

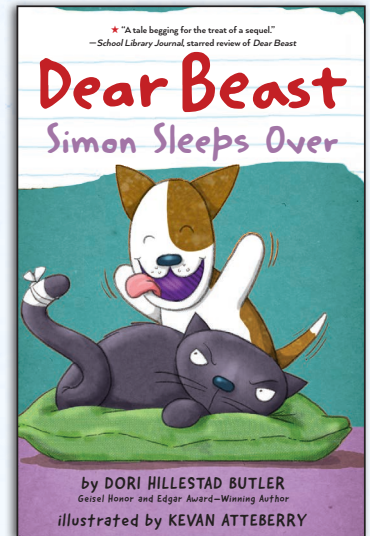
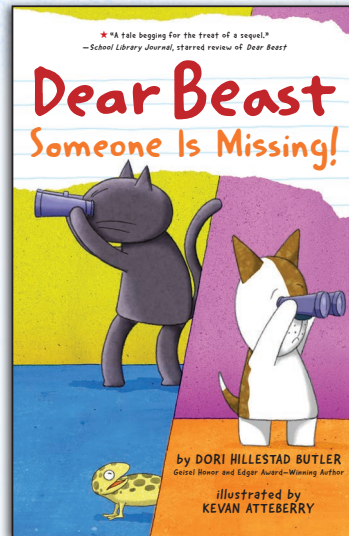
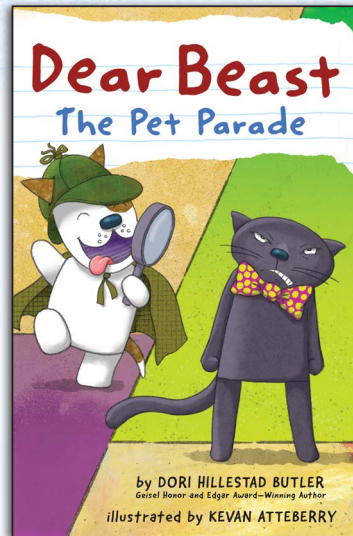
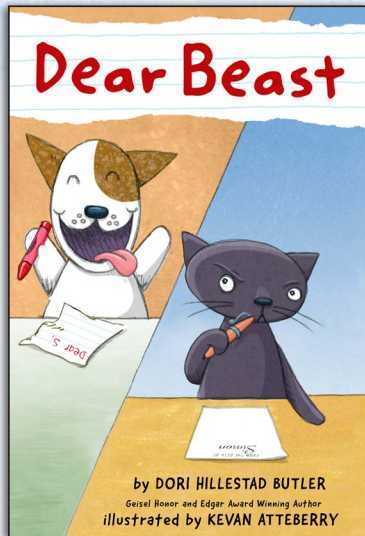
# HOLIDAY HOUSE EDUCATOR'S GUIDE



## Dear Beast

by DORI HILLESTAD BUTLER

illustrated by KEVAN ATTEBERRY



### ABOUT THE SERIES

What happens when a rowdy troublemaker dog meets a very, very jealous cat?

Simon has always been a very good, one may say perfect, cat. He's responsible, loyal, and has never made a mess. But when his owner, Andy, decides it's time to make room for a new dog named Baxter, Simon realizes it's time to pull out all the stops to get rid of the beast. He decides to write his new housemate a strongly worded letter and receives the last thing he could have expected . . . a response.

Through a series of unexpected events, and even a few mysteries, Simon and Baxter continue to exchange letters. Will their rivalry continue? Or will cat and dog realize that their differences create the perfect pair?

### PRAISE FOR THE SERIES

"A welcome and needed addition to libraries of early readers who are outgrowing picture books but not yet ready for middle grade, the Dear Beast series about a Machiavellian cat and an ingenuous dog is a rare gem in that it's as enjoyable for those who will truly get the humor in a mail-delivering snail and those who will simply be amused by a mustached gastropod." —Lacey Vorrasi-Banis, *Entertainment Weekly*

"An engaging romp and an introduction to epistolary fiction." —*Booklist on Dear Beast*

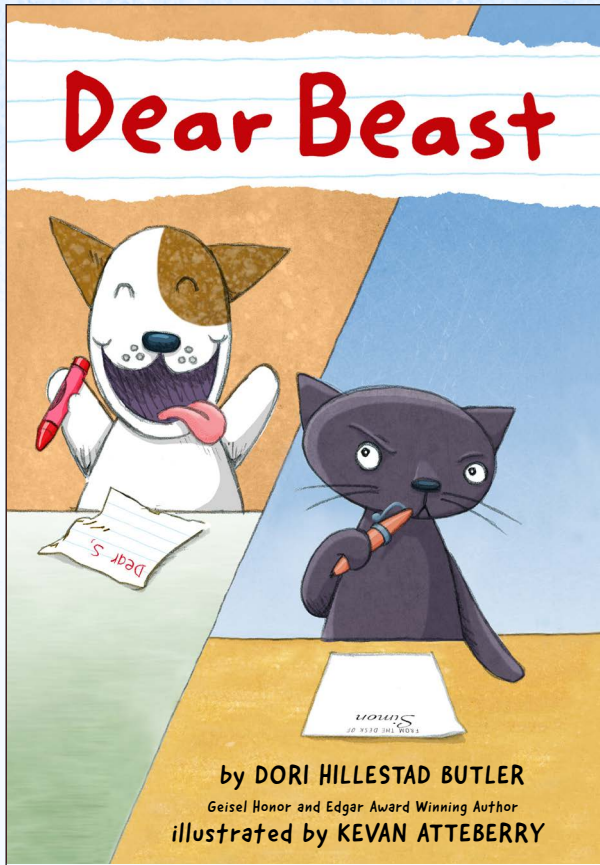




# HOLIDAY HOUSE



HC: 9780823444922 · e-book: 9780823447879 · PB: 9780823448432



## Dear Beast

### ABOUT THE BOOK

A jealous cat really, really, REALLY wants to drive away his young owner's new dog in this playful illustrated chapter book, the first in a new series, from a two-time Geisel Honor winner.

Simon has taken care of his owner, Andy, for many years. He's a good cat. Clean, responsible, and loyal. What more could a boy want? Even when Andy's dad moves out, Simon is certain that Andy doesn't need another pet. So why would Andy's dad adopt a DOG?! To make matters worse, the animal is a rude, rowdy troublemaker.

Simon's job is clear: The beast has got to go. He decides to write him a letter. Strongly worded, of course. But when the dog's response sets off an unexpected correspondence, Simon realizes the beast may be here to stay. Can he make room for another pet in Andy's life?

### CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

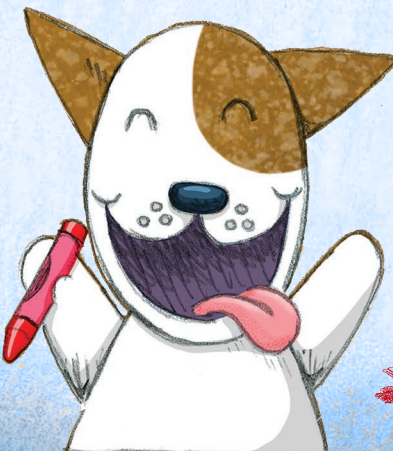
- Take a close look at the cover art. How does the illustration reveal the two main characters of the book? Which character is Simon? Who is Beast? How do the art and the title of the book suggest that the book is written in letters between the characters?
- Explain the term "snail mail." Discuss the significance that Snail delivers the mail. Note the direction that Snail travels. How does Snail lead the reader to the next page?
- Simon tries to teach Baxter the proper way to write a letter. Discuss the parts of a letter. What is a "salutation"? How many unique ways does Simon address Baxter? How does this suggest Simon's problem with Baxter? What is the meanest name he calls Baxter? Explain why Simon finally addresses Baxter by his name (p. 68). Note the way Simon closes his letters. How does this indicate that he is getting impatient with Baxter?





- “Conflict” in a novel is the problem to be solved. How does the first double-page spread (pp. 4–5) suggest the conflict in *Dear Beast*? What role does Bubbles play in solving the conflict between Simon and Baxter? Discuss the roles of the following characters: Cheeks, the squirrel; Tom, the cat; the Terrier Twins; Stinky, the skunk; and Edgar Allan Crow.
- A “theme” is a single word that says what the book is about. Define “jealous.” Debate whether “jealousy” is the theme of the novel. Cite sentences that indicate that Simon is jealous of Baxter.
- Simon seeks help from Bubbles. Study the illustration where Bubbles receives Simon’s first letter (p. 43). What is Bubbles’ reaction to the letter? What mean thing did Simon do to Bubbles. Discuss how Simon tries to warn Bubbles about Baxter. How does Bubbles blame Simon when Baxter runs away?
- Why does Simon think it is Baxter’s fault when Andy breaks his arm? Debate whether this is one more way Simon tries to get rid of Baxter. How does Andy react when Baxter runs away?
- How does Simon convince Baxter that it’s time to return home? Why does Baxter finally agree that Simon should call him Beast? Baxter asks Simon if he missed him (p. 71). Why doesn’t Simon answer the question?
- Andy’s dad thinks that having a pet teaches responsibility. Which pet in the book requires the most care? Which is the best companion for Andy?

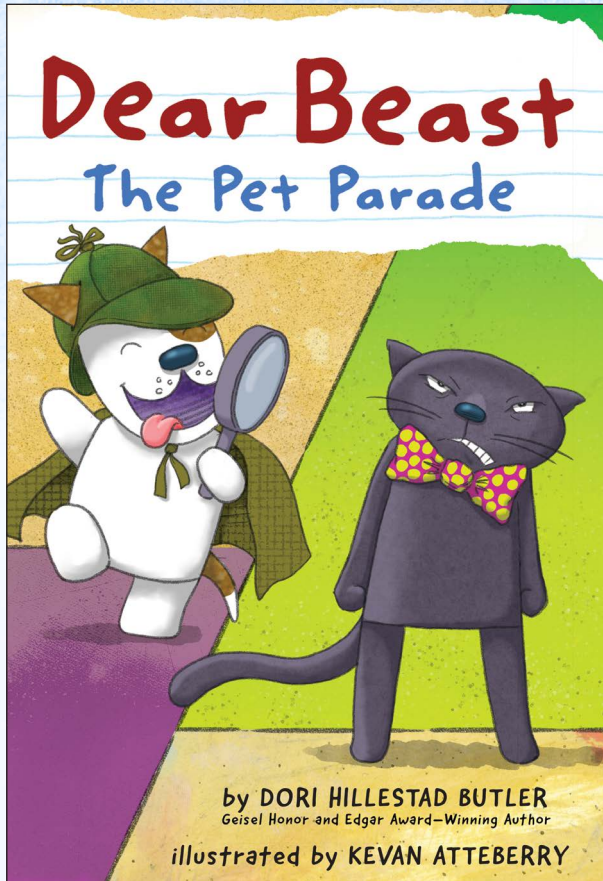
Guide created by Pat Scales, retired school librarian and independent consultant, Greenville, South Carolina.







HC: 9780823444939 · e-book: 9780823447886 · PB: 9780823450688



## Dear Beast The Pet Parade

### ABOUT THE BOOK

A snobby cat and a good-natured dog fight over the chance to dress up with their owner in this playful illustrated chapter book series told in letters.

It's time for the annual city pet parade! Only one pet can win first place . . . Simon the cat has always hated wearing costumes, so he decides it's okay for Andy's new dog, Baxter, to march with Andy instead. This way, Simon gets to avoid a costume and keep his dignity. But when Baxter keeps the costume plans a secret, Simon changes his mind. His boy Andy needs him! Who knows what trouble Baxter is up to? That beast can't be trusted—and it's Simon's job to save the day.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

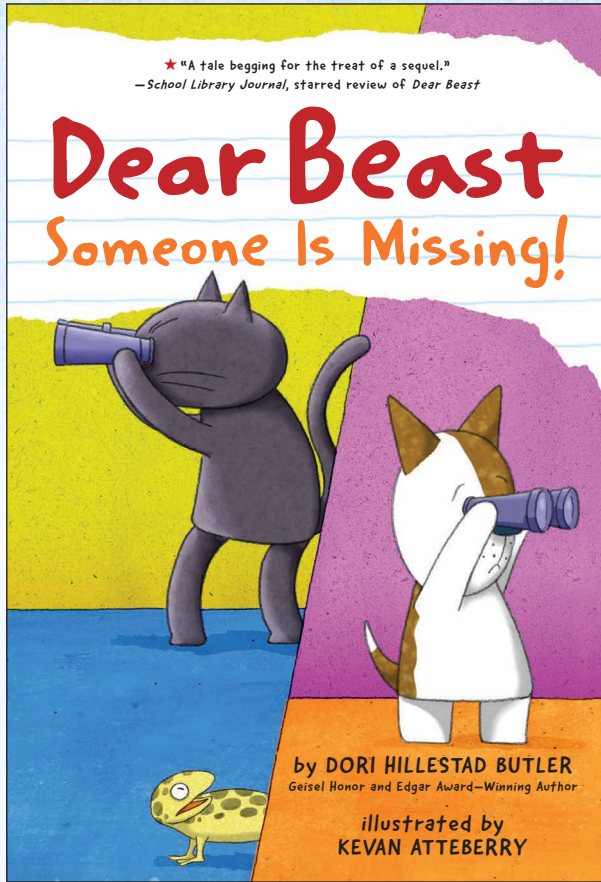
- The title of the book indicates that the book is about a pet parade. Take a clue from the cover art and discuss which pet is the happiest about the parade.
- Why do you think Simon doesn't want to be in the city pet parade with Andy? How does he think he is doing Baxter a favor by suggesting that he participate in the parade? Explain why Simon insists that he help Beast with the parade. How does his attitude fit Simon's character traits?
- Describe Simon's book "How To Be In A Parade." Explain why Simon thinks that he is such an expert on parades. How does Beast have his own ideas about being in a parade? Why is Simon so curious about Baxter and Andy's costumes?
- Simon writes a letter to Bubbles to see what she knows about Baxter's costume. Discuss her reaction to Simon's request. How does she reveal that something went wrong for Simon in last year's parade? Debate whether his failure is the reason he doesn't want to be in the parade this year.
- Simon appeals to Stinky, Cheeks, and Snail to find out about Andy and Baxter's costume. Explain their response.
- Baxter gives Simon the nickname "Cat Man." How does this annoy Simon? Explain Simon's reaction when the other animals call him "Cat Man." Explain why Baxter thinks that Simon needs a nickname. Study the illustration on p. 45. What does it reveal about Simon? How does the illustration reflect Baxter's thoughts about Simon's need for a nickname?
- Why does Simon want to replace Baxter in the parade? Explain why Simon thinks he can be the boss of Baxter. How does Baxter stand his ground and continue his plans to be in the pet parade?
- What is Edgar Allan Crow's role in the story?
- Explain what Andy says to Simon that makes him see that Baxter is the better pet for the parade. Baxter is pleased with second prize. Discuss the first prize that Baxter and Simon have already won.







HC: 9780823448555 • e-book: 9780823450213 • PB: 9780823451357



## Dear Beast Someone Is Missing

### ABOUT THE BOOK

Who says cats and dogs don't get along? A snobby cat and a good-natured dog team up—*sort of*—to solve the mystery of a missing classroom pet.

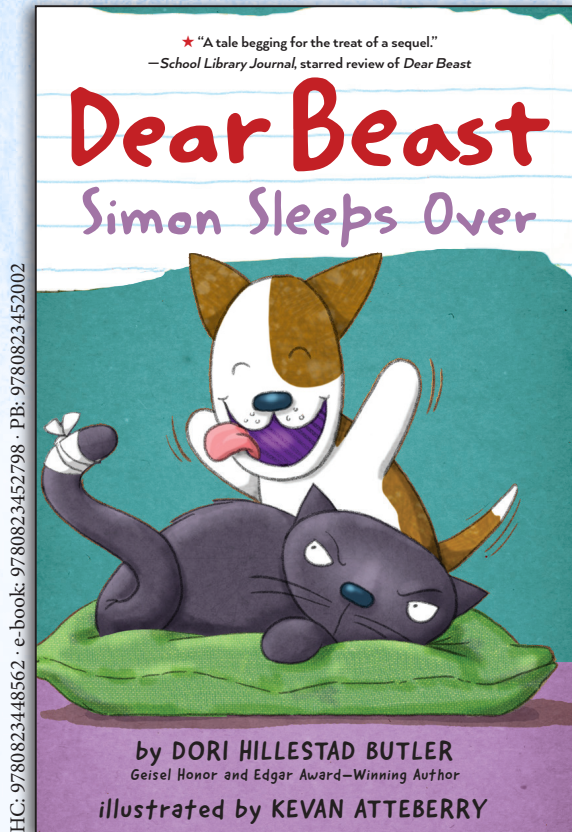
Simon the cat and Baxter the dog have finally learned how to share their owner, Andy. It helps that Simon lives with Andy's mom and Baxter lives with Andy's dad. When a problem comes up, they simply exchange letters to sort it out. Baxter's spelling has even improved . . . though not by much. But then Andy's class pet goes missing, which causes an argument with his friend Noah. Andy is so, so sad. Both Simon and Baxter want to solve the mystery and make Andy happy again. Which pet will collect the clues and piece together the solution?

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Dear Beast is the name of a series of books about main characters Simon, a cat, and Baxter, a dog. What is the title of the book? How does the title suggest a mystery is about to unfold? Explain how the cover art supports the idea of a mystery.
- Beast is Baxter's nickname. Discuss how Simon's letter to Beast on p. 5 establishes the conflict of the book. Note the illustration on p. 6. What is Andy feeling? How is Simon curious about Andy's sadness?
- Contrast the way Simon and Beast react to Andy's sadness. What does selfish mean? How does Simon reveal that he only cares about himself? Consider all of the animals in the book and discuss which one is the most thoughtful.
- Beast informs Simon that Louie, Andy's class pet, is missing. Refer to the cover of the book and identify Louie. Study Louie's features. How might Louie disguise himself and find a very good hiding place?
- Andy and Noah are classmates and best friends. How does the illustration on p. 12 reveal a conflict between the boys? Explain how Beast knows the source of the problem between them.
- Simon calls himself an excellent detective. He explains that a good detective requires skills like (1) talking to witnesses, (2) studying the clues, and (3) using your brain to solve the case. Why does Simon think that Beast is incapable of these things? The other animals want to help. Why do you think Simon is so determined to work alone? How does this fit his personality?
- Who is Muffet? Why is she so certain that Louie hasn't left Room 7? Why does Louie's disappearance give Muffet special concern? How is her concern different from that of Simon and Beast?
- Explain the difference between a detective and a spy. Why is Snail considered a spy? How does Snail become a hero? What is Simon's reaction to Snail's discovery? Why does Simon take credit for solving the crime?
- What are the clues to Louie's disappearance? Who are the witnesses? How do the animals in the book use their brains to solve the case?







## Dear Beast Simon Sleeps Over

### ABOUT THE BOOK

A stuck-up cat and a good-natured dog are pen pals from a distance, until a disastrous sleepover brings them together in this playful illustrated chapter book told in letters.

Andy has two pets and two houses: a cat, Simon, at his mom's house and a dog, Baxter, at his dad's house. But when Andy's mom goes on a business trip, Simon must spend a few nights at Andy's dad's house. A sleepover with the beast? Simon says, "No, thank you." Baxter, on the other hand, is sooooo excited to play together. He and Simon can go on walks! Stay up late! Eat liver treats! He can't wait to finally meet his pen pal in person. What could go wrong?

The big introduction does NOT go well for these wildly different pets. Simon is so desperate to get back home to his quiet, clean oasis that he escapes through a basement window. Can Baxter convince him to return before Andy notices his beloved cat is gone?

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Consider what you know about Beast and Simon from the previous books in the series. How does the cover art show each animal's true character? Explain how the title reveals the adventure that Baxter and Simon are about to have. Baxter is clearly very excited about the sleep over. What is Simon's thoughts about his upcoming event?
- Discuss why Beast and Simon are having a sleepover. How do you know that Andy's father isn't completely excited about Simon coming over? What does he think could go wrong?
- Compare Andy's father's house to his mother's house. Which house has the most rules for Andy? How does Simon expect the rules to be the same for Andy in both houses? Explain why the difference in rules makes Simon out of sorts.
- Simon and Beast have never met. Discuss each pet's expectations when they first meet. Take a clue from the art, and the letter exchange and discuss which animal is most looking forward to meeting the other. Explain why Simon is so demanding and rude in his letters. How does Beast offer friendship to Simon? Describe Beast's act of kindness on p. 20.
- Beast is surprised by Simon's size. Why does Beast say that Simon sounds "big like a lion" (p. 21.) Debate Simon's reaction to Beast.
- Andy's father puts Simon in the basement. Bubbles tries to explain Simon's situation. Why doesn't Simon listen? Simon escapes through a window screen and roams the town. Why is Tom, the cat, surprised when Simon wants to live with him for a week? How does the patch on Tom's eye reveal the kind of life he leads?
- How is the bed Tom offers Simon different than his bed at Andy's mother's house? At what point does Simon realize that he must find another place to sleep? Cheeks and Stinky offer him a bed. What does Simon find wrong with their homes?
- Beast writes letters to Simon asking him to come home. Beast thinks that Simon sounds cranky. Simon sends a picture that explains the difference in cranky and annoyed (p. 39). What is the difference in the two pictures?
- Simon thinks that Bubbles should forget the time he drank from her bowl. Explain why he expects forgiveness from Bubbles but is so unwilling to forgive Beast for biting the fur off his tail.
- Why does Simon finally return to Andy's father's house? Describe the sleepover that he and Beast have. At the end of the book Simon tries Beast's liver treats, and decides he likes them after all. What does this reveal about the "new" Simon?





## RESOURCES

### DEAR BEAST Bookmark

<https://holidayhouse.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Dear-Beast-Bookmark.pdf>

### DEAR BEAST Downloadable Postcard

<https://holidayhouse.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Dear-Beast-Postcard.pdf>

### DEAR BEAST Activity Kit

<https://holidayhouse.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Dear-Beast-Series-Activity-Kit.pdf>

Guide created by Pat Scales, retired school librarian and independent consultant, Greenville, South Carolina.

## ABOUT THE CREATORS



**DORI HILLESTAD BUTLER** is the author of The Dear Beast chapter-book series. She is also the award-winning author of mysteries and books for all ages, including the King and Kayla series and the Haunted Library series. She is a two-time Geisel Honor recipient and an Edgar Award winner, and she has been nominated for children's choice awards in nineteen states. Dori lives in the Seattle area with her husband and their very large dog, Mouse. Visit her online at [kidswriter.com](http://kidswriter.com).



**KEVAN ATTEBERRY** is the illustrator of The Dear Beast Series and has written and/or illustrated many books for children, including *Ghost Cat* and *Tickle Monster*. Many of his books have been bestsellers, but one of his biggest claims to fame is that he created Clippy, the paperclip helper in Microsoft Office. Kevan lives in the Seattle area. Visit him on the web at [kevanatteberry.com](http://kevanatteberry.com).



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#DearBeast