

Study Guide

***Where the Red Fern Grows* by Wilson Rawls**

LEXILE 700

The Novel at a Glance**MORE ABOUT THE WRITER**

Although he spent only a few years in a regular classroom, Woodrow Wilson Rawls learned to love reading at an early age. Winter evenings on the farm, Rawls's mother would read to the boy and his sisters from books bought for them by their grandmother. When their mother grew tired, the children would take turns reading a page or two aloud to each other. Although Rawls didn't care much for the fairy tales that his grandmother favored, his life was changed at the age of ten when his mother gave him a copy of Jack London's *The Call of the Wild*. Rawls carried the novel with him wherever he went; he read it again and again. Working in the fields one day, he decided that he would like nothing better than to write a dog story of his own.

Following the success of *Where the Red Fern Grows*, Rawls often spoke about writing to teachers and young people around the United States. His advice to aspiring writers was to read and write as much as possible. The important thing, he insisted, is to get your story down on paper and not to worry about grammar and punctuation until later. Rawls liked to share a wise saying that he learned from his father—namely, that people can do anything that they set out to do as long as they don't give up.

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Billy Colman, an intelligent and resourceful boy, lives on a small farm and loves to hunt.

Old Dan is a bold and aggressive male redbone hound.

Little Ann is an extremely intelligent female redbone hound.

Grandpa, Billy's grandfather, is the owner of a store in which raccoon hunters gather to exchange stories.

Papa, Billy's father, is a farmer.

Mama, Billy's mother, is also his teacher.

Billy's three sisters are all younger than Billy.

Rubin Pritchard, two years older than Billy, has a nasty disposition.

Rainie Pritchard is a younger version of his brother Rubin.

The stationmaster is a kindly man who doesn't charge Billy for feeding the pups.

The marshal saves Billy from a gang of bullies.

Mr. Kyle is the first hunter to reach Billy's group after the blizzard.

Mr. Benson, a hunter, finds Billy's half-frozen dogs.

Dr. Lathman, another hunter, helps treat Grandpa's ankle.

Where the Red Fern Grows *continued*

VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT

You can sometimes guess at the meanings of unfamiliar words by looking for context clues in the surrounding sentences. Always check your guesses in a dictionary.

Chapters I–VI

dormant, p. 13
sparsely, p. 17
ventured, p. 46

Chapters VII–X

belligerent, p. 94
abounded, p. 98
feat, p. 99

Chapters XI–XIV

predicament, p. 101
leering, p. 112
wily, p. 117

Chapters XV–XVII

monotonous, p. 150
eliminated, p. 156
faltered, p. 163

Chapters XVIII–XX

defiant, p. 188
allotted, p. 189
predatory, p. 191