

# This Book Should be Retired

*Lad, a Dog*, may have been popular with kids when it came out in 1919, but I would have to give the author, Albert Payson Terhune, a big thumbs down. I would not recommend this author to my classmates. The writing and pacing are too old-fashioned for today's readers. Some of the word choices make it feel as if the book was written a thousand years ago, not a hundred years ago. Plus, the point of view—the story is told in the third person by an all-knowing narrator—is not as engaging as it could be. The story would have been much more interesting if it were told in the first person—by the dog.

*Lad, a Dog* is an adventure story and should be exciting. But it moves slowly. The long sentences are cumbersome, which detracts from the action. For example, this sentence describes Lad saving his Mistress from drowning: "The dog's burden was thus made infinitely lighter than if she had struggled or had lain in a posture less easy for towing." A rescue should be exciting and action-packed, but this sentence makes it sound like something from a boring manual.

The stilted writing and old-fashioned word choices also give the story a stiffness that will be off-putting to young readers today. Specifically, in the sentence I just quoted, did the author really need to use "thus"? Or consider this sentence: "And because the dog was strong of soul and chivalric, withal, and because the Mistress was altogether lovable, Lad placed her altar even above the Master's." What is the purpose of the word "withal"?

In addition, I felt like I needed to keep a dictionary on hand for words such as "denizens" and "chivalric." What's wrong with slightly simpler words like "inhabitants" and "brave"? I don't mind a few big words, but to have several in every sentence make the reading too difficult and less enjoyable.



Yet, what truly makes the book feel old-fashioned is the point of view. Telling a story about a dog is much less interesting than hearing what the dog himself has to say. For instance, when introducing The Place—the estate where Lad lives—Terhune writes, “He felt he owned it. It was assuredly his to enjoy, to guard, to patrol from high road to lake.” I get the idea that Lad thinks he is a noble watchdog, but it would be so much more immediate if Lad told the reader this himself. As I read this, I couldn’t stop thinking about *Black Beauty*, where the horse himself narrates. It makes the story so much richer.

In conclusion, I would not recommend this book or this author. The leisurely way Terhune tells the story and the old-fashioned vocabulary he uses will not engage readers today. Nor will they get a great sense of the main character, especially since the story is told in the third-person. My final opinion is that my classmates could pass on *Lad*.