

Reflections:

A Student Response Journal for...

Where the Red Fern Grows

by Wilson Rawls

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ISBN: 978-1-60389-674-0

Item No. 201705

Chapter One

1. From what you may infer about the narrator's character, do you think he'd be someone you'd want as a friend?
2. Knowing the dog faces many dangers in traveling alone, the man still releases the dog after only one night. Would you have done the same? Why?
3. Buddie reminds the man of two little red hounds he owned as a boy, yet the last two paragraphs in this chapter suggest the story will be about the gold and silver cups. Speculate on the connection between the cups and the red hounds.

Chapter Two

4. Billy presses his parents for two hound dogs. He pesters them until they decide to get him some traps. Can you think of an instance in life, a book, or a movie where someone gets rewarded for begging and pestering his or her parents?
5. Although his sisters are upset about Samie getting hurt, Billy's parents don't punish him for catching the cat in his traps. Can you think of a time in your life when your parents refused to discipline your brother or sister when you felt they deserved a punishment?

Response Journal

6. Billy tries to leave home but comes back because of the howling wolf. Write the note Billy might have left for his parents that outlines his reasons for leaving.

Chapter Three

7. Billy believes the Lord helped him find a way to get his dogs. Has there been a time when you or someone you know thought God helped solve a problem? Explain.
8. Billy prayed for the money to buy the pups. If this were a movie instead of a book, write a script of Billy's prayer.
9. Billy works for two years to save fifty dollars. That is a very long time in a young boy's life. Do you know anyone with this level of determination? Do you think determination like this is something you have to be born with, or can it be learned?
10. Write a letter to a friend describing Billy's grandfather.
11. Some readers may think Grandfather is wrong in suggesting to Billy that he NOT tell his father about the fifty dollars. Would you agree with them that keeping a secret of this kind is a form of lying?

Chapter Four

12. Why do you suppose Billy couldn't tell his father about the dogs even after they are purchased and waiting to be picked up?

13. Consider Billy's parents' reaction when they discover he is missing. Will they try to find him? How would your parents react if you went away without their permission? Write a page of dialogue between Billy's mom and dad in which they discuss Billy's absence.

14. Suppose a boy like Billy comes to your school. He is dressed in overalls and is barefoot. How do you suppose he'd be treated by the other students and the teachers? How would you feel if he tried to make friends with you?

Chapter Five

15. Billy and the stationmaster put his pups into a sack with holes cut out for their heads. Billy thinks, "Now, maybe the people won't stare at me when they see what I've got. After all, not every boy owns two good hounds." Why is this passage funny? What do we understand about the townspeople that Billy doesn't?

16. "Those kids are pretty tough, son" he said, "but they're really not bad. They'll grow up some day." Do you agree or disagree with the marshall's attitude toward the gang?

Response Journal

17. Billy is ecstatic because he finally got something he wanted and worked for for so long. Have you or anyone you know ever had that same kind of joy? When?
18. Billy believes the mountain lion prowls around the mouth of the cave because it smells the pups. What are some other explanations for its presence at the cave?

Chapter Six

19. Write a dialogue between Billy's father and Grandfather when Billy's father learns that Billy has gone to pick up pups.
20. Billy believes the names Old Dan and Little Ann are "meant to be." Describe an experience or inspiration in your life that you believe was "meant to be."
21. Billy's father and mother are disturbed that Billy's sisters haven't tasted soda pop. Write a conversation that might occur between his parents discussing their dream of moving to the city and the benefits of this move they see for their children.

Chapter Seven

22. Billy's mother whips him for using her scissors to cut tin, but not for going to town alone. Does this apparent contradiction make any sense to you?

23. Billy plans to kill a raccoon to use its pelt to train his dogs to kill more. Write a letter from a conservationist group stating how it feels about Billy's hunting practices.

24. Billy has long conversations with his dogs, and he believes they answer him in their own way. Relate an instance from your experience, a book, or movie where there is an animal that clearly communicates with humans.

Chapter Eight

25. It is implied that Billy's dogs will really be disappointed if he doesn't cut down the big tree to get the raccoon. Assuming they could speak, write a dialogue in which they talk to each other about this.

26. Felling a large tree can be dangerous and requires skill and planning. Is it believable that Billy's parents and grandfather allow him to cut down the huge tree all by himself? Since it's a parent's responsibility to shield a child from danger, how much freedom and how great a risk do you think is *too much*?