and reasons using words, phrases, and clauses (e.g., *consequently*, *specifically*).

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.1.D](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/W/5/1/d/)  
Provide a concluding statement or section related to the opinion presented.

## Writing Activities: (All writing should use a respectful tone.)

1. **Students compose persuasive letters and/or opinion pieces** that can be mailed to the following contacts in their communities (elected officials , **owners of pet stores that sell puppies**, and newspaper editors) telling each contact why puppies should not be sold at pet stores based on what was learned from reading the book *Lily Unleased* and on the student’s own research. Students can use information from the book and from sites dedicated to ending puppy mills. These sites are listed on the website of the author of *Lily Unleashed* <https://www.emptycagespress.com/how-to-help>
2. Students can write letters using google docs or Word docs which can be cut and pasted into emails and sent directly to elected officials at <https://www.emptycagespress.com/how-to-help>. Go to the *How You Can Help* page. The following example letter supplied from the site [*https://harleysdream.org/*](https://harleysdream.org/)can be read and discussed to stimulate other ideas that can be put in these persuasive letters as well. Make a chart listing student ideas.
3. Students can also write letters directly to the breeders who operate puppy mills. You can find this information on the **Bailing Out Benji** website. Click this link to see puppy mills listed in each state. <https://bailingoutbenji.com/puppy-mill-maps/>

An example for the state of Wisconsin is outlined below. The name of the pet store that sells puppies is listed first. The name of the breeder who supplies puppies to this pet store is listed underneath by number. Full addresses are sometimes not listed, so you might have to do a google search to get the address



BEWARE: websites of puppy mill breeders are known for using deceptive marketing tactics – like showing cute puppy pictures and a bogus description of how their dogs are “treated like family.” Even if the breeder was cited for numerous violations and inhumane conditions.

On some puppy mill websites, breeders might say they work hard to correct any USDA violations reported during kennel inspections. That doesn’t change the fact that the female breeding dogs are still living in locked cages their entire life.

## ****SAMPLE LETTER TO LEGISLATORS****

The Honorable {Legislator’s Name}  
Address  
City, State, Zip

Dear {Sen/Rep Name}:

Do you love dogs? I know many of your constituents do and I’d like to take this opportunity to talk with you about an issue that is very important to me as a taxpayer and citizen of the great state of {state}.

I don’t know how familiar you are with Puppy Mills (large-scale commercial dog breeding), but the welfare of our canine companions has become a huge concern for me and many others in our state.

In addition to being a constituent of yours, I am an active supporter of Harley’s Dream, a nationwide movement created in honor of a little one-eyed Chihuahua named Harley.

Harley lived 10 years in the puppy mill, producing puppies for pet stores. He became sick and was thrown into a bucket to die. When dogs in puppy mills are no longer producing a profit, they are discarded, typically killed. Fortunately, a kennel worker pulled Harley out of the bucket and got him to a rescue group, from which he was adopted. Harley survived and went on to become the voice and face of puppy mill dogs everywhere. He spent years raising funds to rescue dogs from puppy mills and personally traveled on many rescue trips, saving and caring for thousands of dogs. In 2015, he was named the American Hero Dog for his work against puppy mills. Sadly, he passed away in 2016. “Harley’s Dream” was formed in his honor, a non-profit organization whose mission is to raise awareness and educate the public about the cruel realities of the puppy mill industry in our country.

**Did you know?** Three million animals are euthanized in U.S. shelters each year, while about two million puppies are produced by puppy mills annually. Puppy mills are located all across the country, including our state. Puppies are bred here or are shipped into our state to supply the pet stores with puppies to sell. Responsible breeders exist and they DO NOT send their puppies to pet stores to be sold. Pet store puppies ARE puppy mill puppies.

**Did you know?** If puppy mills didn’t exist, there would be 75% fewer dogs in our shelters across the country.

The puppy mill industry is currently poorly regulated by the USDA under the Animal Welfare Act. It provides at best minimal survival regulations for the commercial breeding of dogs. For example, breeding dogs can be (and are) caged their entire lives in cages no more than 6” longer, taller, and wider than they are – without ever stepping foot on grass, and most never experience sunshine. Breeding dogs can (and are) legally caged forever in dark barns or outside year-round in the elements. And all so pet stores can sell the puppies to the unsuspecting public. Don’t our canine companions deserve better than this?

The entire puppy mill industry is an atrocity that has gone on long enough. Animals, at the very least, should be respected and cared for compassionately.

While hundreds of jurisdictions nationwide, and even the state of California, have passed laws and increased regulations to reform this puppy mill industry and to advocate for animal welfare, we need improved laws in our state NOW to stop this horror

I urge you to educate yourself more on this important topic and support any legislation that reflects our concern for these dogs. Let us be the kind of state who leads the efforts of animal welfare in our country and makes the changes necessary to properly care for our canine companions! I encourage you to learn more by visiting http://www.harleysdream.org

Thank you.

Sincerely,  
{Your Name}  
{Your Address}

## Research Project/Opinion Essay

(Grades 7 and up)

Because dogs are **classified** as livestock (like chickens) by the USDA (United States Department of Agriculture), they can be locked in breeding cages their entire life. Does this treatment of dogs as livestock align with the concept of *animal welfare principles* laid out by the AVMA (American Veterinary Medical Association) listed below in letter “d”.

1. What determines if an animal is livestock? Research two topics to guide you:

* *the history of* *dogs as companion animals and service animals to humans*
* *what is livestock*?

You must decide if dogs fit the definition of “livestock” based on what you learn about their

history as companion animals.

1. As Lily did in the book *Lily Unleashed*, find and read Dr. Franklin J. MacMillan's research on the traumatic effects dogs experience from living in puppy mill cages. <file:///C:/Users/Valued%20Client/Downloads/2011%20McMillan%20Mental-Health-of-Dogs-from-Breeders%20(1).pdf>
   1. **Dr. MacMillan’s conclusions:** Substantial anecdotal evidence suggests that the welfare of dogs in commercial breeding establishments (or puppy mills) is poor, but scientific evidence has been lacking**.** By demonstrating that dogs maintained in these environments were reported to have developed long-term fears and phobias, compulsive behaviors such as circling and pacing, possible learning deficits, and are often unable to cope fully with normal existence, this study provides the first clear quantitative evidence that dogs confined in CBEs for breeding purposes demonstrate impaired mental health and, as a result, diminished welfare.
2. Possible ideas to consider: How long have dogs been domesticated? What characteristics of this species make them especially suited to live as partners with humans? How have humans benefitted from having domesticated canine companions?
3. Consider the commitment to animal welfare by the veterinary community that is listed below. Can you include any of these principles as evidence or to bolster your position?

The **American Veterinary Medical Association** has defined its commitment to animal welfare through the adoption of [animal welfare principles](https://www.avma.org/resources-tools/avma-policies/avma-animal-welfare-principles) that serve as guidance when the Association develops policies and takes action to ensure the **welfare of animals**. The AVMA, as a medical authority for the health and welfare of animals, offers the following eight integrated principles for developing and evaluating animal welfare policies, resolutions, and actions:

* *The responsible use of animals for human purposes, such as companionship, food, fiber, recreation, work, education, exhibition, and research conducted for the benefit of both humans and animals, is consistent with the Veterinarian's Oath.*
* *Decisions regarding animal care, use, and welfare shall be made by balancing scientific knowledge and professional judgment with consideration of ethical and societal values.*
* *Animals must be provided water, food, proper handling, health care, and an environment appropriate to their care and use, with thoughtful consideration for their species-typical biology and behavior.*
* *Animals should be cared for in ways that minimize fear, pain, stress, and suffering.*
* *Procedures related to animal housing, management, care, and use should be continuously evaluated, and when indicated, refined, or replaced.*
* *Conservation and management of animal populations should be humane, socially responsible, and scientifically prudent.*
* *Animals shall be treated with respect and dignity throughout their lives and, when necessary, provided a humane death.*
* *The veterinary profession shall continually strive to improve animal health and welfare through scientific research, education, collaboration, advocacy, and the development of legislation and regulations.*

1. Send your opinion essay to Dr. Robert Gibbens. He supervisors the USDA inspections of commercial dog breeding facilities (CDBFs) better known as puppy mills. Mr. Gibbens is also a licensed veterinarian and someone very familiar with the concept of animal welfare.

Dr. Robert Gibbens, DVM  
Director, Western Region  
USDA/APHIS/AC  
2150 Centre Ave  
Building B, Mailstop 3W11  
Fort Collins, CO 80526-8117

[Robert.M.Gibbens@usda.gov](mailto:Robert.M.Gibbens@usda.gov)

## Writing Stages

To write a successful **opinion essay**, make sure to follow these stages: pre-writing, writing, and proofreading.

### Pre-Writing

Before starting to write your essay, you need to gather information to support your opinion. Make sure the evidence you collect matches your stated point of view. While brainstorming and looking for arguments, try to answer these questions to get more ideas:

1. What question should I answer in this assignment?
2. What main points should be conveyed in my essay?
3. Are any of the points inconsistent or contradictory?
4. Can I improve any of my arguments?

## Writing

Organize your research following the format for a persuasive opinion essay to answer the question: **Does the treatment of dogs as livestock align with the concept of animal welfare principles laid out by the AVMA.** Decide which ideas should be mentioned at the beginning, in the main part, and at the end of your essay. Your goal – **build the strongest argument** against dogs being factory farmed in puppy mills following the format below.

**Step 1 – Introduction**

In the introductory paragraph, you need to present your subject and state your opinion clearly. Make sure it contains a thesis statement – a sentence that summarizes the main point of your paper.

There are several techniques to begin your essay, you can:

* address the reader directly;
* include a quotation, direct speech, a sentence from a book;
* start with a question or let your last sentence of this intro paragraph ask a question.

### Step 2 - Main Body

In the body of your essay, you need to support your thesis statement. Write several paragraphs, each presenting a separate point of view supported by reasons. Start every paragraph with a topic sentence – the main idea you will back up with arguments. Make sure you don't begin a new paragraph because the one you are writing right now is too long. Begin a new paragraph only when you want to discuss a new idea.

While writing, pay special attention to:

* **Tense** – normally you should use present tenses in this type of essay.
* **Linking words** – use different expressions for giving reasons (one reason for ... is / many people believe that... / since... / due to...), expressions opinions (to my mind... / I am convinced that... / from my point of view...), adding ideas (first of all.../ secondly... / what is more, …/ finally... ), etc.
* **Formal vocabulary** – do not use idioms or colloquial expressions.
* **Formal punctuation** – do not use exclamation marks, parentheses, and contractions.
* **Citing sources** where necessary. This strengthens your case.

### Step 3 - Conclusion

To conclude your opinion essay, write a paragraph where you restate your opinion using different words. You should avoid introducing a new idea or apologizing for your views. **ALWAYS HAVE A RESPECTFUL TONE**. However, to make your essay more effective, you can end by asking a provocative question or a forewarning.

### Proofreading

When you complete your essay, evaluate different aspects to make sure that your work is excellent:

1. Grammar – make sure you **use the same tense** throughout the essay.
2. Vocabulary –avoid slang.
3. Spelling and capitalization – a helpful app or program to check this is “Grammerly”.

Remember, this is an opinion essay, not a shopping list, so don’t be tempted to use your ideas in list format. Done right, your opinion essay will be a convincing piece of writing.

## Cut apart for student copies

The **American Veterinary Medical Association** has defined its commitment to animal welfare through the adoption of [animal welfare principles](https://www.avma.org/resources-tools/avma-policies/avma-animal-welfare-principles) that serve as guidance when the Association develops policies and takes action to ensure the **welfare of animals**. The AVMA, as a medical authority for the health and welfare of animals, offers the following eight integrated principles for developing and evaluating animal welfare policies, resolutions, and actions:

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* *Conservation and management of animal populations should be humane, socially responsible, and scientifically prudent.*
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