

On a cool October Sunday, Alejandro strolled on a gravel path near the entrance of the Furry Friends Animal Sanctuary. His frown turned into a broad smile as the sound of barking filled his ears.

Alejandro had been volunteering at the animal sanctuary for the past two months. He was grateful to his neighbor, Mr. Wellington, a school counselor, for recommending this idea. Mr. Wellington had advised him that caring for animals could help relieve stress, and he was absolutely right. Volunteering there made Alejandro feel calm and inspired. He was happy to help, not just by giving the dogs love and attention, but also preparing them for adoption.



At Furry Friends, some dogs were ready for adoption because they were friendly, affectionate, and well-behaved around people. However, there were less obedient dogs, too, still undergoing training to become more tame. Alejandro felt particularly drawn to these dogs who always seemed angry with the world.

Alejandro was cheerfully walking into the animal sanctuary when he suddenly stopped, seeing someone he recognized. It was Priya, a seventh grader from his school, gently caring for a large beagle. Although Alejandro was a regular at Furry Friends, he had never seen Priya there before.

Priya, noticing Alejandro, felt a surge of anxiety. She remembered how he had bullied her years ago, mocking her accent and making fun of her lunch. These painful memories were vivid in her mind. However, with guidance from her school counselor, Priya had learned strategies to handle bullies like Alejandro. She practiced ignoring their mean comments and walking away, and she made an effort to stay near her friends, reducing her chances of being targeted by bullies.

"Hey" Alejandro called out, a bit nervously, as he walked towards her with his hands buried in his pockets.

At first, Priya was cautious, but her interest grew as they began talking about dogs. During their conversation, she gradually became more comfortable, and Alejandro, aware of his past actions, listened attentively. In the weeks that followed, as they both cared for the dogs, a friendship formed between Priya and Alejandro. Alejandro, who had moved from Colombia to the U.S. in fifth grade, shared his experiences of being teased as the new kid. In return, Priya opened up about her own challenges with being from a different culture. She described how she had come to embrace her Indian heritage and proud of her unique identity.

One afternoon, while leaving Furry Friends, a group of rowdy teens approached them and began to tease Priya. Alejandro, feeling protective, stepped in front of Priya, confronting the bullies. With a steady voice, he said, "Stop it. Leave my friend alone!" The bullies, surprised by Alejandro's assertiveness and support for Priya, backed off. From that day on, the friendship that had formed between Alejandro and Priya grew even stronger.

1 Read this sentence from the story.

"The bullies, surprised by Alejandro's assertiveness and support for Priya, backed off."

What does "assertiveness" mean here?

- A** Angry tone
- B** Forceful attitude

- C** Powerful voice
- D** Kind words

2 Read this sentence from the story.

"Priya, noticing Alejandro, felt a surge of anxiety."

Which words could replace "wave" and keep the original meaning of the sentence? Choose two.

☐ Wave

☐ Ripple

☐ Thrill

☐ Rush

☐ Tingle

3 Read these sentences from the story. Click to highlight two words or phrases that help you determine the meaning of "obedient."

At Furry Friends, some dogs were ready for adoption because they were friendly, affectionate, and well-behaved around people. However, there were less **obedient** dogs, too, still undergoing training to become more tame.