



**LESSON:** Making a Match

**GRADE:** 3<sup>rd</sup>—5<sup>th</sup>

**TIME:** 45 min. – 1 hour

**DESCRIPTION:** Students will learn about pet adoption and discuss the differences between animal rescue organizations, responsible breeders, and puppy mills. Students will learn how choosing the right pet is part of responsible pet ownership and test out their matchmaking skills in a matching game.

**COMMON CORE STANDARDS:** ELA: Writing, Speaking & Listening, Language

**OBJECTIVE:** Students will distinguish the difference between adoption and buying and identify choosing the right pet as a part of responsible pet ownership.

**GOALS:**

1. Learn the difference between adopting and buying.
2. Identify the individual needs of pets and families in regards to making an adoption match.
3. Identify finding the right pet as a part of responsible pet ownership.
4. Foster empathy and sense of responsibility for animals in need.

**MATERIALS:**

- Photos of a shelter, a breeder and a puppy mill
- Photo and Biography of an HOV animal
- Adoptable animal cards (6)
- Prospective adopter cards (7)
- “Want to do more with HOV” ¼ page handout
- *Optional:* Whiteboard or Flipchart with markers

**LESSON DETAILS:**

1. HOV Introduction
  - a. Raise a silent hand if you have visited Heart of the Valley. *Optional: ask what students were doing at the shelter.*
  - b. Some of you might know what an animal shelter is or what we do at HOV. *Build on responses.*
  - c. Today we are going to talk about the most exciting thing that happens at the shelter. Any guesses? *Adoptions!*
2. Adopting vs. Buying
  - a. When someone comes to our shelter to take home a new pet, we call it *adopting*. Let’s talk about the difference between *adopting* and *buying*.
    - i. **ADOPTION:**
      1. Adoption usually takes place at an animal shelter or animal rescue.
      2. Adoption is the process of taking guardianship or responsibility for a pet who has been surrendered by a previous owner or didn’t have a family at all.
      3. When someone adopts, they are saving the life of a homeless animal.
      4. There is usually a small adoption fee, and the money goes to help save other animals.
      5. Adopting an animal at a shelter makes it possible to save another homeless animal by opening up a kennel.

- ii. **BUYING:** A person buys from a breeder or from somebody online.
  - 1. *Responsible Breeder:* A *responsible breeder* is someone who raises puppies or cats to sell as pets.
    - a. Show a photo of a responsible breeder. Discuss the photo.
    - b. A responsible breeder takes care of all the animals' needs. They give them enough space, food, warmth, shelter, water, care, medical attention, etc.
    - c. By breeding new dogs, they are adding to the number of pets in the world.
    - d. Usually very expensive, breeders are trying to make money.
  - b. If you were to get a new pet, where would you like to get your dog or cat from? (Display photos of a breeder, and animal shelter.) Why? *Let students form their own opinions.*

### 3. Adopting at Heart of the Valley

- a. If people decide to adopt from Heart of the Valley, we try to find the best match.
  - i. What might happen if a really energetic collie gets adopted by a not very active older family?  
*The couple might surrender the dog back to the shelter.*
  - ii. Part of being a responsible pet owner is choosing the right pet.
- b. Animals are just like us—they are all different. They are different ages, sizes, colors; they have different personalities and interests.
- c. Read a bio of an animal.
  - i. What do you think this animal is like?
  - ii. What kind of home might be best for him/her? Why?
  - iii. What kind of home might not be the best fit for him/her?
  - iv. If we think an animal is not comfortable around children, would we adopt out that animal to a family children? *No.*
  - v. If somebody does not have a home that allows dogs, would be adopt out a dog to them? *No.*
- d. Now we're going to put your matchmaking skills to the test.
  - i. Instruct students to get into groups of 4 to 5 students.
  - ii. Each group will receive a set of adoptable animal cards and a set of potential adopter cards. All of the adoptable animals are animals who are at HOV or have been adopted from HOV. (The potential adopters are fictional). Each group will need to match a potential adopter with an adoptable animal. Just like in real life, there is a chance not every animal will find a match.
  - iii. Discuss match results
    - 1. Who did you pair with \_\_\_\_? Why?
    - 2. Which match was the most difficult for you? Why?
    - 3. Which match was the easiest for you? Why?
    - 4. Who couldn't you find a match for?
    - 5. Do you think there are some animals who have a harder time getting adopted?
      - a. Black cats, older dogs, pit bulls, medical problems, special needs, etc.
      - b. Why? *Stigma, more expensive, etc.*
      - c. How do you think these animals feel when they don't get adopted?
      - d. What is something you can do to help these types of animals get adopted?  
*Make posters, tell people about the animals, donate to the shelter, etc.*
  - iv. Helping homeless animals
    - 1. How can we help pets who haven't found families yet?
    - 2. What is one thing you can do today to help a shelter pet in need?

### 4. Wrap-up

- a. Review Questions:
  - i. What is one way adopting different than buying a pet?
  - ii. What is one thing you can do to help a homeless pet?
  - iii. Your friend says she's afraid of black cats/pit bulls. What can you do?
  - iv. Is choosing the right pet part of being a responsible pet owner?
- b. Does anybody have any questions?

**Notes:**

Adapted from the “Adoption Matchmaking” lesson by the San Francisco SPCA (2015).