

Where the Red Fern Grows

Grades 4-6

Written by Roy Sousa and David Twigg
Illustrated by Ric Ward

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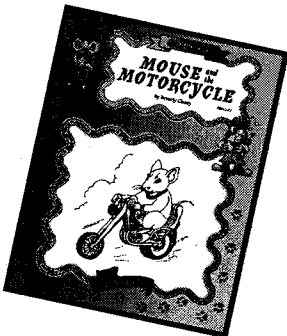
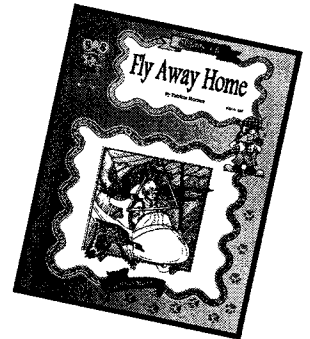
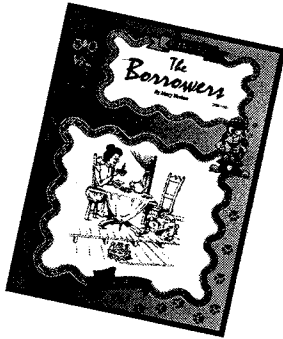
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WHERE *the* RED FERN GROWS

by Wilson Rawls

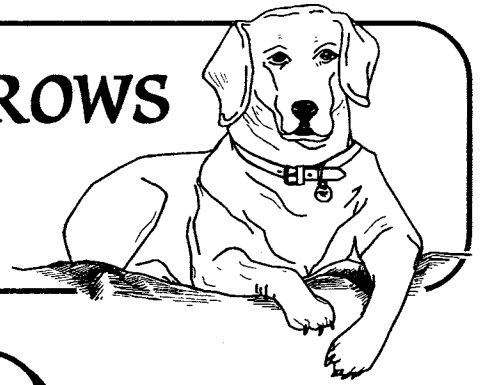


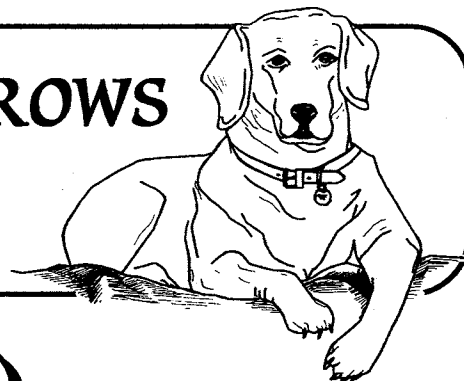
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Expectations

The Students will:

- develop an appreciation for the loyalty and love often demonstrated by an animal to its owner.
- have an insight into the lifestyle of people living in the Ozarks in the early 1900's.
- have the opportunity to read an adventure story.
- develop and reinforce many new and previously learned reading and writing skills.
- become aware of the values of hard work and its rewards.

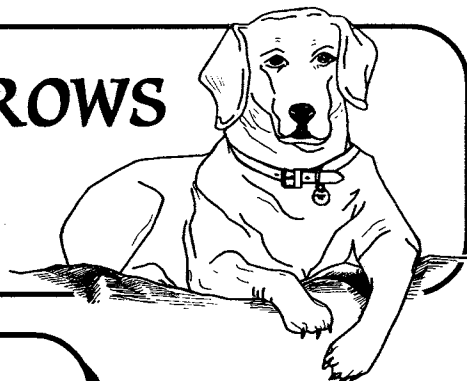
Synopsis of the Novel

Where the Red Fern Grows is a story of loyalty and the “deepest kind of love” between Billy Colman and his beloved dogs. Billy wanted hunting dogs so much he referred to it as “dog-wanting disease.” However he was from a poor family without extra money to spend. Through his sheer determination and hard work he is able to save enough money to get two pups, Little Ann and Old Dan. Together the trio become inseparable and become well known in the Ozark foothills for their exceptional “coon-hunting” skills. Their teamwork helps them win a local coon-hunting championship including a cash prize that later helps their destitute family. Unfortunately, the dog’s remarkable hunting skills lead them into a dangerous encounter with a mountain lion. In the ultimate act of saving Billy’s life, Old Dan suffers fatal wounds and Little Ann, lost without her companion later dies. Billy must then come to terms with the devastating loss of his loyal friends that he only begins to understand when he sees “the red fern grow.”



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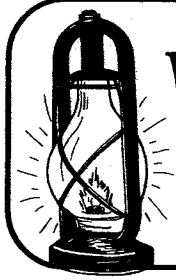
About the Author

(Woodrow) Wilson Rawls

Wilson Rawls was born September 24, 1913 in Scrapper, Oklahoma in the United States. He spent the first few years of his life on a farm in north-eastern Oklahoma. There were no schools nearby, so he was taught how to read and write by his mother. Later a school was built where he and his sisters attended two or three months every summer. His family later moved to Tahlequah, Oklahoma. Here, for the first time, he attended school regularly but he never finished the eighth grade because the depression hit the country, and the family had to move to Muskogee.

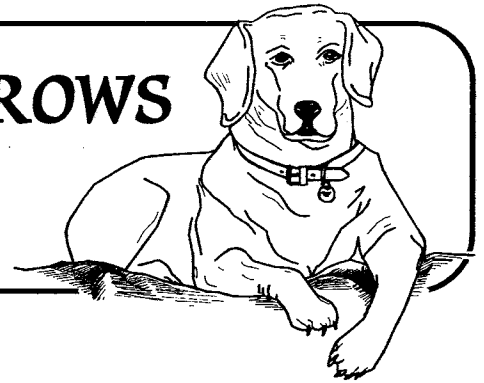
Rawls acquired the joy of reading from his mother. On long winter evenings, his mother would read stories from books that his grandmother had purchased for them. The children had to practice reading a page every night in the book that she read until they had gone through the book again. Rawls didn't like to read the books that his mother presented to the children because he felt they were "girl" stories. One day his mother brought home a book called "Call of the Wild" written by Jack London. This book changed his life because it was a story about a man and a dog instead of a Little Red Hen or Three Little Pigs or Chicken Little. Rawls carried this book everywhere that he went and he considered it a real treasure. He read it frequently. One day, while working in the fields on their farm, he thought of writing a book like "Call of the Wild."

This was a very ambitious dream for Wilson Rawls as he was not educated, and his parents were too poor to buy paper and pencils for him. Wilson's father always told him "a man can do anything he sets out to do if he doesn't give up." Rawls never forgot his father's words. Often, when he spoke to children, he would tell them to continually reach out for the goals that they set for themselves. At all times they should be honest, truthful and not harm anyone along the way and they would reach their goals.



WHERE *the* RED FERN GROWS

by Wilson Rawls



Just before Wilson got married, he opened the trunk in the attic, took out his writings, and burned them. He destroyed five manuscripts for full length novels and all other writings. One of the manuscripts was called “Where the Red Fern Grows.” His wife encouraged him to rewrite one of the novels and he picked “Where the Red Fern Grows” because it was based on his childhood life.

Children were always asking how they could become a good writer. His advice was to read a lot and study creative writing. He felt they should begin writing right away, because a person is never too young to write. Rawls told students not to worry about spelling, grammar, or punctuation in the first draft. It is important to get your ideas down on paper first. The first draft will have to be rewritten many times and then spelling, grammar and punctuation should be done very carefully. Rawls encouraged young writers to keep trying and not give up, and someday they would see their work in print.

Book written by Wilson Rawls

- Where the Red Fern Grows © 1961
- Summer of the Monkeys © 1976
- The Story of Shep

Movies

Where the Red Fern Grows © 1974

