



Mountain Dog

Margarita Engle

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When Tony's mother is sent to jail, he is sent to stay with a great uncle he has never met in Sierra Nevada. It is a daunting move—Tony's new world bears no semblance to his previous one. But slowly, against a remote and remarkable backdrop, the scars from Tony's troubled past begin to heal.

With his Tió and a search-and-rescue dog named Gabe by his side, he learns how to track wild animals, is welcomed to the Cowboy Church, and makes new friends at the Mountain School. Most importantly though, it is through Gabe that Tony discovers unconditional love for the first time, in *Mountain Dog* by Margarita Engle.

A *Kirkus Reviews* Best Book of 2013

Mountain Dog Details

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Author : Margarita Engle

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From Reader Review Mountain Dog for online ebook

Saharsh N says

“How do I train a boy? I try to show him how to be joyful just walking and running and chasing roundness.” (Gabe the Dog, page 92). Mountain Dog, by Margarita Engle, is a heartwarming novel with a wonderful friendship story, a touching writing style, and amazing symbolism.

Mountain Dog is about a boy named Tony, whose cruel mother is put in prison for illegal dog fighting. Tony goes into the mountains to live with his great uncle, who has a very friendly rescue dog named Gabe. Tony has a great time in the mountains, helping Gabe with search and rescue missions. As this realistic fiction story unfolds, Gabe and Tony become best friends. But, Tony struggles with the fact that he can't stay with his great-uncle and Gabe forever.

An interesting aspect to the book, is that it took on both Tony's and Gabe's point of view. The author helps the reader acknowledge, not only Tony's feelings, but also Gabe's. Another fascinating aspect of the book is that it's written in verse form. This quick and simple style, astonishingly accomplishes intense symbolism, along with straightforwardness.

A good example of symbolism that the author uses is math. Math represents good and evil in Tony's world. Math is evil because Tony had to count the money won from dogfighting. He had to struggle with watching so many innocent dogs lose their lives. On the other hand, math is beneficial to Tony, because in order to be a veterinarian, he has to exceed at it.

In conclusion, Mountain Dog is a wonderful book, especially for readers looking for a good friendship story. Margarita Engle is a famous poet and novelist. Some of her other books include The Surrender Tree and Hurricane Dancers.

babyhippoface says

I did not expect to like this book. I looked at it as just another dog book, and I really didn't want to read it. But because it is on the 2016 Sequoyah master list, I read it over spring break. I was quite surprised by what I found. Written in free verse, it is the story of Tony, an 11 year-old boy who has been taken from his mother and his home because his mother is going to prison for her involvement in illegal dog fighting rings. Tony leaves the city and goes to live with an uncle he has never known, Tio Leo, who is a forest ranger in the mountains and part of a volunteer search and rescue team along with his dog, Gabe. Tony quickly learns to love the outdoors and the freshness of the mountains, and especially Gabe. As his relationship with his angry mother disintegrates, Tony and Tio become closer. Tio teaches him how to survive in the wilderness, and lets him come along on rescue missions. Tony blossoms into a strong and intelligent young man under Tio's leadership.

What makes this book really stand out is the style in which it is written. The first voice we hear is Tony's. We about his fears, his angers, his desires, all directly from him. Then the voice shifts to that of Gabe, the

happy-go-lucky search and rescue dog. Engle seems to channel the voice of an actual Labrador retriever for all of Gabe's chapters, as he focuses on learning by the way things smell:

I love the smell of his hands. The finger scent rhymes with good smells, food smells, friendly smells. Only his shoes hold an unfriendly odor. Bad dogs have walked near him. Strange dogs. Dangerous dogs. Their stench rhymes with bear scent and lion scent and the stink of rough places where stray dogs are caged.

I found this to be an interesting, quick, and surprising read. I will definitely recommend *Mountain Dog* to our students.

2016 Oklahoma Sequoyah Children's Book Award Master List

Nate says

This was our third read in the Oregon Battle of the Books program. *Mountain Dog* is basically an open verse narrative poem. There are chapters from the viewpoints of the rescue dog, Gabe, and the young boy named Tony who come to live with Gabe.

This is a great story about starting over in life and getting beyond the past to a new future. Pretty cool story that also gives all-new appreciation for search and rescue people and animals.

Trevor says

Mountain Dog by Margarita Engle is a relaxing and enjoyable book that talks about how a boy has to change his life when his mother ends up going to prison and he is sent to live with his great uncle in the mountains. His great uncle has a chocolate lab, who is very gentle and different from the type of dogs he spent his time with in his old life. In his old life, his mother did some very mean things to make money. For an example, she would make her money by doing fights with pit bulls in a cage. Honestly, I think that is just cruel and people should not be able to fight dogs in a cage. But, Tony had to be involved in this situation because his mother forced him into counting the money she earned from fighting the dogs. Soon, Tony's mother goes to jail and he is sent to live with a great uncle that he never knew about. His great uncle was a forest ranger that lived in the mountains and he had a dog, named Gabe, that was very intelligent. Going to live with his great uncle has changed his life forever.

I particularly like about this book is that it is very relaxing to read and overall joyful. In the book, one of the main characters is Gabe, the dog, who I personally like because my favorite pet is dogs. I have two dogs myself and I just love them a bunch. I like the idea in the book where some of the chapters are from Gabe's point of view. The characters felt real to me and reminded me of my dogs and how our relationship is similar to Tony's and Gabe's relationship. For instance, with my dogs and I like to go out and play with toys and like to chase around each other in the house. My favorite part of the story is when Tony helps out with the SAR dog training and how the process of search and rescue dogs have to train, so they will be able to find lost people in the woods. The book made me feel relaxed and I just enjoyed reading this book a lot. This book got focused on reading and trying to get to the end of the book to see what happens.

The only parts that I didn't like about the book is when Tony has to go visit his mom in prison and she is still fighting and being aggressive. One part of the book I felt relieved for a second because the mom actually started to seem that she was changing and becoming more gentle. Then the next time Tony visits his mom

she is starting to fight again and this got me disappointed.

Overall, the story was good and I enjoyed it a lot. I felt like i could sit down for an hour and read this book. I really like this book and advise other people to read it. If people enjoy books with heroic dogs, then this is the book for them. Mountain Dog is a great book and I believe that anybody can this book and enjoy it.

H says

Books in "verse" are the rage in children's publishing these days, and this is like many of them in that it is more in short sentences than in really carefully chosen verse. That said, students who like survival stories, or dogs, will like this story of Tony, a broken boy who makes a bond with a rescue dog owned by his uncle. Best for grades 4-6.

Becca says

This book is about a twelve-year-old kid named Tony. His mom was sent to prison, so he had to go live with his great uncle, Tío, who he's never met before. Tony is forced to move from Los Angeles to Sierra, Nevada. Tony seemed to always be worrying about his past but when him and Gabe, a SAR dog, become friends things start to get better. Tony makes friends with "loud mouth" Gracie, and her Grandmother, B.B., or as Tío calls her Bee. Once everything seems to be a lot easier for Tony he gets lost in the woods. Tony was taught to wait and stay where he is if he every gets lost, but he panics and starts to run in a lot of different directions. He's finally found after many hours of Gabe searching for him. Then, just when things have settled down Tío asks if Tony wants to be adopted by him and B.B. So Tony says yes because his mom had started fighting in the prison and a guard got hurt so she has to add time to how long she's going to be in jail. Finally, Tío and B.B. get married.

LaurenJ says

Mountain Dog by Margarita Engle is a novel in verse but switches to chapters when the dogs POV comes in. This is a fiction genre published in 2013. This story is about a boy named Tony who grew up with a mother who breed and fought fighting dogs. Once she was caught and sent to prison Tony's only family who he didn't even know he had Uncle Tio. He took him in. Tio is a rescue worker with a rescue dog named Gabe. Tony and Gabe form a bond which is weird for Tony because he's never seen a dog as nice, caring, loving , animals.

I would recommend this book for middle school kids with a little higher reading level. It can get confusing switching between POV's.

Noe Avila says

SPOILER ALERTHave you ever read a book about a dog who could track anyone with his nose? The genre is realistic fiction. It was a pretty good book and really fast to read. But I didn't like that there wasn't that much about the dog each chapter about the dog was at least 3 pages. But everything else was okay.

Know let me summarize the book. Tony the boy is having trouble with his mom who is in jail and has to adjust to his new life with his uncle. Gabe the dog is a rescue dog and wonders why sometimes Tony is sad and sometimes happy. Gabe also doesn't know that he is rescuing people he thinks its a game which is kinda funny. At the end Tony's uncle adopts a puppy under Tony's name so Tony could start training her to become rescue dog when Gabe retires. The setting is in Sierra Nevada where Tony's uncle lives. The theme is to let go of the past but learn from it.

A major event that changed Tony and Gabe was when Tony got lost and Gabe had to search for him because Tony was looking for the hunter's dog. Tony got scared but he learned what to do in a situation like this. Gabe got to use his skills to save Tony.

I was angry that the book didn't have that much about the dog! And the title is called mountain dog. The title is so misleading because when I get a book that has the word dog in the title I expect to talk mostly about the dog. It was like the dog was the side character of his own book.

I rate this book 3 stars because it didn't talk that much about the dog. I recommend this book to people who like emotional stories. if you are ever lost in the woods don't worry because someone will look for you. You just got to wait.

Violinist1124 says

Adore this book!

leslie delgadillo says

*****SPOILER WARNING*****Have you ever read a dog book that has the cliche the dogs was the best thing ever in the world but at the end dies?Well I have and well I thought this book was going to be the same but then read and more and more and boom!No cliche the dog lives!which is a first for me.I loved the book mountain dog cause it dosent follow the same old cliche and I like how the author puts the writing in stanzas like a poem which is my favorite kind writing and there's more but I'll save that for later on.

The main setting of the story is at a mountain where the boy Tony goes to live with his tio Leonilo or in English uncle leo and his dog Gabe after his mom gets sent to prison cause the police found out she was doing dog which is illegal.the mountain is an important setting cause its where most of the story takes place along with being Tony's favorite place cause to him it feels more like a home then his real home in the city. so Tony's lived with his mom that did dog fights which is illegal so she was sent to jail and tony was sent to live with his tio. so Tony tried not getting use to his new good life and prepared for the day he would need to get back to his bad life but slowly started to love it especially Gabe the dog who helped him through the hard times.Lastly he finds that his uncle wants him to be his son and tony finally excepts his new life and gets a dog so he can be like his uncle when he grows up.The conflict in my book is person vs self cause tony is trying to not getting use to his new life,trying to get over the fact his mom is in prison and dealing with a hard time to get over things and getting adapted to new things.The theme of mountain dog to me would be that even if many things go bad or if things are not going your way at one point and things will get better one way or another.

the point of view affected the story in many ways since it kept changing from a human to a dog; which made the story even more interesting especially since the author shows a dog's p.o.v which is Gabe's through most of the story. If it was in third person it would be harder to show the thought of the dogs and it wouldn't be as interesting. the structure of the story was very interesting cause it was very short dialogue not actual paragraphs cause it was written in stanzas so it was easy to read. all the words the author used were great cause they made you feel the characters feelings and felt like you were actually part of it. like when Gabe wanted to teach Tony how to be happy you could feel the determination in him with just a few words. I was very satisfied with the ending which was Tony's uncle adopts him and then Tony gets a dog and is happy with his new family and dog. the reason why it satisfied me was because it makes the reader think what will happen after that point like for me I thought maybe he'll grow up to be like his uncle but to another maybe he follows his mom's step without wanting to and tries not. so in many ways it can make the reader think what will happen next. My favorite part was when Tony got his own dog cause then after that you get to Tony's new dog luz, Spanish for light point of view and see that she dealt with a similar situation like Tony's and hopes to get a better life but doesn't really except it like Tony was in the beginning. that's why its one of my favorite parts.

I would rate this book 5 stars cause I because I loved it had no cliche and the way it was written. I would recommend this book to anyone who like dog books or realistic fiction or poem form written stories. but I would mostly recommend it to someone who is dealing with this kind of situation or are having a hard time and maybe need a book to relate to. this book was awesome; it was a nice very touching and just a book you shouldnt just sniff with a curiosity but smell the whole entire story.

Rachel Reinwald says

Mountain Dog by Margarita Engle.

Tony goes to live with an uncle he's never met when his mother is arrested for having a pit bull fighting ring. His uncle lives in a remote area on the Pacific Crest Trail and Tony slowly and unsteadily adjusts to a life where he doesn't have to worry about city dangers, but there are wildlife dangers. His uncle trains rescue dogs and leads search and rescue missions. Gabe, Tio's rescue dog, befriends and tries to heal Tony with his dog ways. The chapters alternate from Tony and Gabe's point of view. The writing is a little juvenile (however, I guess that's appropriate), putting it towards the 4th grade end of the Caudill spectrum, but the perspective of the dog is fun and interesting to think about. How do dogs interpret things? Do they have insight humans don't? Where do their skills fall short? Can dogs heal people? Can they find people that are lost figuratively and literally? The young writing also helps even the playing field with several tough topics: child neglect, animal abuse, gambling, dog fighting, anger, abandonment. We see realistically that it takes Tony a long time to heal and there are a lot of setbacks. He is afraid to do math because he used to be forced to be in charge of bets where the losing dogs got abused. He is afraid to love and trust Tio because he fears his situation is temporary. He doesn't want to get to know the kids at school because they might bully him or if he likes them he'll have to leave. The wilderness is another big thing to be afraid of in a world where he is scared most of the time. So the personal development of Tony is what I found the most interesting. Other than that, it is somewhat uneventful and the prose is simple but not in a beautiful way. I guess I could definitely see a 12-year-old character writing like that, so it's more realistic. But I definitely would go for Sharon Creech simple prose over this. But who doesn't love a heartwarming dog story about a boy who gets rescued from his unstable life? This is a gentle way to introduce young readers to hard concepts to talk about. For more rescue dogs, try: White Fur Flying by Patricia MacLachlan, Mad Dog by Dandi Daley Mackall, Rock Harbor Search and Rescue by Colleen Coble, For more children of prisoners, try: Ruby on the Outside by Nora Raleigh Baskin, Saving Sam by Susan Brocker, Sunny Holiday by Coleen Paratore, Bill Rules by Elizabeth Fensham, Chasing the Falcons by

Gordan Korman, and The Graham Cracker Plot by Shelley Tougas.

Tags: dog-fighting, contemporary realistic, novels in verse, rescue dogs, search and rescue, parents in prison, foster kids, wilderness, survival skills

Bethe says

I took too many notes on the greatness of this book to include here: if you enjoy dog POV, novels in verse, confused boy finding his place, figurative language and symbolism, it's here. Has a bit of a Ghetto Cowboy feel. Sentence that made me sad: "Dogs that didn't bring a profit lost more than money." Sentence that made me happy: "There's no rule that says a scientist can't also love words." Final thought - dogs can save a life in so many ways.... LOVE this book!

Debby Zigenis-Lowery says

A friend passed this book on to me because I am working on a middle grade novel in verse and therefore also studying the form (most novels in verse are for the YA age range). While this is a contemporary novel--something I seldom read--I enjoyed it.

The first plus it has going for it, is the setting--my beloved Sierra Nevada mountains.

Second, it's a good story about a boy trying to build a new life after his mother, a drug addict and dog fighter, is put in jail.

Third, I like the dual point of view. The chapters are alternately narrated by "Tony the Boy" or "Gabe the Dog." Engle does a fantastic job helping me to imagine how a dog might think.

I'd recommend this book for anyone who loves dogs or kids embarked on transformative journeys. Thanks, Pat, for loaning this to me.

Edward Sullivan says

A complicated story inventively and thoughtfully told, and certainly one fans of dog stories will thoroughly enjoy.

Shelby says

The main character in this story is a boy named Tony who struggles with moving forward from his troubled past. This novel can serve as a tool to help students understand how someone can be affected when they experience a "break" from the pattern of their normal life. Tony is ripped from his life in the city and sent to live in the mountains with an Uncle he has never met. Talk about an extreme change! I could use this story to have students examine and write about a time when they experienced a "break" from the pattern they were

used to. For example, have they ever had to move to a new place or be the new kid at school like Tony was? What was that like? Or, for another option, I could have students look at a “break from the pattern” situation from a perspective that is not their own. Then, they would write about how they might react if they were that person.
