



SQUEAK
SQUEAK



Supporting Details In this story, a boy is convinced that his dog can communicate. As you read, think about what evidence causes him to believe this.



LOOK FOR WORD NERD'S
8 WORDS IN BOLD

Squeak Twice for Yes

Is Brian's dog trying to tell him something?

BY BOBBIE PYRON | ILLUSTRATIONS BY DAVE CLEGG

The night I discovered Sherlock could talk was just a regular night. Mom was rushing around the kitchen, trying to figure out what to do with the pork chops Dad had forgotten to take out of the freezer.

"Brian," Mom cried. "Would you please call your dog? He's driving me crazy with his squeaky toy!"

Sherlock stood in front of her, squeaking his stuffed monkey over and over.

"Come here, Sherlock," I said. Sherlock **bounded** over, wagging his tail. He looked up at me with those big brown eyes. Most of

the time his eyes were happy, and sometimes his eyes said he was about to cause trouble. This time his eyes said, "Listen up!"

"What is it, Sherlock?" I asked.

Squeak, squeak—squeeeeeeeak!

"Are you trying to tell me something?"

Squeak! Squeak!

"Hey, Dad," I said. "I think Sherlock is

trying to talk to us through Mr. Squeaks." Sherlock squeaked the monkey twice.

"He's trying to tell you he wants his dinner," Mom called from the kitchen.

Sherlock yipped at the sound of his favorite word: *dinner*.

"Is that what you want, Sherlock?" I asked. "Squeak twice for yes if you want dinner."

Sherlock picked up the slobbery monkey and squeaked it twice.

"Mom! Did you see that?"

Dad watched Mom poke at the frozen pork chops.

"Brian, just feed that poor dog. And honey, call Speedy's Pizza," Mom said as she slumped down on the couch.

I filled Sherlock's dish with food.

"You want your dinner, boy?" I asked. Squeak! Squeak!

I decided to try something else. "Do you want to go to the vet, Sherlock? Squeak twice for yes and once for no."

Sherlock bit down once on Mr. Squeaks. Hard.

“Whoa! Mom! Dad! Did you see that?”

They were too busy arguing over pizza toppings to notice.

The next day at school, I found Ophelia in the library. She was easy to spot because she wears the same clothes every day—jeans, a T-shirt that says “It’s All Relative,” and a purple cap with “Dr. Who Rules” stitched on it. The kids in fifth grade think she’s weird. I happen to know she’s a genius. That’s why I’d chosen her as my science fair partner. With her brains, I actually had a chance of going to the Missouri State Championship in St. Louis. The winners would get tickets to Six Flags amusement park, which had just opened the Super Anti-Gravity Coaster. I wanted to ride it more than anything.

“Hey, Phee,” I said. “You’re coming over today to work on our project, aren’t you?”

She glared at me over the rim of her glasses. I’m pretty sure I’m the only one who can call her Phee without getting socked in the stomach. “Of course,” she said. “Our presentation is in five days.”

“Cool!” I held my hand up for an automatic high five. Ophelia rolled her eyes. Ophelia does not do high fives.

We sat cross-legged on my bedroom floor, going over our presentation on Morse code. Ophelia studied her checklist as she tapped her pencil on the side of her glasses.

“First, you’ll tell them how Samuel Morse and some others invented this method of communicating in 1836. Then, using this Morse code alphabet chart I made, you’ll explain how each letter and number is represented by a unique **sequence** of dots and dashes or clicks.

And don’t forget, the length of each character in Morse code is inversely proportional to—”

“It’s boring, Phee,” I groaned.

“It’s a perfectly good presentation,” she sniffed.

“But it’s not going to win,” I said.

Sherlock trotted into my room holding Mr. Squeaks in his mouth.

“Watch this, Phee.”

“Sherlock, squeak twice for a dog cookie.”

Squeak! Squeak!

“See,” I said. “He can talk.”

“Coincidence,” Ophelia said.

“No, really,” I said. “Watch this.”

We ran through our yes-for-dinner and no-for-the-vet routine. For extra credit, I asked him if he wanted a bath.

Squeak!!!!

“Interesting but **irrelevant**,” Ophelia said.

Sherlock put his front paws on Ophelia’s knees. Squeak, squeak-squeak, squeeee, squeak!

She laughed.

“See, he’s using Morse code,” I said, half joking and half not.

Ophelia rolled her eyes.

“Right. How would a dog learn Morse code?”

“Why not?” I said.

“On *Animal Planet* they said chimpanzees, dolphins, and even dogs have been taught to ‘read’ symbols for words.”

Picking up steam, I said, “He’s been in the room with us while we’ve been working on this project. It makes total sense!”

Ophelia shook her head.

I paced around my bedroom. “Phee, do you know what this means?”



I grabbed Sherlock by his furry front paws and danced him around the room. “There’s no way we can lose now with Sherlock.”

Ophelia stuffed her notepad into her Albert Einstein backpack. “The only way we’ll win is by hard work, not a trick dog!”

“But, Phee—”

“No buts, Brian. I’ve worked hard on the research and graphs and posters. All I need you to do is give the **oral** presentation.”

“Why can’t you do it?”

She looked down at her cowboy boots. “I. Can’t. Talk. In. Front. Of. People.”

I touched her trembling arm. “Don’t worry. I have it covered.”

After she left, I studied the Morse code alphabet chart. “Maybe Ophelia’s right,” I said. “Maybe you weren’t really using Morse code.”

Sherlock picked up Mr. Squeaks. Squeak, squeak-squeak, squee, squeak!

I wrote down the pattern of his squeaks then looked up at the chart.

“I’ve got it!” I crowed. “You said, ‘One smart boy,’ didn’t you?” Sherlock squeaked his monkey twice.

I laughed and rolled on the floor with my dog. “Six Flags, here I come!”

The day of the science fair arrived. Ophelia had the charts and posters. All I had to bring was Sherlock. And Mr. Squeaks.

“I still don’t understand why we’re bringing the dog,” Mom said.

“I told you. He’s part of the presentation,” I said with a grin.

I found Ophelia setting up our table in the packed gymnasium. I hardly recognized her: She had on a dress and no Dr. Who cap.

“Wow, Phee,” I said. “You look really—”

“Don’t say a word,” she said, her face turning



as red as Mr. Squeaks’s cape. “And what’s he doing here?” she demanded, pointing at Sherlock.

Before I had a chance to argue with her again, Principal Meeks announced the beginning of the contest.

“You’re ready with your part, right?” Ophelia grew paler the closer the judges came.

“I’ve been working with Sherlock all week,” I **assured** her. “He can say, ‘Hello, my name is Sherlock’ in Morse code.”

“That’s not what I meant,” she hissed.

The judges, teachers, parents, and students arrived at our table. There must have been 30 people. Ophelia whimpered behind me.

“Ah, and what would a science fair be without a Morse code project,” Mr. Dent, the English teacher, sighed.

I smiled. “My partner and I have a very different presentation. We’ve taught my dog to



communicate using Morse code.”

“Let me introduce him.” I looked behind me. No Sherlock.

“He was just here a minute ago,” I said.

“Sherlock, where are you, boy?” I called.

A faint squeak came from under the table. I lifted the tablecloth. Sherlock was hiding with Mr. Squeaks.

I pulled him out. “Meet Sherlock, the talking dog,” I said. Sherlock looked as terrified as Ophelia.

I explained how I’d taught him to talk using different squeaks for dots and dashes. One of the judges nodded. “Fascinating.”

I sat Sherlock on the table beside the poster of the Morse code alphabet. I handed Sherlock his monkey. Someone in the back laughed.

“Sherlock, why don’t you introduce yourself?” He stared out at the crowd, frozen. Mr. Squeaks shook in Sherlock’s mouth.

“What’s the matter? Cat got his tongue?” someone called. Everyone laughed and hooted.

Sherlock squealed with fright and leapt off the table, knocking Ophelia’s graphs and charts to the floor. The crowd scattered as he flew across the gymnasium toward the doors.

“Sherlock! Wait!” I cried. “Come back!”

Ophelia **clutched** a sheet of paper, her

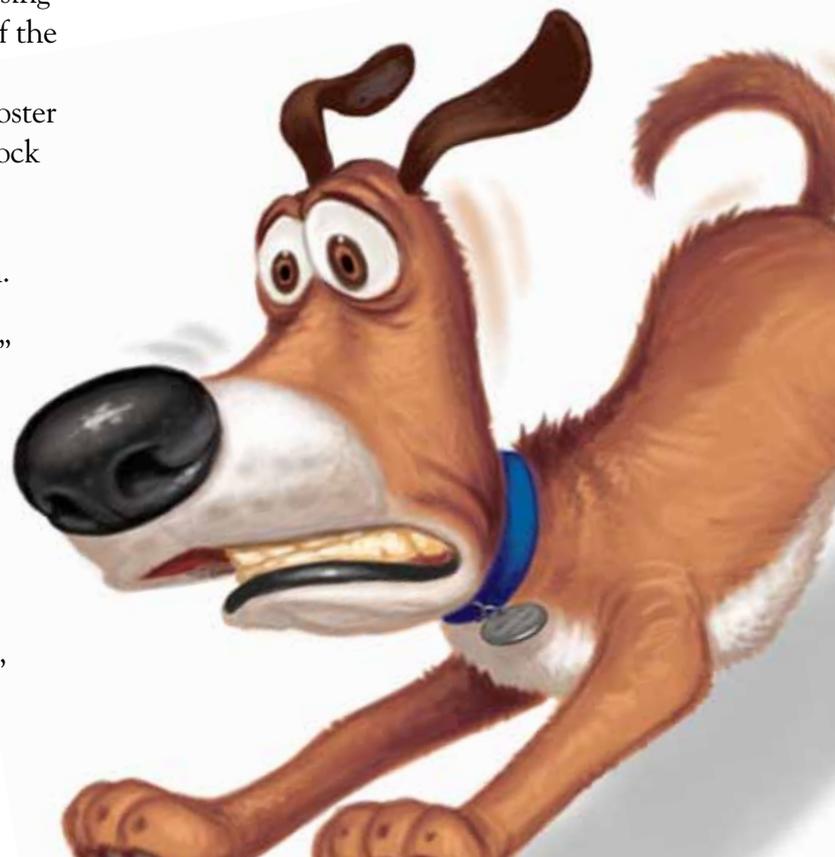
hands shaking but her face determined. “I’ll take over. Go find him.”

I almost melted in **gratitude**. “Thanks, Phee,” I said as I dashed away.

Mom and Dad **scoured** the hallways with me and called Sherlock’s name. No Sherlock. I felt sicker than sick.

Dad patted my shoulder. “We’ll find him.”

Mom put her arm around me. “I’m sorry about the project, honey. I know how much



you wanted to win.”

Tears stung my eyes. “I don’t care about winning the stupid science fair. I just want to find Sherlock.”

But Sherlock was nowhere to be found. “We’ll look out in the parking lot,” Mom said. “You go help Ophelia.”

When I spotted Ophelia packing up all our stuff, I felt even more terrible. Sherlock was worth a hundred trips to Six Flags to me but not to Ophelia.

“I’m really sorry, Ophelia,” I said miserably. “I ruined everything.”

She turned around, grinning!

“Sherlock!” I cried. I took my dog from her arms.

“He came back here while you were looking for him,” she said.

I hugged him. “You were right all along, Phee,” I said. “It was stupid to think he could talk. I guess sometimes a squeak is just a squeak.”

She ruffled Sherlock’s ears. “It’s OK. If he hadn’t run away, I’d never have found the courage to actually talk in front of people. That’s worth more than any first-place medal.”

Sherlock yipped and wagged his tail. I put him on the floor. He grabbed his monkey and squeaked it for all he was worth.

Sherlock pawed Ophelia’s leg and squeaked the same pattern again.

Ophelia grabbed a pen and scribbled something down.

Her eyes grew huge, and then she laughed.

“What is it?” I asked.

She turned the pad so I could read it:

“Sherlock sorry sorry boy.”

We both laughed. Ophelia held up her hand and we slapped the best high five ever.

“You ready to go home, Sherlock?”

Squeeeak! Squeeeeeeak! 🐾

AUTHOR CHAT



Meet Bobbie Pyron

“I think dogs are much more intelligent than we imagine,” says author Bobbie Pyron. To Bobbie (and many scientists), the idea that a dog can communicate isn’t so far-fetched.

“There are some dogs that know nearly 1,000 words,” she says.

Bobbie hasn’t taught her own dogs Morse code. She’s too busy working as a librarian and writing books. Her latest, *A Dog’s Way Home*, is one of our favorite novels of the year.

WRITE TO WIN!



Imagine you are Brian. Write a paragraph in which you explain why you think Sherlock can communicate. Use details from the story. Send your paragraph to “Dog Contest” by Dec. 15, 2011. Ten winners will each receive a copy of Bobbie Pyron’s book, *A Dog’s Way Home*. See page 2 for details.

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