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## Family Reading Guide for "Forever Ripley"

*Conversation starters for parents and children*

### Getting Started

#### What This Book Is About

"Forever Ripley" is narrated by Ripley, a devoted German Shepherd fulfilling her handler Max's final wish: "take care of my girls." Max has died, and Ripley—knowing her own time is growing short—is determined to guard Charlie, the girl she loves more than peanut butter, and keep the promise she made to the person she loved most. Told through a dog's eyes and heart, this tender story explores grief, loyalty, memory, and the enduring power of love.

#### Key Themes Your Child Will Encounter:

- **Loyalty and promise-keeping:** Ripley's commitment to Max's final wish shows what it means to love someone unconditionally and honor that love after they're gone
- **Grief and loss:** The story explores loss from a dog's perspective, offering young readers a gentle and safe way to approach these big feelings
- **Memory as comfort:** The novel shows how the memories we make with loved ones continue to sustain us long after they are gone
- **The human-animal bond:** Ripley's relationship with Charlie and with Max demonstrates how deeply animals and people can love and need each other
- **Presence as a gift:** Simply staying close, paying attention, and being consistent are among the most powerful ways to support someone who is grieving
- **Making the most of time:** Ripley's awareness that her own time is short gives her—and readers—an appreciation for living fully in each moment

**Content Note for Parents:** This book deals gently but honestly with death, grief, and the loss of beloved animals. It is a good choice for families who have experienced loss—of a pet or a person—and want a warm, sensitive framework for discussing those feelings. If your family has recently lost a pet, be prepared for this book to bring up those feelings, and embrace the opportunity to talk about them.

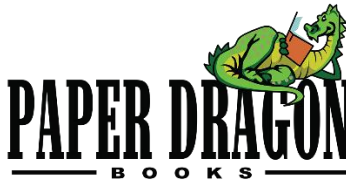
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### Discussion Questions

#### About Ripley and Her World

- Why do you think Ripley takes Max's last wish so seriously?
- How does Ripley show love without being able to use words?
- What does it mean that Ripley loves Charlie "more than peanut butter"?
- How does Ripley feel when she realizes her own time is running short?

#### About Grief, Memory, and Love



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- How do Charlie and Ripley help each other through their grief?
- What memories might Ripley carry with her of her time with Max?
- Why do you think the author chose to tell this story from a dog's point of view?
- How do the memories we make with someone help us after they are gone?

### **Fun Conversation Starters**

- If your pet could talk, what do you think they would most want to tell you?
  - What is a memory with someone you love that you never want to forget?
  - If you were Ripley, how would you "take care of the girls"?
  - What do you think Ripley loves most about Charlie?
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### **Discussion Activities**

#### **Honoring Love and Memory**

- Create a memory book or box celebrating a pet or person who has been important to your family
- Share a favorite memory of someone you love—a person or animal
- Look at old photographs together and tell the stories behind them
- Plant something in honor of someone or an animal your family has loved

#### **Connecting with Animals**

- If you have a pet, spend extra time together—notice what your pet communicates without words
  - Visit a local animal shelter and learn about the animals there
  - Research German Shepherds and the many roles they serve as working dogs
  - Discuss what your family's pet might say about your family if they could speak
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### **Conversation Tips for Parents**

#### **Creating Space for Feelings**

- This book may bring up grief—for a pet, a grandparent, or another loved one. Let your child lead
- Validate that it's okay to cry about a story—strong feelings mean we cared
- Share your own experience of loss at an age-appropriate level
- Don't rush past the sadness to the lesson—sometimes the most important thing is just feeling it together

#### **Talking About Loss**

- Use Ripley's perspective as a starting point: "What do you think a dog understands about death?"
- Discuss different ways people—and animals—grieve
- Explore healthy ways to honor and remember loved ones who are gone



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- Remind your child that loving someone and losing them is one of the hardest and most human experiences—and that's okay

### **Making It Personal**

- Share how your family honors the memory of loved ones who have died
  - Talk about what promises matter most in your family
  - Discuss what you most want to be remembered for—and what you most want to remember about those you love
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### **Questions by Age Group**

#### **For Younger Readers (Ages 6-8)**

- What is Ripley's job in the story?
- Who is Charlie and why is she so important to Ripley?
- What does Max ask Ripley to do before he dies?
- Name one way Ripley takes care of Charlie.

#### **For Older Readers (Ages 9-12)**

- How does telling the story through Ripley's perspective change how you experience the grief in the book?
  - What does "Forever Ripley" suggest about what love looks like without words?
  - How does awareness of limited time affect the way Ripley lives?
  - What does the story suggest about how we carry people—and animals—with us after they're gone?
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### **Activity Ideas**

#### **Memory and Remembrance Projects**

- Create a "memory map" of important places shared with a beloved person or pet
- Write a letter to someone—person or animal—you miss, telling them what you want them to know
- Design a memorial garden or corner with objects that represent someone you've loved
- Make a photo collage celebrating a pet's or person's life

#### **Creative Writing**

- Write a day in the life from your pet's perspective
  - Create a story in which an animal fulfills a promise to someone they love
  - Write Ripley's journal entries across the events of the book
  - Write a letter from Charlie to Ripley after the story ends
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"Forever Ripley" reminds us that love is not canceled by death—it continues in the loyalty of those left behind, in the memories we carry, in the care we offer to those our loved ones also loved. Ripley's story is one of heartbreak and devotion, of a life fully lived in service of connection. Let this book open a conversation about the animals and people your family has loved, and about what it means to carry someone with you long after they are gone.