

Where the Red Fern Grows

Whole-Novel Discussion and Activities

BURNING ISSUES

1. Billy shows unusual patience, determination, and courage. Do you find his behavior believable—or is the character of Billy Colman too good to be true? Explain.
2. How well do you think pets understand the people who take care of them? What remarkable pets have you known or heard about?
3. The legend of the red fern helps Billy deal with his grief. What stories help you, or people you know, when you or they are sad or going through a hard time?
4. In the final sentence of the novel, the grown-up Billy says that he believes in the legend of the sacred fern. Is it likely that Billy still would believe in the legend as an adult? Explain.

CHOICES ACTIVITIES

1. **Creative Writing A New Ending.** Imagine that Old Dan and Little Ann have survived their battle with the mountain lion. Think about other ways that the story might end. Then, write a new final chapter that tells what happens after the death of the mountain lion. (Don't forget about the title of the novel. Either make up your own legend, find a different way to make sense of the title, or create a new title to fit your ending.)
2. **Mathematics Price Check.** As a store owner, Billy's grandfather knows the value of a dollar and is astounded by Billy's success at saving money. Things cost more today than they did when Billy was a boy in the 1920s. Make a chart listing ten different items that Billy's grandfather sells in his store. Find out approximately how much each item costs today and fill in the price on the chart. Then, find out how much each item would have cost in the 1920s. Look for books about life at that time or for advertisements in old newspapers and magazines stored on microfilm in the public library. You might also do research on the Internet or interview people you know who remember that period. Illustrate your chart, if you wish, and share your findings with the class.
3. **Geography Come to the Ozarks!** Billy describes his childhood home as “the most beautiful place in the whole wide world.” What would it be like to visit that part of northeastern Oklahoma? Work with several classmates to design a travel campaign for this region. Choose a leader to direct the group's discussion and a recorder to track assignments. Your travel campaign can include brochures, posters, radio and TV spots, and speeches. Try to include some descriptions from the novel in the campaign. Present your campaign for the class.
4. **Music Songs of Long Ago.** What kind of music do you suppose Billy listened to when he was growing up? Did he hear music on the radio, on records, or at live performances? Check the library for recordings of music that was popular in the 1920s. In an oral presentation, share what you learned in your research, play a musical recording from that era, and talk about the ways in which the song reminds you of—or is very different from—Billy's world.
5. **Art The Art of the Matter.** Illustrate one or more scenes from *Where the Red Fern Grows* in the medium of your choice. Whether you decide to draw, paint, sculpt, or make a collage, try to capture the ideas and feelings expressed in the part of the novel that you are illustrating. You might want to get together with some classmates and create a “Red Fern Art Gallery” of your finished pieces.