

Underdogs #2: We're Not the Champions

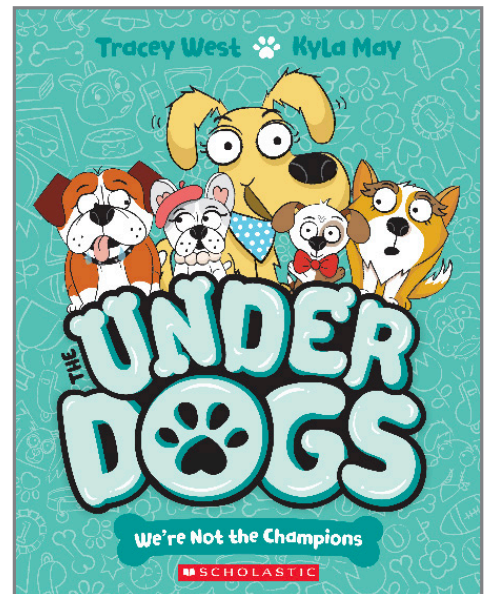
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RECOMMENDED FOR: Lower to Mid Primary



SYNOPSIS

Welcome to Barksdale, where all the dogs strive for perfection. Every shopkeeper claims to be the best groomer or sell the best biscuits. And at Barksdale Academy, the pressure is on for one pup to be named Best in Show. Duke's cousin Coco, a French bulldog visiting from Paris is cool, funny, and charming especially compared to the Underdogs. So when it comes time to choose teams, it's no surprise she ends up on Team Awesome instead of with her cousin Duke and his friends. But during the K-2 exam, Coco can't seem to get anything right! And if Barksdale loses the field day events, everyone, including the Underdogs, will fail their loyalty exam! Can the Underdogs come to Coco's rescue and save their school's reputation?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tracey West has written more than 300 books for children and young adults, including the New York Times bestselling Dragon Masters series, the Pixie Tricks series, and the Hiro's Quest series. She has also appeared on the New York Times bestseller list as author of the Pokémon chapter book adaptations. Tracey lives with her family in New York State's western Catskills. She can be found on Twitter and Instagram at @TraceyWestBooks and on Facebook at @AuthorTraceyWest.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Kyla May is an Australian illustrator, writer, and designer. She is the creator and illustrator of the *Paris Takes Over The World*, *The Underdogs*, *Diary of a Pug* and *Lotus Lane* book series. As well as books, Kyla has used her imagination to create six animated TV series, including *Kuu Kuu Harajuku*, co-created by Gwen Stefani, and *SheZow*. In between children's books and cartoons, Kyla has created several toy ranges and gifts for children. Kyla's creative career began as an advertising art director and licensed brand creator. Kyla lives by the beach in Victoria, Australia, with her three daughters, three dogs and two cats.

STUDY NOTES

- Before reading the story, as a class discuss the book cover and title. Some things to include in your discussion could be:
 - What can you see happening on the cover of the story?
 - What does the blurb on the back of the cover tell us about the setting and characters?

- Who has read the first Underdogs story? Share your recollections of it with the class.
- What is an underdog? What do you think this means in the context of the title?
- Several of the characters are introduced in the opening pages as being the best at something, while The Underdogs don't feel that they are the best at anything. Do you have to be the best at something to be good at it or to enjoy it? What do you think you would enjoy doing if you were a dog in Barksdale? Draw yourself as one of The Underdogs and caption it with your name and a description of what you would enjoy doing. You might want to look at pictures and information about different breeds of dogs before you start, and decide which breed's behaviour matches your personality and interests.
- Peanut hates water while Duke is scared of heights, which means that neither of them want to jump off the diving board. What is something that you find scary or intimidating, and what activities has it made difficult for you to do? What can you say to yourself or do that might make it easier the next time you try? In small groups create an inspirational poster encouraging people to overcome their fears and try new or difficult things.
- The description of the ice-cream fight on p 26 contains four examples of alliteration, where two or more words in a sentence all start with the same sound. In pairs or small groups think of at least four alliterative food descriptions of your own. Choose your favourite alliterative description and create a one page illustrated advertisement for your chosen food, captioned with your alliterative description.
- What is your favourite funny scene in the story? What made it funny and why did you like it the most? Write a one or two paragraph description of your favourite funny scene, explaining what occurred in the scene, what was funny, why it was funny, and why you chose it over the other funny scenes in the story.
- Make a rhyming cheer of your own about your school, or school house, to use at sports days and athletics carnivals. It can be funny like Peanut's, serious like Nova's or even rambling and highly descriptive like Harley's, as long as it rhymes and sounds good when being shouted encouragingly.
- Rewrite one of the scenes in the story where Duke is feeling sad about Coco hanging out with the popular pups from Coco's point of view. How was she really feeling the whole time, and why do you think she made the choices that she did?
- Have a class competition day of your own including some of the activities from the story, such as bean bag toss, baton relay, sack race, water balloon catch and speed relay. Which relay or race did you have the most fun competing in and why?