

Dear

Comprehension

Genre

A **Fantasy** is a story about characters and settings that could not exist in real life.



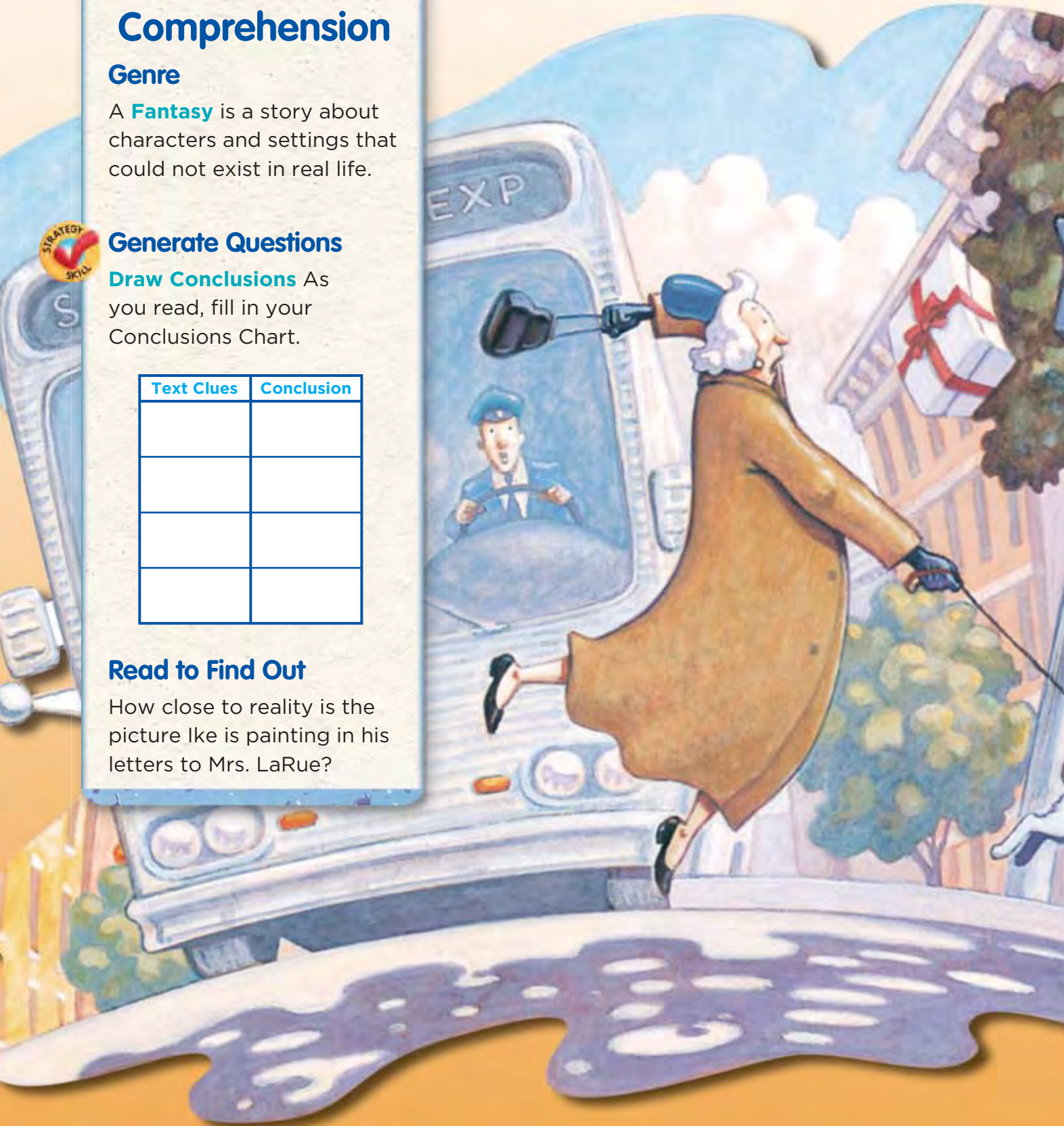
Generate Questions

Draw Conclusions As you read, fill in your Conclusions Chart.

Text Clues	Conclusion

Read to Find Out

How close to reality is the picture Ike is painting in his letters to Mrs. LaRue?



Mrs. LaRue

Letters from Obedience School

Written and Illustrated by

Mark Teague



The Snort City Register / Gazette

September 30

LOCAL DOG ENTERS OBEDIENCE SCHOOL



"Ike LaRue"

Citing a long list of behavioral problems, Snort City resident Gertrude R. LaRue yesterday enrolled her dog, Ike, in the Igor Brotweiler Canine Academy.

Established in 1953, the Academy has a history of dealing with such issues.

"I'm at my wit's end!" said Mrs. LaRue. "I love Ike, but I'm afraid he's quite spoiled. He steals food right off the kitchen counter, chases the neighbor's cats, howls whenever I'm away, and last week while I was crossing the street he pulled me down and tore my best camel's hair coat! I just don't know what else to do!"

School officials were unavailable for comment . . .



Dear Mrs. LaRue,

October 1

How could you do this to me? This is a PRISON, not a school! You should see the other dogs. They are BAD DOGS, Mrs. LaRue! I do not fit in. Even the journey here was a horror. I am very unhappy and may need something to chew on when I get home. Please come right away!

Sincerely,

Ike



IGOR
BROTWEILER
CANINE
ACADEMY

BROTWEILER

IGOR
BROTWEILER
CANINE
ACADEMY
"WE AIM TO TAME"

WARNING!
PRISONERS
ON BOARD

BADDOG

KEEP OUT



October 2

Dear Mrs. LaRue,

Were you really upset about the chicken pie? You know, you might have discussed it with me. You could have said, "Ike, don't eat the chicken pie. I'm saving it for dinner." Would that have been so difficult? It would have prevented a lot of hard feelings.

Needless to say, I am being horribly mistreated. You say I should be patient and accept that I'll be here through the term. Are you aware that the term lasts TWO MONTHS? Do you know how long that is in dog years?

Sincerely,

Ike



Draw Conclusions

What conclusion can you draw about Ike from his letters?



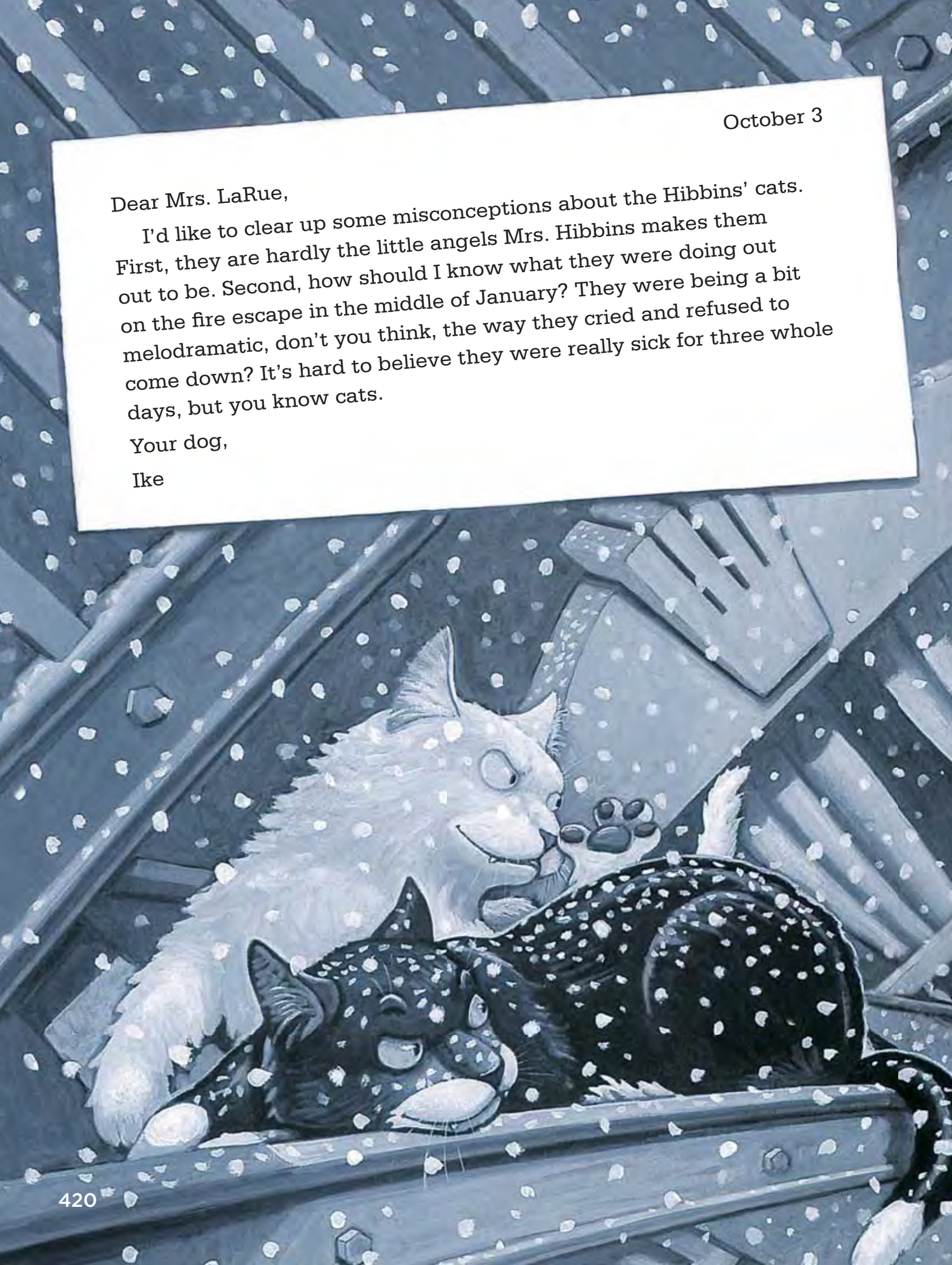
October 3

Dear Mrs. LaRue,

I'd like to clear up some misconceptions about the Hibbins' cats. First, they are hardly the little angels Mrs. Hibbins makes them out to be. Second, how should I know what they were doing out on the fire escape in the middle of January? They were being a bit melodramatic, don't you think, the way they cried and refused to come down? It's hard to believe they were really sick for three whole days, but you know cats.

Your dog,

Ike







October 4

Dear Mrs. LaRue,

You should see what goes on around here. The way my teach — I mean WARDEN, Miss Klondike, barks orders is shocking. Day after day I'm forced to perform the most meaningless tasks. Today it was "sit" and "roll over," all day long. I flatly refused to roll over. It's ridiculous. I won't do it. Of course I was SEVERELY punished.

And another thing: Who will help you cross the street while I'm away? You know you have a bad habit of not looking both ways. Think of all the times I've saved you. Well, there was that one time, anyway. I must say you weren't very grateful, complaining on and on about the tiny rip in your ratty old coat. But the point is, you need me!

Yours,

Ike



Dear Mrs. LaRue,

October 5

The GUARDS here are all caught up in this "good dog, bad dog" thing. I hear it constantly: "Good dog, Ike. Don't be a bad dog, Ike." Is it really so good to sit still like a lummoX all day? Nevertheless, I refuse to be broken!

Miss Klondike has taken my typewriter. She claims it disturbs the other dogs. Does anybody care that the other dogs disturb ME?

Yours,

Ike



Dear Mrs. LaRue,

October 6

Were the neighbors really complaining about my howling? It is hard to imagine. First, I didn't howl that much. You were away those nights, so you wouldn't know, but trust me, it was quite moderate. Second, let's recall that these are the same neighbors who are constantly waking ME up in the middle of the afternoon with their loud vacuuming. I say we all have to learn to get along.

My life here continues to be a nightmare. You wouldn't believe what goes on in the cafeteria.

Sincerely,

Ike

P.S. I don't want to alarm you, but the thought of escape has crossed my mind!



October 7

Dear Mrs. LaRue,

I hate to tell you this, but I am terribly ill. It started in my paw, causing me to limp all day. Later I felt queasy, so that I could barely eat dinner (except for the yummy gravy). Then I began to moan and howl. Finally, I had to be taken to the vet. Dr. Wilfrey claims that he can't find anything wrong with me, but I am certain I have an awful disease. I must come home at once.

Honestly yours,

Ike



Draw Conclusions

What conclusion can you draw about Ike's illness?



BROTWEILER
PUMPKIN FESTIVAL

THE
BIRDMAN
OF
ALCATRAZ



October 8

Dear Mrs. LaRue,

Thank you for the lovely get well card. Still, I'm a little surprised that you didn't come get me. I know what Dr. Wilfrey says, but is it really wise to take **risks** with one's health? I could have a relapse, you know.

With fall here, I think about all the fine times we used to have in the park. Remember how sometimes you would bring along a tennis ball? You would throw it and I would retrieve it EVERY TIME, except for once when it landed in something nasty and I brought you back a stick instead. Ah, how I miss those days.

Yours truly,

Ike

P.S. Imagine how awful it is for me to be stuck inside my tiny cell!

P.P.S. I still feel pretty sick.



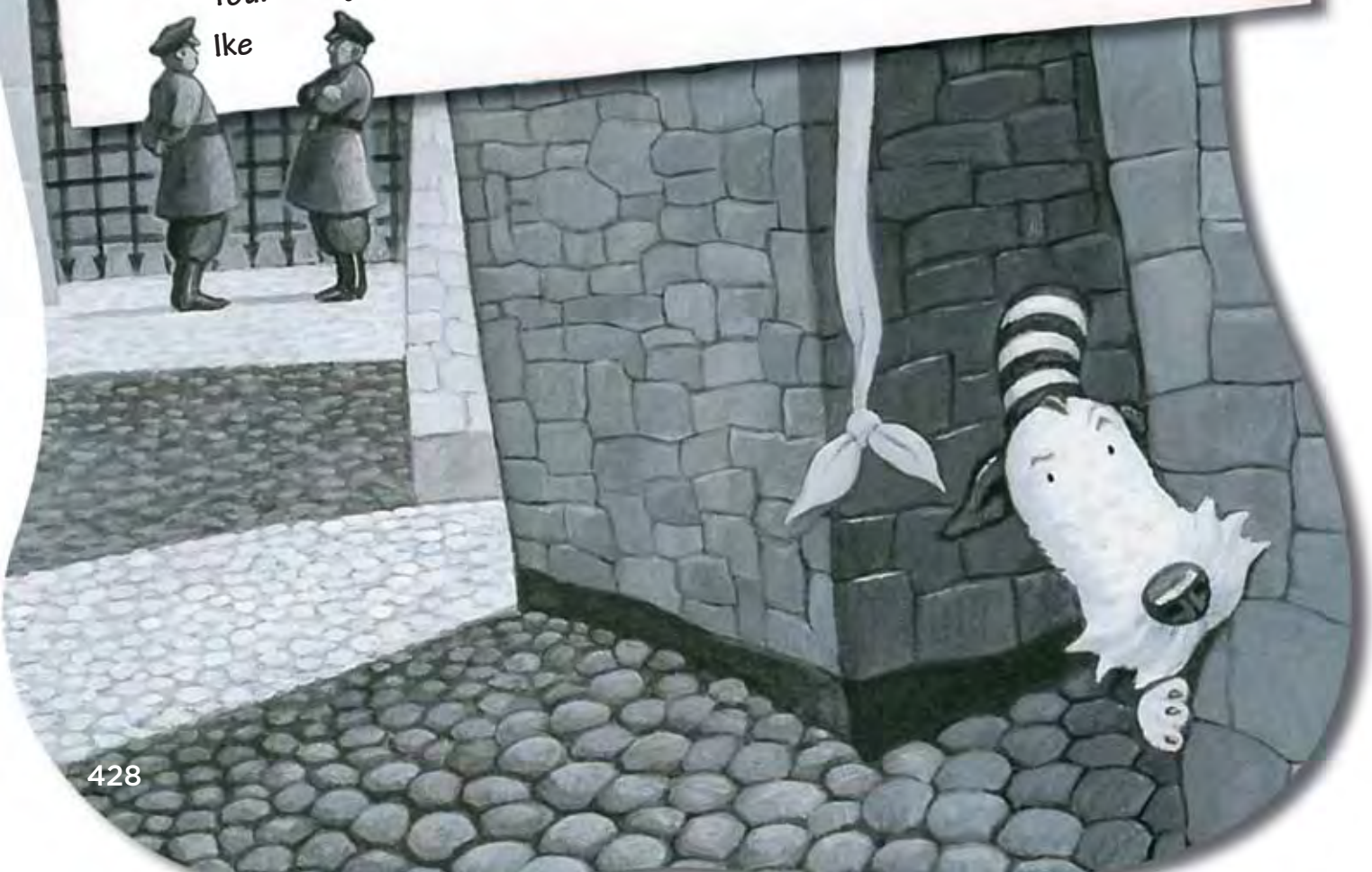
October 9

Dear Mrs. LaRue,

By the time you read this I will be gone. I have decided to attempt a daring escape! I'm sorry it has come to this, since I am really a very good dog, but frankly you left me no choice. How sad it is not to be **appreciated!** From now on I'll wander from town to town without a home — or even any dog food, most likely. Such is the life of a **desperate** outlaw. I will try to write to you from time to time as I carry on with my life of hardship and danger.

Your lonely fugitive,

Ike



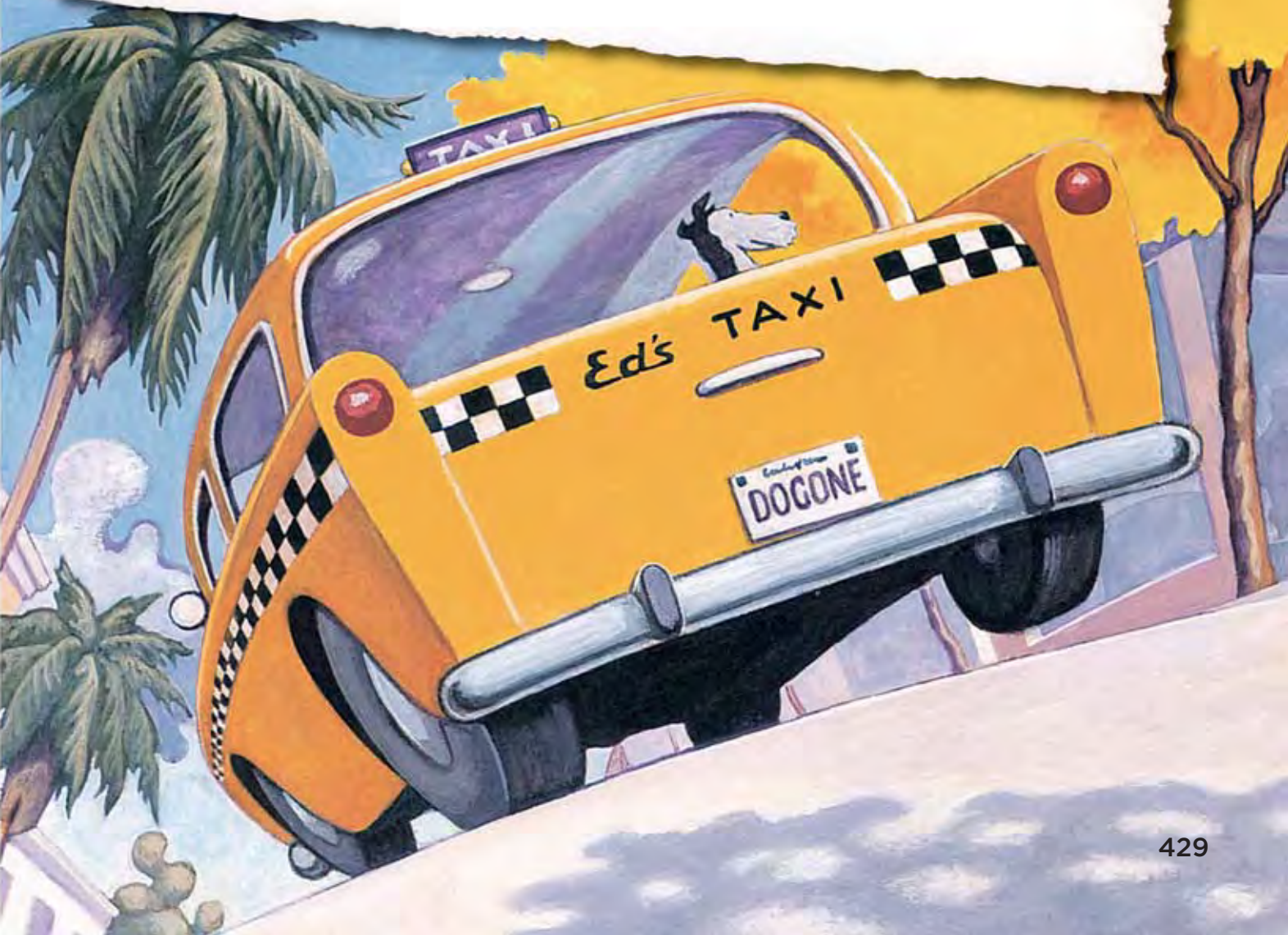
October 10

LARUE ESCAPES DOGGY DETENTION

Former Snort City resident Ike LaRue escaped last night from the dormitory at the Igor Brotweiler Canine Academy. The dog is described as “toothy” by local police. His current whereabouts are unknown.

“To be honest, I thought he was **bluffing** when he told me he was planning to escape,” said a

visibly upset Gertrude R. LaRue, the dog’s owner. “Ike tends to be a bit melodramatic, you know. Now I can only pray that he’ll come back.” Asked if she would return Ike to Brotweiler Academy, Mrs. LaRue said that she would have to wait and see. “He’s a good dog basically, but he can be difficult. . . .”





Dear Mrs. LaRue,

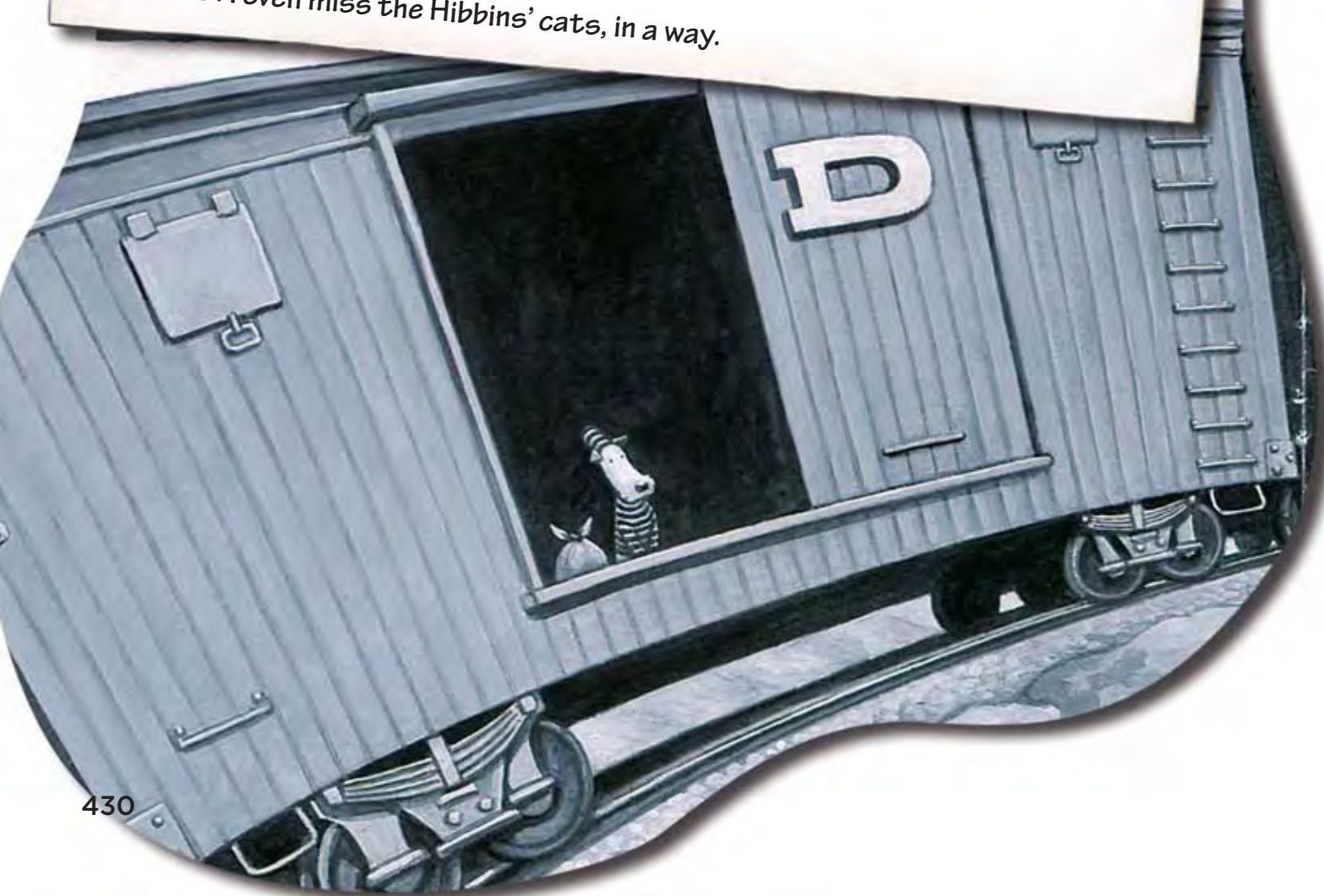
October 11 — Somewhere in America

I continue to suffer horribly as I roam this barren wasteland. Who knows where my wanderings will take me now? Hopefully to someplace with yummy food! Remember the special treats you used to make for me? I miss them. I miss our nice, comfy apartment. But mostly, I miss you!

Your sad dog,

Ike

P.S. I even miss the Hibbins' cats, in a way.





October 12 — Still Somewhere

Dear Mrs. LaRue,

The world is a hard and cruel place for a “stray” dog. You would scarcely believe the misery I’ve **endured**. So I have decided to return home. You may try to lock me up again, but that is a risk I must take. And frankly, even more than myself, I worry about you. You may not know it, Mrs. LaRue, but you need a dog!

Your **misunderstood** friend,

Ike



October 13

HERO DOG SAVES OWNER!

Ike LaRue, until recently a student at the Igor Brotweiler Canine Academy, returned to Snort City yesterday in dramatic fashion. In fact he arrived just in time to rescue his owner, Gertrude R. LaRue of Second Avenue, from an oncoming truck. Mrs. LaRue had made the trip downtown to purchase a new camel's hair coat. Apparently she

neglected to look both ways before stepping out into traffic.

The daring rescue was witnessed by several onlookers, including patrolman Newton Smitzer. "He rolled right across two lanes of traffic to get at her," said Smitzer. "It was really something. I haven't seen rolling like that since I left the police academy."





Mrs. LaRue was unhurt in the incident, though her coat was badly torn. "I don't care about that," she said. "I'm just happy to have my Ike back home where he belongs!"

LaRue said she plans to throw a big party for the dog. "All the neighbors will be there, and I'm going to serve Ike's favorite dishes. . . ."

“... I'll bet he can't wait to taste the chicken pie. . . .”

WELCOME HOME

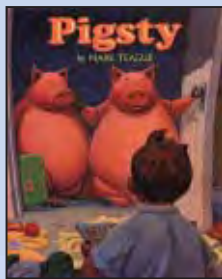


Write Home About Mark Teague



Mark Teague says that this story is one of his favorites. He had lots of fun pretending he was Ike and writing from a dog's point of view. Mark based Ike on two dogs he and his brother had. One dog loved to eat, the other dog liked to play tricks. Now Mark has cats. He put them in this story, too. Mark gets ideas for many of his books from things he did as a boy. Then he adds a twist or two to make his stories really funny.

Other books by Mark Teague



Find out more about Mark Teague at www.macmillanmh.com

Author's Purpose

What clues can you use to determine Mark Teague's purpose for writing *Dear Mrs. LaRue*? Did the author want to explain, entertain, or persuade?





Comprehension Check



Summarize

Summarize *Dear Mrs. LaRue*. Include the most important events. Be sure to tell who is writing the letters and why.

Think and Compare

Text Clues	Conclusion



1. Do you think Mrs. LaRue **misunderstood** Ike? Why or why not? Review your Conclusions Chart to organize clues and answer the question. **Generate Questions: Draw Conclusions**
2. Look again at pages 420–421 of *Dear Mrs. LaRue*. Why do you think the cats were on the fire escape in January? Use story details in your answer. **Analyze**
3. If you were Mrs. LaRue, would you believe what Ike said in his letters? Why or why not? **Apply**
4. Sometimes people exaggerate a lot, the way Ike does. Why do you think people do this? **Analyze**
5. Read “Puppy Trouble” on pages 412–413. Compare it with *Dear Mrs. LaRue*. Which story is a fantasy, and which is realistic? How can you tell? Use details from both selections in your answer. **Reading/Writing Across Texts**

