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Left in Charge

When Travis' father leaves for the cattle drive, Travis is put in charge of many of the farm jobs and the family security. In Chapter 1, he says to Travis:

“Now Travis, you ‘re getting to be a big boy; and while I’m gone, you’ll be the man of the family. I want you to act like one. You take care of Mama and Little Arliss. You Look after the work and don’t wait around for your mama to point out what needs to be done. Think you can do that?”

In a group, discuss the following questions. Choose one person to record the answers on the lines. When you are finished, compare and contrast your responses with those of other groups.

- If your mother or father left you in charge of the work around the house, what extra jobs would you have to do?

- Would you be able to handle these responsibilities? All of them? Some of them? Explain.

- What does Travis' father mean when he says he expects Travis to act like a man? Do most fourteen year olds act grown-up? Explain, using examples from your experience.

Travis' father continues:

“You act a man’s part while I’m gone, and I’ll see that you get a man’s horse to ride when I sell the cattle. I think we can shake on that deal. “

- How is Travis' father treating him like a grown-up?

- The father makes a bargain or agreement with his son. Explain what an agreement is.

- Is it fair for the father to make a bargain like this with his son? Explain your feelings.

- Do your parents make bargains or agreements with you? What kind? How do the agreements work out?

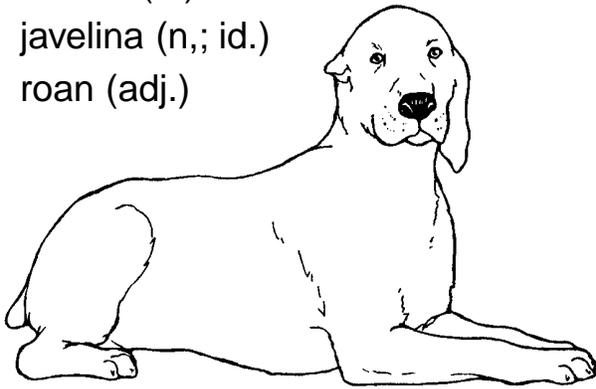
Research Activity

Directions: Here are some terms from *Old Yeller* that have to do with the farm, or were regional idioms (id.). Research the following and see how many you can find. Reference books that might be helpful are an unabridged dictionary, farm almanacs, tree and plant books, and books on American idioms. Your librarian might be able to help you.

Section 1

(Chapters 1-3)

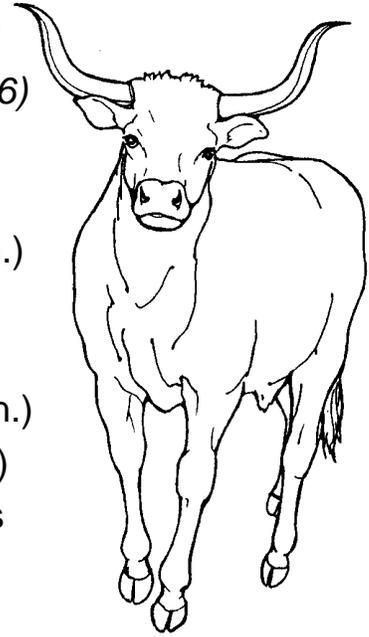
- cattle (n.)
- fall to staves (id.)
- tushes (n.)
- javelina (n.; id.)
- roan (adj.)



Section 2

(Chapters 4-6)

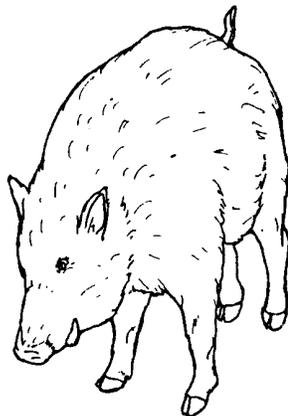
- catclaw
- scrub oak
- windy (id.) (n.)
- treed (v.)
- hardpan (n.)
- watercress (n.)
- chaparral (n.)
- sucking eggs
- dog run
- pack it



Section 3

(Chapters 7-9)

- corncrib (n.)
- boar coon
- bee myrtle
- in a strut (id.)
- shoat (n.)
- wall-eyed fit (id.)



Sections 4 and 5

(Chapters 10-16)

- bear grass (n.)
- chinaberry (n.)
- turkey pear bush (n.)
- corn shucks (n.)

