**Waiting for the Magic by Patricia MacLachlan,**

**illustrations by Amy June Bates**

Louisiana Young Reader’s Choice Nominee 2014

Grades 3 - 5

*Submitted by Catherine Bascle*

**SUMMARY**  
When William and Elinor’s father leaves “for a while” their mother drives them down to the animal shelter, something Papa never wanted. What they end up getting is four dogs and a cat. The animals quickly settle in, corforting the famil, helping them heal what is a little too close to breaking. It is a simple sort of magic, but one that makes all the difference. IL: **MG** – BL: **3.0** – AR Pts: **2.0** 160 pages

Hardcover. Atheneum Books for Young Readers. 2011. 9781416927457. $15.99.

Paperback. Atheneum Books for Young Readers. 2012. 9781416927464. $5.99.

**E-book Available.**

**AUTHOR’S BIOGRAPHY**  
Patricia MacLachlan has written many books for children, including *Sarah, Plain and Tall*, winner of the 1986 Newbery Medal. She has written both novels and picture books. Several of these were written with her daughter, Emily. She resides in Williamsburg, Massachusetts with her husband and 2 border terriers.

**ILLUSTRATOR’S BIOGRAPHY**  
Amy June Bates is the illustrator of Waiting for the Magic. She has always loves to draw and read. She lives in Pennsylvania with her husband and three children. She is also the author of the book, *Christian, the Hugging Lion*.  
  
**CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS**  
  
**Writing:**

Ask your students to imagine that they are William and are keeping a journal. Ask them to make journal entries as they go through the book telling scenes from the book in their own words. For example, how they feel about their father leaving and later coming back, what they think about the animals talking, etc.

**Art:**

At the beginning of the book each of the four dogs and cat are described in detail. Ask your students to draw one of the dogs or cat. They can research what the dog breed looks like.

**Science**:

Animals do not usually talk to humans the way they do with William and his family in the book. That does not mean that they are telling us anything. Research and discuss some ways that animals communicate with humans.

In this book, we see and hear about cats, dogs, and even chickens living with people. Not all animals can be happy as a part of people’s homes though. Research and discuss the difference between domestic and wild animals.

The dogs and Lula do a lot to help William’s family by giving comfort during hard times. Investigate ways that animals are used to help humans, such as hospitals, physical therapy and the military.

**Social Action:**

All of the pets the family takes in come from a shelter. Many animals that end up in shelters, however, do not survive to be adopted, often because the shelter cannot afford to keep them any longer. Some shelters, though, make sure to keep animals for as long as it takes to find them families. Start a penny drive to raise money to donate to a shelter that has a no-kill policy.

**Vocabulary:**

flawed earnest

forbidden wander

tepid philosophical

distracted clatter

wiry beacon

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. What reason does William’s father give for leaving in his note?
2. What are the words Elinor is not allowed to say? Why?
3. Which dog becomes closest to William’s mother?
4. How does William feel about his father leaving?
5. Why does Elinor hear the dogs before William does?
6. How do the dogs react when William’s father first comes home?
7. Who suggests the attic room as a good place to write?
8. Why does William’s father stop sleeping on the couch?
9. What makes Marvelous fall silent?
10. Why do they decide to take in the new dog?
11. William mentions that "if you don't talk about it maybe it isn't there." Is that a good way to handle your problems? How so?
12. Different people find different things help them be creative. William’s father likes things quiet. Bryn’s old owner often had the television or music on. What helps you create?
13. William’s family is very happy with all of the animals added to it, but what are some reasons NOT to have pets?

**Additional Resources**

**Further Reading**

Non-fiction

*Dogs on Duty* by Dorothy Hinshaw Patent

*Eco Dogs* by Judith Bauer Stamper

*Baghdad Pups* by Meish Goldish

*Morris and Buddy: The Story of the First Seeing Eye Dog* by Becky Hall

*Detection Rats* by Rosie Albright

Picture books

*Lucy, Rescued* by Harriet Ziefert

*When You Wander: A Search-and-Rescue Dog Story* by Margarita Engle

*Maggie's Second Chance* by Nancy Furstinger

*Two Bobbies* by Kirby Larson and Mary Nethery

Novels

*White Fur Flying* by Patricia MacLachlan

*Hooper Finds a Family* by Jane Paley

*Hideout* by Gordon Korman

Animal Rescue Team series by Sue Stauffacher