

A Conversation With  
**Trisha Adelena Howell**  
Author of  
**The Pekinese Who Saved Civilization,  
The Princess and the Pekinese,  
and other dog titles**

Kim Bloomer: Trisha, you seem to be very enamored with animals in general and with dogs in particular. Why is this?

**Trisha Howell:** Animals are wonderful beings, living in harmony with nature while also supporting and inspiring us. If treated well, dogs and other domestic animals are always there for us, never too busy to give us attention, sympathy, encouragement, and love. They ground us firmly in reality and bring us back to what is really important: the love and friendship of family and friends. In turn, we love our dogs and cats intensely, and this inspires us to be more joyful and loving in general.

KB: I am in total agreement with you on this, Trisha! You seem to be saying that dogs have a lot to teach us, that they somehow make us better people.

**TH:** Yes. Dogs constantly model unconditional love and devotion for us. They show us the great value of a generously loving heart and teach us that we are at our very best when we show love and understanding to others. Dogs are happy with very few material possessions; they teach us that it is relationships, not things, which count.

KB: Yes, they truly model the unconditional love factor, don't they? I notice that your two Pekingese puppies accompany you to your dog-related presentations. What is it about this breed in particular that has captured your heart?

**TH:** Pekingese are very calm and loving dogs who are highly devoted to their families. I have taken four different Pekingese to book readings and signings with me, and they have been very gentle and friendly with children. They are always eager to be petted, they never bark, and they never bite—not even when a child pulls their tail! Their response to that is usually to kiss the child.

KB: True Canine Good Citizens, your Pekes! My very first dog was a tricolor Peke named Geronimo, so I am rather partial to the little guys myself. What do your own Pekes have to share with people who come to meet them?

**TH:** Like most dogs, Addie and Rocky the Pekingese model unconditional love and joyful enthusiasm for life. They greatly touch the hearts of both children and adults

who interact with them. They are ambassadors of good will to the world, showing us all that what matters in all our relationships is love, enthusiasm, and generosity of spirit. I'm amazed and grateful that Addie and Rocky seem to be an inspiration to everyone they meet! I have seen children cry tears of joy because they are so moved by the love that Addie and Rocky give them. These dogs are incredibly loving!

KB: I'm sure they are, and I look forward to meeting them too one day. What do books about dogs have to offer children and adults?

TH: For one thing, demonstration of the devotion that dogs gift us with. In *The Princess and the Pekinese*, the Pekinese's absolutely unconditional and unstoppable love for his cranky new sister, the Princess, is an inspiration for people everywhere. And, through a surprise twist, this love triumphs in the end when the Princess finally acquires the insight into herself that enables her to appreciate all her blessings, including the great value of her whole family's love for her. The book also models how siblings can better get along with one another. Many studies show that a good relationship among siblings is crucial for a child's optimal emotional, mental, and social development. The bond between brothers and sisters is unique and the longest lasting relationship most people have. Yet the cruelty, fighting, and rejection that is rampant among younger siblings can be emotionally scarring. *The Princess and the Pekinese* shows how one sibling comes to accept and even to love the new sibling she initially despises and resents. Since children are so drawn to animals, they can learn this lesson for their own lives through watching it play out through the dogs. So books with animal characters not only teach children about the beauty and blessing of interacting with animals but also model for them good behavior that the children can then integrate into their own lives. This is also the case with my other current animal title, *The Pekinese Who Saved Civilization*. This humor book conveys a lot of vital personal, social, and political information for both children and adults through the mouth of a dog, making learning fun for them. Lovable curmudgeon Addison charms readers of all ages, wittily conveying questions and lessons to ponder. He encourages readers not only to laugh but also to think about many ideas on improving their lives. Even when Addison is crabby, he's endearing, bringing the warmth of laughter into the lives of both children and adults. And by inadvertently exhibiting his own dog foibles, Addison reveals ways in which humans are often blinded by self-interest and various prejudices. This enables readers to examine their own perspectives and thus to see themselves and the world more clearly. So dogs can also be a mirror through which we can look at ourselves more clearly. Howell Canyon Press' upcoming humorous chapter book series, *Addie the Playful Pekinese*, teaches children valuable life lessons as Addison strives to guide his niece and ward, puppy Addie, through the exciting and funny adventure of growing up. Of course, this could also be demonstrated through human characters. But, as I said, children can relate so well to animals, both in person and in books, that they can sometimes more easily absorb the lessons that come from animal characters than from human characters. The energy, enthusiasm, joy, and playfulness of dogs is very much like that of children, and so children find a kindred spirit in their canine companions, both in life and in books.

KB: I can see how any age group will relate to these books, Trisha. What a wonderful way to show children AND adults about life lessons using the ever cheerful demeanor of dogs! Humor is also very good for our well-being. When you read your dog-related books to children and introduce them to Addie and Rocky, you also give a presentation and invite discussion about pets. Can you tell us more about this?

**TH: The presentation is called “Children & Pets: The Irresistible Combo!”, and it’s about how children can blend fun and responsibility with pets. It is very important that anyone who is adopting a pet not only recognize the fun side—the companionship, play, love, devotion, loyalty, etc. that a pet can bring—but also the responsibilities that a lifelong commitment to an animal entails. So children and I brainstorm what these responsibilities are. When they think about it, kids can come up with a clear view of the time, effort, and love involved with caring for an animal—from providing food, water, shelter, toys, grooming, cleanup, and medical/dental care to providing exercise, play, protection, and love to the animal. We also discuss how and where to choose the right pet, how to train and show a pet, options for traveling with a pet, ways to interact with pets even if you don’t have your own and, most importantly, the need to rescue abandoned pets and to prevent unwanted future pets by spaying and neutering. We don’t cover every topic in every presentation—I gear each one to the age and interests of the group—but I give every participant several extensive handouts explaining resources for more information in each area. That way children and their parents can practice what they’ve learned.**

KB: Trisha, I could give you a great big hug for doing this!! By teaching our children what pet ownership entails, you’ll have responsible adult pet owners, thereby lessening the abuse/neglect/abandonment pets that are found in every pet shelter. That is a “pet” peeve of mine, pardon the pun. If everyone researched the pet for their lifestyle and understood that taking on a pet means for the life of the pet, there would be no need for animal shelters. So, thank you, Trisha, for taking on the role of educating our children on this much needed subject, thereby ensuring better future pet owners.

**TH: Thank you. I very much enjoy doing it!**

KB: Do you have a final word about pets that you’d like to convey to children and adults through your books and presentations?

**TH: If I could emphasize only one thing, it would be to recognize, appreciate, and reciprocate the enormous love, devotion, and loyalty that pets so cheerfully give us.**

KB: I ditto that! I want to thank you for joining us today on AspenbloomWellPet, Trisha. I hope you’ll come back and share with us again in the future.

Please all my readers pick up copies of Trisha’s books today and read them to your children. Remember being proactive in our pet care means teaching that to our children so they can be the responsible pet owners of the future.