

FLEYDO ENGLISH SCHOOL

B1 Reading Challenge

Hachiko: The Dog Who Waited

The true story of an Akita dog whose loyalty touched the heart of an entire nation

Level	B1 (Intermediate)
Age Group	Teens (11-16)
Topic	True Stories
Duration	~20 minutes
Vocabulary	15 words
Quiz	5 questions

Article

There is a bronze statue outside Shibuya Station in Tokyo that millions of people walk past every day. It shows a dog sitting quietly, ears raised, looking towards the station exit as if waiting for someone. The dog's name is Hachiko, and his story is one of the most famous in Japan. He was an Akita — a large, powerful breed from the snowy mountains of northern Japan — and he became a national **symbol** of loyalty, faithfulness, and love. What makes his story so extraordinary is not what he did, but how long he did it. For nine years, Hachiko walked to the same spot at the same station and waited for a man who would never come back. This is his story.

A Professor and His Dog

In 1924, a professor named Hidesaburo Ueno began working at the Imperial University of Tokyo, now known as the University of Tokyo. Ueno was a specialist in agricultural science, and he was well respected by his students and colleagues. He lived in Shibuya, a busy district in western Tokyo, and every morning he would **commute** to the university by train from Shibuya Station. That same year, Ueno adopted a two-month-old Akita puppy. The puppy had been born on a farm in Odate, a small city in Akita Prefecture in the far north of Japan. Ueno named him Hachiko — "Hachi" meaning eight, because he was the eighth puppy in the litter, and "ko" being a common ending for Japanese names. From the very beginning, the **bond** between the professor and the puppy was strong. Hachiko followed Ueno everywhere around the house, slept near him, and watched him with calm, intelligent eyes.

The Daily Routine

As Hachiko grew, a beautiful **routine** developed. Every morning, Hachiko would walk with Professor Ueno to Shibuya Station and watch him disappear through the ticket gate. Then, every afternoon at exactly three o'clock, Hachiko would return to the station and sit by the exit, waiting for the professor to step off the train. When Ueno appeared, Hachiko would jump up, wag his thick, curled tail, and walk home beside his owner. The station workers and local shopkeepers soon got to know the big golden-brown dog. They would smile when they saw him trotting along the pavement, his ears forward, his eyes bright. He was a **devoted companion**, and the daily walk to and from the station became the most important part of his day. For more than a year, this **routine** never changed. Hachiko was always there, rain or shine, waiting patiently at the same spot.

The Day Everything Changed

On 21 May 1925, Professor Ueno went to work as usual. Hachiko walked him to the station that morning, just like every other day. But that afternoon, while giving a lecture at the university, Ueno suddenly collapsed. He had suffered a cerebral haemorrhage — a sudden, massive bleed in the brain. Despite the efforts of doctors, he died on the spot. He was just 53 years old. That afternoon, Hachiko went to Shibuya Station at three o'clock and waited. The train arrived, the doors opened, passengers streamed out — but there was no Professor

Ueno. Hachiko waited. He waited until the last train left. Then he walked home alone. The next day, he went back. And the day after that. And the day after that. He did not understand that his owner was dead. He only knew the **routine**: walk to the station, wait for the professor, walk home together. So he kept waiting.

The Years of Waiting

After Ueno's death, Hachiko was given to different family members and friends, but he kept running away and returning to Shibuya. Eventually, Kuzaburo Kobayashi, a former gardener of the Ueno household who lived nearby, took care of him. Every single day, Hachiko would leave Kobayashi's house and walk to Shibuya Station. He would arrive in the afternoon, sit in his usual place near the ticket gate, and watch the passengers come and go. Some people were kind to him. The station workers gave him scraps of food and water. A few of the local vendors knew his story and treated him gently. But others were not so kind. Some people thought he was just a **stray** dog and shouted at him or chased him away. Children sometimes pulled his tail or threw things at him. Through all of this, Hachiko endured. He never stopped coming. He never gave up hope. Day after day, month after month, year after year, the **loyal** dog returned to the same station, looking for the same face in the crowd.

A Story That Touched the Nation

For several years, Hachiko's story was known only to the people who lived and worked near Shibuya Station. But in 1932, everything changed. A former student of Professor Ueno named Hirokichi Saito, who had become an expert on Akita dogs, saw Hachiko at the station and learned his story. Deeply moved, he wrote an article about the dog and submitted it to the Asahi Shimbun, one of Japan's biggest newspapers. The article was published on 4 October 1932, and the reaction was extraordinary. People across Japan were touched by the story of the **loyal** dog who refused to stop waiting. Letters poured in. Donations arrived. Hachiko became a celebrity almost overnight. People began travelling to Shibuya Station just to see him, to pet him, and to take photographs with him. His story became a **tribute** to the Japanese idea of loyalty — a value called "chugi" that is deeply important in Japanese culture.

The Bronze Statue

In 1934, while Hachiko was still alive, a famous Japanese sculptor named Teru Ando created a bronze statue of the dog. It was placed right outside Shibuya Station, close to the spot where Hachiko always waited. A grand ceremony was held to unveil the **monument**, and Hachiko himself attended. Photographs from that day show the old dog sitting calmly next to his own statue, surrounded by admirers. It was a **remarkable** moment — a living legend standing beside his own memorial. The statue quickly became one of the most famous meeting points in Tokyo. Even today, when people in Tokyo arrange to meet at Shibuya Station, they often say, "Let's meet at Hachiko." The dog's image appears on postcards, stamps, books, and films. He has become part of the fabric of Tokyo itself.

Hachiko's Last Day

On 8 March 1935, Hachiko was found dead on the street near Shibuya Station. He was about eleven years old. He had been waiting for Professor Ueno for nine years, nine months, and fifteen days. When the news of his death was announced, people across Japan went into mourning. It was front-page news. Teachers told the story to their students. Families discussed it at dinner. The little dog from Akita Prefecture, who had simply refused to give up, had become one of the most beloved animals in the country's history. A funeral service was held at Shibuya Station, attended by hundreds of people. Hachiko's body was preserved through taxidermy and is now displayed at the National Museum of Nature and Science in Ueno, Tokyo — just a few kilometres from the university where his owner once taught. His bones were buried at Aoyama Cemetery in Tokyo, right next to the grave of Professor Ueno. After a decade apart, they were together again.

The Wartime Statue and Its Replacement

During the Second World War, Japan faced severe shortages of metal. In 1944, the original bronze statue of Hachiko was melted down to make weapons for the war effort. Many people in Tokyo were upset, but there was nothing they could do during wartime. However, after the war ended in 1945, the people of Shibuya did not forget. In 1948, Teru Ando's son, Takeshi Ando, was asked to create a new statue of Hachiko. The second statue was unveiled in August 1948 and placed in the same spot as the original. It is this statue that stands at Shibuya Station today, one of the most photographed monuments in Japan. Every year on 8 March, a ceremony is held at the statue to honour Hachiko's memory. Dog lovers, schoolchildren, and tourists gather to pay their respects to the dog who waited.

Why Hachiko Still Matters

Hachiko's story has been told in books, films, and television programmes around the world. In 2009, a Hollywood film called "Hachi: A Dog's Tale," starring Richard Gere, brought the story to an international audience. The film moved the setting to the United States but kept the core of the story the same: a dog's unbreakable loyalty to a beloved owner. In Japan, Hachiko is taught in primary schools as an example of devotion and faithfulness. There is a second statue of Hachiko at Odate Station in Akita Prefecture, near the farm where he was born. And in 2015, a new statue was unveiled at the University of Tokyo campus showing Hachiko joyfully reuniting with Professor Ueno — the moment the real Hachiko waited nine years to experience but never did. It is a deeply moving [tribute](#). Why does this story still matter, nearly a hundred years after it happened? Perhaps because it reminds us of something simple and [remarkable](#): that love does not need words. It does not need to be understood or returned. Hachiko did not know that his owner had died. He did not choose to become a [symbol](#). He simply loved one person, and he showed that love in the only way he knew how — by waiting. And in a world that moves faster every year, there is something deeply comforting about a dog who never moved at all.

Vocabulary

Word	Definition
loyal	faithful and always supporting someone, even in difficult times
commute	to travel regularly between home and work or school
routine	a regular way of doing things, always in the same order
bond	a strong feeling of connection or love between people or animals
collapse	to fall down suddenly because of illness or weakness
mourn	to feel or show deep sadness after someone has died
stray	a pet or animal that has no home and lives on the streets
shelter	a place that gives protection from bad weather or danger
devoted	loving someone or something very much and giving them a lot of attention
monument	a statue or structure built to remember a person or event
tribute	something you do or make to show respect and admiration for someone
remarkable	unusual or surprising in a way that makes people notice
symbol	a thing that represents or stands for something else, especially an idea
companion	a person or animal you spend time with and enjoy being with
endure	to suffer through something difficult or painful without giving up

Comprehension Quiz

1. What breed of dog was Hachiko?

- A) Shiba Inu
- B) Akita
- C) German Shepherd
- D) Golden Retriever

2. What was the name of Hachiko's owner?

- A) Professor Takeshi Yamamoto
- B) Professor Kenji Tanaka
- C) Professor Hidesaburo Ueno
- D) Professor Akira Suzuki

3. How did Hachiko's owner die?

- A) He was hit by a train
- B) He had a car accident
- C) He suffered a cerebral haemorrhage at the university
- D) He fell ill with pneumonia

4. What happened in 1932 that made Hachiko famous across Japan?

- A) A television documentary was made about him
- B) He was adopted by the Emperor of Japan
- C) A newspaper article about him was published in the Asahi Shimbun
- D) He saved a child from a traffic accident near the station

5. Where can Hachiko's preserved body be seen today?

- A) Shibuya Station waiting room
- B) Tokyo Imperial Palace
- C) The National Museum of Nature and Science in Tokyo
- D) Odate City Museum in Akita Prefecture

Answer Key

#	Answer	Question
1	B	1. What breed of dog was Hachiko?
2	C	2. What was the name of Hachiko's owner?
3	C	3. How did Hachiko's owner die?
4	C	4. What happened in 1932 that made Hachiko famous across Japan?
5	C	5. Where can Hachiko's preserved body be seen today?