

SHOW COURAGE. BE KIND.



*the*  
**MARSHALL**  
MOVEMENT



ASSOCIATION of  
PROFESSIONAL  
HUMANE  
EDUCATORS  
*Empathy through Education*

## **Marshall the Miracle Dog, the Movie** **Questions for Family or Classroom Discussion**

- Finn is the new kid at school. It has not been easy for him to “fit in” with his schoolmates.
  - Have you ever been the new kid or do you know someone who was the new kid?
  - How does it feel to be the new kid?
  - Have you ever reached out to the new kid to say hello and help him or her feel welcome? Why or why not?
  - Have you ever been the new kid and had someone reach out to you to help you feel welcome?
- It was obvious to Finn’s mom that something was going on with him. She assumed it was due to his adjusting to their move from a big city to a small town. Finn did not tell her about the bullying that was going on at school.
  - Why do you think children fail to tell their parents that someone is bullying them?
  - Do you think this is a healthy or unhealthy way to deal with bullying?
  - What are some healthy ways to deal with bullying?
- Luke and his friends, Joe, Mike, Chelsea and Gia decide they don’t like Finn and several acts of bullying follow, such as locking Finn in the laundry bin at school, taking his cell phone, and luring him to have Spartacus snap at him.
  - What is their reason for not liking Finn?
  - Do you feel their reason justifies their actions?
  - What reasons have you seen bullies use for hurting other people?
- Although Gia is a member of Luke’s group, she is not comfortable with the way her friends are treating Finn.
  - In what ways can you tell Gia is an uncomfortable bystander?
  - What does she try to do to diffuse the bullying situation?
  - Is this enough of an action to make her an ally?
  - What actions can you take when you witness bullying?

- What actions would you like a bystander to take if they witnessed you being bullied?
- Finn finally tells Drew about the bullying in the locker room.
  - What is Drew's reaction to this?
  - How do you think Finn feels after he decides to tell Drew that he has been bullied?
  - How does Grace react to Drew?
  - What does Finn learn about Drew that surprises him?
- Finn tells Drew and Grace that he is a "loser". Drew says, "Don't say that, you'll start to believe it." Grace says, "That's what the bully wants."
  - Why do you think people that are frequent targets of bullying feel like they are "losers" or that they deserve what is happening to them?
  - How can they get help in understanding that this is not true?
- Finn and Luke finally come head to head on the bridge during the search for Marshall.
  - What does Finn tell Luke that convinces him to help Marshall?
  - How does working together to help Marshall help them resolve their differences?
- Luke's mom, Sue, brings home dogs from everywhere she goes including taking them from people's yards. When she takes them from people's yards, some characters call it stealing. Sue calls it rescuing.
  - How would you describe what she is doing?
  - How does she defend her behavior to her husband, Gary, and her son?
  - What is it called when someone behaves like Sue?
  - How is this behavior harmful to the animals involved?
  - How is this behavior harmful to the people involved?
- Think about all the things you observed going on at Luke's house and list the signs of animal hoarding. The following are acceptable responses:
  - Too many animals
  - Lack of veterinarian care
  - Lack of enough food
  - Animals fighting one another for access to food
  - People living without enough money to care for themselves, much less the animals
  - Caretakers fighting amongst themselves about how many animals they have
- There may come a time when you see a chained dog in someone's yard that you feel needs rescuing because of weather conditions or lack of food or water.
  - What are some options for rescuing a dog in this situation other than taking it from the yard?

- Finn and his mom have a discussion about getting a dog. Although the discussion does not go well, why is it important for families to talk this long term commitment through before getting a dog?
- Sue becomes very upset when Finn takes Marshall from her property. She says, “What kind of horrible person kidnaps a dog from a happy home?”
  - How is what Finn does any different than what Sue does?
  - Are either of them right about taking dogs from someone’s home?
  - What should you do if you know someone like Sue?
  - What could Finn have done instead of “kidnapping” Marshall?
- When Marshall ran away from the vet’s office, he came into contact with many people in the community but no one tried to help him. They just let him roam as a stray dog.
  - Why is it important to do something about a stray animal?
  - What are some things you can do to help a stray animal?
- A young child approaches Marshall in the park. It is possible that you may come across a dog that is off-leash when you are outdoors.
  - Is there a safer way to approach a dog that is off-leash?
  - What should a person do if an off-leash dog approaches them?
- The cornerstones of Marshall’s book, ***Marshall the Miracle Dog*** by Cynthia Willenbrock, are evident in the movie as well. One of those cornerstones is empathy.
  - What characters from the movie would you identify as empathetic people? Justify your answer by describing how your chosen character acts towards others.
- Another of Marshall’s cornerstones is strength. Two types of strength are physical strength and inner or emotional strength. Look at this trait in the character of Finn and Luke.
  - What type of strength does each of them show?
  - Is the quality of strength positive in each of them?
  - Does one of these characters change the type of strength they demonstrate?
  - Is this a positive change for that character?
  - In what ways do you see yourself as physically and mentally strong?
- Finn perseveres in his effort to make the baseball team despite the efforts of the bullies to keep him off the team. Perseverance is a Marshall cornerstone.
  - What “reward” did Finn gain from persevering?
  - Can you think of a time in your life when you persevered?
  - What rewards have you gained from persevering in your life?
- Finn demonstrates courage and perseverance in his efforts to show Luke’s mom, Sue, that she is wrong about the way she thinks she is helping Marshall and the other dogs she takes from people’s homes.
  - What actions does Finn take to demonstrate courage and perseverance in this effort?
  - Does Finn require help in this effort? Who helps him and how?

- Sue must show courage and inner strength when the Humane Society comes to take the dogs away.
  - How does Sue demonstrate an attempt to seek forgiveness from those she has hurt?
  - What type of service does she do in the end to make amends for her misguided behaviors?
- Forgiveness is one of Marshall's cornerstones. Once someone has hurt us physically or emotionally it can be hard to forgive.
  - How does Finn deal with forgiveness with two of the characters from the bully group?
- Gia sought forgiveness by offering Finn an apology.
  - Do you feel Gia's apology is sincere? How do you know?
  - Do you think it is harder to forgive Luke than Gia? Describe how that might be different.
  - Think of a time you had to forgive someone for hurting you. How were you able to "let go" of the hurt?
- Kindness is a cornerstone very important to the Marshall Movement.
  - List the actions that each of the following characters demonstrate to show kindness: Finn, Cyndi, Doc Henry, Drew, and Grace.
  - What are some ways you can demonstrate kindness daily?