Name\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ #7

*Read and annotate thoroughly*

He was eating dinner when he heard the horrible crying and whining.

Heart pounding, he jumped up from the table and raced across the living room. He threw

open the bedroom door and flicked on the light.

Over in the corner by the benc h the dog was trying to dig a hole in the floor.

Terrified whines shook its body as its front paws clawed frenziedly at the linoleum, slipping

futilely on the smoothness of it.

“Boy, it’s all right!” Neville said quickly.

The dog jerked around and backed into the corner, hackles rising, jaws drawn back all the

way from its yellowish-white teeth, a half- mad sound quivering in its throat.

Suddenly Neville knew what was wrong. It was nighttime and the terrified dog was trying to dig itself a hole to bury itself in.

He stood there helplessly, his brain refusing to work properly as the dog edged away from the

corner, then scuttled underneath the workbench.

An idea finally came. Neville moved to his bed quickly and pulled off the top blanket.

Returning to the bench, he crouched down and looked under it.

The dog was almost flattened against the wall, its body shaking violently, guttural snarls

bubbling in its throat.

“All right, boy,” he said. “All right.”

The dog shrank back as Neville stuck the blanket underneath the bench and then stood up.

Neville went over to the door and remained there a minute looking back. If only I could do

something, he thought helplessly. But I can’t even get close to him.

Well, he decided grimly, if the dog didn’t accept him soon, he’d have to try a little

chloroform. Then he could at least work on the dog, fix its paw and try somehow to cure it.

He went back to the kitchen but he couldn’t eat. Finally he dumped the contents of his plate

into the garbage disposal and poured the coffee back into the pot. In the living room he made

himself a drink and downed it. It tasted flat and unappetizing. He put down the glass and. went

back to the bedroom with a somber face.

The dog had dug itself under the folds of the blanket and there it was still shaking, whining

ceaselessly. No use trying to work on it now, he thought; it’s too frightened.

He walked back to the bed and sat down. He ran his hands through his hair and then put them

over his face. Cure it, cure it, he thought, and one of his hands bunched into a fist to strike

feebly at the mattress.

Reaching out abruptly, he turned off the light and lay down fully clothed. Still lying down, he

worked off his sandals and listened to them thump on the floor.

Silence. He lay there staring at the ceiling. Why don’t I get up? he wondered. Why don’t I try to do something?

He turned on his side. Get some sleep. The words came automatically. He knew he wasn’t

going to sleep, though. He lay in the darkness listening to the dog’s whimpering.

Die, it’s going to die, he kept thinking, there’s nothing in the world I can do.

At last, unable to bear the sound, he reached over and switched on the bedside lamp. As he

moved across the room in his stocking feet, he heard the dog trying suddenly to jerk loose from

the blanketing. But it got all tangled up in the folds and began yelping, terror-stricken, while its

body flailed wildly under the wool.

Neville knelt beside it and put his hands on its body. He heard the choking snarl and the

muffled click of its teeth as it snapped at him through the blanket.

“All right,” he said. “Stop it now.”

The dog kept struggling against him, its high-pitched whining never stopping, its gaunt body

shaking without control. Neville kept his hands firmly on its body, pinning it down, talking to it

quietly, gently.

“It’s all right now, fella, all right. Nobody’s going to hurt you. Take it easy, now. Come on,

relax, now. Come on, boy. Take it easy. Relax. That’s right, relax. That’s it. Calm down.

Nobody’s going to hurt you. We’ll take care of you.”

Soon the dog lay still beneath his strong hands, the only movement its harsh breathing.

Neville began patting its head, began running his right hand over its body, stroking and soothing.

“That’s a good dog,” he said softly. “Good dog. I’ll take care of you now. Nobody will hurt

you. You understand, don’t you, fella? Sure you do. Sure. You’re my dog, aren’t you?”

Carefully he sat down on the cool linoleum, still patting the dog.

“You’re a good dog, a good dog.”

His voice was calm, it was quiet with resignation.

After about an hour he picked up the dog. For a moment it struggled and started whining, but

Neville talked to it again and it soon calmed down.

He sat down on his bed and held the blanket-covered dog in his lap. He sat there for hours

holding the dog, patting and stroking and talking. The dog lay immobile in his lap, breathing

easier.

It was about eleven that night when Neville slowly undid the blanket folds and exposed the dog’s head.

For a few minutes it cringed away from his hand, snapping a little. But he kept talking to it quietly, and after a while his hand rested on the warm neck and he was moving his fingers gently, scratching and caressing.

He smiled down at the dog, his throat moving.

“You’ll be all better soon,” he whispered. “Real soon.” The dog looked up at him with its

dulled, sick eyes and then its tongue faltered out and licked roughly and moistly across the palm of Neville’s hand.

Something broke in Neville’s throat. He sat there silently while tears ran slowly down his

cheeks.

In a week the dog was dead.

1. Choose one line from this section of the reading, copy it below. Why does it stand out to you?
2. How does Richard Matheson (the author) build emotional tension in this scene? Use textual evidence to support your claim.

3. What is the significance of the dog? Use textual evidence to support your answer.