



# Breaking the Chain

## Art and Creative Writing Activity

*Based on characters created by renowned children's author Debra White*

### **Student Directions:**

Please read the following passage. Then, on a separate sheet of paper, write your own ending to the story and/or draw a picture of Harriet and Joey. Use your imagination, be creative, there are no wrong answers!

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Harriet, a scruffy gray cat, thought she would be happy in the new house she just moved into with her owner, Candace. In the sizzling hot Arizona summers, Harriet could sit in the cool indoors and watch birds out the windows all day.

After dinner that evening, Harriet jumped onto the windowsill. Instead of finding trees full of birds, she looked into the neighbor's yard and saw a big brown dog chained to a doghouse, barking loudly. Next to the doghouse sat a half-empty bowl of water. Like a wind-up toy, the dog paced back and forth. The dog's constant motion and noise annoyed Harriet. She got down and looked for something else to do. Silly dog, she thought. He must be crazy.

Later the next day, Harriet heard whimpers from the neighbor's yard. She sped through the house to the living room for a closer look. She jumped onto the windowsill and saw the dog pawing in the dirt near the now empty water bowl. He must be thirsty, Harriet thought. She wanted to help, but how? This was a job for the great Harriet.

A huge problem stood in her way - how to get out of the locked house. Candace, her owner, almost always closed all the windows and locked the doors before leaving for work. But sometimes she forgot to check the basement. Harriet charged downstairs and, sure enough, she found a window that was slightly ajar. She rammed her head against it and within seconds, she was outside.

Harriet darted across the yard and scaled the fence. She sat down by the big brown dog and asked, "What's the matter? Why are you crying?"

"Who are you?" the dog asked, too tired to lift his head off the ground.

"I'm Harriet, the greatest cat in Maricopa County. I just moved next door."

"My name is Joey and I'm hot and thirsty," the dog said, panting heavily.

"Why are you outside tied up like a criminal?" Harriet asked, staring at the heavy chain around Joey's neck. Her eyes followed the chain and saw that it was hammered firmly to the doghouse.

"I've been out here on this chain for three years, ever since I was a puppy," Joey grumbled. "And I'm not a criminal. I never did anything bad. Maybe they thought I'd run away."

"Don't get so sore," Harriet said. "What happened to your water?"

"I guess I drank it all."

"That wasn't too smart," Harriet said, staring at the empty bowl. Her glance shifted to Joey. "Aren't you bored by yourself?"

"Sure, that's why I bark. I have no one to play with or take me for a walk."

"I just moved next door. My owner and I like a quiet neighborhood so try and keep it down," Harriet said.

"What I need is a friend. Will you be my friend?" Joey asked.

"I'm not used to having mongrels as friends, but I'll think about it," Harriet said, licking her paw. "Maybe my owner can do something to get you off this hideous chain."

"I'll be your best friend if you can," Joey said as he stood up. He tried to slobber on Harriet's cheek.

"Here, here, don't get too mushy, I'm not that kind of cat," Harriet said. "But they don't call me the great Harriet for nothing. I'll be back."

Your assignment is to write and/or draw a picture providing an ending to the story above. How does Harriet assist in freeing Joey? How does Joey feel once he's free? Be creative -- it's your story and picture!

