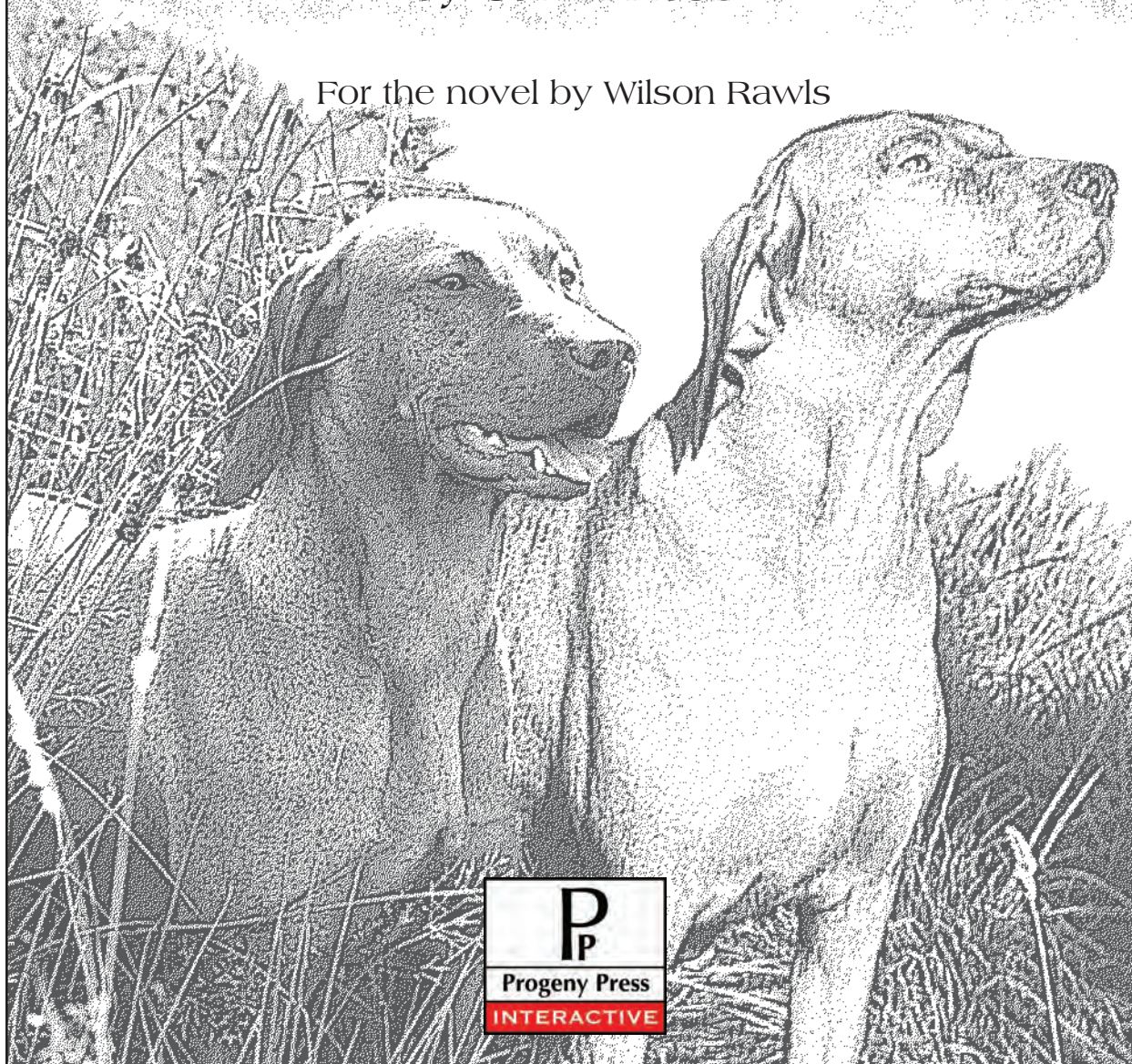


Where the Red Fern Grows Study Guide

by Calvin Roso

For the novel by Wilson Rawls



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Where the Red Fern Grows Study Guide
A Progeny Press Study Guide
by Calvin Roso
with Andrew Clausen, Michael Gilleland

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Synopsis

*“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him,
who have been called according to his purpose.”*

—Romans 8:28

There is nothing Billy Colman wants more than a pair of hunting dogs, but times are tough for farming families in the Ozarks. “Maybe some day when we can afford it, you can have them,” Billy’s father tells him, “but not right now.”

But Billy doesn’t give up. Determined to get a pair of hunting dogs, Billy finds ways to raise the money. With great patience, Billy saves all the money he can, and after two years he is finally able to buy his hunting dogs.

Billy works with Old Dan and Little Ann as often as he can, training them to track and tree coons, and teaching them how to avoid “Old Ringtail’s” tricks. Though his dogs bring him pleasure, there are trials ahead for Billy as well. But through hard work, patience, and perseverance, Billy ultimately understands how God uses all things in life to answer the prayers of his family.

Chapters 10–13

The fame of my dogs spread all over our part of the Ozarks. They were the best in the country. No coon hunter came into my grandfather's store with as many pelts as I did. Grandpa never overlooked an opportunity to brag. He told everyone the story of my dogs, and the part he played in getting them.

Vocabulary:

The following terms apply to the physical features or terrain of the land. Match each word to its definition.

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| 1. ____ bottoms | a. a submerged, or partly submerged bank of land along a shore |
| 2. ____ eddy | b. a small valley or basin |
| 3. ____ trough | c. a thicket of woody stems |
| 4. ____ channel | d. low land along a watercourse |
| 5. ____ shallows | e. a shallow area in a body of water |
| 6. ____ canebrake | f. the deeper part of a river |
| 7. ____ slough | g. a small whirlpool |
| 8. ____ bar | h. a level surface of land |
| 9. ____ flats | i. a long and narrow or shallow channel or depression |
| 10. ____ hollow | j. a place of deep mud or mire; swamp |

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Questions:

1. Billy stretches his coon hides on the smokehouse wall. Why does he stretch them on the side facing the road?
2. What does Billy's grandfather do when Billy's stories about hunting "get too far off the beaten path"? What did Billy understand this to mean?
3. What does the following passage reveal about the character of Little Ann?

Her actions weren't those of a hunting hound. She was constantly playing. She would play with our chickens and young calves, with a piece of paper or a corncob. What my little girl lacked in size, she made up in sweetness. She could make friends with a tomcat.

4. What does the following passage reveal about the character of Old Dan?

He strutted around with a belligerent and tough attitude. Although he wasn't a tall dog, he was heavy. His body was long and his chest broad and thick. His legs were short, big, and solid. The muscles in his body were hard and knotty.

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5. Billy wonders what Old Dan would do if Little Ann got into some kind of predicament. How does Old Dan behave when little Ann falls through the ice?

6. How does Billy save Little Ann from being pulled under the ice?

7. Why do you think Billy's grandfather makes a bet with the Pritchard boys? What are the specifics of the wager they make?

Thinking About the Story:

8. *Irony* occurs when there is a difference between what is expected and what actually happens. For example, *irony* can be seen in Psalm 7: 15, 16:

He who digs a hole and scoops it out falls into the pit he has made. The trouble he causes recoils on himself; his violence comes down on his own head.

It is *ironic* that the violent person described in the psalm is done in by his own violence.

What is *ironic* about how Rubin Pritchard dies?

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9. An author's *style* is his unique way of writing. Wilson Rawls structures many of the chapters of *Where the Red Fern Grows* by beginning with a statement, problem, or question and then giving the answer as the chapter progresses. For example, Chapter 2 begins with Billy's statement: "I suppose there's a time in practically every young boy's life when he's affected by that wonderful disease of puppy love." The narrator then proceeds to explain what happens when he was affected by this "disease." Likewise, at the beginning of Chapter 7 we read, "Now that I had my pups another obstacle had cropped up." The author then proceeds to tell about that problem and how it is resolved.

Look at the beginning of Chapter 11. What question is presented at the beginning of this chapter? How is it answered by the rest of the chapter?

What statements are made at the beginning of Chapter 12? What happens as a result?

10. The *mood* of a story is the feeling the author creates for the reader. An author sets the mood through the use of words, phrases, or descriptions that have feelings connected to them. For example, if an author wishes to set a mood of gloom or sadness, he may write about cold rain or damp fog.

What moods are evident during the hunt for the "ghost coon" in Chapters 12 and 13? What words, phrases, or descriptions help create these moods?

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Dig Deeper:

11. When Billy prayed that God would help him finish the job of chopping down the tree, he wondered whether God answered his prayer, or if the tree happened to fall by coincidence.

This time, after he prays for help in saving Little Ann's life, how is Billy's response different?

Read the story about the ten lepers in Luke 17:11–19. Why does Jesus commend the one who returns?

12. Read Philippians 4:6. What does this verse teach us about how to pray?

Do you think it's important to express thankfulness? Why or why not?

13. What words or phrases are used to describe Billy's feelings about the Pritchards at the beginning of Chapter 12?

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14. How would you describe Billy's feelings about the Pritchards at the end of Chapter 13? Has Billy's attitude toward them changed? If so, how?

15. Read Matthew 5:43–47 and Romans 12:16–18. What do these passages teach about how we should treat other people?

16. In Chapter 10 Billy mentions that he is telling stories and bragging about his dogs to the other coon hunters. At the beginning of Chapter 12, Billy's grandfather has begun bragging about Billy and his dogs and telling some tall tales. How might this have made a difference in what occurs with the Pritchards?

Read Proverbs 27:2, Romans 12:3, and Galatians 5:26. How do these verses relate to Billy's and his grandfather's stories and the Pritchard boys? Do you think the Pritchards would have challenged Billy if he and his grandfather had been paying better attention to these verses?

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15. Billy learns that God does answer prayer. He knew it was God who gave him the “heart, courage, and determination” to raise the money through hard work.

Chapters 4–6

Vocabulary:

Answers will vary. Accept reasonable responses.

Questions:

1. Billy sneaks away because it is hard for him to wait to get a ride to town, and he doesn't want his parents to know yet.
2. Billy buys overalls for his father, cloth for his mother, and candy for his sisters. He does this to make amends for leaving home without telling anyone.
3. The teasing of the town children ruins Billy's day.
4. One of the children pulls on an ear of the female pup. Billy can ignore it when the children are teasing him, but he feels as if he must defend his dogs. “I hadn't worked two long hard years for my pups to have some freckle-faced punk pull their ears.”
5. The Sheriff admires Billy's “grit,” or his hard work and perseverance.
6. Billy hears the cry of a mountain lion. His pups both react strongly to the mountain lion. The male dog runs to the mouth of the cave and bawls out a challenge, and both dogs sit rigidly side by side trying to catch a scent of the animal. Billy's father tells him that a mountain lion won't bother a person unless it's wounded or cornered.
7. Billy finds the names carved into a tree at the fisherman's camp.
8. Billy says he didn't like it and “wouldn't live there even if they gave it to me.” He says he didn't like the people and couldn't understand them. But he did like the sheriff.
9. Billy's mother says that she prays every night for the day that the family will be able to afford to move into town.

Thinking About the Story:

10. Billy is afraid because he has heard stories about sheriffs and their guns and how many men they have killed. Billy later discovers that the sheriff is a very kind and friendly man.
11. Billy finds the names for his dogs carved on a tree in the fishermen's camp. It was in the fishermen's camp where he'd first found the magazine advertisement. It was in the fishermen's camp where he'd prayed for God's help in getting his dogs. It was the fishermen who bought live bait, berries, and vegetables from Billy, helping him raise the money for his dogs. Billy says that it “could not have happened without the help of an unseen power.” He later tells his mother that he knows God answered his prayer and he'll always be thankful to God.

Dig Deeper:

12. Answers may vary. These verses tell us to honor our parents. Had Billy kept this commandment in mind, he may have decided to ask his parents if he could make the trip or may have waited patiently until his grandfather could take him.
13. These verses tell us to look out for the interests of our neighbors, to humbly consider others better than ourselves, to help strangers in need and have mercy on them, to serve one another in love, and to love our neighbors as we love ourselves.
14. Answers will vary.

Chapters 7–9

Vocabulary:

1. sunk; 2. refreshed; collapsed; 3. thrust; 4. endurance; 5. sturdy; 6. confused; 7. territory; 8. loosened; 9. spent idly; 10. flinched.

Questions:

1. Billy's first obstacle is that he needs to get a coonskin. Next, he needs to train his dogs. Finally, he has to chop down the large sycamore tree.
2. He thinks it is a joke because all the coon has to do is drop the object to get his paw free.
3. Billy's father assures him that it may take time before one of those traps would catch a coon. He suggests that Billy's scent may still be lingering around the traps. He tells Billy to be patient.
4. He trains the dogs by dragging a coonskin and having the dogs follow the trail of scent left behind.
5. Billy promises them that all they need to do is tree a coon, and he will do the rest of the work. Billy decides that he must cut down the huge sycamore tree to keep his end of the bargain.