



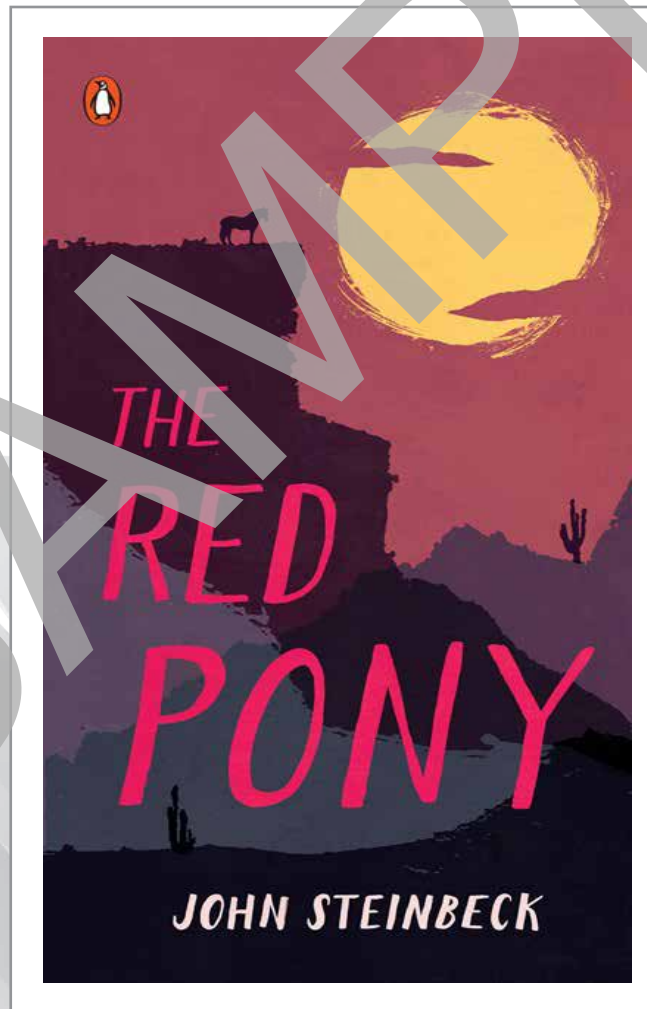
**TEACHER GUIDE**

**GRADES 9-12**

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

# The Red Pony

John Steinbeck



**READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT**

# The Red Pony

John Steinbeck

## TEACHER GUIDE

**NOTE:**

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

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## Skills and Strategies

### **Thinking**

Brainstorming, research

### **Comprehension**

Predicting, comparison/  
contrast

### **Writing**

Journaling, creative writing,  
descriptive, letter writing,  
narrative

### **Vocabulary**

Word mapping

### **Listening/Speaking**

Role play, discussion

### **Literary Elements**

Characterization, theme,  
dialect, simile, metaphor,  
personification

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## Novel Units: Rationale

How do you ensure that the needs of individual students are met in a heterogeneous classroom? How do you challenge students of all abilities without losing some to confusion and others to boredom?

With the push toward “untracking” our schools, these are questions that more and more educators need to examine. As any teacher of “gifted” or “remedial” students can attest, even “homogeneous” classrooms contain students with a range of abilities and interests.

Here are some of the strategies research suggests:

- cooperative learning
- differentiated assignments
- questioning strategies that tap several levels of thinking
- flexible grouping within the class
- cross-curriculum integration
- process writing
- portfolio evaluation

*Novel Units* are designed with these seven facets in mind. Discussion questions and projects are framed to span all of the levels of Bloom’s taxonomy. Graphic organizers are provided to enhance critical thinking. Tests have been developed at two levels of difficulty (Level 1 = lower; Level 2 =higher). While most activities could be completed individually, many are ideal vehicles for collaborative effort. Throughout the guides, there is an emphasis on collaboration: students helping other students to generate ideas, students working together to actualize those ideas, and students sharing their products with other students. Extension activities link literature with other areas of the curriculum—including writing, art, music, science, history, geography, and current events—and provide a basis for portfolio evaluation.

Finally, teachers are encouraged to adapt the guides to meet the needs of individual classes and students. You know your students best; we are offering you some tools for working with them. Here are some of the “nuts and bolts” for using these “tools”: a glossary of some of the terms used above that will facilitate your use of the guides.

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## Chapter II: *The Great Mountains*, pp. 38-55

### Vocabulary Words:

listlessly (38)	sidled (39)	disemboweled (39)	imperturbability (42)
Stetson (43)	colander (44)	<i>paisano</i> (44)	repose (45)
inflexibly (46)	brutality (48)	rheumatism (48)	diffidently (50)
rebuke (51)	hamebells (52)	rapier (52)	

### Discussion Questions:

1. How much time has passed since the pony died? How is Jody spending his time? How does he seem to be feeling?  
*It was three weeks from Thanksgiving when the pony died and it is now midsummer. Jody seems listless, bored, and irritable—throwing rocks at nests, and at Mutt, killing birds.*
2. How can you tell that Jody is a reflective boy? Is he a cruel one? Does he think more about the natural world around him than most ten-year-olds?  
*He has nasty impulses—such as when he disembowels the bird—but perhaps is working out his anger about what happened to the pony; he spends a lot of time looking at the sky, clouds, mountains—and experiencing a range of emotions from fear to sorrow to peace as he ponders them.*
3. When Jody asks his mother “What’s in the big mountains?” she responds, “Only the bear, I guess...the one that went over the mountain to see what he could see...” What tone of voice do you imagine her to use? What does she mean?  
*Dryly humorous, perhaps, she is referring to the song “The Bear Went Over the Mountain” which contains endless refrains about what he saw there.*
4. Who is the old man and why has he come? Do you think he has a right to stay? Does Carl think so? If it were up to Jody’s mother, would she let him stay, do you think?  
*“Gitano” is an old “paisano”—country man—who was born and grew up on the ranch of which the Tiflin’s property was once a part—in a house nearby, now gone. He has come to live out his days, but Carl tells him he must look for his own relatives.*
5. Jody “didn’t want to go away from Gitano.” (p. 47) Why not? What’s the attraction? Have you ever been held by a similar fascination?  
*He loves the idea that the old man went into the mysterious great mountains as a boy and wants to keep him talking about them.*
6. Who is Easter? In talking about Easter to Gitano, Carl “hated his brutality...and so he became brutal again.” How is this talk “brutal”? How is this like the way Jody treats Mutt?  
*Easter is an old horse—Carl’s first; Carl pointedly talks about how Easter should be shot because he is no good to anyone anymore. Jody is cruel to Mutt, perhaps unconsciously imitating his father’s unfeeling attitude toward animals.*

- 
7. Does Carl really mean that he should shoot Easter? If so, why doesn't he do it? If not, why does he say it—according to Billy? Do you agree with Billy that the horse has earned his right to rest—or should he be “put out of his misery”? Does this remind you of any incidents from other stories—such as *Of Mice and Men*?

*Billy implies that Carl feels more affection for the old horse than he is willing to show; maybe he cannot handle feeling sad that the once-strong horse has become so decrepit—as he will one day, too. In *Of Mice and Men*, an old dog—the pet of one of the old ranchers—is shot because its smell and appearance bothers some of the others in the bunkhouse. Later, Lenny is shot to keep him from suffering at the hands of a lynch mob.*

8. What does Jody discover that the old man has? What do you suppose its history might be? Why does Jody decide that he must not tell anyone about it? Is that decision the best one? *a beautiful rapier; “It would be a dreadful thing to tell anyone about it, for it would destroy some fragile structure of truth”—p. 53. Someone like Jody’s father might scorn the old man’s dreams—and damage the heroic aura that has built up around him in Jody’s imagination.*
9. Why do you think Gitano leaves his sack? Where does he go? Should Carl go after him? Why doesn't he?  
*Perhaps he couldn't carry it; perhaps it was his way of exchanging something for the horse, before they go off into the mountains. Carl really doesn't need the horse and is glad to be rid of the old man.*
10. Does Gitano have the right to take Easter? Would Carl have given up the horse if Gitano had asked for him? How does Jody feel as he thinks about the rapier and Gitano? Why?  
*Student opinion will vary on Gitano's right to take the horse. Jody feels a longing and a sorrow as he thinks of the mountains and imagines the old man returning to them.*

**Prediction:**

Will the old man, Gitano, ever return? Why will Jody's father lend Jody \$5?

**Writing Activity:**

Extend this chapter with a description of where Gitano went after riding off on Easter. You might include a conversation with someone they meet along the way, and some of the old man's thoughts as he rides. Another approach might be to write an interior monologue for Carl that expresses his real feelings about the old man and Easter.