



# Coco

## the Guide Dog

By Michèle Dufresne

- 1 Coco squirmed in my lap as we drove home from the breeder.
- 2 “Don’t get too attached to her,” Mom said for the hundredth time.
- 3 “I know,” I said patiently. “I get it. Coco has an incredibly important job ahead of her. She isn’t ours to keep forever.”
- 4 And I did understand. Our family had become what are known as “puppy raisers.” Coco was coming home with us as a little eight-week-old fur ball, but she would stay with us only for the next year or so.
- 5 She had been selected to be a guide dog. Someday it would be her job to guide a blind person. But before she could begin her training, she needed to grow up a bit and learn some basic dog skills, such as how to get along with people and show good manners.
- 6 Mom loved dogs. A couple of months ago, our dog Sammy had died. Mom had had Sammy since before she married Dad, so it was especially hard on her. Then she heard about this program where families help raise guide dogs.
- 7 “Instead of getting a new puppy, how about we wait awhile and foster a seeing-eye puppy?” Mom asked us. I was pretty excited by the idea and Dad agreed too. So Coco became our first foster dog.

- 8 Our first walk with Coco was a bit of a struggle. She hated the leash and couldn't make up her mind about which way to go. After loads of time sniffing everything around her, she finally squatted and peed. I made a big fuss about it as they taught us to do in the training class. She loved seeing me so happy, and she jumped around and wagged her tail wildly.
- 9 Coco was as smart as she was energetic. She quickly learned how to navigate her way through busy intersections in our crazy downtown. In the park she didn't bark at passing people or dogs or chase the squirrels, the way some of the other dogs did.
- 10 I started getting up a little earlier in the morning and taking Coco for a walk before school. Mom was a bit worried when I decided to give up soccer so that I could spend more time training Coco. But I wasn't great at soccer, and I really wanted to come straight home after school and see Coco. I read a bunch of books on dog training. I also read some manuals on training guide dogs—even though she hadn't officially begun that part of her life yet.
- 11 One afternoon, around her first birthday, I put on a blindfold and headed down the sidewalk with her. I wanted to know what it would feel like to be guided by her. I jumped when I heard the engine of a car roar by. Yikes! It was pretty nerve-racking, but Coco seemed to be doing great. She stopped at the curb, just as I had taught her to, and led me around a bike that had been abandoned on the sidewalk in front of the next-door neighbor's house.
- 12 When Coco was 13 months old, we took her to the seeing-eye clinic so that they could check her progress. Part of me wanted them to say she wasn't ready, but she was the shining star. It was time for her to begin her guide training with an instructor. Mom told me that we would get reports about her progress. We could even visit her once in a while.
- 13 I knew Coco was going to be an amazing guide dog. She would do everything she could to keep her human partner safe. But Coco had become a part of our family. I felt myself choke up as I hugged her and whispered in her ear, "You are the best and smartest dog ever!" As they led her away, my heart felt heavy, and I knew no matter who her new owner was, she would always be my dog.



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## Test Questions

*Circle the correct answer.*

1) What is the meaning of the word *energetic* as it is used in the following paragraph?

Coco was as smart as she was **energetic**. She quickly learned how to navigate her way through busy intersections in our crazy downtown.

- a) active
- b) hesitant
- c) tranquil
- d) intelligent

2) This question has two parts. First answer Part A, then answer Part B.

**Part A: Which character trait best describes the puppy raisers in the passage?**

- a) depressed
- b) defeated
- c) dedicated
- d) deflated

**Part B: Select two statements below that support your answer choice in Part A.**

- a) I decided to give up soccer so I could spend more time training Coco.
- b) Coco squirmed in my lap as we drove home from the breeder.
- c) I put on a blindfold and headed down the sidewalk with her.
- d) A couple of months ago, our dog Sammy died.

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## Test Questions (continued)

**3) Which of the following statements best describes how the puppy raisers felt at the beginning and the end of the story?**

- a) In the beginning, they were hopeless, and in the end, they were disappointed.
- b) In the beginning, they were eager, and in the end, they were proud.
- c) In the beginning, they were thrilled, and in the end, they were annoyed.
- d) In the beginning, they were curious, and in the end, they were confident.

**4) Put a number in front of the following statements to show the proper order of events in the passage.**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Our first walk with Coco was a bit of struggle.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Our family decided to be guide-dog puppy raisers.
- \_\_\_\_\_ My heart was heavy, but I would always feel Coco was part of our family.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Coco soon learned to stop at a curb and lead me around obstacles on the sidewalk.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Coco was ready to begin guide dog training with an instructor.

**5) Which of the following statements did the author support in both passages, “Coco the Guide Dog” and “Guide Dogs.”**

- a) Guide dogs spend time with puppy raisers to learn manners and get used to being around people.
- b) Guide dogs are bothered by their harness and U-shaped handle, but they are necessary to teach them commands.
- c) Guide dogs are so energetic that they are difficult to train.
- d) Guide dogs are medium-size dogs with a short coat, so they are easy to care for.