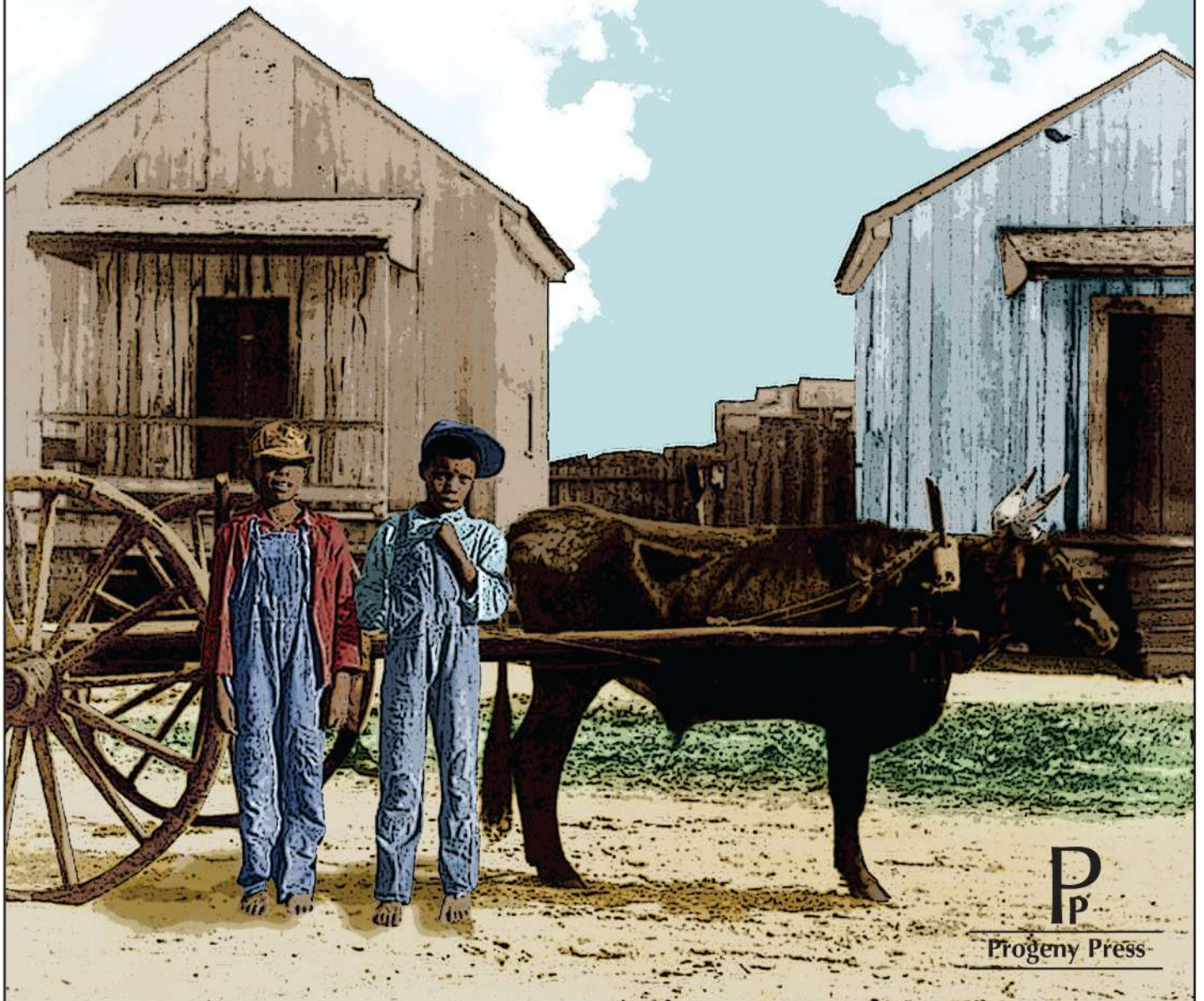


Wagon Wheels

Study Guide

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For the book by
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Table of Contents

Note to Instructor	4
Synopsis	5
About the Author	6
Background Information	7
Before-you-read Activities	8
Vocabulary	9
Chapters 1 & 2	12
Chapters 3 & 4	15
Fact or Opinion	19
Compound Words	20
Crossword Puzzle	22
After-you-read Activities	24
Additional Resources	26
Answer Key	28

Synopsis

In 1878, Ed Muldie and his three sons leave Kentucky to take advantage of free land offered by the United States government through the Homestead Act. They settle in Nicodemus, Kansas, and build a dugout home to live in for the winter.

During the harsh winter, the people of Nicodemus are saved from starvation by Osage Indians who bring them food. The following spring, Mr. Muldie travels ahead to find a place to build a new home away from the flat prairie. While living by themselves in the dugout, the three boys narrowly escape a prairie fire. When a letter from Mr. Muldie arrives, the three boys must travel 150 miles alone to be with their father.

Wagon Wheels Study Guide

What would you do if you woke up one night and found a rattlesnake lying next to you? _____

4. To help pass time on long journeys people sometimes listen to the radio, listen to tapes, or play games. The Muldie boys did not have any of these things. How might they have passed the time instead? _____

What are some things that you like to do that require no electricity or any toys?

5. How do you think Mr. Muldie felt when he saw his boys walking toward his new home? _____

Wagon Wheels Study Guide

Dig Deeper:

6. The boys had to walk 150 miles to meet their father. If you were asked to do this, do you think you could? _____

7. Ecclesiastes 4:9–12 says:

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who has no one to help him up! Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

Explain these verses in your own words. _____

Do you think any of the boys could have made the 150 mile journey alone? Why or why not? _____

Wagon Wheels Study Guide

Answer Key

Vocabulary

1. dugout: a rough shelter that is made by digging a hole in the ground or in the side of a hill.
2. banjo: a musical instrument that has a round body, a long neck, and five strings.
3. mush: a porridge made of cornmeal boiled in water.
4. supply: to provide with materials needed.
5. prairie: flat or rolling land covered with grass and very few trees.
6. molasses: a sweet, thick, yellow-brown syrup made from sugar cane.
7. panthers: large fierce members of the cat family; cougars.
coyotes: animals that look like small wolves and live on the prairies of North America.

Chapters 1 & 2

Questions:

1. The Muldie family moved to Kansas to take advantage of free land offered under the Homestead Act.
2. Mr. Muldie said that living in a hole in the ground was for animals only. He offered to build houses for everyone in town.
3. The music, the singing, and the good food like cornbread made the dugout feel like a home. Answers will vary.
4. It would be hard to survive the Kansas winter. The winter was mean because it was very cold and very windy.
5. The boys had heard stories about Indians and thought their lives were in danger.
6. The Indians brought them the food they needed and wood to burn. Answers will vary on the second part of this question.
7. The Indians had food so they shared with the people of Nicodemus.
8. He wanted his sons to speak well of and defend the Indians when they heard people saying bad things about Indians. Answers will vary on the second part of this question.

Chapters 3 & 4

Questions:

1. The boys hunted, fished, cooked, swept the dugout clean, and baked their own cornbread. They made a wagon for Little Brother and never let him out of their sight.
2. Johnny saw the deer running toward the river for protection.
3. They let the fire go out. When there was no longer any warmth from the fire, the rattlesnake slithered away. Answers will vary on the second part of this question.
4. Answers will vary. They may have talked about the past, the new home, sang songs, or made plans.
5. Answers will vary. Most likely he was proud of them and relieved that they made it safely.
6. Answers will vary.
7. Answers will vary, but the basic idea is that it is better to have a partner in whatever we are doing to make the work easier and for help when we need it. Having two others to help is even better. Answers will vary on the second part of this question.
8. Johnny carried Little Brother when he could not walk anymore. Johnny and Willie took turns watching the fire and scaring away animals with the gun while the one of them slept. Willie woke up Johnny to tell him about the rattlesnake.
9. Knowing this verse may have helped encourage the boys to be brave because they would know that they weren't alone, but that God was with them. Answers will vary on the second part of this question.

Fact or Opinion

1. F; 2. O; 3. F; 4. F; 5. O; 6. F; 7. O; 8. O; 9. O; 10. F; 11. F; 12. O; 13. F; 14. F; 15. F.

Compound Words

The list of words might include: dugout, cornbread, rattlesnake, yourself, firewood, everyone, something, saddlebag, understand, ourselves, themselves.