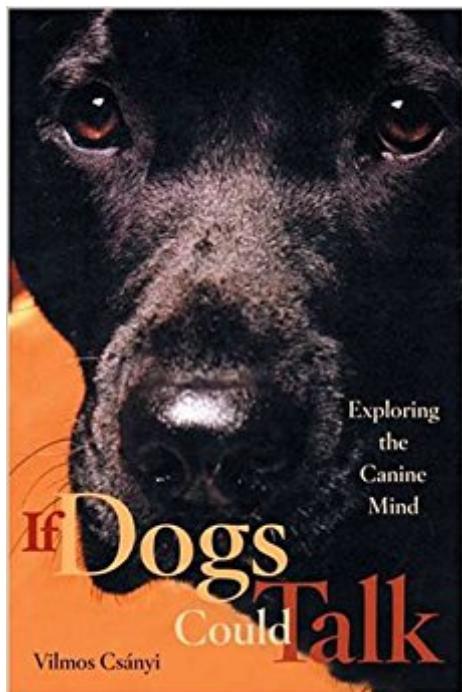The book was found

If Dogs Could Talk: Exploring The Canine Mind

Synopsis

Every dog owner knows intuitively that there's something special about the high degree of mutual understanding and empathy that exists between humans and their proverbial best friends. Now, an internationally renowned Hungarian ethologist (a specialist in the scientific study of animal behavior) traces the roots of this unique relationship back to the unusual circumstances in which the two species co-evolved over many millennia. Drawing in part on close observations of his own two pet dogs, Flip and Jerry, the author argues that the longstanding alliance of dogs and humans arose from behavioral traits present in the original wolves from which all modern dogs are descended. Wolves, like humans, are highly intelligent social predators, with well-developed cooperative problem-solving and communications skills, giving them distinct advantages in their developing relations with humans. These basic intellectual skills were refined and enhanced over tens of thousands of years, resulting in the enormously varied "artificial animals" we see today. Although the book's specific focus is on dogs, it ranges far afield to discuss in an easy-going, accessible style recent experimental and theoretical work on the behavior of other animals, and especially on their interactions with humans. A highly personal work, If Dogs Could Talk makes the case that the social and emotional bonds between dogs and humans are indeed special, and that they ought to form the basis for our treatment of dogs. Moreover, the author concludes, by closely observing the cognitive behavior of dogs, we can also learn a good deal about how the human mind works.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In this intriguing book, Hungarian ethologist CsÃƒÂ¡nyi approaches the question of canine

sentience using more science and less wishful thinking than one usually finds in the pet section of the bookstore. "Individual dog stories or anecdotes must be handled with considerable care when we want scientific proof," he warns. Even with this in mind, however, CsÃƒÂ¡nyi is most willing to see intelligence in his own beloved dogs, Flip and Jerry, who romp through the pages in charming anecdotes. So how smart are dogs, really? "The average dog living in a human environment understands at least forty to fifty expressions... and is able to act appropriately even in complicated situations." CsÃƒÂ¡nyi draws parallels between human and canine evolution in terms of reasoning ability, visual observations and other brain functions. Just as in early humans, individual bonding and group dynamics are the emotional and intellectual drivers for dogs, CsÃƒÂ¡nyi notesÃ¢â ¬â •a fact that will come as no surprise to pet owners. He demonstrates that dogs can imitate us, feel emotions, cooperate and obey commands, but he follows Darwin in recommending that we not assign morals to animal behaviors. Dogs will develop morals when they develop speech, he says, and he's actually quite enthusiastic about the prospect, going so far as to recommend a breeding program to produce talking dogs. Illus.

This book by canine ethologist Csanyi has been popular in his native Hungary and is now translated for American readers. As the author points out, canine ethologists must also have familiarity with human behavior, as the natural environment of the dog is human society. To be successful, the proto-dog had to develop the ability to understand and empathize with what humans expected of it, and these basic intellectual skills were honed and refined over the thousands of years that dogs have been domesticated. The author substantiates this alliance of two minds, as he calls it, with synopses of his own research, the findings of other scientists, and anecdotes from the behavior of his own dogs and other pet dogs. Csanyi is a careful scientist, but also a dog lover, and his attention to the coevolution of human and dog behavior provides a very different view of dogs from what is found in standard dog books. Nancy Bent

Mostly, "If Dogs Could Talk" is book which explores many aspects of how to approach the complex issues that surround studying what dogs might be thinking and feeling. Csanyi is Hungarian, and one of the world's foremost ethologists studying canine behavior. The book is well-translated, in that it is quite readable, in spite of its many challenges.By far, the most exciting aspect of the book concerns the examples of his own and other dogs he has known. I found that I learned to think

about dogs and their behavior in wholly new ways: what they might be trying to "say" to me through their physical indications -- this was the most valuable aspect of the book for me.On the flip side, Csanyi is dismissive in his discussion of some of the most famous ethology work done with primates and birds. I suspect that this negativity, though it is not overtly stated, seems to stem from the time that the study of individual animals takes in these cases, and that only many trials with many subjects yields real data. However, he might have explored his bias rather than diminishing the work of others and had a much better outcome.One of the other reviewers said that even with its problems, he learned so much more than from reading anything else he had to give this book a high rating, and after all my reservations, I agree with him.

This book is very interesting and shows many aspects of a dog's mind in a coherent way, though, if we love dogs, very seldom we can bring all aspects altogether as Csanyi does.But, unfortunately, the author loves so much his dogs that it gives the impression that he is ready to grant them with so much cleverness the result being unrealistic and romantic.Nevertheless, my own dog is for sure the cleverest that I know and I'm sure he can easily compete with Csanyi's ones.

One of the few behaviorists who REALLY likes dogs. Genius because he did the same study on dogs, children, and grad students and each group had members who did something that appeared stupid, until he talked to the grad students. So dogs aren't so dumb after all.

Wonderful read. As a professional dog trainer for over 12 years, I found this book stimulating, thought-provoking, and fascinating. It is the first "dog" book in years I have read that has held my attention. The descriptions of the research studies the author conducted on dog behavior are astounding. If you are interested at all in the canine mind, buy this book. Can't say enough good things about it.

So glad this was translated into English.He was a wonderful trainer and what magnificent dogs.All dog owners will receive a great deal of information on training there dog.

great book for learning about dogs, lots of personal experience, which is great in a sea of technical books, really enjoyed this book and learnt alot.

the language presentation was disjointed and awkward. no humor or interesting vignettes. Some of

these issues could be related to translation problems.

If you are a student of canine behavior and body language, by all means but there are better books out there for those seeking practical information.

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