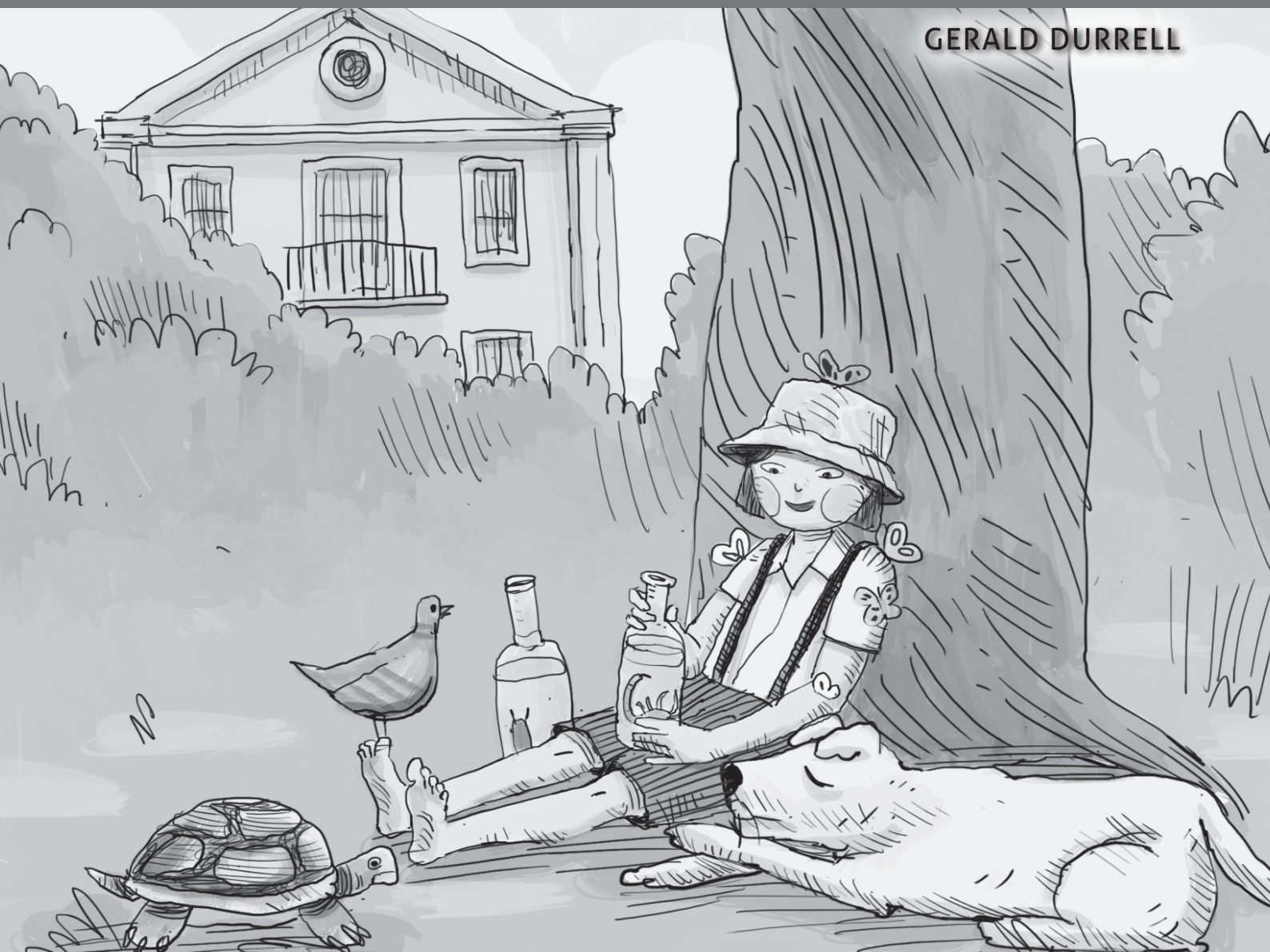


My Family and Other Animals

GERALD DURRELL



WORKSHEETS

ABOUT THE BOOK

My Family and Other Animals is an autobiographical book by British naturalist Gerald Durrell. It covers the four years that he spent as a child on the island of Corfu with his mother Louisa Durrell, older brothers Lawrence (Larry) and Leslie, and his sister Margaret (Margo). The family moved to the island in 1935, when Gerald was ten years old and returned to England in 1939. Their father had died in 1928. Gerald's love of animals and nature began on this Greek island. The book is rich with his descriptions of the colourful plants and the animals living there. In it, Gerald tells of his friends and adventures

on the island. He also tells some of the humorous anecdotes of the family. The book was published in 1956, when Durrell had already written several books about his trips, on which he collected animals in the wild for zoos. Although *My Family and Other Animals* is an autobiographical work, a few of the events told in it are not true. For example, Larry was married at the time and lived in another part of Corfu with his wife. And the reason the Durrells left the island in 1939 was the outbreak of World War II. However, it is still an objective and truthful work, which is told in a very humorous way.

SUMMARY

The novel begins on a grey, windy August afternoon in 1935. The members of the Durrell family are sitting at home and complaining about the dreary climate of England. The family consists of Mrs Durrell, her eldest, 23-year-old son Larry, nineteen-year-old son Leslie, their sister Margo, who is eighteen, and Gerry, who is the youngest. All of a sudden, Larry suggests that they move to the island of Corfu, Greece, where the weather is nice and warm all year round. Mrs Durrell doesn't think that's possible because they have just bought and moved into the house which they live in. Larry insists because a friend of his, who has moved to Corfu, has just sent him a letter talking about the beauty of the island. Soon afterwards, they are on their way to the island with their dog, Roger, and the things they need for their hobbies. Everyone in the family has an eccentric interest.

When they arrive on the island, they spend the night at a hotel. The next day, they begin house hunting with the hotel guide. They spend the whole day looking at different villas, but they can't find one that suits them. The following day, Mrs Durrell decides to hire a taxi and look for a villa without the help of the hotel guide. They find themselves surrounded by pushy and loud taxi drivers, all speaking in Greek. Luckily, a taxi driver who speaks English offers to drive them to a villa which he thinks would be the right one for them. It is a small pink villa with a small garden filled with colourful flowers. The driver, whose name is Spiro, is a very friendly man. He helps the family get settled in the house and takes care of everything that needs to be done.

Happily settled in their new home, everyone begins to pursue their own interests. Gerry spends all his time wandering in the garden or among the fruit gardens with Roger, exploring the area, collecting insects and discovering new creatures. He makes friends with the local people and picks up some Greek words. He meets a very interesting man who is called the Rose-Beetle man. The man sells Gerry a tortoise and later, a pigeon. Although he cannot talk, the two become good friends and communicate through pantomime. Soon, his mother decides to hire a tutor for him. And Larry's friend George starts teaching him.

Meanwhile, Larry has invited a group of friends from England to stay with them. Mrs Durrell thinks they should stay at a hotel as there is not enough room in their house for so many people. However, Larry convinces her to move to a bigger house. This time they move to a large villa with yellow walls, located on top of a hill overlooking the bay. They hire the gardener's wife, Lugaretzia, to help Mrs Durrell with the housework. Larry's friends, who are writers, poets and artists, arrive. When one group leaves, another group arrives. Some of them are very eccentric people with different habits or problems. Meanwhile, Gerry fills the house with a lot of creatures, including scorpions, birds and even snakes.

When George leaves the island, Mrs Durrell hires an Oxford student to tutor Gerry. But when he and Margo start to spend time together, Mrs Durrell fires him. Margo goes through a period of depression after this. In spring, their great aunt in England, who is ill all the time, writes to Mrs Durrell saying she wants to come and stay with them. No one in the family wants her to come, so they move to a smaller villa this time and use it as an excuse to prevent her visit. This white villa is also on the top of a hill and surrounded by olive trees. Gerry has a new tutor now, Mr Kralefsky. Months later, when Kralefsky tells Mrs Durrell that it is time for Gerry to go to a proper school, she decides to return to England. The children argue against it, but they pack and sadly leave the island taking with them all the animals Gerry has collected. There are so many of them that an official at the passport control classify the family as a travelling circus.

Discuss before you begin reading:

- 1 Have you had an insect collection? Do you keep any pets, like sea turtles, birds or fish? If you were to keep an animal at home, what would it be? Why?
- 2 Does anyone in your family have a hobby or an interest that bothers you or that you find strange?

A Word Search

Find the names of 15 animals (including insects, sea animals and birds).

J	M	J	S	N	A	I	L	C	J	E	W	S	D
H	C	A	T	E	R	P	I	L	L	A	R	Y	Y
O	X	W	A	S	P	D	I	G	Z	O	A	F	O
H	Y	A	Z	M	S	C	O	R	P	I	O	N	M
T	A	M	J	S	E	M	M	L	T	O	A	D	G
B	U	M	B	L	E	B	E	E	A	C	J	Y	H
W	V	F	K	L	L	Q	Y	C	U	Z	N	T	E
I	A	I	G	R	V	P	H	I	R	S	O	A	O
S	Y	L	K	L	A	D	Y	B	I	R	D	A	V
T	S	E	A	G	U	L	L	Z	S	F	R	O	G
P	I	G	E	O	N	T	O	E	F	C	R	A	B
I	T	O	R	T	O	I	S	E	H	D	Y	Z	W
O	M	W	U	Q	C	J	U	B	E	E	T	L	E
L	V	G	R	A	S	S	H	O	P	P	E	R	T
H	T	F	B	S	P	I	D	E	R	P	O	R	C

B Match the words you find with the descriptions below.

- a small creature with a soft, wet body and a round shell; moves very slowly: _____
- looks like a frog, but has brown skin and lives mainly on land: _____
- an insect with wings and yellow and black stripes; has a painful sting like a bee but does not produce honey: _____
- a small sea creature with a flat round body covered by a shell and five pairs of legs with large claws on the front pair; usually moves sideways: _____
- a large bee that is covered with short hairs and makes a loud noise when it flies: _____
- has a shell into which it can pull its head and legs for protection; moves very slowly and sleeps during the winter: _____
- a small animal that is greenish-brown in colour, with smooth skin, big eyes and long back legs for jumping; usually lives near water: _____
- any insect with a hard covering on its body: _____
- a small, worm-like animal that feeds on plants and develops into a butterfly or moth: _____
- a bird that lives near the sea, with short legs, long wings and white and grey feathers: _____
- a round, red beetle with black spots; believed to bring good luck: _____
- a small creature with eight legs; catches insects in its web: _____
- a bird, usually grey in colour and with a fat body; lives in towns and cities: _____
- looks like a large insect; lives in hot, dry areas; has a curved tail; its sting can be poisonous: _____
- an insect with long back legs; jumps high into the air; makes a high vibrating sound: _____

A Stop reading at the end of page 7 and look at the table below. Match the characters in the first row and their interests/hobbies in the first column. Tick (✓) the relevant boxes.

Interests / hobbies	Gerry	Larry	Leslie	Margo	Mrs Durrell
collecting insects					
cooking					
gardening					
removing acnes					
losing weight					
natural history					
reading					
shooting					

B At the end of Chapter 1, match the descriptions and the characters (human and animal) in the table. Tick (✓) the relevant boxes.

Descriptions	Achilles	Agathi	Rose-Beetle Man	Quasimodo	Spiro	Yani
the English-speaking taxi driver						
a strange man in eccentric clothes						
an old shepherd						
the tortoise that Gerry buys from the eccentric man						
an old, poor peasant woman						
the baby pigeon that the eccentric man sells to Gerry						

C When you have read up to page 46, match Gerry's statements with the characters listed below.

a Achilles	d Quasimodo	g Spiro
b Agathi	e Roger	h Theodore
c George	f Rose-Beetle Man	i Yani

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>___ 1 He was an expert fencer and was also learning some of the local dances.</p> <p>___ 2 Policemen, peasants and priests waved and smiled as he passed; fishermen, grocers and café owners greeted him like a brother.</p> <p>___ 3 He was the perfect companion for an adventure; he was loving, brave, intelligent and full of tolerance for my strange activities.</p> <p>___ 4 He loved grapes as much as Roger did, so there was always great rivalry.</p> <p>___ 5 Firstly, he was a respectable scientist, so he was a very important person.</p> | <p>___ 6 If the tune was a waltz, he would dance around the gramophone, cooing softly. If it was a military march, he would get up, inflate his chest and march up and down the room.</p> <p>___ 7 As she sat with her bobbin of wool, she would sing. It was from her that I learned some of the most beautiful peasant songs.</p> <p>___ 8 ... and he would give me fruit and advice to keep me safe on my walks.</p> <p>___ 9 He looked like a character from a fairy tale. Roger was so shocked by his appearance that he started barking.</p> |
|--|--|

A Read the statements by Gerry below and write down who the underlined word in each one refers to.

Gerry's statements	Who is he/she?
1 <u>She</u> would move from room to room with the trays and explain to us the details of how her stomach had been the night before.	
2 Suddenly <u>he</u> froze. He had seen something I hadn't: lying under Yani's chair was a large grey cat who was watching us with unfriendly green eyes.	
3 <u>He</u> was a tall, handsome young man who had just left Oxford University.	
4 But this incident seemed to cure her broken heart. <u>She</u> no longer took walks alone or went out on the boat by herself.	
5 The tiny figure in the bed lifted her eyelids and looked at me with great bright eyes. <u>She</u> lifted her small hand covered in rings and held it out to me smiling.	
6 Soon <u>he</u> appeared on the veranda with a towel wrapped around him. 'Gerry!' he roared, his face red with anger. 'Where's that boy?'	
7 <u>He</u> taught history in a very boring way, making me memorize and repeat dates and events.	
8 But when <u>he</u> told you about it, you never felt like he was teaching you something new.	
9 <u>She</u> told us we should see it as a holiday, a pleasant trip. We would soon be back in Corfu.	
10 ' <u>She</u> says she wants to come and stay... the doctors have advised a warm climate.'	

B Complete the table. *Who said the following? To whom? And when or why?*

Quotations	Who is speaking?	To whom?	When / why?
1 'But a boat is a very large present for a birthday. And I can't afford it anyway.'			
2 'Those vultures come in here and tear my book before it's even finished, and you say I'm upset?'			
3 'But that makes thirteen people including us.'			
4 'Have you heard flowers talking?'			
5 'I was ...er...you know...looking through my slides, and I came across one that may interest you.'			
6 'While you sleep, their roots grow into your brains, and steal them. When you wake up, you are mad.'			
7 'If it took three caterpillars a week to eat eight leaves, how long would four caterpillars take to eat the same number?'			
8 'But before you do that, make sure everyone has taken their bath, will you?'			

TEST YOURSELF

MY FAMILY and OTHER ANIMALS by Gerald Durrell

TOTAL

.....

B2 - Level 6

A Mark the sentences as True (T) or False (F). (10x2=20 pts)

- ___1 It was Larry who suggested leaving England and moving to Greece.
- ___2 The family started house hunting the morning after they arrived in Corfu.
- ___3 The people in the village were not hospitable to the Durrell family at first.
- ___4 Gerry was a very sociable boy who made friends easily.
- ___5 Spiro had learned some English from the English tourists who came to visit Corfu.
- ___6 Mrs Durrell and the elder sons were not pleased about Spiro interfering in their life.
- ___7 The Rose-Beetle Man communicated with Gerry through pantomime.
- ___8 It was Spiro, the driver, who gave Gerry his first pet on the island.
- ___9 Gerry named his pigeon, which he bought from the Rose-Beetle-Man, Quasimodo.
- ___10 Larry supported Gerry's interest in insects.

B Mark the correct answers. (10x3=30 pts)

- 1 The Durrell family wanted to find a villa with a - - - .
a bathroom b view of the sea c terrace
- 2 Gerry's favourite school subject was - - - .
a geography b natural history
c mathematics
- 3 George tried to get Gerry interested in geography and history by - - - .
a showing some pictures b acting out
c adding in some zoology
- 4 Which of his pets was not any annoyance to Gerry during his lessons with George?
a Quasimodo b Achilles c Roger
- 5 Where did Gerry first meet Doctor Theodore?
a at George's house after his discovery of a trapdoor spider tunnel
b in Larry's room when he came for a visit
c on the way to Yani's house, during a walk
- 6 Who did Gerry meet in the town every Thursday?
a Spiro and his friends b Doctor Theodore
c the Belgian man who taught him French
- 7 What did Lugaretzia always complain about?
a the heavy housework b Gerry's animals
c her illnesses
- 8 Who was Zapotec?
a an Armenian man who Spiro sent to the Durrells to help with cooking for the guests
b a friend of Doctor Theodore
c one of Larry's eccentric friends who stayed in the Durrell house

9 Why did Mrs Durrell fire Gerry's second tutor?

- a He could not get on with Gerry.
- b He had a romantic relationship with Margo.
- c He often argued with Leslie.

10 Why did the Durrells move out of their first villa?

- a It wasn't big enough to host Larry's friends
- b There wasn't enough room for Gerry to keep all his animals in.
- c The garden wasn't big enough for Mrs Durrell to grow a lot of vegetables in.

C Write the name of the person who ... (10x2=20 pts)

- 1 ... convinced Larry to move to Greece: _____
- 2 ... Gerry's last tutor on the island: _____
- 3 ... the arrogant child of the Durrell family: _____
- 4 ... often told Gerry how to keep safe: _____
- 5 ... Gerry was fascinated with: _____
- 6 ... sent Gerry a pocket microscope: _____
- 7 ... built a boat for Gerry as a present: _____
- 8 ... always suggested moving house: _____
- 9 ... came to see the family off as they were leaving (3 names): _____
- 10 ... cried as the ship sailed off: _____

D Complete the sentences. (5x3=15 pts)

- 1 Quasimodo, the pigeon, couldn't fly because he _____.
- 2 Achilles, the tortoise, died when _____.
- 3 Larry was furious when the Magenpies _____.
- 4 The Bootle-Bumtrinket was the name of _____.
- 5 The Sea Cow was _____.

E Match the two halves of the sentences (1-6 with a-f). (5x3=15 pts)

- ___1 In the big villa, Gerry was given a big room on the first floor all to himself ...
 - ___2 In the middle of a lesson, Gerry asked to see Kralefsky's mother ...
 - ___3 One day, Mrs Durrell got very worried
 - ___4 Every Thursday, at tea time, Theodore and the Durrells went up to the attic ...
 - ___5 Margo spent a week in the attic all by herself, just reading poems ...
- a when he needed to go to the bathroom
 - b to watch the sea plane land in the bay
 - c because she was forced to break up with Peter
 - d after his scorpion and its babies caused panic in the dining room during lunch
 - e because a storm broke out when she had sailed to the island alone

ydspublishing

PALLADIUM TOWER

Barbaros Mah. Kardelen Sk. No: 2 Kat: 22 34746 Ataşehir / İstanbul

Tel: 0850 288 35 00 • Faks: 0850 288 35 09

www.ydspublishing.com • info@ydspublishing.com