

Why They Nearly Renamed the Dog

TIME	30 minutes full · 15 minutes short
PRIMARY SKILL	Use an allusive name to infer meaning
OBJECTIVE	Trace the dog's escapes, locate the book's explanation of the name Houdini, and explain why borrowing that name works as a joke or comparison.
STUDENT EVIDENCE	An escape list, the source of the borrowed name, and a one-sentence explanation of what the new name would imply.
ESSENTIAL QUESTION	How can a name carry a whole story or comparison with it?

Before teaching

Read or play the complete book before the timed lesson. Keep the book available so claims and evidence can be checked against the text. Book-specific targets: Track Bagels' repeated escapes and the book's explanation of Houdini.

Materials:	the book, Student Evidence page, pencil.
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Lesson sequence

TIME	TEACHING MOVE
4 min	Collect the escapes List the repeated behavior that motivates the proposed name.
6 min	Find the name explanation Locate what the book tells you about Houdini.
7 min	State the shared feature Explain what the dog and the borrowed name have in common.
8 min	Test the comparison Use more than one escape to show that the name fits repeatedly, not once.
5 min	Explain the effect Say why the borrowed name is more effective than simply calling the dog "an escape artist."

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Access routes

SOLO	Use the book independently to complete the evidence page. Require book-based support for the reasoning.
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SUPPORTED	Pause at the key evidence moments. Rephrase the task orally, then have students point to or record evidence before explaining.
LISTENING	Use narration and illustrations. Ask the same book-specific questions orally and accept pointing, choosing between evidence already visible in the book, drawing, or an oral explanation. Do not require teacher-invented answer choices.
EXTEND	Apply the same reasoning move to a second moment in the book or ask students to explain why a tempting alternative is weaker.

Teacher guidance

Students do not need outside biographical knowledge. The book's own explanation is the evidence base for the allusion.

Book-specific answer anchors

- The proposed name Houdini comes from the famous escape artist. The book supplies the connection so students do not need outside biographical knowledge.
- Bagels earns the comparison through repeated escapes. The shared feature is not fame in general but getting out of places that should contain him.
- A strong response names at least two of Bagels's escape episodes and then states the common feature: both Bagels and Houdini are associated with escaping confinement.

Assessment

- The proposed name is tied to repeated escapes.
- The book's explanation of the borrowed name is located.
- The student states the shared feature that makes the comparison meaningful.

Short route · 15 minutes

3 min - name/model the skill. 8 min - gather the minimum evidence required on the student page. 4 min - explain the answer and verify it against the book.

Watch for

Knowing who Houdini was from prior knowledge but not connecting that meaning to the repeated events in the book.

Source note

Extracted and audited as a standalone from the ELA unit The Words They Use. No regional standards are attached to this standalone skill lesson.

STUDENT EVIDENCE · GRADES 2-3

Bagels Come Home

Why They Nearly Renamed the Dog

Name _____ Date _____ An escape list, the source of the borrowed name, and a one-sentence explanation of what the new name would imply.

ESCAPE / EVENT 1

ESCAPE / EVENT 2

WHAT THE BOOK SAYS ABOUT

HOUDINI

SHARED FEATURE

WHY THE NAME FITS

EXIT CHECK

How can a name carry a whole story or comparison with it?

TEACHER KEY · GRADES 2-3

Bagels Come Home

Why They Nearly Renamed the Dog

Book-specific answer anchors

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- Bagels earns the comparison through repeated escapes. The shared feature is not fame in general but getting out of places that should contain him.
- A strong response names at least two of Bagels's escape episodes and then states the common feature: both Bagels and Houdini are associated with escaping confinement.

Expected student evidence

- The proposed name is tied to repeated escapes.
- The book's explanation of the borrowed name is located.
- The student states the shared feature that makes the comparison meaningful.

Watch for

Knowing who Houdini was from prior knowledge but not connecting that meaning to the repeated events in the book.

Independent success

The student completes the required evidence product, uses the named book-specific evidence above, and can explain the reasoning move without relying only on recall or a teacher-supplied answer.

Unit source

The Words They Use · Bagels Come Home by Joan Betty Stuchner