

## **Anna and the King**

Anna, an English schoolteacher, is employed by the King of Siam to teach his children in a Buddhist temple. Anna was telling the children about her own long-ago trip through Egypt, when there suddenly fell from the roof above her head onto the centre of the map, which she stretched on the table, a coil of something that looked at first like a thick silk cord neatly rolled into a ball. In another instant the coil unrolled itself and began to move slowly away. Anna screamed, and forgetting her dignity fled to the far end of the temple expecting the children to follow her. When she turned, she was amazed to see all the royal pupils sitting quietly on their seats in an attitude of respect. Not a child had moved or made a sound. The temple was still. All the children's eyes were fixed on the snake as it moved in lazy curves along the entire length of the table. With a feeling of shame Anna returned to her seat to watch it. She even managed to share a little of the children's fascination as she looked into the clear eyes of the snake. She had never seen one like it. The snake moved on its slow way down the table. To Anna each second seemed an hour. She held her breath in terror as it dropped from the table to the arm of the chair of Prince Chulalongkorn. What if the child moved and the snake struck? She had no doubt that her own life would be taken in a moment if the young prince went to die under her care. She wanted to call out to him to hold perfectly still, but no sound came. She need not have worried, for he sat as motionless as the Buddha gleaming in the twilight behind him. Anna could not swallow or breathe until she saw the snake glide from the chair and crawl through the corridor and down the steps, and finally out of sight. Then she almost fainted with relief.

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## Guide Dogs for People with Vision Loss

We're all familiar with the image of dogs guiding people with vision loss along streets and through public spaces. But unless you've actually benefited from one of these specially trained animals, you probably have no idea what wonderful mobility tools and loving companions they can be.

The guide dog is a "mobility aid" that can enable people who are blind or have low vision to travel safely. Guide dogs can guide people around obstacles and through crowds, stop at curbs and stairs, and sometimes even be trained to find a limited number of objects that are within sight when given orders such as "Find the chair," "Find the door," or "Find the elevator." The guide dog user can also train (or "pattern") the dog to find frequently used landmarks, such as a bus stop pole or a mailbox.

One common misconception is that people who are blind or have low vision and don't have orientation and mobility (O&M) travel skills can use a guide dog to travel safely and independently; people mistakenly assume that it is the dog that shows the person where to go. **This is not true.** The person who is blind or has low vision directs the dog; the function and purpose of the dog is to merely guide the person around obstacles and indicate the location of steps and curbs.

Another misconception is that guide dogs indicate when it is safe to cross the street. **This is also not true.** For example, at a traffic signal, the guide dog does not know when the light changes from green to amber to red. It is the person who determines when it is safe to cross the street and which way to go; the dog then guides the person across the street to reach the other side. Although the dog does not know when it is safe to cross the street, if it sees a car approaching too close, it has been trained to stop or attempt to move the person out of the way.

<https://visionaware.org/everyday-living/essential-skills/an-introduction-to-orientation-and-mobility-skills/dog-guides-for-people-with-vision-loss/1234>