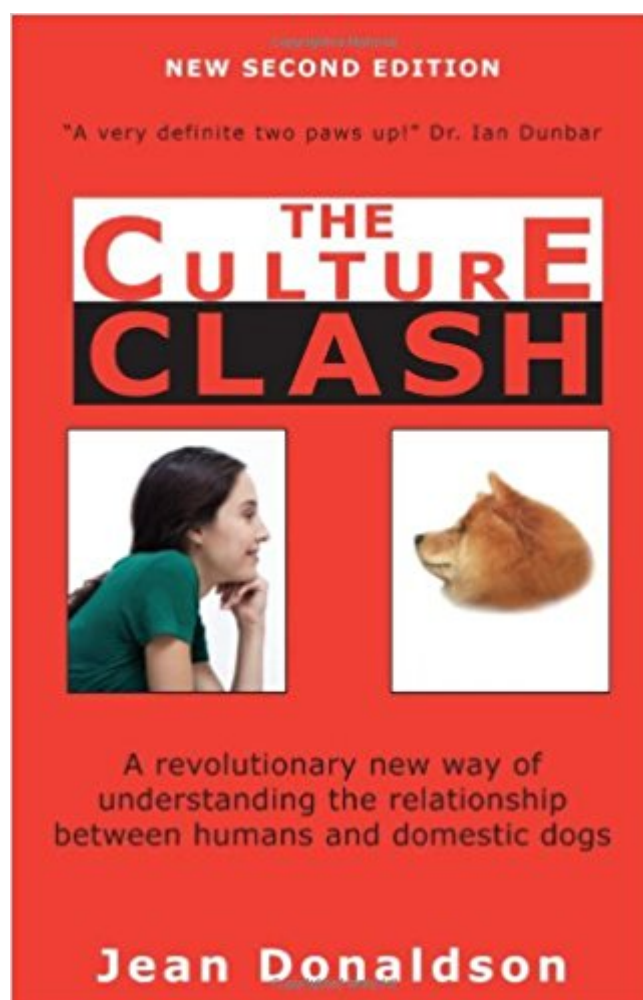


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# Culture Clash



## Synopsis

Generations of dogs have been labeled training-lemons for requiring actual motivation when all along they were perfectly normal. Numerous other completely and utterly normal dogs have been branded as canine misfits simply because they grew up to act like dogs. Barking, chewing, sniffing, licking, jumping up and occasionally, (just like people), having arguments, is as normal and natural for dogs as wagging tails and burying bones. However, all dogs need to be taught how to modify their normal and natural behaviors to adjust to human culture. Sadly, all too often, when the dog's way of life conflicts with human rules and standards, many dogs are discarded and summarily put to death. That's quite the Culture Clash.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

**SUGGESTED AUDIENCE:** Anyone who wants to increase their knowledge of canine behavior, and all who consider their dogs to be furry little people with values and morals. I first read *The Culture Clash* in 1998 and have been recommending it ever since. People often ask me to recommend books and many times I have been hesitant because there are many bad ones and only a few good ones. *The Culture Clash* by Jean Donaldson is one of the better books on canine behavior. When first published in 1997, *The Culture Clash* received the prestigious Maxwell Award from the Dog Writer's Association of America as the Best Dog Training and Behavior Book of the year. More importantly, this book was one of the first to challenge the dominance myth and punishment based training. In *The Culture Clash*, Donaldson helps us to understand our dogs as dogs, and not as furry little creatures that we too often attribute with human like characteristics. Donaldson's refreshingly new approach has had a tremendous effect on the relations I have with my dogs and my

understanding of why they do what they do. Unfortunately, the depiction of dogs by the mass media, and even many dog people, has created some all too common misconceptions about dogs: that they have morals, know when they have done something wrong, are capable of planning revenge, and have a desire to please. This has done a great disservice to all dogs, resulting in our giving them human like responsibilities and then being disappointed when they cannot live up to our expectations. Our dogs' failure to live up to our standards has also led to the proliferation of the "dominance theory" in the dog-human relationship. This in turn has led to the use of punishment based training techniques because of the emphasis on "showing the dog you are the leader." Donaldson convincingly demonstrates that dogs are NOT disobedient because they are trying to be dominant, but because they do not understand what a cue means or they find other instinctual stimulus to be more motivating than what we are asking of them (e.g. asking them to come when chasing a squirrel). Once we understand this and start applying scientifically validated learning theories to training our dog, we discover that dominance is totally irrelevant. This is evident in our training classes at Green Acres where young children are training the family dog as easily, and sometimes more effectively than their parents. Donaldson explains how our dogs' instinctual behaviors can actually be used to make them even better companions. For example, many old school training books would tell you never, ever allow your dog to play "tug-of-war" because it will make the dog dominant. This advice is totally erroneous. As Donaldson explains, dogs in the wild tugging together at a carcass are NOT trying to dominate one another; they are working cooperatively together to dissect the carcass. By playing tug with our dog, with rules of course, we are not making them aggressive, but are building a bond by working together cooperatively as a pack. You will find that for many dogs playing tug is a very motivating reward, possibly more motivating than chasing that squirrel.

I've read several dog training books and have trained several puppies, but I admit I still have a lot to learn. I rate this book highly because it has a lot of great information about, among other things:-  
Motivation. We all behave according to what we find rewarding in life, so why not use a dog's natural motivators (usually treats, but also play and contact) to get the behavior we want? Most of what we ask a dog to do (such as chewing only items we select, not eating food wherever it is found, not rushing to greet other people or dogs, not walking as fast as possible) is unnatural for the dog, so trained behaviors have to be made more worthwhile than what comes naturally.-  
Understanding dogs. Dogs are social creatures who do not like being alone. Dogs (like humans) are wary of unfamiliar objects and places. Dogs are not moral creatures who know right from wrong and

feel guilt; rather, they learn what's safe and what's dangerous and avoid the dangerous.- The human-dog relationship. If your dog associates you with punishment for a given behavior, he will learn to wait until you're not around to do the behavior. If your dog comes to you on command and you ignore him when he arrives, he will learn that coming to you is not that important.- Generalizing obedience. Just because your dog sits on command in the living room, it does not mean he will do the same in the kitchen, the backyard, or the park. Every environment provides different cues which your dog picks up on; he must be trained in a variety of places to really understand that SIT always means SIT. All of this information and more make this book an easy recommendation. However, it comes in a sometimes off-putting package. Besides a few regrettable typos that make some points harder to understand, the author has an axe to grind. Instead of letting her positive training approach speak for itself, she repeatedly denigrates all methods of corrective training and the people who use them. Like many who advocate a positive approach, she undercuts her argument by suggesting that corrective training never works (though she briefly allows that it may occasionally be necessary). Not only have I seen it work, it can be much faster and more effective than using treats "and without any obvious deterioration in the handler-dog relationship that is usually claimed. Corrective training is also a fact of life: dogs (and other animals) use it on each other all the time. The author also denigrates the concept of leadership as a corollary of aversive training, but I find that silly. Clearly the human has to be the leader in the human-dog relationship for it to be harmonious, and in my experience, the relationship is more solid when the human accepts that role. The author also manages to blame Walt Disney(!) for decades of poor dog training, which is just bizarre. Finally, I would say that the title of the book doesn't really match its contents (is the clash between positive and corrective trainers? between humans and dogs? hard to say), but I suppose that doesn't matter. I regret spending so much time on the negatives, but for someone approaching this book in good faith, they are (ironically) aversive and might tempt you to stop reading. However, I feel there is so much good info to be gleaned that it is worth putting up with the author's missteps.

I bought this in paper many years ago and it stands up well today. It is the one book of the dozens I read about dogs that stayed with me. As a rescue volunteer, amateur trainer of 3 dogs through the basic CGC certification, and advocate for dogs... it is the single book that most folks would get the most from. There are plenty of training books, few better than from Gary Wilkes. And the video series 'Take a Bow, Wow!' is excellent. 'Culture Clash' is something else... 'Culture Clash' is not about how to train your dog: it is about how your dog really is and how it senses, reasons, and responds. It can give you a true understanding of why dogs are the way they are. And it explains

what dogs are NOT. For a Kindle download price, you cannot spend a more worthwhile \$8 and it will stay with you for your entire life and help you immensely with any dog you observe, love, rescue, or train. And that is a great return for not much money. It's fascinating and surprising.

One of the best ever books on dog behavior and training. Combine it with Ian Dunbar's "How to Teach a New Dog Old Tricks" and Karen Pryor's "Don't Shoot the Dog" and you will have all you ever need!

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