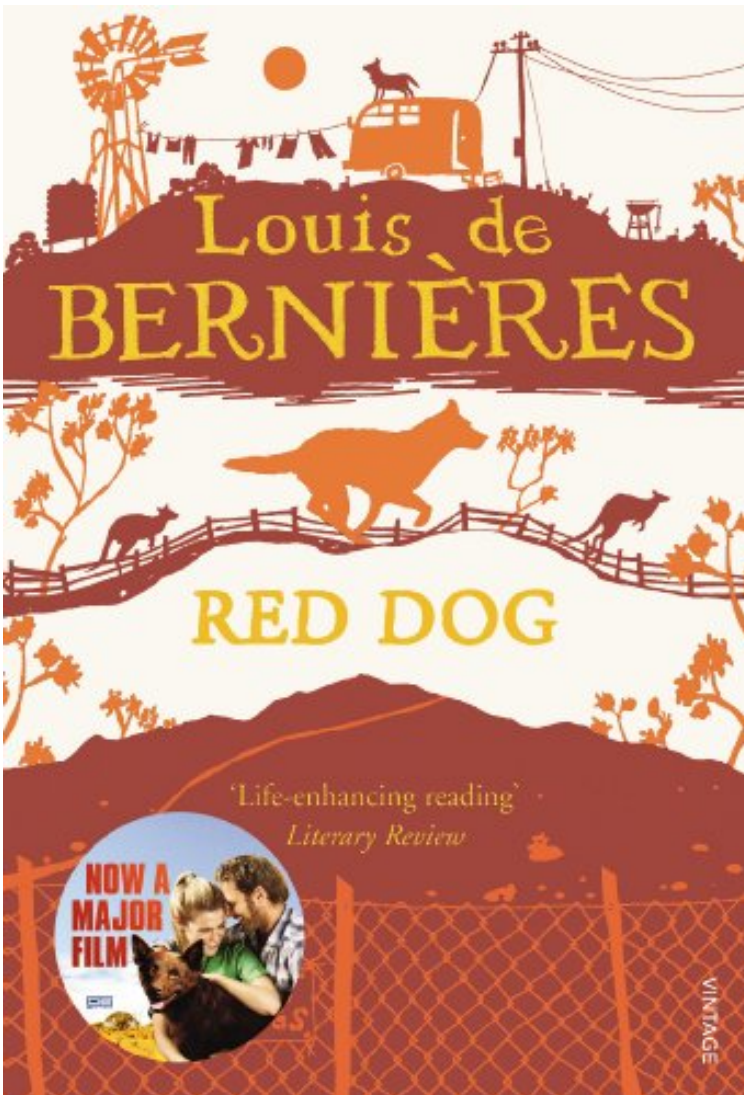


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# Red Dog



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**Description :** Description du produitNo reader, regardless of age, will fail to be captivated by this charming story of a legendary dog, in Louis de Bernires Canadian publishing debut.In early 1998 I went to Perth in Western Australia in order to attend the literature festival, and part of the arrangement was that I should go to Karratha to do their first ever literary dinner. Karratha is a mining town a long way farther north. The landscape is extraordinary, being composed of vast heaps of dark red earth and rock poking out of the never-ending bush. I imagine that Mars must have a similar feel to it.I went exploring and discovered the bronze statue to Red Dog outside the town of Dampier. I felt straight away that I had to find out more about this splendid dog.A few months later I returned to Western Australia and spent two glorious weeks driving around collecting Red Dog stories and visiting the places that he knew, writing up the text as I went along. I hope my cat never finds out that I have written a story to celebrate the life of a dog. Louis de Bernires

Prsentation de l'diteur'In early 1998 I went to Perth in Western Australia in order to attend the literature

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I felt straight away that I had to find out more about this splendid dog. A few months later I returned to Western Australia and spent two glorious weeks driving around collecting Red Dog stories and visiting the places that he knew, writing up the text as I went along. I hope my cat never finds out that I have written a story to celebrate the life of a dog.' Louis de Bernieres.com Red Dog is a book by a writer in love. While passing through a town in the Australian outback, novelist Louis de Bernieres discovered a statue of a dog. Intrigued, he made inquiries, and was swamped by locals with tales of a wildly charismatic creature named

Tally Ho. De Bernieres, author of *Corelli's Mandolin*, has fashioned a charming picaresque of Tally's misdeeds and misadventures, not least of which involve the animal's enormous appetite (complemented by an equally enormous flatulence). "Tally," he writes, "was the most notorious canine dustbin in the whole neighbourhood. With apparent relish he ate paper bags, sticks, dead rats, butterflies, apple peel, eggshells, used tissues and socks." De Bernieres' enchantment with this "dustbin" is a reflection of a larger rapture: here is a writer who has fallen for Australia itself. He wittily captures the country's cadences, its landscape, its weakness for the (literal) underdog. --Claire Dederer *Extrait* Chapter 1 *THE STINKER* 'Strewth,' exclaimed Jack Collins, 'that dog's a real stinker! I don't know how he puts up with himself. If I dropped bombs like that, I'd walk around with my head in a paper bag, just to protect myself.' "Everyone likes their own smells," said Mrs Collins. Jack raised his eyebrows and smirked at her, so she added, 'Or so they say.' "Well, it's too much for me, Maureen. He's going to have to go out in the yard." "It's his diet," said Maureen, 'eating what he eats, it's going to make smells. And he gulps it down so fast, he must be swallowing air.' "Tally would let off even if you fed him on roses," said her husband, shaking his head, half in wonder. 'Shame it's a talent you can't be paid for. We'd all be millionaires. You know what I think? We should hire him out to the airforce.

You could drop him in enemy territory, he'd neutralise it for three days, more or less, and then you could send in the paratroops. It'd be a new era in airborne warfare." "Don't light any matches, he's done it again," said

Maureen, holding her nose with her left hand, and waving her right hand back and forth across her face. 'Tally, you're a bad dog.' Tally Ho looked up at her with one yellow eye, keeping the other one closed for the sake of economy, and thumped his tail on the floor a couple of times. He had noted the affectionate tone of her voice, and took her words for praise. He was lying on his side, a little bit bloated after gnawing on one of his oldest bones. He was only a year old, so his oldest bone was not too old, but it certainly had plenty of flavours, and all the wind-creating properties of which Tally Ho was particularly fond. Tally was the most notorious canine dustbin in the whole neighbourhood, and people delighted in presenting him with unlikely

objects and encouraging him to eat them. With apparent relish he ate paper bags, sticks, dead rats, butterflies, feathers, apple peel, eggshells, used tissues and socks. On top of that, Tally ate the same food as the rest of the family, and at this moment carried in his stomach a goodly load of yesterday's mashed potato, gravy and steak and kidney pie. This is not to say that Tally ever raided dustbins or browsed on garbage. That would have been very much beneath his dignity, and in any case, he had never found it necessary. He had never lacked success in obtaining perfectly good food from human beings, and ate odd things in good faith, just because human beings offered them to him. He made up his own mind as to what was worth eating again, and whilst he would probably be quite happy to eat more eggshells, as long as they still had some traces of egg in them, he probably wouldn't try another feather. 'I'm going to take him to the airport,' said Jack, 'he can work off some energy, and get some of that gas out.' He went to the door and turned. Tally Ho was looking up at him expectantly, both yellow eyes open this time. His ears had pricked up at the magic word 'airport'. 'Run time,' said Jack, and Tally sprang to his feet in an instant, bouncing up and down with pleasure as if the floor was a trampoline. The caravan shook and the glasses and cutlery in the cupboard started to rattle. Tally Ho seemed to be grinning with pleasure. He was shaking his head from side to side and yelping. 'Get him out before he demolishes the whole place,' said Maureen, and Jack stood aside for

Tally Ho to shoot out of the door like the cork from a bottle of champagne. He bounded out of the small garden, and did some more bouncing up and down outside the car. Jack opened the back door, said 'Hop in' and Tally Ho jumped onto the back seat. In an instant he hopped over and sat in the front seat. Jack opened the front passenger door and ordered 'Out!' Tally looked at him coolly, and then deliberately looked away. He

had suddenly gone deaf, it appeared, and had found something in the far distance that was terribly interesting. 'Tally, out!' repeated Jack, and Tally pretended to be looking at a magpie that was flying over the

caravan. Jack used to be in the Australian army, and he liked his orders to be obeyed. He didn't take it lightly when he was ignored by a subordinate. He picked Tally bodily over the seat, and deposited him in the back.

'Stay!' he said, wagging his forefinger at the dog, who looked up at him innocently as if he would never consider doing the slightest thing amiss. Jack closed the door and went round to the driver's side. He got in, opened all the windows, started the engine and called over his shoulder, 'No bomb-dropping in the car.

Understood?' Tally waited until the Land Rover had started over down the road, before springing lightly once more over onto the front passenger seat. He sat down quickly and stuck his head out of the window, into the breeze, so that he would have a good excuse for not hearing his master telling him to get in the back. Jack raised his eyebrows, shook his head and sighed. Tally Ho was an obstinate dog, without a doubt, and didn't consider himself to be anyone's subordinate, not even Jack's. It never occurred to him that he was anything less than equal, and in that respect you might say that he was rather like a cat, although he probably wouldn't have liked the comparison. Seven kilometres away the car stopped outside the perimeter fence of Paraburdoo

airport, and Tally Ho was let out. A Cessna light aircraft bounced along the runway and took off. Tally chased its shadow along the ground, and pounced on it. The shadow sped on, and Tally ran after it in delight, repeatedly pouncing, and wondering at its escape. Jack got back into the car, and drove away. He blew the horn, and Tally pricked up his ears. It was a red-hot day in February, which in Australia is the middle of the summer, and all the vegetation was looking as if it had been dried in an oven. It was one of those days when you are physically shocked by the heat if you go outdoors, and the sun feels like the flat of a hot knife laid directly onto your face. The air shimmers, distorting your views of the distance, and you can't believe that it really is that hot, even if you have lived there for years, and ought to be used to it. If you have a bald patch, and you aren't wearing a hat, it feels as though the skin on the top of your head is made of paper and has just been set alight. It seems as if the heat is going straight through your shirt, so you go as fast as you can from

one bit of shade to another, and everything looks white, as if the sun has abolished the whole notion of colour. Even the red earth looked less red. Visitors to that place can't believe that the mining companies are actually allowed to leave all those heaps of red stones and red earth all over the place, without caring about it at all, but the strange fact is that all those heaps and piles were put there by nature, as if She had whimsically

decided to mimic the most untidy and careless behaviour of mankind itself. The divergence is that nature managed to do it all without the help of bulldozers, diggers and dumper trucks. Through this ungentle landscape galloped Tally Ho, raising his own little plume of red dust in the wake of the greater plume raised by Jack Collins' car. His whole body thrilled with the pleasure of running, even though the day was at white heat, and even though he had to blink his eyes against the dust. He was young and strong, he had more energy than his muscles could make use of, and the world was still fresh and wonderful. He understood the joy of going full tilt to achieve the impossible, and therefore he ran after his owner's car as if he could catch it with no trouble at all. As far as he was concerned, he really did catch it, because after seven kilometres there it was, parked outside the caravan, its engine ticking as it cooled down, having given up the chase, too

tired to continue. As for Tally, he could have run another seven kilometres, and then another again, and caught the car three times over. When he arrived home he came leaping through the door, headed straight for his bowl of water, and slurped it empty. Then, his tongue hanging out and leaving drips along the lino, he went back outside and lay down in the shade of a black mulga tree. That evening Mrs Collins opened up a big can of Trusty, and Jack set his stopwatch to zero. Tally Ho had a special gift for bolting food at lightning speed, and so far his record for a whole 700g can was eleven seconds flat. Tally Ho put his forepaws up on the table to watch the meat going into his bowl, and Mrs Collins put on her curt tone of voice and said,

'Down, Tally! Lie down!' He slumped down on the floor, and put on his most pathetic and appealing expression, so that she felt sorry for him even though she knew it was only an act. He sighed, and raised his first one eyebrow and then another. His whole body was quivering with anticipation, the muscles in his legs just waiting for the moment when he could hurl himself at his dinner. 'Are you ready?' asked Mrs Collins, and Jack Collins nodded. She put the bowl down on the floor, Tally leaped up and Jack pressed the timer on his stopwatch. 'Crikey,' he declared. 'One hungry mongrel! Ten point one seconds. Truly impressive.' Tally cleaned his bowl conscientiously with his tongue, and then cleaned it again just to make sure. When there was definitely not one atom of food left in it, he strolled outside and lay down once more under the shade of the tree, his stomach feeling pleasantly stretched, and very soon he fell asleep. He dreamed of food and adventuring. When he awoke half an hour later, fully restored, he lay for a while, enjoying the way that the evening was cooling off, and thought about going walkabout. He felt curious about what might be going on in the wide world, and the thought of missing out on something made him feel uneasy. He got to his feet,

stood still for a time whilst he thought a little more, and then set off past the other caravans, and into the wilderness. He found a path worn through the spinifex by kangaroos, and set off joyfully down it, quickly...