

## Greetings From America

### Lesson One

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# OWNEY THE TRAVELING DOG

## Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Participate in a grand conversation about *Owney the Traveling Dog* by Lynn Hall.
- Predict what will happen next in the story.
- Create a cause and effect chart of story events.
- Sequence story events
- Distinguish between though, through, and thought.

## Materials Needed

- Student journals
- Map of the United States
- Copy of *Owney the Traveling Dog* by Lynn Hall. If a copy of this book is not available at your local library, a fully-illustrated version may be found at: <http://www.col.k12.me.us/fms/owney/Owney%20Book/lhowneystory.htm>

Owney was a homeless dog who was adopted by the Albany Post Office in 1888. During his lifetime, Owney traveled over 140,000 miles to post offices across America. He became the US Postal Service mascot.

## Set Induction

1. Discussion: Who owns a cat or dog? Has your pet ever been lost? What were some of the concerns you had? How did you feel? How do you think your pet felt? Did you ever find your pet?
2. Transition: Today we're going to read a story about a dog who was lost in Albany, New York, in 19---. Help students find Albany, New York on a map of the United States. Calculate how many years ago the story took place.
3. Introduction: To enhance comprehension, teach students these vocabulary words: Owney, Albany, mascot. Write the following sentence on the board, and discuss with students what the underlined word might mean.

**Then James said, "Let's just keep him here. He can be our mascot. It won't take much to feed him. And he'll be good company, especially at night."**

## Activities

1. Picture Walk: Look at the illustrations and talk about what kind of dog Owney was, how the transportation and lifestyle compared with contemporary times, and what activities students think are happening to Owney.

2. Read: If a single copy of the book is available, read the story aloud to the students. Because the story is quite long, you may want to break it up into several readings. If multiple copies are available, or if students are using computers, use a Directed Reading-Thinking Activity to help students comprehend the story. Have students read one section at a time, stopping to predict what will happen next and to discuss the story. You may want to prompt students by asking questions such as:

- Who do you think put the scarf over Owney?
- What does “it was gone before he’d even tasted it” mean?
- Who will take care of Owney now?

After using DRTA the first day, have students buddy read on following days as they finish the story.

3. Respond: After reading the book, students should respond in their journals. They might write about how Owney felt at different parts of the story; where they think Owney would travel next; or how the postal service depicted in the story compares with today’s service.

4. Retelling/sequencing or Grand conversation: Using printouts of the book illustrations from <http://www.col.k12.me.us/fms/owney/Owney%20Book/osequencepics.htm>, have younger students sequence the illustrations and retell the story. Older students may have a grand conversation about the book using their journal answers as conversation-starters.

5. Choose one of the following minilessons, or design one of your own.

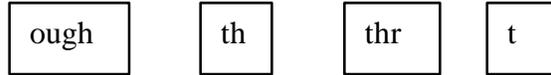
Minilesson A: Conduct a minilesson about cause and effect using events in the story. Create a cause-and-effect chart.



Discuss the story using this chart. Items might include:

- Because the weather was cold and snowy [effect: Owney sought shelter under a wagon]
- Because workers felt sorry for Owney [effect: Postal workers adopted Owney]
- Because a worker put Owney’s bag on the train [effect: Owney went for a trip]
- Because Owney enjoyed traveling [effect: Owney visited several post offices]
- Because people enjoyed meeting Owney [effect: People put medals on his harness]

**Minilesson B:** Conduct a minilesson on *thought*, *through*, and *though*. Write the three words on the board, asking children to look carefully to see how they are different. Circle the letters that vary. Then ask, “Which word says *thought*? How do you know? Yes, we can hear a t at the end,” and so on. Have students build the words using letter cards as follows:



Finally, have students decide which of the following sentences from the story are correct and which are not. (The errors below are as written in the online version of the story!)

**Owney slept thought the trip down the streets of Albany.**  
**When he got back this time, Owney was even less happy to stay home. It was as thought home was not longer just the Albany post office.**  
**Then, when he felt the train slowing for a station, he worked his head back through the collar.**  
**Even though he was very young, he understood that hunger could kill him.**  
**And the wagon kept the snow off him, thought he was already so cold and wet it hardly mattered.**

### **Resources:**

Enjoy learning more about this real-life Post Office mascot by visiting these websites:

- <http://www.si.edu/postal/exhibits/mail3.html>. This site briefly relates Owney’s story and has pictures of Owney and some of his medals and tags.
- <http://www.si.edu/postal/membership/newsv5issue4.html>. A lengthy version of the Owney story, including his death and preservation.

Find out what’s happening in other classrooms by visiting:

- <http://www.angelfire.com/ca2/owney/index.html> Read about the Owney project that began in a fifth grade classroom.