

# Teacher Notes:

## *Butterfly and Oscar*

Author: *Tricia Oktober*

### Synopsis

Butterfly, the little pug puppy, is introduced into a lovely home where she meets five small dachshund dogs. The dachshunds thought Butterfly looked very different but Oscar befriended Butterfly – slept with her and cleaned up the mess she made when eating. Butterfly played, as all pups do, doing what the other dogs would never do: chewing up garden plants and ruining stuffed toys. However, Butterfly grew quickly and Oscar gave up sharing their rocking-chair bed. During one night, Oscar awoke to see an ugly thing with big eyes staring at her. This frightened her so she growled, and bared her teeth. Soon all six dogs were doing the same. As this happened every night, their owner was upset.

A mirror, placed close to the floor, allowed Butterfly to see her reflection; at first she was scared as it reminded her of the ‘ugly outside thing’ she saw at night. Oscar came to her and made her accept it was her own reflection . . . she realised how very different she was!

Butterfly became reclusive, sad and stayed away from the other dogs. The owner, however, solved the problem by introducing two new pups . . . Ming and Mopsie, both little pugs. At last Butterfly accepted that the way she looked made no difference to her owner, or, all the other dogs. Oscar and Butterfly were friends again, especially at meal times.

### Before Reading:

- Collect a variety of books about dogs (both fiction & non-fiction) from your library/local library.
- Research information about Dachshunds . . . the word comes from 2 German words *dachs* meaning **badger** and *hund* meaning **hound**, and Pug . . . it’s generally accepted that the pug originated in China and made its way to England.
- Find out how the dachshund became known as a ‘sausage’ dog.
- Research/contact local breeders who may be able to share information with your class.
- Access some of the Internet resources listed below.

## Reading: *Butterfly and Oscar*

This is a very richly illustrated book by Tricia Oktober, relating an all too common topic. However, the narrative is told sensitively and the resolution leaves a positive feeling.

As this is such a delightful read, introduce the book by:-

- ❖ Discussing the cover – *Which dog is Oscar or Butterfly? What breeds are they? What could this story be about?*
- ❖ Displaying the end papers and the title page – allow time for students to comment.
- ❖ Reading the whole story, displaying each page to your class.
- ❖ Spending some time talking about the story with your class. They may wish to review specific pages, as the illustrations play a very important role in supporting the text.
- ❖ Returning to the text – this time ask students to think about the ‘feelings’ the dogs may have for each other as you re-read the story. Focus on the changes in Butterfly’s behaviour.
- ❖ Discussing Oscar’s role in helping Butterfly.
- ❖ Discussing how the owner knew how Butterfly was feeling and how to help her.

## After Reading

- ❖ After a second reading, begin discussing ‘feeling different’: for young students this is not so obvious, therefore give examples that relate to the children’s experiences. For example – different types of pets owned, size of shoes, being tall/short, colour of eyes, etc.
- ❖ Draw-up some data sheets to record this information impressing that we are all unique and ‘differences’ do not matter in our daily lives . . . refer back to Butterfly’s experience.
- ❖ Should being different mean anything?  
In this story being different made Butterfly feel ‘left out’ or worried about being different from the dachshunds. Discuss if the ‘difference’ Butterfly felt ever applies to people. Be sensitive about your students’ backgrounds or country of origin.
- ❖ Some ideas about feeling ‘different’ –
  - Often newly enrolled students feel alone in their new school – how could your students assist the new student?
  - Some students have migrated from a range of different places in the world; often language is a point of ‘difference’. Use a map of the world to identify the origins of refugees or migrants. Again be sensitive about this.
  - List some common words from the students’ home language, e.g. learn the Indonesian numbers 1-10
    - 1 - satu    6 - enam
    - 2 - dua    7 - tujuh
    - 3 - tiga    8 - delapan
    - 4 - empat    9 - sembilan
    - 5 - lima    10 - sepuluh

Use the website [http://www.seasite.niu.edu/vietnamese/vn\\_dishes/fruits2](http://www.seasite.niu.edu/vietnamese/vn_dishes/fruits2)

This site shows different fruits and how their names are pronounced in Vietnamese.

-Some classes have several families who have migrated to Australia – a chart or graph could be drawn up to list the origins of the students or their parents.

- ❖ Discuss the advantages of being ‘different’ – this does not have to be all about negative feelings! We celebrate living in a multi-cultural society where ‘difference’ has been embraced. By acknowledging different cultures of students you could celebrate their culture by researching their country, holding food tastings from around the world, researching anything special about another country as well as introducing Aboriginal language and stories.

- ❖ Divide the class into small groups and distribute the books collected from the library. This will allow time for a small group to revisit *Butterfly and Oscar* – have a close look at the detailed illustrations, read selected pages, etc.
- ❖ Use a copy of Download 1 to discuss the ‘differences’ with the owner’s dachshunds.
- ❖ Make a list of different dog breeds and some of their special attributes e.g. guide dogs, guard dogs, dogs that visit hospitals, herding dogs (heelers, kelpies), etc.
- ❖ Use a copy of Download 2 to list how the owner should care for all the dogs.
- ❖ Read about the author and perhaps read some of her other books.

## About the Author: *Tricia Oktober*

Tricia Oktober is a multi-award-winning writer and illustrator. She lives in the Blue Mountains of New South Wales (locate this on a map for the class), surrounded by her beautiful garden. She has eight dogs – five mini shorthair dachshunds and three pugs – and a pair of elderly doves.

*Ask: Does this give you a clue about who is telling this story? Why? Support your answer.*

### **From Tricia Oktober**

I have owned little brown dachshunds most of my life and have always kept a sketchbook of drawings of them from puppies to adults. I am often asked how I tell them apart, but to me they all look and behave very differently from each other.

When I brought a pug puppy home and introduced her to the five dachshunds only Oscar was gentle and kind. The others kept their distance until she did naughty and destructive things, then they joined in and loved her.

I thought I might have a story when the little pug saw her reflection in the window and was frightened by it. As I wrote I realised that there was a much deeper message of feeling different and being an outsider.

I draw each illustration in pencil first until I have a rough of the finished book with a front and back cover.

I make any corrections and then photocopy them. Using coloured pencils I work out the colours. I use a light-box to trace each illustration onto Aches watercolour paper and then paint in water colour using the coloured pencil roughs as a guide.

## Beyond the text :

- Begin a theme about 'Pets'. E.g. responsibilities, dogs for different environments, etc.
- Talk about the design of *Butterfly and Oscar* – the end papers, the blurb, the back cover.
- Focus on the structure of the story – use a story map either whole class or individual.
- Read other books about dogs.
- Use the Internet references below to add details about dachshunds and pugs.
- Invite a speaker or dog owner to present the best way to care for dogs and the correct way in which to approach dogs.

## Internet References

1. The Australian National Kennel Council (ANKC) [www.ankc.org.au](http://www.ankc.org.au)
- 2. TES Australia – is an excellent resource to explore a range of languages.**
3. The RSPCA Official site: <http://www.rspcansw.org.au/>
4. Dog breeds and interesting facts: <http://dogs.about.com/od/dogbreedprofiles>
5. Caring for dogs/other pets: <http://www.depi.vic.gov.au/pets/dogs/your-dogs-welfare-needs>
6. About the author: Tricia Oktober <http://www.recreatingeden.com> ( episode 1 )
7. Breeds of dogs: <http://www.mydog.com.au/breeds>

# Download 1

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## The Same but Different!

The owner of Mousie, Polly, Isa, Old Dog and Oscar could tell them apart. Use a line from the dog's name to the way the owner remembered each one. One has been done for you:

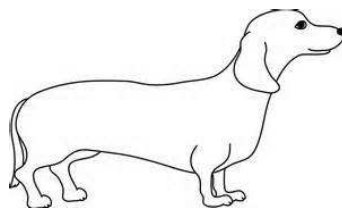
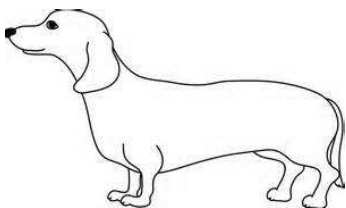
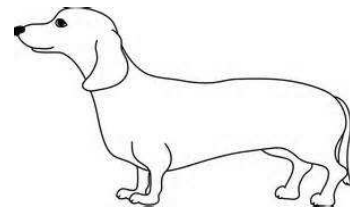
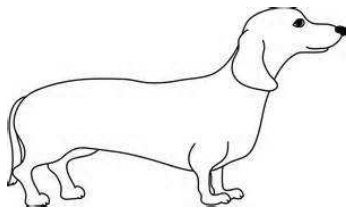
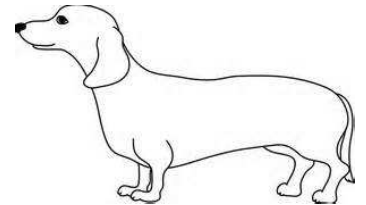
Polly → like everybody and everything and food

Old Dog → the quietest

Mousie → very old

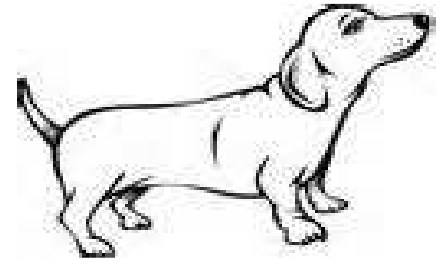
Isa → noisiest

Oscar → had blue eyes



## Download 2

Name : \_\_\_\_\_

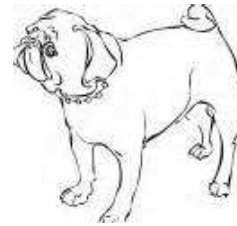


# Happy Healthy Dogs

All the pets in *Butterfly and Oscar* had to be looked after.

Make a list and draw a picture of what the owner would do to keep the pets happy and well.

One section has been done for you.



Go to the Vet  
for check-ups.



