

A Guide for Using

Where the Red Fern Grows

in the Classroom

Based on the novel written by Wilson Rawls

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Introduction

A good book can touch our lives like a good friend. Within its pages are words and characters that can inspire us to achieve our highest ideals. We can turn to it for companionship, recreation, comfort, and guidance. It also gives us a cherished story to hold in our hearts forever.

In Literature Units, great care has been taken to select books that are sure to become good friends!

Teachers who use this unit will find the following features to supplement their own valuable ideas.

- Sample Lesson Plans
- Pre-reading Activities
- A Biographical Sketch and Picture of the Author
- A Book Summary
- Vocabulary Lists and Suggested Vocabulary Activities
- Chapters grouped for study, with each section including:
 - *quizzes*
 - *hands-on projects*
 - *cooperative learning activities*
 - *cross-curriculum connections*
 - *extensions into the reader's own life*
- Post-reading Activities
- Book Report Ideas
- Research Ideas
- A Culminating Activity
- Three Different Options for Unit Tests
- Bibliography
- Answer Key

We are confident that this unit will be a valuable addition to your planning, and hope that as you use our ideas, your students will increase the circle of “friends” that they can have in books!



Sample Lesson Plan

Each of the lessons suggested below can take from one to several days to complete.

LESSON 1

- Introduce and complete some or all of the pre-reading activities found on page 5.
- Read “About the Author” with your students. (page 6)
- Read the book summary with your students. (page 7)
- Introduce the vocabulary list for SECTION 1. (page 8) Ask students to find all possible definitions for these words.

LESSON 2

- Read Chapters I through V. As you read, place the vocabulary words in the context of the story and discuss their meanings.
- Play a vocabulary game. (page 9)
- Ask students to design a plan for working for something they want, and implement the plan! (page 11)
- Work in groups to dramatize the street scene in Tahlequah. A number of variations are possible. (page 12)
- Discuss the book in terms of math. (page 13)
- Begin “Reading Response Journals.” (page 14)
- Administer the SECTION 1 quiz. (page 10)
- Introduce the vocabulary list for SECTION 2. (page 8) Ask students to find all possible definitions.

LESSON 3

- Read Chapters VI through IX. Place the vocabulary words in context and discuss their meanings.
- Play a vocabulary game. (page 9)
- Learn how to train dogs and teach one command. (page 16)
- Research specific things mentioned in the book. (page 17)
- Discuss the book in terms of science. (page 18)
- Discuss the world from another point of view. (page 19)
- Administer SECTION 2 quiz. (page 15)
- Introduce the vocabulary list for SECTION 3. (page 8) Ask students to find all possible definitions.

LESSON 4

- Read Chapters X through XIII. Place the vocabulary words in context and discuss their meanings.
- Play a vocabulary game. (page 9)
- Make raccoon paws. (page 21)
- Practice making and tracking raccoon prints. (page 22)

LESSON 4 (cont.)

- Discuss the book in terms of mapmaking. (page 23)
- Learn about and apply the techniques of conflict resolution. (page 24)
- Administer SECTION 3 quiz. (page 20)
- Introduce the vocabulary list for SECTION 4. (page 8) Ask students to find all possible meanings.

LESSON 5

- Read Chapters XIV through XVIII. Place the vocabulary words in context and discuss their meanings.
- Play a vocabulary game. (page 9)
- Have a whooping contest! (page 26)
- Work together to determine how responsibility is shared. (page 27)
- Discuss the book in terms of beauty; do art activity (page 28)
- Interview an older person. (page 29)
- Administer SECTION 4 quiz. (page 25)
- Introduce the vocabulary list for SECTION 5. (page 8) Ask students to find all possible meanings.

LESSON 6

- Read Chapters XIX and XX. Place the vocabulary words in context and discuss their meanings.
- Play a vocabulary game. (page 9)
- Learn about and practice dog care. (page 31)
- Identify and dramatize special scenes in the story. (page 32)
- Discuss the book in terms of social studies. (page 33)
- Discuss and apply the flashback technique. (page 34)
- Administer SECTION 5 quiz. (page 30)

LESSON 7

- Discuss any questions your students may have about the story. (page 35)
- Assign book report and research projects. (pages 36 and 37)
- Begin work on a culminating activity. (pages 38,39,40, and 41)

LESSON 8

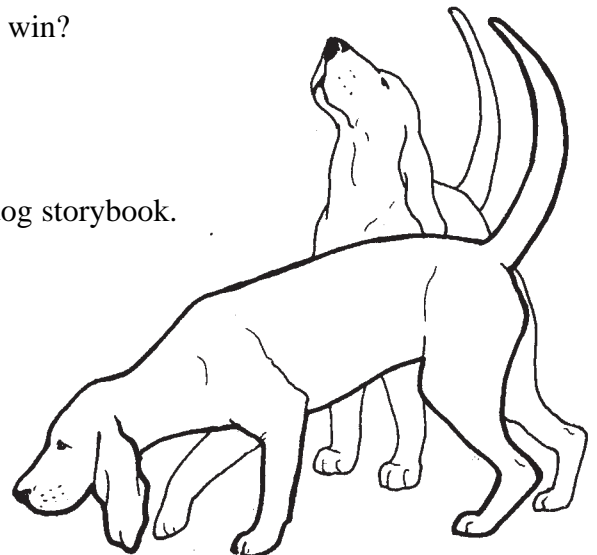
- Administer Unit Tests: 1, 2, and/or 3. (pages 42, 43, and 44)
- Discuss the test answers and possibilities.
- Discuss the students’ enjoyment of the book.
- Provide a list of related reading for your students. (page 45)

Before the Book

Before you begin reading *Where the Red Fern Grows* with your students, do some pre-reading activities to stimulate interest and enhance comprehension. Here are some activities that might work well in your class.

1. Predict what the story might be about just by hearing the title.
2. Predict what the story might be about just by looking at the cover illustration.
3. Find out if students have heard of Wilson Rawls, and if they know anything about his personal life or his writing.
4. Answer these questions:
 - Are you interested in:
 - stories that take place in a very rural country setting?
 - stories which involve a special friendship between a young person and his two dogs?
 - stories about winning, in spite of great odds?
 - stories about the devotion of two animals to their master and each other?
 - Would you ever:
 - save nickels, dimes, and quarters for two years to buy two puppies?
 - be able to walk barefooted for forty miles?
 - endure the teasing and beatings of other children your age?
 - trap, kill, and skin animals?
 - enter a contest that you had little chance to win?
 - Have you ever been saved by an animal?
Describe your experience in detail.

5. Work in groups or as a class to create your own dog storybook.



About the Author

Wilson Rawls was born on September 24, 1913 in Scraper, Oklahoma to Minzy and Winnie Rawls. His early years were spent on a farm in northeastern Oklahoma. Because there were no schools in this part of Oklahoma during this time, his mother taught Wilson and his sisters to read and write. When his mother brought home Jack London's *The Call of the Wild*, Wilson became inspired by what books could offer. He was so moved by this book he decided that someday he would write a book like London's himself!

His first experience in attending a regular school came when he and his family moved to Tahlequah. Due to the pressures of the depression, he didn't finish the eighth grade. Still, he carried with him the desire to write a book. This dream might have seemed impossible to achieve to most children who had little formal education and no money to buy paper and pencils. Yet, Wilson remained encouraged by the words his father spoke to him:



“Son, a man can do anything he sets out to do, if he doesn't give up.”

He didn't give up. He worked the next years at odd jobs, such as carpentry, while traveling to North and South America. While working, he wrote as much as he could on whatever paper he could find, and left his writing at his mother's house. But just before he married Sophie Ann Styczinski in 1958, he burned all of his writings, including a manuscript for *Where the Red Fern Grows*.

In 1959, Wilson Rawls became a full-time writer. He chose to rewrite *Where the Red Fern Grows* as his first novel because it reflected his boyhood. It was soon serialized in a magazine, and then published in 1961. He has also written another award-winning book, *Summer of the Monkeys*.

Wilson Rawls, when asked by educators and children how to become a writer, says:

“Do a lot of reading. Read and study creative writing. Do not wait to start writing. You are never too young to start. Do not worry about grammar and punctuation on your first draft. The important thing is to get your story down on paper. Your first work will probably need a lot of rewriting. You can worry about grammar and punctuation then. Remember, the more you write and rewrite, the better you will get. And most important of all, do not get discouraged. If you keep trying and don't give up, you will make it someday. The road can be rough, but the day you see your work in print will make it all worth it. Best of luck!”

(Quotations for this biographical sketch were taken from *Something About the Author*, Volume 22, page 206.)

Where the Red Fern Grows

by Wilson Rawls

(Bantam, 1985)

Billy Colman, a young boy living in the Ozarks, has a case of puppy love—for two coon hounds. But coon hounds are expensive, and his parents cannot afford to get him the dogs he wants. While looking through an abandoned campsite, Billy finds an ad in a sportsman's magazine that says he can order coon hound pups for twenty-five dollars each. He formulates a plan for earning the money to buy the dogs himself. It takes him two years to raise the fifty dollars he needs, but he does it.

From the moment Billy picks up his pups at the depot, the three of them are inseparable. He trains Old Dan and Little Ann to hunt coons, and he trains them well. From that time on, they're out nearly every night hunting for ringtails in the hills and river bottoms near the log cabin where Billy lives. The dogs and Billy prove to be a successful hunting team.

Billy's Grandpa enters the team in the championship coon hunt. After quite an adventure, Old Dan, Little Ann, and Billy win the big hunt and return home with pride. But soon their happiness is shattered. Old Dan challenges a mountain lion and is mortally wounded. Billy buries his beloved dog on a hilltop near his home. A heartbroken Little Ann quickly loses her will to live and, after futile attempts by Billy to force her to eat, she drags her weakened body to the top of Old Dan's grave. There she dies of grief for her companion.

Billy buries Little Ann by the side of Old Dan—along with part of his life. But just before his family leaves the Ozarks the following spring, he finds a beautiful red fern growing between the two little graves. He recalls an old Indian legend that says wherever the red fern grows, that spot is sacred. Full of emotion, he says goodbye to his two special friends, knowing that he will never forget them.



Vocabulary Lists

On this page are vocabulary lists which correspond to each sectional grouping of chapters. Vocabulary activity ideas can be found on page 9 of this book.

SECTION 1

Chapters I–V

| | |
|-------------|------------|
| allotted | festered |
| aromatic | muster |
| canebrakes | provisions |
| commotion | quavering |
| dormant | sheen |
| drastic | sparsely |
| dumbfounded | squalling |

SECTION 2

Chapters VI–IX

| | |
|-------------|-------------|
| bulldogged | mischievous |
| desperation | peculiarity |
| domain | persistence |
| eternity | querying |
| gouge | sober voice |
| hampering | wedge |
| jarred | wiley |
| limbered | wincing |
| liniment | |

SECTION 3

Chapters X–XIII

| | |
|----------------|-------------|
| abounded | rifle |
| begrudgingly | rile |
| belligerent | salve |
| clambered | shriveled |
| debris | sidled |
| Decoration Day | slough |
| designated | strutted |
| disposition | surpassed |
| leering | taut |
| nonchalantly | ventilating |
| predicament | wattle |
| protruding | wallowing |

SECTION 1

Chapters XVIII

| | |
|----------|-------------|
| awed | heedless |
| blurted | impulsively |
| dabbing | jinx |
| doused | jubilant |
| droning | leeward |
| faltered | pent-up |
| fidget | restored |
| flitting | solemn |
| gawking | squabble |
| gloated | verge |
| haggard | |

SECTION 1

Chapters XIX–XX

| | |
|----------------|-----------|
| berserk | impact |
| blood-curdling | jugular |
| caress | legend |
| churring | lithe |
| cleaved | petrified |
| disembowel | predatory |
| entrails | scourge |
| feeble | sinews |
| foliage | wavered |

Vocabulary Activity Ideas

You can help your students learn and retain the vocabulary in *Where the Red Fern Grows* by providing them with interesting vocabulary activities. Here are a few ideas to try.

- ❑ People of all ages like to make and solve puzzles. Ask your students to make their own **Crossword Puzzles** or **Wordsearch Puzzles** using the vocabulary words from the story.
- ❑ Challenge your students to a **Vocabulary Bee!** This is similar to a spelling bee, but in addition to spelling each word correctly, the game participants must correctly define the words as well.
- ❑ Play **Vocabulary Concentration**. The goal of this game is to match vocabulary words with their definitions. Divide the class into groups of 2-5 students. Have students make two sets of cards the same size and color. On one set have them write the vocabulary words. On the second set have them write the definitions. All cards are mixed together and placed face down on a table. A player picks two cards. If the pair matches the word with its definition, the player keeps the cards and takes another turn. If the cards don't match, they are returned to their places face down to the table, and another player takes a turn. Players must concentrate to remember the locations of words and their definitions. The game continues until all matches have been made. This is an ideal activity for free exploration time.
- ❑ Have your students practice their writing skills by creating sentences and paragraphs in which multiple vocabulary words are used correctly. Ask them to share their **Compact Vocabulary** sentences and paragraphs with the class.
- ❑ Ask your students to create paragraphs which use the vocabulary words to present **History Lessons** that relate to the time period or historical events mentioned in the story.
- ❑ Challenge your students to use a specific vocabulary word from the story at least **10 Times In One Day**. They must keep a record of when, how, and why the word was used!
- ❑ As a group activity, have students work together to create an **Illustrated Dictionary** of the vocabulary words.
- ❑ Play **20 Clues** with the entire class. In this game, one student selects a vocabulary word and gives clues about this word, one by one, until someone in the class can guess the word.
- ❑ Play **Vocabulary Charades**. In this game, vocabulary words are acted out!

You probably have many more ideas to add to this list. Try them! See if experiencing vocabulary on a personal level increases your students' vocabulary interest and retention!

Quiz Time!

1. On the back of this paper, write a one paragraph summary of the major events in each chapter of this section. Then complete the rest of the questions on this page.
2. In the first chapter, what causes the narrator of the story to remember his childhood?

3. Why won't Billy's parents buy him the dogs he wants?

4. What is the significance of the sportsman's magazine that Billy finds in the abandoned fishermen's camp?

5. With how much money does Billy start his savings? _____
6. List the ways in which Billy earns money for his dogs.

7. How does Billy's grandfather respond when he finds out that his grandson has been saving every penny of the money he has earned to buy two hunting dogs?

8. In one well-written sentence, characterize the "pre-dog" Billy.

9. In one well-written sentence, characterize the marshal in Tahlequah.

10. On the back of this paper, explain how much you would be willing to do to get two dogs you really wanted.

Working For It!

As Billy reads the advertisement for a Kentucky kennel’s coon hounds, he realizes that his dream could become a reality. Fortified by this knowledge, he begins a savings campaign. He saves diligently for two years and reaches his goal.

Do you think you could earn and save enough money to buy something you really wanted? For this story-related project, saving for something special is exactly what you are going to try to do! Here are some ideas to help you get started.

What is something you want that is within a realistic price range?

Why do you want this item?

How will your life be enriched by owning this item?

Would you have your parents’ support for this purchase if you were to use your own money to buy it? Explain your answer.

How much money does this item cost? _____

How much money would you have to earn each week to buy this item in two months? _____ in six months? _____ in one year? _____

What is a reasonable amount of money you could earn each week? _____

At this rate, how long will it take you to buy this item?

On the back of this page, list as many ways as are possible for you to earn money. Next to each way, write the amount of money that can be generated from this job source and the time commitment the job will take. Then, choose the most realistic job opportunities from your list.

The only thing left now for you to do is to start working!



Drama on the Street

Billy Colman's first experience with the people of Tahlequah was not a pleasant one. People stared at him rudely and the boys who were his own age taunted him by calling him, "Hillbilly, hillbilly." But when he proudly strode back through town carrying his two brand-new, beautiful, redbone pups, he expected a different reaction. After all, not every boy his age owned two coon hounds!

But, much to his dismay, the townspeople still stared and laughed at him. The town boys ganged around him, taunting him with, "The dog boy has come to town. The dog boy has come to town." Billy was devastated.

"My heart burst. Tears came rolling. The day I had waited for so long had turned black and ugly."

The boys were mean to him, and the gang's leader stomped on Billy's bare toe with his boot and pulled the girl pup's ear cruelly. It was just too much for Billy to bear. He fought back, much like the way the old redbone hound fought back against the town dogs in the the first chapter. It was the country boy against the town boys. But the marshal intervened, and spared Billy from a painful beating, just as the narrator saved the old hound in the first chapter from a painful end.

Working in size-appropriate groups, recreate this street scene. It is up to each group to decide how many players will be needed to present the street scene to the class. In the scene you and your group create and perform, you may change the outcome of the confrontation in any way you choose.

Possibilities include:

- The two ladies with iodine-painted feathers intercede on Billy's behalf.
- The stationmaster tells the town kids something that would make a difference.
- The marshal locks Billy up for the night for disturbing the peace.
- One of the boys in the town gang is empathetic towards Billy, and changes the fighting odds.

A number of scenarios are possible. It is up to you and your group members to decide what type of scene to perform. However, as you plan, remember that no one is to get hurt in any way as you enact your "drama on the street" for your eagerly awaiting class!

Math

It took Billy two years to earn fifty dollars. He earned it penny, nickel, dime, and quarter at a time working constantly to meet his goal.

If you were to create an accounting of the money he earned and the ways in which he earned it, what would this record look like?

Use the chart below to help you create an accounting record of Billy's earnings. Use the prices that are suggested to compute his earnings per item sold. Your total must equal fifty dollars.

| Record of Earnings: Billy Colman | | | |
|---|----------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Item for Sale | Price per Unit | Quantity Sold | Total Earned |
| bucket of berries | 10 cents | | |
| crawfish, large | 5 cents | | |
| crawfish, small | 3 cents | | |
| five minnows | 1 cent | | |
| roasting ear | 1 cent | | |
| bucket of assorted vegetables | 5 cents | | |
| opossum hide | 15 cents | | |
| skunk hide | 25 cents | | |
| | | Grand Total | \$50.00 |

Reading Response Journals

One great way to insure that the reading of *Where the Red Fern Grows* touches each student in a personal way is to include the use of Reading Response Journals in your plans. In these journals, students can be encouraged to respond to the story in a number of ways. Here are a few ideas.

- Ask students to create a journal for *Where the Red Fern Grows*. Initially, just have them assemble lined and un-lined three-holed paper in a brad-fastened report cover, with a blank page for the journal's cover. As they read the story, they may draw a design on the cover that helps tell the story for them.
- Tell them that the purpose of the journal is to record their thoughts, ideas, observations, and questions as they read *Where the Red Fern Grows*.
- Provide students with, or ask them to suggest, topics from the story that would stimulate writing. Here are a few examples from the chapters in SECTION 1.
 - Billy wants coon hounds more than anything else. He wants them so badly that he is willing to work two long, hard years for them. Describe something you want that you would be willing to work hard for.
 - Describe relationships with animals you have had, or relationships with animals you wish to have
 - Explain how you would have reacted to the teasing and bullying of the boys of Tahlequah.
- After the reading of each chapter, students can write one or more new things they learned in the chapter.
- Ask students to draw their responses to certain events or characters in the story, using the blank pages in their journals.
- Tell students that they may use their journals to record “diary-type” responses that they may want to enter.
- Encourage students to bring their journal ideas to life! Ideas generated from their journal writing can be used to create plays, debates, stories, songs, and art displays.
- Allow students time to write in their journals daily.

See the answer key for ideas for the evaluation of your students' Reading Response Journals.

Quiz Time!

1. On the back of this paper, write a one paragraph summary of the major events in each chapter of this section. Then complete the rest of the questions on this page.

2. Why does Billy choose the names Old Dan and Little Ann for his dogs?

3. What are the reasons Billy's parents have for wanting to move to town?

4. Why does Billy need a coonskin to train his pups?

5. Describe how Grandpa's brace and bit trap works.

6. What is one of the tricks a raccoon uses to throw a dog off its scent?

7. Why is it so important for Billy to chop down the big sycamore tree to get the treed raccoon?

8. How do Old Dan and Little Ann feel about coon hunting?

9. What finally causes the big sycamore to fall?

10. If you were Billy, would you have left the tree or chopped it down? Justify your choice on the back of this paper.

Time to Train!

Nearly every dog can be trained. Billy was able to train Old Dan and Little Ann to become the best coonhounds they could be.

For this hands-on activity, you will need a dog. Puppies are usually easier to train than older dogs, but an older dog can be an excellent student, especially if the lessons are given with love! If you have your own dog, great! If not, ask to borrow one from a neighbor or friend. All the training time you will need is about ten minutes a day.

Only one lesson will be explained on this page. You may find that you enjoy training your dog so much that you would like to go beyond this one lesson. There are many great dog training books available, as well as obedience training classes. There are numerous advantages in having or being with a well-trained dog.

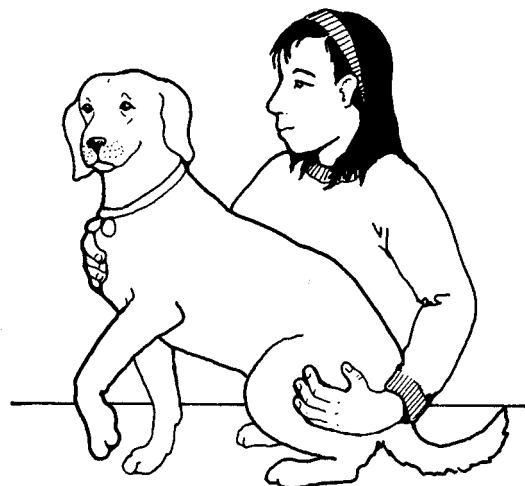
To begin the lesson, try to find a spot in which there will be as few distractions as possible for your dog. It will be easier for your dog to concentrate on what you have to teach. Once you both have settled in this spot, begin the lesson.

The “Sit” Command

There are several different ways to teach your dog to obey the “sit” command. You can put a treat right in front of her nose and jerk the treat straight up as you say “sit.” The dog will sit expectantly. You can stand by her, and at the word “sit,” pull up on her leash while gently pushing on her hindquarters. Do not push with great force! If you do, the dog will just tense up and the tension could cause a hip problem.

You can also follow these directions:

- Kneel down by your dog. Put one hand on the dog’s chest just under the collar.
- In a kind, firm voice, say the dog’s name, followed by the command “sit.” (“Little Ann, sit.”)
- At the same time you say “sit,” use your other hand to scoop the dog’s hindquarters into a sitting position as shown in the picture on the right.
- Use the scooping hand to pet your dog while you praise him or her. (“Good dog, Little Ann!”)
- Try the command again. Delay between the time you say “Little Ann, sit” and the time you scoop the legs into a sitting position. The dog will soon get the idea of what you want, eventually sitting on the command word alone.
- Pet and praise the dog every time he or she sits.
- Continue this training session for five to ten minutes, paying close attention to your dog’s level of patience and frustration. If the lesson gets “tense” for either of you, stop and continue where you left off another day. Then, play with the dog!
- Remember, your dog is eager to please you! Return the affection!



Let's Find Out Together!

There are many types of trees and animals that are described or mentioned in *Where the Red Fern Grows*.

Look at these lists. Working in groups of two or three, choose one or more of these trees and animals to research. You may not choose a topic that has already been selected by another group.

List #1—Dogs

| | | |
|----------|--------------|---------------|
| bird dog | coon hounds: | walkers |
| boxer | redbone | bloodhound |
| poodle | blue tick | black and tan |
| collie | | |

List #2—Ozark Wildlife

| | | |
|-------------|---------------|---------------|
| night hawk | minnow | opossum |
| timber wolf | ringtail coon | crawfish |
| skunk | mountain lion | frog |
| | | gray squirrel |

List #3 Ozark Trees

| | | |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| ash | box elder | dogwood |
| papaw | red oak | birch |
| sycamore | redbud | burr oak |
| | | water oak |

Each research project will include the following things:

- A cover with a realistic, colored picture of the topic
- A thorough, written description of the topic
- An explanation of how and why the topic is mentioned in *Where the Red Fern Grows*

When the research projects are complete, one or more of the group members will present the information to the class in an enjoyable way. It is up to the group members to select the manner in which the oral presentation is made.

Science

Billy knew exactly what it would take to make him happy. More than anything, he wanted two puppies to raise and train. But he wasn't going to be satisfied with just any dogs. He had to have coonhound pups, and he had to hunt raccoons with them. The desire consumed him, often to the point of weight loss and sleeplessness. How could such a young boy be so obsessed with this desire?

Billy was raised in the Ozarks, an area where coon hunting was a way of life for its inhabitants. He had heard coon hunting stories all his life, and believed at least a part of all of them. He loved to sit in his Grandpa's store and hear the coon hunters tell of the wiley raccoons that could outwit grown men and their dogs, and the sense of pride these men would show as they told how their well-trained dogs finally treed the clever coon. Hunting was in his blood, and he wanted to own the dogs that could outsmart old ringtail!

Raccoon hunting does not only touch the characters in *Where the Red Fern Grows*. Many people, past and present, have been infected with the desire. In the past, Indians and pioneers hunted this native North American mammal for its meat and fur. In the 1920's, these animals were hunted nearly to extinction in some areas because of the popularity of raccoon coats. Now, raccoons are hunted as much, if not more, for sport as for food and fur. Hunters still enjoy the thrill of a nocturnal hunt, a fast-paced chase, the baying of hounds, and a clever coon.

But, in spite of all the hunting, raccoons are still plentiful. A study of their habits and adaptability confirms the reasons why. The raccoon is a fascinating animal. You are bound to increase your appreciation for this amazing animal if you learn more about it.

For this activity, find out more about raccoons. Research their physical characteristics, habits and habitats, natural enemies, degree of intelligence, and relationship with humans.

After you have researched raccoons, research raccoon hunting. Are the methods you discover similar to the methods you have read about in *Where the Red Fern Grows*? How are they the same? How are they different? Are coon hounds still used? Is there any chance that raccoons can become extinct?

After you have completed your research, decide for yourself if you could ever go on a coon hunt. Be ready to explain your choice completely.



Another World

In Chapter VI, Billy describes the sights, sounds, and tastes of Tahlequah for his eagerly listening family. This was his first time ever to see a town, and he was overwhelmed by all that he saw and felt. The town was teeming with people, the schoolyard overflowing with kids, and the streets full of those who stared, laughed, or teased. It was another world for him. He decided he never wanted to live in this other world after the experiences he had in Tahlequah.

Suppose the times have changed, but Billy has not. It is the time in which you live, and Billy has come to your town to get his coon pups. He still has the “country” look, and still is awed by the town.

Look at the town you the in from Billy’s point of view. As you do, answer the questions below.

Where would he go to pick up his pups? _____

Would people in your town stare at Billy? Why? _____

What would he think of the law enforcement officers in your town? _____

Which store in your town would amaze Billy most? Why? _____

What would Billy have purchased for his family in your town? _____

What thing about your town would strike Billy as the most unusual? _____

What would he like most about your school’s yard? _____

On the back of this paper, describe the following “modern” things through Billy’s eyes:

| | | | | |
|--------------|-------------|---------------|-------|------------|
| television | pollution | diesel trucks | pizza | hairstyles |
| tennis shoes | video games | elevators | malls | skydiving |

Would children in your town make fun of Billy because he is different from them? _____ If so, how? _____

Would you make fun of Billy? _____ Explain your answer on the back of this paper.

Would Billy want to come back to your town? _____ Why or why not? _____

Quiz Time!

1. On the back of this paper, write a one paragraph summary of the major events in each chapter of this section. Then complete the rest of the questions on this page.

2. During the first season that Billy hunts, the price of raccoon skin goes up because of people's interest in coonskin coats. At this time, what is a good-size coonskin worth? _____

3. What does Billy do with all the money he earns from his coon hunting? _____

4. In one well-written sentence, characterize Old Dan.

5. In Chapter X, Old Dan has quite an adventure in tree-climbing. Describe it on the back of this paper.

6. In one well-written sentence, characterize Little Ann.

7. In Chapter XI, Little Ann has quite an adventure on the ice. Describe it on the back of this paper.

8. Describe the personalities of the Pritchard brothers.

9. How does the ghost coon earn his name? _____

10. Respond to the following questions on the back of this paper. If you were Billy Colman, would you have:
 - a. agreed to the bet with the Pritchard brothers?
 - b. killed the ghost coon?
 - c. been able to pull the ax out of Ruben?
 - d. taken flowers to Ruben's grave?
 - e. gone coon hunting again?

Paw Prints

For this hands-on project, your students will need to be divided into groups of two, three, or four. There must be an even number of groups. These groups will remain the same for the cooperative learning activity described on page 22.

Provide modeling clay for each group. You or your students may make it according to these directions or use a favorite recipe of your own.

Ingredients

- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (125mL) water
- 2 tablespoons (30 mL) vegetable oil
- 1 cup (250mL) salt
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups (375 mL) flour
- food coloring (optional)

Directions:

Pour oil into water.

Add rest of ingredients.

Mix all ingredients together with hands.

Knead on a table.

Store the dough in the refrigerator until you are ready to use it.

Each group will use the modeling clay to make a complete set of front and hind raccoon feet. Use the patterns on this page to shape the feet. Add contouring for “toe” and “finger” curves and toothpicks for the claws. Let your models dry. Once they are dry, use the feet you have made for the activity described on page 22.

left forefoot



right forefoot



left hind foot



right hind foot



Track Down!

For this activity, you will need the raccoon feet models you made according to the directions on page 21. The students will remain in the same groups that they were in when they made the feet. Remember, you need to have an even number of groups.

- Show raccoon tracks to your students and explain how they are made. Check the books listed in the Bibliography (page 45) for resources. Tell your students that when a raccoon walks, his left hind foot is usually paired with the right forefoot, and the right hind foot with the left forefoot. When a raccoon is running, the forefeet are paired and the hind feet are paired.
- Pair each group with another group. The groups that are paired do not have to be the same size. Designate one group of each pair as the “coon” group, and the other as the “hunter” group.
- Throughout a week-long period, dismiss one “coon” group at a time to go to an area on the school campus where they can make “raccoon” tracks. These tracks can be most easily made on wet sand or dirt. They must make the tracks tell a story, and write down this story as they make the tracks. For example, their “coon” may have wandered curiously up behind the swings, tried one out, and using the swinging motion to propel himself, jumped far out in front of the swing! The group must work together to make their coon tracks look realistic.
- After the group has finished making tracks, the “hunter” group they have been paired with must try to follow their coon tracks and recreate the story behind the tracks. When the hunter group has finished, the partner groups can meet to compare their stories!
- The groups may now change places. The “coon” group becomes the “hunter” group and the “hunter” group becomes the “coon” group,
- After this activity has been completed, evaluate the experience in terms of trail making and trail tracking!

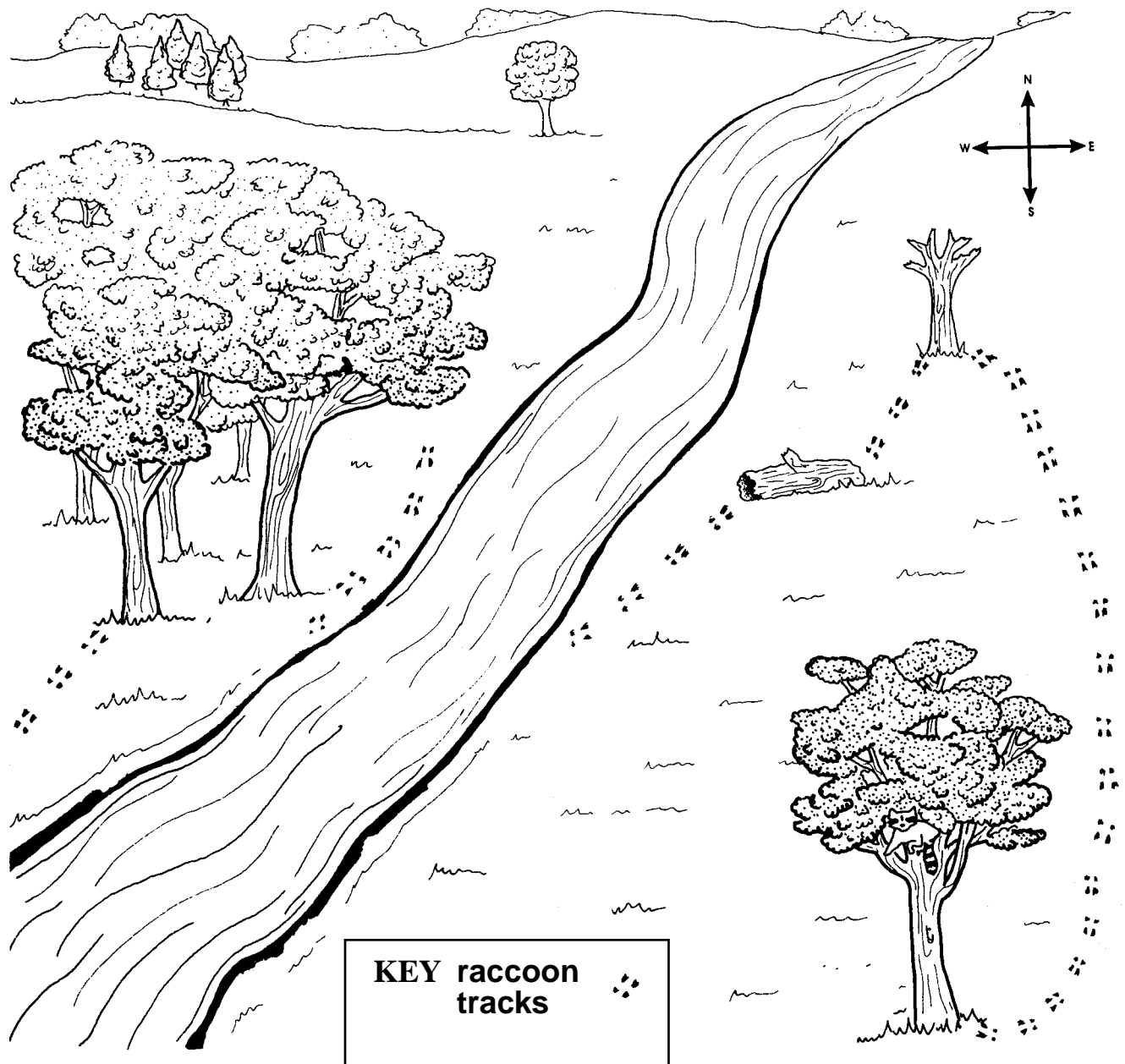


As an extension of this activity, examine the animal tracks that you can find around your school or home. If you have raccoons nearby, you’ve got some tracking “experience” and can proceed to track the raccoon and try to tell his story! If there are no raccoon prints to track, try to track and tell the story of another animal!



Map Making

The map below shows a raccoon's trail. This particular raccoon was being chased by Old Dan and Little Ann, although the dogs' tracks have been omitted so you can clearly distinguish the coon's trail. Read the map to determine the raccoon's escape route and the outcome of the chase. Use directional words and the names of landmarks to chronicle the event on a separate piece of paper.



Conflict Resolution

At two separate times in *Where the Red Fern Grows*, Billy Colman was put into situations where he was challenged to fight back. He did the best he could to avoid conflict, but when his dogs were involved, he fought back. Billy faced the Tahlequah bully when his dog's ear was pulled. And when Ruben said he was going to kill Billy's dogs with an ax, Billy ran to their defense.

Have you ever been faced with a situation in which you felt that fighting was the only way out? If so, use the back of this paper to describe the situation and what you did.

What can you do to avoid fighting? Brainstorm for ideas with the rest of your class. Then add your ideas to the ideas below.

Ideas for conflict resolution:

1. **Say you are sorry.** Sometimes these words are the only thing the other person needs. Sometimes it may take a little more: "I'm sorry I broke your pencil. I'll buy you another one."
2. **Count to 10 (or 15 or 20!).** This gives you time to "cool down" a bit and a chance to think before you act. Think about the different choices you have in the situation. Think about the consequences of the different actions you could take. Decide which choice of action is the best one for you.
3. **Take turns telling each side of the problem.** Let the other person go first. Let the person finish all he or she has to say. Then you take your turn. You might start out by saying something like, "Why are you mad?"
4. **Have another person you both respect help you settle it.** Another person can often help you both see the other person's point of view. Teachers, parents, and principals are great ones to help!
5. **Make a joke about the situation** so the other person will not take the conflict so seriously. Laughter eases many tensions!
6. **Walk away!** This is sometimes very hard to do, especially if others are watching to see what you will do. Just remember, even if you think you can win a fight, it's not worth the consequences when you get sent to the principal's office or have to spend the day timed out in your room.
7. **Stay out of trouble.** Remember, the best way to keep a conflict from happening is to avoid it in the first place. Be aware of how your actions might look to other people. Be careful not to hurt people's feelings or embarrass them.

Suppose the Tahlequah youth and Billy, Ruben and Billy, or Rainie and Billy had tried some of these methods!

Work with a partner. Choose one method of conflict resolution and rewrite a scene from the story with a harmonious solution as the outcome of the conflict situation. Dramatize your scenes for the class.

Quiz Time!

1. On the back of this paper, write a one paragraph summary of the major events in each chapter of this section. Then complete the rest of the questions of this page.
2. What is the surprise Billy's grandpa has been planning for him for months? _____

3. What is the significance of the cup of coffee Billy has when he camps at Bluebird Creek with his father and grandpa?

4. What are Billy's tools as he readies Little Ann for the beauty contest? _____

5. What surprise does Billy find when his father and the judge push the hollow box elder down?

6. Who finds Grandpa and Old Dan? _____
7. If you were Billy, would you choose to stay in severe weather to try to find your dogs, or return to camp to help ease the pain of the men? Why?

8. What amazes the judge so much about Billy's relationship with Old Dan and Little Ann?

9. How do Old Dan and Little Ann keep from freezing?

10. How much money does Billy win in the jackpot? _____

If you had won the money Billy did, would you have turned it over to your father? Explain your answer and your reasoning on the back of this paper.

Whoop-Meter!

Coon hunters “whoop” to their dogs to encourage them and acknowledge their effort. Billy was no exception, whooping loudly, joyfully, and excitedly!

What do you think the whoops of the coon hunt sound like? Could you imitate a “who-e-e-e” if you tried?

Have a whooping contest in your class. Any member of the class may participate, even the teacher! Rank each participant in length, volume, and style. Use a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being poor and 5 being outstanding. The classmate with the highest score wins! Record the scores on the “Whoop-Meter” below.



| Participant's Name | Length | Volume | Style | Total |
|--------------------|--------|--------|-------|-------|
| 1. | | | | |
| 2. | | | | |
| 3. | | | | |
| 4. | | | | |
| 5. | | | | |
| 6. | | | | |

Sharing the Responsibility

The characters in *Where the Red Fern Grows* knew that responsibility to get the job done must be shared. Old Dan and Little Ann knew that working together as a coon hunting team made them more effective than hunting individually. Billy realized his place in the coon hunting team and held up his end of that responsibility. He also knew he had a responsibility to his family, and unquestioningly gave his father every cent he earned from his coonskin sales and his coon hunt jackpot.

Are there many jobs that are better done if the responsibilities are shared?

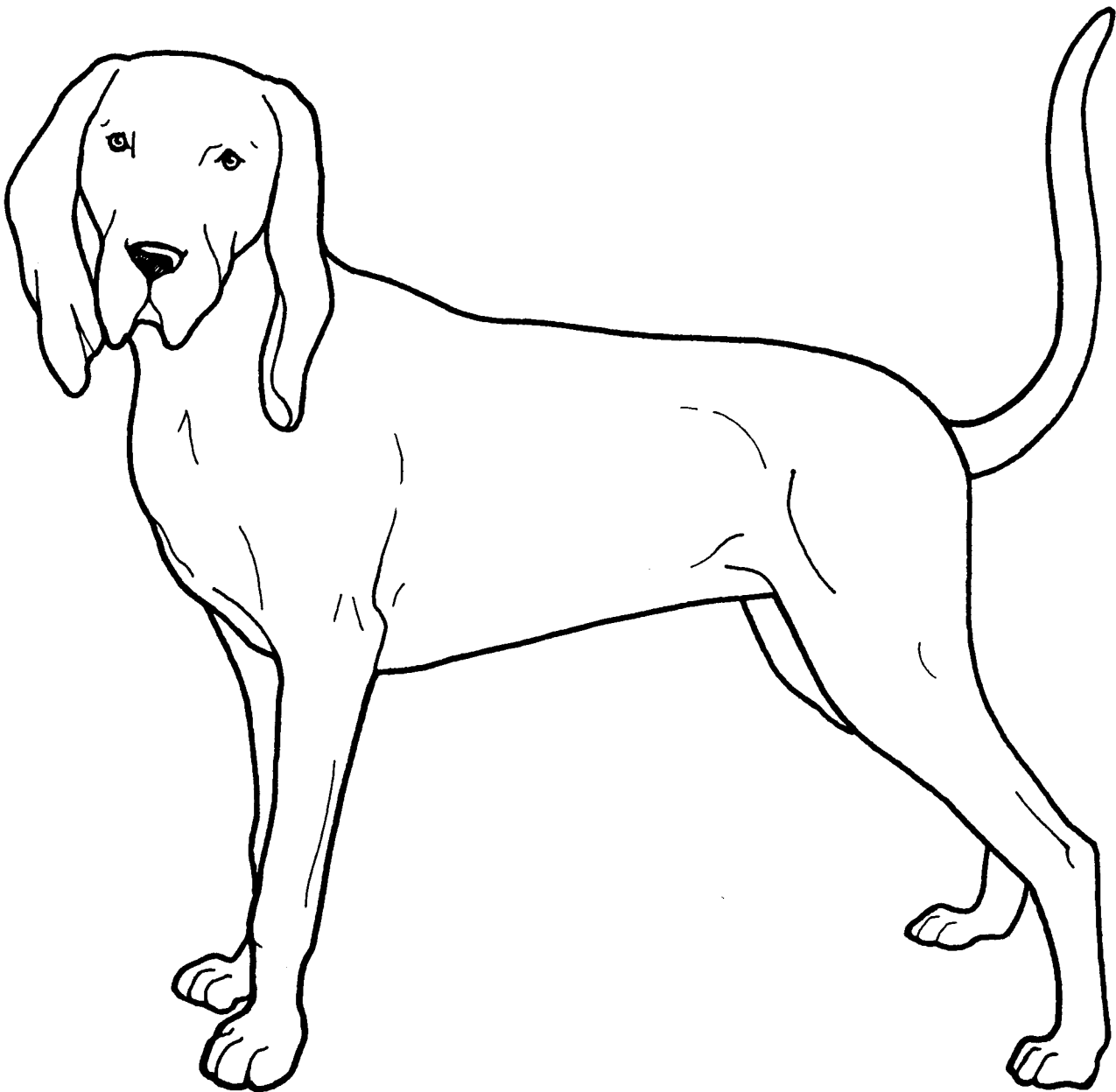
Work in groups of two to four to think of ten jobs that are better and more easily done, if there is a group effort to complete them. In your list, include at least one classroom job and one job at home. When you have finished completing the chart below, choose one of the jobs, and, working in your groups, do it!

| Sharing the Responsibility Job Chart | | | |
|---|--------------------------------|--|--|
| Type of job | Number of people needed | Completion time if work is done alone | Completion time if work is shared |
| 1. | | | |
| 2. | | | |
| 3. | | | |
| 4. | | | |
| 5. | | | |
| 6. | | | |
| 7. | | | |
| 8. | | | |
| 9. | | | |
| 10. | | | |

Art

Billy works hard to prepare Little Ann for the “beauty contest” at the big coon hunt competition. Much to his surprise and joy, she wins!

Here is an picture of a coon hound. Fill in the detail needed and color the hound appropriately. Figure out a way to make your dog shine as Little Ann did. Attach all finished pictures to the class bulletin board for a **Coon Hound Beauty Contest**. Ask the principal, another teacher, parent, or local artist to judge the pictures and pick a winner!



A Gift of Age

Billy learns a great deal from his Grandpa because he respects him and trusts in his experience.

Do you get the chance to talk with your grandparents or someone else who has lived a long time? What do you like to talk about with them? What do they like to talk about with you?

Interview a person who is at least 50 years old. Use these ideas to help you get started. Be sure to add your own ideas to the interview as well!

Suggested Interview Topics

Childhood: Tell me about . . .

- what the world was like
- your time with your family
- grade school experiences
- hobbies and special interests
- your heroes
- a typical day
- where you lived
- your favorite music
- what you did for fun
- your pets
- your favorite teacher
- your dreams
- special friends
- your responsibilities

The Teen Years: Tell me about . . .

- your first date
- your first job
- special friends
- what the world was like
- a typical day
- hobbies and special interests
- your most embarrassing moment
- what you did for fun
- your responsibilities
- your first drive
- your dreams

Adulthood: Tell me about:

- your jobs
- your marriage
- your children
- your grandchildren
- what the world was like
- special friends
- hobbies and special interests
- food likes and dislikes
- your view of the world
- a favorite poem or story
- a great joy
- a great sorrow
- what you do best
- your military service
- advice you have for living the best life a person can live

Quiz Time!

1. On the back of this paper, write a one paragraph summary of the major events in each chapter of this section. Then complete the rest of the questions on this page.

2. What beast is referred to as “the devil cat of the Ozarks”?

3. What other incident is Billy reminded of when he looks at his ax covered with the blood of the mountain lion?

4. Describe Old Dan’s wounds after his battle with the mountain lion.

5. Describe Little Ann’s wounds after her battle with the mountain lion.

6. Why does Billy choose the top of a hillside to bury Old Dan?

7. Why does Little Ann die?

8. How does Billy’s father explain the reason for the deaths of Old Dan and Little Ann?

9. What part does a belief in God and the answering of prayers play in *Where the Red Fern Grows*?

10. How does seeing the red fern help Billy?

Dog Care

Billy was very careful to give Old Dan and Little Ann the best care he could. He knew that dogs need good care to help them stay healthy. Even when Old Dan was mortally wounded, he and his mother administered the best cleaning and bandaging that they could. If Old Dan had not lost such a large amount of blood, his wounds might have healed, and he could have hunted many more coons.

How much do you know about dog care and administering first aid to animals? For this project, you will learn and demonstrate this.

You will need:

- several good dog care resources (Bibliography, page 45)
- 10 well-trained, gentle, “kid-tested,” non-aggressive pet dogs and their leashes
- a dog groomer
- a bag to collect loose hair
- 1 or 2 old white sheets, torn in strips suitable for bandaging
- a large, fenced outdoor area in which to work
- 2 or more parent helpers (ideally, the owners of the dogs!)
- 10 dog grooming brushes
- a veterinarian or veterinarian’s assistant

Procedure:

1. As a class, discuss the elements of good dog care. Be sure to include such areas as:
 - appropriate pet selection
 - fresh water supply
 - grooming requirements
 - housebreaking
 - obedience training
 - ethical responsibilities
 - types and amounts of food
 - adequate sleeping areas
 - exercise
 - play
 - medical care
2. Divide the class into 10 groups of two or three children per group.
3. Invite a dog groomer to your class to demonstrate proper dog grooming techniques.
4. Move to an outside area with the dogs, grooming brushes, dog groomer, and students in groups. The students can work in their groups, with one dog, and practice grooming techniques under the supervision of the groomer and parent dog owners or helpers.
5. Invite a veterinarian or veterinarian’s assistant to your class to discuss the medical care for dogs. Areas that he or she might address are:
 - regular checkups
 - proper care
 - disease prevention
 - shots and pills
 - rabies
 - signs and symptoms of illness
 - worms
 - parasites (fleas and ticks)
 - simple first aid techniques
 - reproduction—spaying—neutering
 - training
6. Move to an outside area with the dogs, sheet strips, veterinarian or veterinarian’s assistant, and students in groups. The students can work in their groups, with one dog, and under the guidance of the veterinarian, learn how to wrap a simple strip bandage around a dog’s leg or abdominal area. Parent dog owners or helpers would be very helpful for this activity.
7. Thank your guests and dog owners for sharing their time, knowledge, and dogs with you!

Special Scenes

Throughout *Where the Red Fern Grows*, there are special scenes which stay in your mind. Perhaps one of these scenes is the moment when Billy sees his coon hound pups for the first time, or his rather comical slide down the fire escape at the school in Tahlequah. Maybe his win with Little Ann in the beauty contest touched you in a special way, as did the dogs' determination to keep the coon treed during the championship coon hunt, in spite of dangerously cold weather. Wilson Rawls created many scenes such as these, scenes that have etched a place in your memory.

In this activity, work in groups of two to four to select scenes that best represent the group's opinions as you read the questions below. When you have finished your selection, choose one of these scenes to dramatize for your class. Prior to the dramatization, write a brief synopsis of the scene, and explain why this scene is particularly memorable. After your group has practiced the scene, present it for the class. Include a reading of your summary and your reasons for this scene's importance to your group in your presentation.

Which of the scenes in the story:

- made you laugh?
- made you cry?
- caused you to think about something you had never thought about before?
- made you very angry?
- frightened you?
- upset you?
- made you wonder?
- triggered a memory of your own?
- made you happy?
- frustrated you?
- did you want to share with someone else?
- made you want to live in the Ozarks?
- could you visualize strongly?
- did you reread?



Social Studies

When Billy Colman sees the red fern growing between the graves of his dogs, he recalls an Indian legend he has heard.

“I had heard the old Indian legend about the red fern. How a little Indian boy and girl were lost in a blizzard and had frozen to death. In the spring, when they were found, a beautiful red fern had grown up between their two bodies. The story went on to say that only an angel could plant the seeds of a red fern, and that they never died; where one grew, that spot was sacred.”

–Chapter XX

Billy draws great comfort from his belief in this legend. He knows that his dogs have been special, and deserve the recognition the red fern has provided.

Just as the Indians created the legend of the boy and girl, their death, and the growth of a special red fern that is told in *Where the Red Fern Grows*, so do others throughout the world tell legends of people, places, and events. Their legends reflect the cultures, attitudes, and values that are important to them.

What is a legend?

What legends do you know?

Do you believe the legend of the red fern? Explain your answer on the back of this paper.

Research legends that you have heard or those you would like to learn more about. After you have finished your research, share what you have discovered with the class. Here are some subjects:



| | | | |
|-------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Robin Hood | Casey Jones | Buffalo Bill Cody | Davy Crockett |
| King Arthur | Roy Bean | Wild Bill Hickok | Honest Abe |
| Cleopatra | John Brown | Johnny Appleseed | Jesse James |
| Hiawatha | Odysseus | George Washington | Annie Oakley |
| Beowulf | Siegfried | Yoshitsune | Rama |
| Wyatt Earp | Paul Bunyan | Billy the Kid | Daniel Boone |
| John Henry | Mike Fink | Pretty Boy Floyd | Sam Bass |
| Betsy Ross | Pecos Bill | Benjamin Franklin | Uncle Remus |
| Joe Magarac | Sir Launcelot | Old Stormalong | Antar |

The Flashback

Where the Red Fern Grows begins in the present, with a man’s memories triggered by the valiant courage of a redbone hound who is in a street fight with some town dogs. What unfolds in flashback form is a beautifully touching story about the loving and fulfilling relationship that can exist between a boy and his dogs. There are many things around us that can trigger memories. As we look at a favorite old plaything, our younger years come flooding back. As we smell the salty smell of an ocean breeze, a wonderful weekend at the shore fills our senses. As we hear a bit of music that brought us comfort in the past, we are again comforted. As we touch a hard-won trophy or ribbon, our struggle for it is relived. As we hold a special gift that was given to us by someone who is no longer alive, we feel that person with us.

What triggers memories for you? Is it a photograph, a story, or a song? Is it a trophy, a stuffed animal, or the smell of baking cookies? What can make you flashback into your past?

For this activity, choose something or someone that causes you to think about the past. Write your choice here.

| |
|---|
|  |
| <hr data-bbox="402 1079 1167 1087"/> brings back memories of <hr data-bbox="198 1283 1377 1291"/> <hr data-bbox="198 1383 1377 1392"/> <hr data-bbox="198 1486 1377 1495"/> |
|  |

Create a story that is told in flashback form the way Wilson Rawls tells his. Begin the story in the present, and see, hear, smell, taste, touch the special thing you mentioned above. Then, as your memories come flooding back, tell your story.

Any Questions?

When you finished reading *Where the Red Fern Grows*, did you have some questions that were left unanswered? Write some of your questions here.

Work in groups or by yourself to prepare possible answers for some or all of the questions you have asked above and those written below. When you have finished your predictions, share your ideas with the class.

- What happened to the old redbone hound the narrator of the story saved at the beginning of the book?
- If Billy had not seen the advertisement in the sportsman's magazine, do you think he would have ever gotten his dogs?
- What do you think Billy's father and mother would have done if they had known Billy had such a large amount of money saved?
- If Billy had not been able to get his two coonhounds, do you think he would have gotten over his intense desire to have them in time?
- Could Billy have gotten his dogs without his grandpa's help?
- What happened to Rainie Pritchard?
- Do you think the Pritchards and their blue tick hound killed the ghost coon?
- Would Ruben have killed Billy's dogs if he hadn't tripped?
- Do you think the Pritchard family blamed Billy for Ruben's death?
- What would have happened to Old Dan if Little Ann had drowned in the icy river?
- Could Old Dan have won the beauty contest?
- How would Billy, his father, and his grandfather have felt if Little Ann and Old Dan had not won the coon hunting contest?
- Why didn't Billy keep the gold and silver cups for himself?
- Could Old Dan's life have been saved if Billy had seen the wound far back in the dog's belly, and had carried Old Dan before his entrails had a chance to work themselves out?
- If Little Ann had lived, would she have been a good hunting dog for Billy?
- Will Billy get more dogs?
- Will the Colmans be happy in town?
- Is the legend of the red fern really an old Indian legend?
- Will Billy visit his grandpa at his store in the country again?
- Does the red fern ever die?

Book Report Ideas

There are numerous ways to do a book report. After you have finished reading *Where the Red Fern Grows*, choose one method of reporting that interests you. It may be a way that your teacher suggests, an idea of your own, or one of the ways below.

- **See What I Read?**

This report is a visual one. A model of a scene from the story can be created, or a likeness of one or more of the characters from the story can be drawn or sculpted.

- **Time Capsule**

This report provides people living at a “future” time with the reasons why *Where the Red Fern Grows* is such an outstanding book, and gives these “future” people reasons why it should be read. Make a time capsule—type of design, and neatly print or write your reasons inside the capsule. You may wish to hide your capsule after you have shared it with your classmates. Perhaps one day someone will find it and read *Where the Red Fern Grows* because of what you wrote!

- **Come To Life!**

This report is one that lends itself to a group project. A size-appropriate group prepares a scene from the story for dramatization, acts it out, and relates the significance of the scene to the entire book. Costumes and props will add to the dramatization!

- **Into the Future**

This report predicts what might happen if *Where the Red Fern Grows* were to continue. It may take the form of a story in narrative or dramatic form, or a visual display.

- **A Letter to the Author**

In this report, you can write a letter to Wilson Rawls. Tell him what you liked about *Where the Red Fern Grows*, and ask him any questions you may have about the writing of the book. You might want to give him some suggestions for a sequel! After your teacher has read it, and you have made your writing the best it can be, send it to him in care of the publishing company.

- **Guess Who or What!**

This report takes the form of several games of “Twenty Questions.” The reporter gives a series of clues about a character from the story in a vague to precise, general to specific order. After all clues have been given, the identity of the mystery character must be deduced. After the character has been guessed, the same reporter presents another “Twenty Questions” about an event in the story.

- **A Character Comes To Life!**

Suppose one of the characters in *Where the Red Fern Grows* came to life and walked into your home or classroom? This report gives a view of what this character sees, hears, and feels as he or she experiences the world in which you live.

- **Sales Talk**

This report serves as an advertisement to “sell” *Where the Red Fern Grows* to one or more specific groups. You decide on the group to target and the sales pitch you will use. Include some kind of graphics in your presentation.

- **Coming Attraction!**

Where the Red Fern Grows is about to be made into a movie and you have been chosen to design the promotional poster. Include the title and author of the book, a listing of the main characters and the contemporary actors who will play them, a drawing of a scene from the book, and a paragraph synopsis of the story.

- **Literary Interview**

This report is done in pairs. One student will pretend to be a character in the story, steeped completely in the persona of his or her character. The other student will play the role of a television or radio interviewer, trying to provide the audience with insights into the character’s personality and life. It is the responsibility of the partners to create meaningful questions and appropriate responses.

Research ideas

Describe three things you read in *Where the Red Fern Grows* that you would like to learn more about.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

As you are reading *Where the Red Fern Grows*, you will encounter geographical locations, historical events, diverse people, ways of life that are different from your own, and a variety of animals and plants. To increase your understanding of the characters and events in the story as well as more fully recognize Wilson Rawls' craft as a writer, research to find out more about these people, places, habits, and things.

Work in groups to research one or more of the areas you named above, or the areas that are mentioned below. Share your findings with the rest of the class in any appropriate form of oral presentation.

(Check the plants and animals that are listed on page 17. Include them in your research.)

- The Ozarks
- hillbillies
- Illinois River in Northeastern Oklahoma
- Cherokees in Oklahoma in the 1920's
- Cherokee land strip
- Tahlequah, Oklahoma
- Snake River Valley, Idaho
- Muskogee, Oklahoma
- Indian legends
- hoot owl
- screech owl
- red fox
- kingfisher
- blue jay
- red fern
- hackberry tree
- black gum tree
- white oak tree
- raccoon hunting laws
- types of coon hounds
- types of coon hunting and the guidelines for each
- raccoons:
 - adaptability
 - habits
 - habitats
 - family members
 - northern
 - crab-eating
 - kinkajous
 - coatimundis
 - ring-tailed cat
 - ringtail
 - panda
 - intelligence
 - uses of fur
 - as pets

A Look into the Future

In the next four pages, your students will be looking into the future life of Billy Colman. Using what they know about the places and the characters in *Where the Red Fern Grows*, they will project what might have happened to Billy as he moved from the country to the town. Ask them to share these ideas with the class. They will also travel back with Billy to the Ozarks more than fifty years after the death of his faithful dogs. Display their ideas of his homecoming on a classroom bulletin board picturing the hilltop gravesite of Old Dan and Little Ann. (See page 48 for more ideas.)

The New Kid in Town: Billy Colman

At the end of *Where the Red Fern Grows*, Billy and his family leave their home in the Ozarks to move to town. If Wilson Rawls had written about Billy's transition to town life, what do you think he might have said about the following things?



- Do the Colman's bring Samie, the housecat, to town with them?
- Does the education Billy's mother provided prepare Billy and his sisters for the town school?
- Does Billy prefer the town or the country? Do Billy's sisters prefer the town or the country?
- What does Billy do with his time each day after school?
- How is Billy regarded by his peers?
- How is the "hillbilly" Colman family regarded by the townspeople?
- What are the sights, sounds, tastes, smells, and touches of town life?
- Does Billy do anything in town to cause his mother to worry?
- What does Billy's father do in town to earn money?
- Does Grandpa come to visit them in town?
- What are Billy's typical days and nights like?
- Does Billy get new dogs? If so, are they coon hounds?

Discuss your ideas for all of these questions. Then, working in size-appropriate groups, choose one question and dramatize it for the class.

A Look into the Future *(cont.)*

When Billy begins to live in town, he is sure to notice many differences between town life and country life. If you were in his place, how do you think you might compare and contrast them?

Use what you know about the Ozark hills that were Billy’s home and his experiences in the town of Tahlequah to complete the comparison chart below. Add your own insights as well!

|  Billy’s Two Worlds  | |
|---|-----------|
| Country Life | Town Life |
| Criterion by which Billy is judged by others | |
| | |
| Ability to make friends | |
| | |
| Educational advantages and disadvantages | |
| | |
| Level of contentment | |
| | |
| Reasons to stay | |
| | |
| Reasons to go | |
| | |

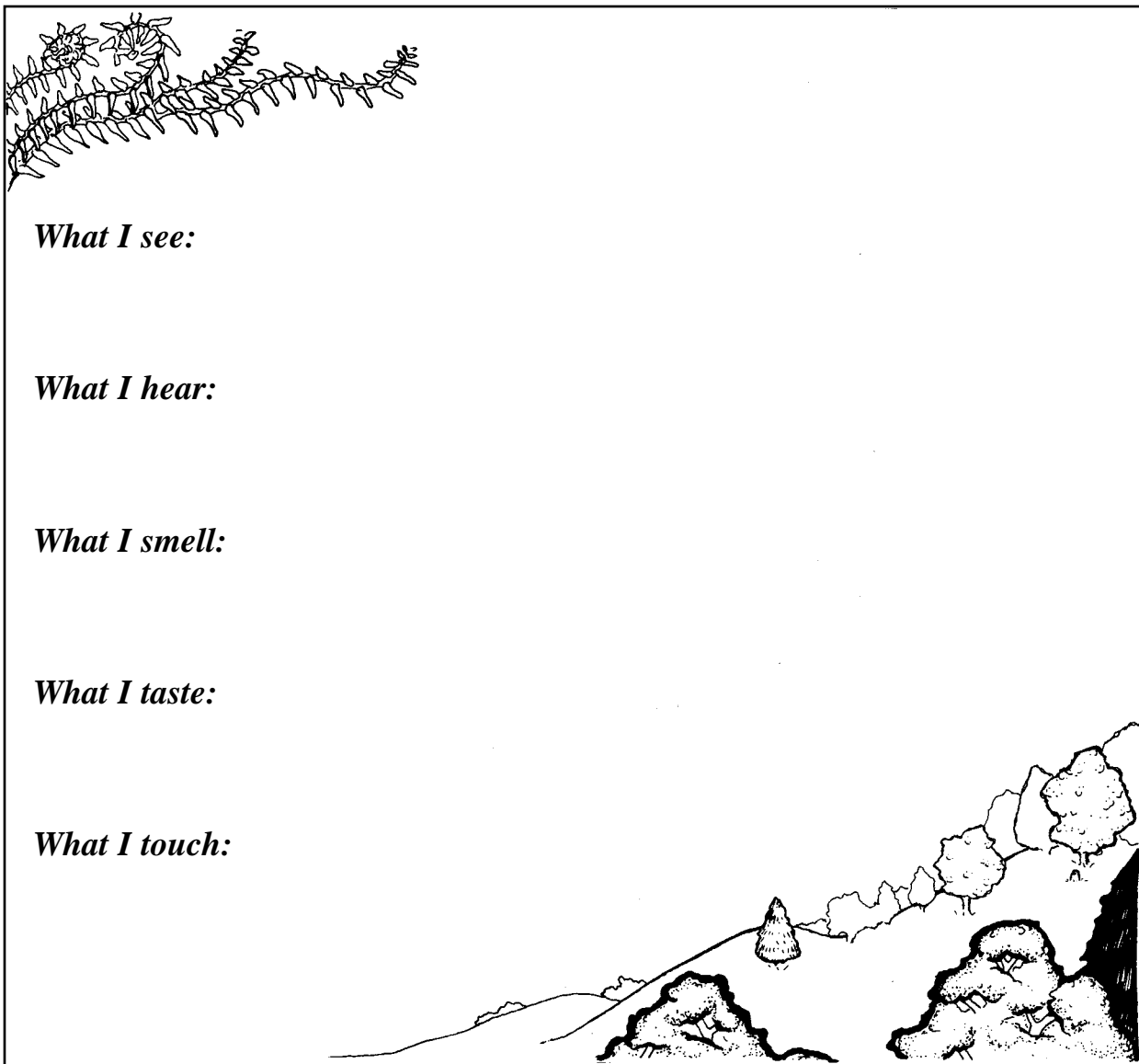
In which world would you be happier? Why?

A Look into the Future *(cont.)*

“I have never been back to the Ozarks. All I have left are my dreams and memories, but if God is willing, some day I’d like to go back—back to those beautiful hills.”

A much older Billy Colman says these words at the end of *Where the Red Fern Grows*. He longs to walk the trails he walked as a boy, to feel a mountain breeze on his face, to smell the fragrance of the trees, to touch the bark of the sycamore. He would like to return home to see the places he spent his boyhood, and visit the graves of his two very special dogs.

Suppose Billy does make a journey back to his childhood home in the Ozarks? And when he does, being home again completely fills his senses! In the spaces below, describe a few of the sensory experiences he has as he stands surrounded by the hills he loves. On a separate piece of paper, draw what Billy sees as he climbs to the hilltop graves of his beloved dogs over fifty years after they were buried there. Add your pictures to the class bulletin board display.



What I see:

What I hear:

What I smell:

What I taste:

What I touch:

A Look into the Future *(cont.)*

Billy Colman has made his journey back to the Ozarks and has visited the graves of his dogs. Red ferns and wildflowers now completely cover the hilltop where his dogs were buried. However, time has worn at the sandstone marker where he had carved their names so many years ago. Billy decides to make a new grave marker, one that will tell the story of his dogs as well as their names.

On the grave marker below, write the words that will tell all who read them how special Old Dan and Little Ann were to Billy.



After you have written an appropriate epitaph for the dogs on this grave marker, cut the marker out and add it to the culminating activity bulletin board. (page 48)

Unit Test

Matching: Match these quotes with the characters who said them.

| Mama | Grandpa | Billy | Rainie | Papa |
|------|---------|-------|--------|------|
|------|---------|-------|--------|------|

- _____ "I've seen them do things that I couldn't understand. I'd never heard of hounds that ever had any affection for anyone, but these dogs are different. Did you know they won't hunt with anyone but him, not even me?"
- _____ "It's all over. There'll be no more lessons. I've worked hard and I've done my best. From now on it's all up to you."
- _____ "I don't want you children to grow up without an education, not even knowing what a bottle of soda pop is, or ever seeing the inside of a schoolhouse. "
- _____ ". . . it's your money. You worked for it, and you worked hard. You got it honestly, and you want some dogs. We're going to get those dogs."
- _____ "You ready to pay off?" he asked. "I told you them hounds couldn't tree the ghost coon."

True or False: Write true or false next to each statement below.

- _____ Billy develops a plan for a way to get his coon hound pups by reading a magazine advertisement.
- _____ The marshal of Tahlequah admires Billy.
- _____ Old Dan and Little Ann enjoy hunting coons with Papa and Grandpa on a regular basis.
- _____ Ruben and Rainie Pritchard give Billy the bet money after Billy's dogs tree the ghost coon.
- _____ *Where the Red Fern Grows* is an entirely fictional story.

Short Answer: Provide a short answer for each of these questions.

1. What price does Billy pay for his dogs? _____
2. Which family member helps Billy get his pups? _____
3. What does Billy use to catch his first coon? _____
4. What keeps Old Dan and Little Ann from freezing the night of the championship coon hunt? _____

5. What is the source of the story of the red fern? _____

Essay: Answer these essay questions on the back of this paper.

1. Would you characterize Billy as a selfish or unselfish boy? Justify your answer with examples from the story.
2. Throughout the book, Billy referred to what he once called "an unseen power" that helped him. Do you think he would have gotten what he wanted without this "power"? Why?

Response

Explain the meaning of each of these quotations from *Where the Red Fern Grows*.

- Chapter I: *“Although the old hound had no way of knowing it, he had stirred memories, and what priceless treasures they were. Memories of my boyhood days, an old KC. Baking Powder can, and two little red hounds. Memories of a wonderful love, unselfish devotion, and death in its saddest form.”*
- Chapter III: *“But on that day, I found the greatest of treasures, a sportsman’s magazine, discarded by the campers. It was a real treasure for a country boy. Because of that magazine, my entire life was changed.”*
- Chapter III: *“It was too much for my grandfather. He turned and walked away. I saw the glasses come off and the old red handkerchief come out. I heard the good excuse of blowing his nose. He stood for several seconds with his back toward me. When he turned around, I noticed his eyes were moist. In a quavering voice, he said, “Well, Son, it’s your money. You worked for it, and you worked hard. You got it honestly, and you want some dogs. We’re going to get those dogs.”*
- Chapter V: *“My heart burst. Tears came rolling. The day I had waited for so long had turned black and ugly.”*
- Chapter V: *“I saw an outraged look come over the marshal’s face. Reaching up, he pushed his hat back. He glanced up and down the street. I heard him mutter, ‘There’s not a one in that bunch with that kind of grit.’ ”*
- Chapter VI: *“ ‘They’ll never bother you unless they are wounded or cornered, but if they are, you had better look out.’ ”*
- Chapter VIII: *“ ‘Please, Papa,’ I begged, ‘don’t make me quit. I just have to get that coon. If I don’t, my dogs won’t ever believe in me again.’ ”*
- Chapter IX: *“I’m sure no one in the world can understand a young boy like his grandfather can.”*
- Chapter IX: *“ ‘You know, Billy,’ he said, ‘about this tree-chopping of yours, I think it’s all right. In fact, I think it would be a good thing if all young boys had to cut down a big tree like that once in their life. It does something for them. It gives them determination and will power. That’s a good thing for a man to have. It goes a long way in his life.’ ”*
- Chapter XIII: *“As I sat there on the limb, looking at the old fellow, he cried again. Something came over me. I didn’t want to kill him.”*
- Chapter XVIII: *“ ‘Men,’ said Mr. Kyle, ‘people have been trying to understand dogs ever since the beginning of time. One never knows what they’ll do. You can read every day where a dog saved the life of a drowning child, or lay down his life for his master. Some people call this loyalty. I don’t. I may be wrong, but I call it love—the deepest kind of love.’ ”*
- Chapter XX: *“I’m sure the red fern has grown and has completely covered the two little mounds. I know it is still there, hiding its secret beneath those long, red leaves, but it wouldn’t be hidden from me, for part of my life is buried there, too. Yes, I know it is still there, for in my heart I believe the legend of the sacred red fern.”*

Teacher Note: Choose an appropriate number of quotes for your students.

Conversations

Work in size-appropriate groups to write and perform the conversations that might have occurred in each of the following situations.

- * Billy's father and mother decide that they will give the money to Billy for his two dogs. But to do so, they will have to sell their mule. Billy hears their conversation and responds. (3 people)
- * The fishermen talk among themselves about the young boy who always has bait and vegetables to sell. (2 or more people)
- * Billy's Grandpa tells the coon hunters who come into his store about his grandson's efforts to raise money for coon hounds. (2 or more people)
- * The ladies with the iodine-painted feathers talk about that country boy and his looks and manners. (2 people)
- * The marshal talks with the boys in town who bullied Billy. (2 or more people)
- * The stationmaster talks with the marshal of Tahlequah about the determination and dedication Billy has shown in his two-year effort to get his dogs. The freckle-faced boy with the missing front teeth (and the now-broken nose) is listening and has his own comments to make. (3 or more people)
- * Billy's mother talks to her daughters about coon hunting. (4 people)
- * A panel comprised of a coon hunter, a fur buyer, an animal activist, and a raccoon pet owner discuss coon hunting. (4 people)
- * Billy meets up with Freckle-face next year. Both are alone. (2 people)
- * Billy tries to talk his grandpa out of the bet with the Pritchard boys. Ruben and Rainie become quite involved in the conversation as well. (4 people)
- * Little Ann and Old Dan give directions to each other as to the best way to catch a raccoon. (2 people)
- * Ruben seemed to want to say something to Billy just before he died. Create that conversation. (2 people)
- * Mrs. Pritchard calls out to Billy just after he has put the flowers on Ruben's grave. (2 people)
- * The judges in the championship coon hunt talk about what they have seen in coon hunts in the past, and how what they have seen compares with what they see now in Billy and his dogs. (2 or more people)
- * The Colman family discusses the coon hunting championship when they return home. Grandpa is there, too. (7 people)
- * Old Dan, Little Ann, the treed mountain lion, and Billy have a conversation about what should be done. (4 people)
- * Grandpa consoles Billy after the death of his dogs. (2 people)
- * Even though Billy's sisters will miss Old Dan and Little Ann, they tell Billy to get some new dogs. Billy responds. (4 people)
- * Alone on the hilltop, Billy says goodbye to his dogs. He hears a voice. (2 people)
- * Write and perform one of your own conversation ideas for the characters from *Where the Red Fern Grows*.

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Answer Key

Page 10

1. Accept appropriate summaries.
2. The narrator sees the bravery of a hunting dog when the dog is surrounded by a pack of fighting town dogs. He remembers the special hunting dogs he had as a boy.
3. Billy wants two coon hounds, and they are expensive. His parents cannot afford to give Billy the dogs he wants, but they would if they could.
4. It is in the sportsman's magazine that Billy finds the ad for the Kentucky kernel that will provide him with his two coon hounds, if he can earn the money. Without the magazine ad to give Billy a chance for his dogs, he probably wouldn't have had the focus to work as hard as he did.
5. He starts with 23 cents.
6. Billy sells bait and vegetables to the fishermen, picks and sells berries to his grandpa for the store, and, through his grandpa, sells the skins of the animals he traps.
7. Billy's grandfather is filled with pride, so much so that he cries. His grandson has worked incredibly hard for two long years to get what he wanted.
8. Accept appropriate characterizations.
9. Accept appropriate characterizations.

Page 14

Explain to the students that their Reading Response Journals can be evaluated in a number of ways. Here are a few ideas.

* Personal reflections will be read by the teacher, but no corrections or letter grades will be assigned. Credit is given for effort, and all students who sincerely try will be awarded credit. If a "grade" is desired for this type of entry, you can grade according to the number of journal entries for the number of journal assignments. For example, if five journal assignments were made and the student conscientiously completes all five, then he or she should receive an "A."

* Non-judgmental teacher responses should be made as you read the journals to let the students know that you are reading and enjoying their journals. Here are some types of responses that will please your journal writers and encourage them to write more.

- "You have really found what's important in the story!"
- "WOW! This is interesting stuff!"
- "You write so clearly, I almost feel as if I am there!"
- "You seem to be able to learn from this a book and apply what you learn to your life!"
- "If you feel comfortable doing so, I'd like you to share your idea with the class. They will enjoy what you've written!"

* If you would like to grade something for form and content, ask the students to select one of their entries and "polish it" according to the writing process.

Page 15

1. Accept appropriate responses.
2. He sees the names carved in a tree trunk.
3. Billy's parents feel that the opportunities for their children to get an education, meet people, and see the world will be possible if they move to a town.
4. The pups need to become familiar with a coon's scent.
5. The curiosity of the raccoon traps him. He puts his paw in a small opening to get a shiny object. Once his paw has curled up around the shiny object, he won't let the object go. He's trapped by his own desire to hold on to the shiny object!
6. Accept any well-described trick.
7. Billy promises his dogs that if they can tree the raccoon, he will do the rest. He wants his dogs to believe him.
8. They love it!
9. The wind has probably caused the fall.

Answer Key *(cont.)*

Page 18

This raccoon picture may be used as you present the science lesson on page 18. You and your students can use it in a variety of ways. For example, the picture can be used as a raccoon research report cover, or as the impetus for a drawing lesson.



Answer Key *(cont.)*

Page 20

1. Accept appropriate responses.
2. A good-sized coon hide is worth \$4 to \$10.
3. Billy turns all the money he earns over to his father.
4. An excellent characterization can be found in Chapter 10.
5. Accept reasonable descriptions of his efforts to get the coon who has gone up the hollow in the tree.
6. An excellent characterization can be found in Chapter 10.
7. Accept reasonable descriptions of her ordeal on the ice.
8. Characterizations must mention their meanness and trouble making.
9. The ghost coon seems to disappear when it is chased.

Page 25

1. Accept appropriate responses.
2. Grandpa has entered Billy and his dogs in a championship coon hunt.
3. In Billy's circle, coffee is a man's drink.
4. Billy uses butter and Grandpa's comb and hairbrush.
5. He sees three raccoons leave the tree.
6. Little Ann finds both of them.
7. Accept appropriate responses.
8. The judge is amazed because Billy's dogs seem to be able to read his mind.
9. The cold dogs run around the tree to keep from freezing.
10. Over \$300 is in the jackpot.

Page 28

For example, the dog can be coated with clear nail polish or a very light coat of baby oil.

Page 30

1. Accept appropriate responses.
2. It is a mountain lion.
3. The bloody ax reminds Billy of Ruben Pritchard's death.
4. Check the description given in Chapter XIX.
5. She has only one bad wound on her shoulder.
6. Billy chooses the hillside spot so Old Dan can get a good view of the countryside and hear the baying of the hounds.
7. She misses Old Dan so much that she loses her will to live.
8. The dogs die so the family will not be separated on their move to town.
9. Accept reasonable answers.
10. He knows his dogs have been special and deserve a "sacred spot."

Page 33

A legend is a type of folk story that may be based on a real person, place, or event, or a story that may be entirely fictional.

Pages 38 and 39

Ask students to present their ideas for these pages to the class.

Pages 40 and 41

Create a bulletin board display of these culminating activities. The board background can be a large red fern and wildflower covered hilltop. Sensory writing can serve as a border, as can hilltop pictures. The grave markers can be cut out and placed on the hilltop.

Page 42

Matching

- 1) Papa 2) Billy 3) Mama
- 4) Grandpa 5) Rainie

True or False

1. True
2. True
3. False. The dogs loved to hunt only with Billy.
4. False. The Pritchards wanted Billy to kill the ghost coon for the bet money, although to tree the coon was the original bet.
5. False. The book is based on Wilson Rawls' boyhood experiences.

Short Answer

1. \$40
2. Grandpa
3. Grandpa's brace and bit trap
4. They run in a circle around the tree with the coon in it.
5. Indian legend

Essay

1. Accept appropriate responses. Check for examples that clearly support the writer's opinion.
2. Accept fully explained responses.

Page 43

Accept all reasonable and well-supported answers.

Page 44

Perform the conversations in class. Ask students to respond to the conversations in several different ways, such as, "Are the conversations realistic?" or, "Are the words the characters say in keeping with their personalities?"