

LONE DOG

I'm a lean dog, a keen dog, a wild dog, and lone;
I'm a rough dog, a tough dog, hunting on my own;
I'm a bad dog, a mad dog, teasing silly sheep;
I love to sit and bay the moon, to keep fat souls from sleep.

I'll never be a lap dog, licking dirty feet,
A sleek dog, a meek dog, cringing for my meat,
Not for me the fireside, the well-filled plate,
But shut door, and sharp stone, and cuff and kick and hate.

Not for me the other dogs, running by my side,
Some have run a short while, but none of them would abide,
Oh, mine is still the lone trail, the hard trail, the best,
Wide wind, and wild stars, and hunger of the quest!

Irene Rutherford McLeod

1. Perhaps you have heard a person described as a "lone dog." What kind of person is he?
2. What words did the poet use to describe a "lone dog?"
3. Reread lines 5 through 8. What way of life is criticized in these lines?
4. Reread lines 11 and 12. Do you share the poet's preference for the "lone trail"? Why or why not?
5. What is the effect of the repetition in the first stanza? What does it reveal about the poet's attitude.
6. In addition to end rhymes, the poet used several internal rhymes, such as "a lean dog, a keen dog." Point them out.
7. As a rule, a serious poem does not contain so many rhymes. Is this a serious poem? What is its purpose? Does the language of the poem suit the purpose?