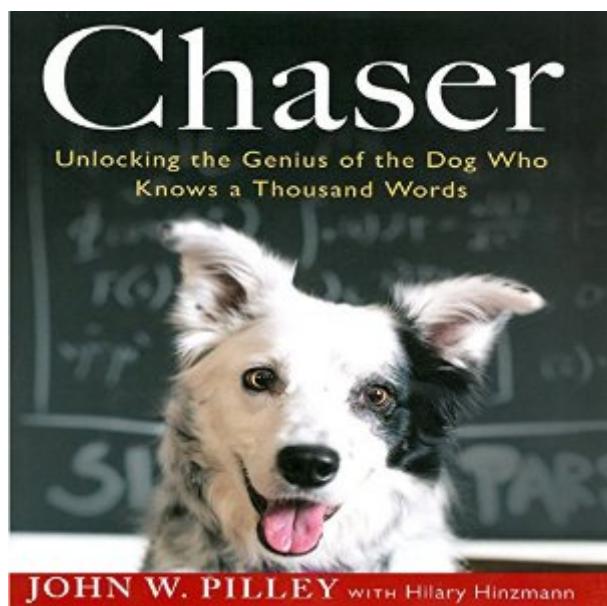


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Chaser: Unlocking The Genius Of The Dog Who Knows A Thousand Words



Synopsis

The amazing story of a very smart Border collie who is redefining animal intelligence. Chaser has a way with words. She knows over a thousand of them-more than any other animal of any species except humans. In addition to common nouns like house, ball, and tree, she has memorized the names of more than one thousand toys and can retrieve any of them on command. Based on that learning, she and her owner and trainer, retired psychologist John Pilley, have moved on to further impressive feats, demonstrating her ability to understand sentences with multiple elements of grammar and to learn new behaviors by imitation. John's ingenuity and tenacity as a researcher are as impressive as Chaser's accomplishments. His groundbreaking approach has opened the door to a new understanding of animal intelligence, one that requires us to reconsider what actually goes on in a dog's mind. Chaser's achievements reveal her use of deductive reasoning and complex problem-solving skills to address novel challenges. Yet astonishingly, Chaser isn't unique. John's training methods can be adopted by any dog lover. Through the poignant story of how he trained Chaser, raised her as a member of the Pilley family, and proved her abilities to the scientific community, he reveals the positive impact of incorporating learning into play and more effectively channeling a dog's natural drives. John's work with Chaser offers a fresh perspective on what's possible in the relationship between a dog and a human. His story points us toward a new way of relating to our canine companions that takes into account our evolving understanding of the way animals and humans learn.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In the spirit of full disclosure, I am a dog lover and the owner of a Shetland sheepdog that never ceases to amaze me with her intelligence. For most of my life, I have strongly disagreed with the belief, long espoused by the church and philosophers such as Descartes, that animals are soulless and therefore essentially different from humans. It is therefore with great interest that I picked up a copy of 'Chaser: Unlocking the Genius of the Dog Who Knows a Thousand Words', a book that knocks that archaic attitude on its tail. Its author, John Pilley Ph.D., is a retired professor of psychology at Wofford College who, during his teaching career, taught animal behavior using, as his teaching assistant, his dog, Yasha. With both Yasha and his teaching career behind him, Pilley took to moping around the house until his wife, as any sane wife would, put her foot down and told him in no uncertain terms that he was going to get another dog. Enter Chaser, a border collie puppy that enters the Pilley household and immediately takes over. Pilley, with his background in animal behavioral research, is not your everyday dog owner and immediately sets out to answer the question, "How much can a dog learn?" Armed with love, patience and an endless supply of free time, he worked with Chaser every day, devising experiments aimed at discovering the limits of what a dog can learn. I use the words work and experiments but the truth is that everything he does with Chaser is play, at least as far as Chaser sees it. Within three years, Chaser had learned the names of 1,022 toys and was able to correctly respond to several commands related to each. She also was able to apply deductive reasoning and retrieve unfamiliar items by process of elimination.

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