



**Charlie Small**



**Guide Dogs**



**California's Unlikely  
Warriors**

# Reading Booklet

**English reading  
Key stage 2 levels 3-5**



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# Charlie Small

Charlie Small is a young boy who has had lots of amazing adventures.

## Meet Charlie Small!

When Charlie Small was eight years old he just popped out to go exploring and something strange happened to him. Since then he has never got any older (he is still eight years old!) but he has had lots of different adventures, helped by his friend, the inventor Jakeman.

We recently caught up with Charlie and asked him some questions.

### **Tell us about some of your adventures.**

I've travelled in space, been King of Gorillas, joined a gang of cut-throat pirates and lots more.

### **What was your most exciting adventure?**

The Mummy's Tomb, when I got chased by a smoke demon.

### **What are your favourite pastimes?**

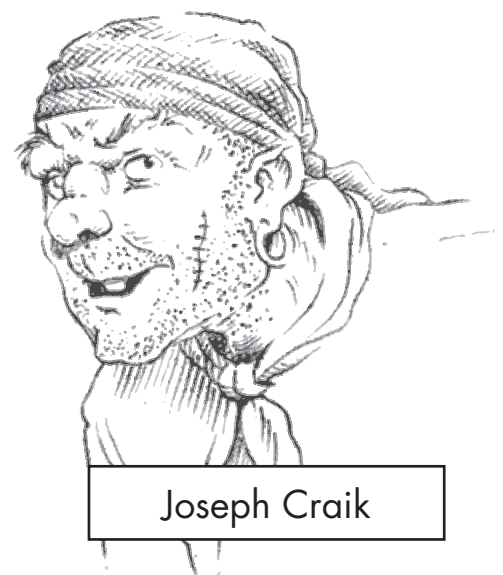
Riding my hover-scooter, swinging through trees and battling to defeat my *arch enemy* Joseph Craik.

### **What other languages can you speak, apart from Gorilla?**

I can speak a little bit of Mole. I can understand the howls of Braemar the White Wolf and I can speak Chimp too.

### **When will you return home?**

I am still trying to get back home, but until I do, I'm going to keep a diary for each of my adventures. Meanwhile, mum is still expecting me back for tea...



Joseph Craik



This is the opening of one of Charlie Small's diaries.

## Chapter 1

# A Rude Awakening

I was driving across a wide plain on the Air-rider, a hover-scooter specially designed for me by my pal, Jakeman. He's an incredible inventor whose marvellous machines have helped me loads on my adventures.

I hovered a few centimetres from the ground and skimmed along at thirty kilometres an hour. The long grass rippled and the hot sun beat down, making the air shimmer and my eyes ache. In danger of getting heatstroke, I needed to get out of the sun.

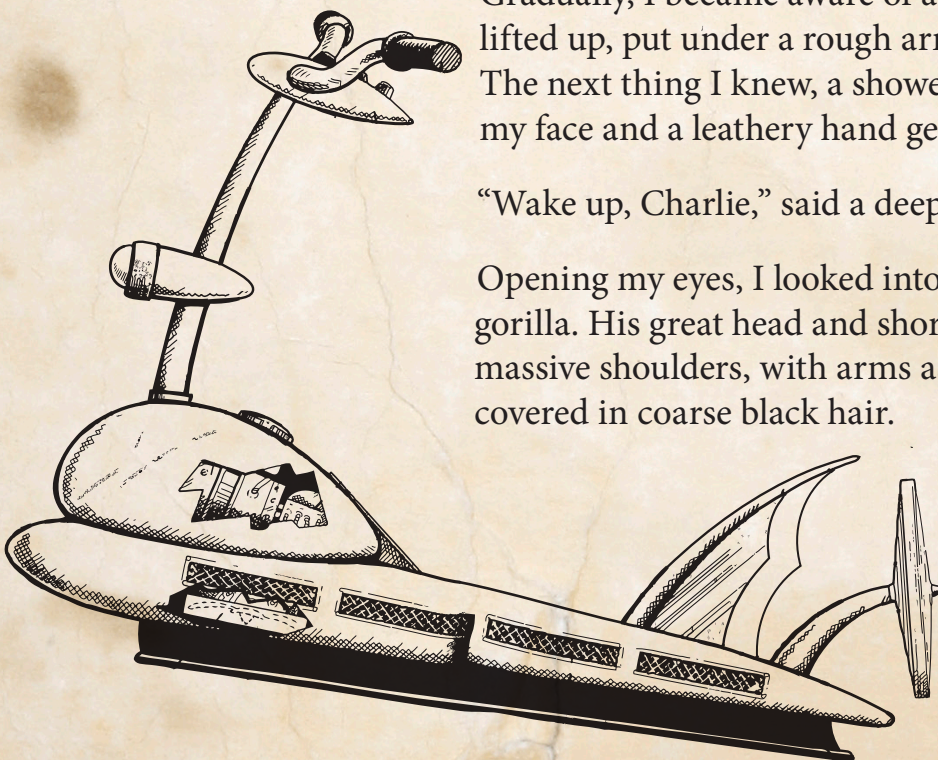
To my left, the ground rose forming a series of cone-shaped hills, covered with patchy woodland. Opening the scooter's throttle, I zoomed towards the trees, and parked in their cool shade.

Suddenly, as I stepped from my scooter, a large flower sprang up towards me. Its bright purple, rubbery petals opened like a fan and sprayed powdery mist into my face. I coughed and spluttered as more flowers rose up, filling the air with strong perfume. I tried to weave my way through them but my head began to spin. My eyes closed and I gave a jaw-shaking yawn. I felt I must lie down. I had to sleep.

Gradually, I became aware of a hand on my collar. I was lifted up, put under a rough arm and carried into the trees. The next thing I knew, a shower of icy-cold water splashed my face and a leathery hand gently slapped my cheeks.

"Wake up, Charlie," said a deep voice.

Opening my eyes, I looked into the face of an adult male gorilla. His great head and short, thick neck stood on massive shoulders, with arms as thick as my waist, and covered in coarse black hair.





# Guide Dogs

## What guide dogs do

Guide dogs help people who are blind or visually impaired move around safely, and often transform their lives. They are usually allowed anywhere that the public can go, even where other dogs aren't allowed. In order to help their owner, guide dogs must know how to:

- keep a steady pace
- stop at all kerbs
- recognise and avoid obstacles
- stop at the bottom and top of stairs
- lie quietly when their owner is sitting down
- help their owner to board public transport
- obey spoken commands
- ignore distractions such as other animals and people.



## Guide dogs and their owners

Guide dogs must also know not to obey any command that would put their owner in danger. This is called selective disobedience and is perhaps the most amazing thing about guide dogs: they know when to obey their owner and when they should *disobey* to keep their owner safe.

Selective disobedience is extremely important at road crossings, where the owner and dog must work very closely together to cross safely. When they reach the kerb, the dog stops and signals to the owner that they have reached a crossing. Dogs cannot recognise the colour of traffic lights, so the owner must decide when it is safe to cross the road. The owner listens to the flow of traffic to judge when the light has changed and then gives the command 'forward'. If there is no danger, the dog crosses the road. If there are cars coming, the dog waits until they pass and then crosses.

The guide dog doesn't know where they are going, so it must follow the owner's instructions. The owner can't see obstacles so the guide dog must help the owner to avoid them. The owner is like the navigator on an aircraft who must know how to get from one place to another, and the dog is the pilot who gets them there safely.

## How guide dogs are trained

Not all dogs are suited to the life of a guide dog. Puppies born to be guide dogs have to be intelligent and good-natured; it is important that they aren't nervous of crowds or frightened by sudden noises.

When it is eight weeks old, the puppy sets out on its journey to become a life-changing guide dog. It goes to live with a volunteer 'puppy-walker', who teaches the pup to follow simple commands and to walk on a lead. The puppy-walker also takes it to busy town centres and on different kinds of public transport. The puppy is introduced to the sights, sounds and smells of a world in which it will play such an important part.

When the puppy is about a year old, it returns to the guide dog centre for the next part of its training. It can be hard for puppy-walkers to say goodbye to a puppy, but they have the satisfaction of knowing they have helped to raise a dog who will one day be someone's eyes.

## Work and play



Guide dogs work hard and there is no room for fun during the working day. If you see a guide dog, you should leave it alone so that it can concentrate on helping its owner.

At the end of the day, however, a guide dog will play just like an ordinary pet.

*"Before I got my guide dog, Benji, I spent most of my time at home. Now I'm out and about almost every day. He has given me confidence: now I can catch a bus into town, meet my friends and go shopping. I can go anywhere I want, without thinking twice."*

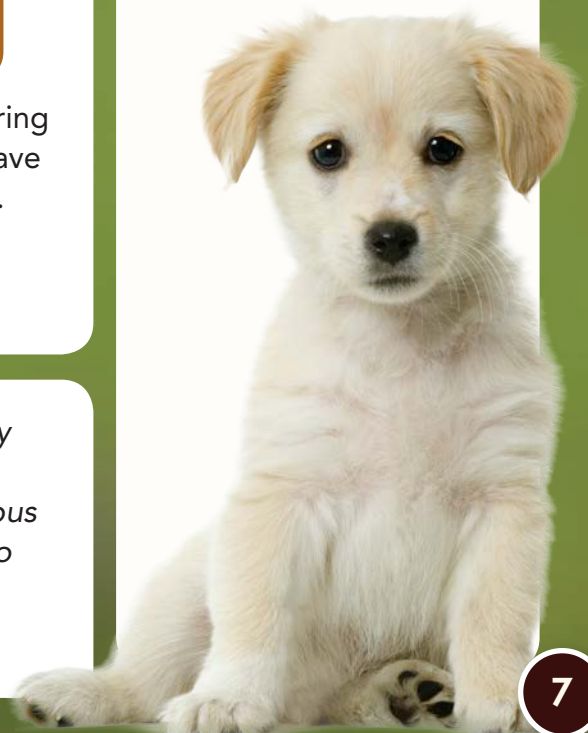
**Guide dog owner Lucy, talking about her guide dog.**

## Did you know?

- The first guide dogs in the UK were trained in 1931 by Rosamund Bond and Muriel Crooke.
- There are now 4,500 guide dog owners in this country.
- The working life of a guide dog is 6 – 7 years.
- The lifetime cost of a guide dog is £50,000.

## Play your part!

If you sponsor a gorgeous little guide dog puppy, you play an important part in its amazing journey. It costs from only £1.00 a week and you get regular 'pupdates' with photos as it grows up and news of all its adventures!



This text is about how ladybirds helped farmers in California to get rid of a plague of tiny insects that were killing their orange trees.

# California's Unlikely Warriors



Over 100 years ago in America, Californian orchards were almost destroyed by a plague of thousands of tiny creatures called scale insects. These tiny sap-sucking bugs were attacking the orange trees and ruining all the fruit.

Scale insects had never been seen in America before. So where had they come from? Eventually the invasion was traced to some acacia plants that had been shipped in from Australia.

The scale insects spread so quickly that unless something was done to get rid of them, the whole fruit industry in California would be ruined. The situation was so bad that Californian fruit growers were pulling up their fruit trees and burning them to destroy the pests. Soon, the takeover started to spread to other parts of America. Different kinds of pesticides were used to try to kill the insects but none of them worked.

By now thousands of orange trees were dying.

A professor from the Department of Agriculture, Charles V. Riley, suggested that the scale insects might be controlled by introducing other insects to feed on them. But no-one listened to him. No-one had ever heard such a theory before! They thought it was a crazy idea and laughed at his suggestion. This made Mr Riley more determined. He was sure that he was right.

He had heard that in Australia, scale insects were much less of a problem. So, why was this? Why were the Australians not suffering the same damage to their trees and plants?

Mr Riley predicted that the Australian scale insects must have a natural enemy that was reducing their numbers. Eventually he was able to persuade a researcher called Alfred Koebele to go to Australia to try to find out if this was the case.







In Australia, Mr Koebele visited many of the trees that attracted scale insects and made a surprising discovery – a large number of small colourful beetles were living in them. They were ladybirds, and everywhere he found scale insects on the fruit trees of Australia, he found ladybirds feasting on them. Mr Koebele scooped up as many of the little red and black creatures as he could and sent them back to California.

When the unlikely warriors were set free in one of the dying Californian orange groves, they cleared all the scale insects from the trees in just a few days. The original 350 ladybirds sent from Australia multiplied at such a staggering rate that by June that year over 10,000 were available to be distributed to fruit growers across California. The speed at which the pests were wiped out was astonishing. One grower, who had abandoned all hope for his young orange trees, was able to harvest two to three boxes of oranges from each tree by the end of the growing season.

So successful was the experiment that soon the Americans were breeding and distributing more and more ladybirds. Not only that, but before long other countries around the world also decided to import and breed Australian ladybirds.

Because of this remarkable result, we now know a lot more about these ladybirds. We know that scale insects are their favourite food and that some ladybirds can eat large amounts in a day. Ladybirds also like to eat honeydew, nectar and pollen – but they still need insects to help them grow and breed.



Today, scientists are still studying ways of using insects to help control the pests and parasites that regularly destroy our plants and trees. As we learn about some of the damage that chemical pesticides can cause, it seems even more important to take care of small creatures that can help us protect our environment.

There is an old superstition which says that ladybirds bring you luck. They certainly brought good fortune to the fruit growers of California!



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