

# AP THEMES INTRODUCTION

## Peter the Pup and the Canine Kingdom

By OER Project staff

Peter the Pup was born as part of one of the biggest litters in the Canine kingdom. This litter's birth had been long awaited by all the dogs in the kingdom, as they were the offspring of Leroy the Lapdog and Greta the Great Dane. Theirs had been a controversial marriage for many reasons. First of all, it was thought that big dogs and small dogs should never marry because their offspring would be medium-sized, and therefore shunned by normal dog society. Also, this union brought together two groupings within the Canine kingdom—the Growlers and the Waggers—who had long been at war, largely due to ideological conflicts. As it happens, Leroy and Greta's relationship became one of the great love stories in Canine history.

Peter, the runt of the litter, seemed to inherit more traits from his Wagger mom than his Growler dad. At first, no one thought Peter would survive. At mealtime, he was always pushed to the bottom of the puppy pile and would walk away with scraps. One day, Peter's hunger and loneliness became too much to bear, so he crafted a plan to improve his poor puppy life. Many dogs in his position would try to fight their siblings for food and attention. But Peter's Wagger tendencies led him to another solution. Peter may have been small, but he was really smart. After mulling over a lot of ideas, Peter invented something that made every dog in the kingdom sit up: an automated behind-the-ear scratcher! Peter had been carefully saving his allowance, and he spent all 200 treats on the materials and labor needed to make the Scratch-o-matic. His inventory sold out immediately. Peter used half the money he made to buy food, and used the rest to make more Scratch-o-matics. His invention was a hit, and soon his business expanded to include an automated belly-rub machine. In fact, his products became the first in Canine history to be traded in the Land of the Felines. Everyone scoffed at this at first, as cats and dogs were (as they are, and as they always will be) mortal enemies, but Peter was different, and he knew what it was like to be shunned for being different. And because he wagged more than he growled, the cats weren't afraid of him. Peter even hired some felines to work for him, and before you knew it, dogs and cats were getting along, and Peter became famous throughout the animal kingdom as a unifier of diverse...um...peoples.

Even after he became King of Canines, they still called him Peter the Pup because of how small he, the runt of the litter, still was. He loved the name because it was a reminder to others that you don't have to be big or violent to get what you want. Still, the Growlers and their descendants did not disappear from Canine society, and their beliefs merged with many Wagger beliefs. It was this blending of ideas and values that allowed the Canine kingdom to develop one of the most powerful armies in history—even though most political conflicts were settled with negotiation and diplomacy.

One of the most difficult challenges Peter faced during his reign came when the entire region was made nearly uninhabitable by the increased presence of unscooped doggie-doo-doo, a problem Canine historians call *overpoopulation*. Despite the seriousness of the problem, it was very hard to change the behavior of most dogs due to their belief system, which emphasized the credo, "you can't teach an old dog new tricks." Even Peter the Pup could not invent a machine powerful enough to keep the kingdom clean. So instead, he and several other great thinkers of the day passed laws requiring dogs to poop only in certain areas. They also added overpoopulation awareness curriculum to schools, which, over a few generations, changed dogs' attitudes and behaviors.

Peter the Pup lived to the ripe old age of 16 before reaching the dog afterlife, referred to in Canine rituals as "going to live on a farm." But he is known and respected all over the animal kingdom as a kind, benevolent pup who made the world a better place for all.

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*Currency in the Canine kingdom was called treats. The most valuable were blue, followed by red, then white. Here, Canines are seen exchanging the treats at a business meeting, using a system of card-reading to determine who has earned the most treats.*

*[A Friend in Need](#), by C.M. Coolidge, 1903. Public domain.*