



2003

### Dear Mrs. LaRue, Letters from Obedience School

AnnMarie Hamar

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Teague, Mark. *Dear Mrs. LaRue, Letters from Obedience School*. Illustrated by Mark Teague. Scholastic Press, 2003. ISBN 0439206634. \$15.95.

Reviewer: AnnMarie Hamar

Reading Level: Preschool, Primary

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Humorous Stories;

Subject: Dogs—Juvenile fiction; Books—Reviews;

Poor Ike the dog. His owner, Mrs. Gertrude LaRue, has sent him to the Igor Brotweiler Canine Academy because he steals food off the table, harasses the neighbor's cats, and is generally mischievous. In an amusing series of letters, an unhappy Ike pleads for her to let him come home. "This is a PRISON, not a school!" he laments. "You should see the other dogs. They are BAD DOGS, Mrs. LaRue. I do not fit in." After ten days in "confinement," Ike finally escapes and arrives home just in time to save Mrs. LaRue from being hit by a car. Ike suddenly goes from being a bag dog to being a hero.

What works so well with this book is the way the illustrations and the text mesh. Color drawings show the academy as it really is--dogs being served gourmet meals on silver platters, and Ike in a cozy room complete with juicer and boom box stereo. Black and white illustrations depict the school as it exists in Ike's vivid imagination--dogs wearing prison stripes, the teachers as prison guards and the school itself as Dr. Frankenstein's castle complete with lightning bolt overhead. The letters are very funny with Ike expressing his homesickness and doing his best to make his owner feel sorry for him.

Any child who has ever felt unjustly punished by a parent will relate to Ike's feelings. Teague's inspiration for the book came from his own dog and his brother's dog.