

Vocabulary

1. **contemplative** (kən tem' plə tiv') *adj.* inclined to think about things; philosophical (page 1)
2. **carrion** (kar' ē ən) *n.* decaying flesh of a dead animal (page 5)
3. **disparagingly** (di spər' ij iŋ lē) *adv.* in an insulting way; disrespectfully (page 10)
4. **incipient** (in sip' ē ənt) *adj.* just beginning (page 14)
5. **reproachfully** (ri prōch' fə lē) *adv.* in a critical manner; accusingly (page 23)
6. **fallible** (fal' ə bəl) *adj.* liable to make mistakes (page 23)
7. **dispiritedly** (di spir' it id lē) *adv.* in a dejected, sad, or discouraged manner (page 26)
8. **disemboweled** (dis' im bəw' əld) *v.* removed the intestines of (page 39)
9. **imperturbability** (im' pər tər' bə bil' ə tē) *n.* quality of remaining undisturbed; calmness (page 42)
10. **repose** (ri pōz') *n.* rest (page 45)
11. **diffidently** (dif' ə dənt lē) *adv.* without confidence; timidly (page 50)
12. **rebuke** (ri byōk') *n.* scolding; reprimand (page 51)
13. **martially** (mār' shə lē) *adv.* in a way that is warlike or shows readiness to fight (page 56)
14. **restively** (res' tiv lē) *adv.* in an unruly way; restlessly (page 57)
15. **construed** (kən strōd') *v.* interpreted (page 59)
16. **unprecedented** (un pres' ə den' tid) *adj.* never before experienced; unheard of (page 60)
17. **paternally** (pə tər' nə lē) *adv.* in a fatherly manner (page 61)
18. **complacent** (kəm plā' sənt) *adj.* very satisfied with oneself; smug (page 64)
19. **fatuous** (fach' ō əs) *adj.* silly; foolish (page 64)
20. **ominously** (əm' ə nəs lē) *adv.* in a threatening manner (page 82)
21. **profanity** (prō fan' ə tē) *n.* inappropriate language; swear word (page 82)
22. **earnestness** (ər' nist nəs) *n.* intense sincerity or seriousness (page 82)
23. **unseemly** (un sēm' lē) *adj.* improper (page 87)
24. **marshaling** (mār' shəl iŋ) *adj.* organizing; managing (page 95)
25. **disconsolately** (dis kən' sə lit lē) *adv.* in a way that cannot be comforted; unhappily (page 98)

The Gift (pages 1–37)

Discussion Questions

1. In the opening **characterization**, what do the physical description and actions of Billy Buck suggest about the kind of man he is?
2. How old is Jody? How does he react to having a pony?
3. How do Jody's schoolmates react to the pony? How does Jody's mother react when she sees Jody caring for the pony?
4. Explain the **irony** of Billy Buck's promise about the rain. What other promises is Billy unable to keep?
5. What are Jody's feelings for Billy Buck? Do these change when Billy Buck cannot save the pony? Explain.
6. Why do you think Jody's father tells stories on the night the pony is dying?
7. What deeper significance might there be in the pony's going outdoors to die? In what way might the outdoors be a **symbol**?
8. What might the pony symbolize in Jody's life? What chief lesson about life do you think he learns from his experiences?
9. Why do you think Jody kills the buzzard? What might the buzzard symbolize?

Writing Activity In one or two paragraphs, compare and contrast Carl Tiflin and Billy Buck. Focus on each man's relationship with Jody.

The Great Mountains (pages 38–55)

Discussion Questions

1. Based on **setting** details, about how much time has passed since the end of the last story? How may events in that story help to explain Jody's cruelty to Doubletree Mutt and other animals when this story starts?
2. How is Jody's attitude toward the western mountains different from his parents' and Billy Buck's? How do the mountains differ from the Gabilans east of the ranch?
3. Briefly describe Gitano and his reasons for coming. Why do you think he comes to the ranch instead of remaining with relatives?
4. Why are the Tiflins unable to accommodate Gitano's request? How is Jody's attitude toward Gitano different from his father's?

5. What parallels does Gitano see between himself and the old horse? What do Billy's remarks about Easter imply about Gitano?
6. What does the narrator reveal to be the motive for Tiflin's "brutal" remarks about Easter and Gitano? Does his behavior seem reasonable? Does it seem realistic? Explain.
7. Why do you think Jody decides not to tell anyone of the old man's rapier, or sword? What might the sword **symbolize**?
8. How is Gitano's going off to the mountains like the pony's behavior in "The Gift"? Why do you think he takes Easter with him?
9. State one **theme** that you think the story conveys about life and death or about the relationship between generations.

Writing Activity Should the Tiflins grant Gitano's request? Is society as a whole obliged to accommodate him? State and explain your opinion in one or two paragraphs.

The Promise (pages 56–79)**Discussion Questions**

1. In the **narrative structure** of the book, how do events at the end of the first story help explain opening events in this one?
2. What role does Billy play in arranging for a colt for Jody? What does the narrator show is Jody's feeling about Billy's involvement?
3. What does Carl Tiflin demand his son do if he wants the colt? How is Tiflin's attitude regarding the colt different from Billy's?
4. Does Jody do a good job caring for the mare? Cite details to support your answer.
5. Explain Jody's mixed feelings during the mare's pregnancy. What do his daydreams about helping the sheriff show about Jody?
6. What does Billy explain usually happens when a colt is backward? Why do you think he is so honest about it this time?
7. Cite examples in which the **third-person omniscient point of view** shows Billy's thoughts. How do his thoughts about Jody help explain why Billy saves the colt instead of the mare?
8. How does Jody seem to feel about Billy killing the mare to save the colt? What do you think he learns from the experience?

Writing Activity What impression of farm or ranch life do you get from this story and the first? Respond in one or two paragraphs.

The Leader of the People (pages 80–100)**Discussion Questions**

1. What is Jody like at the start of the story? List details of **characterization** to support your answer.
2. Identify two **conflicts** that Grandfather's visit prompts in the Tiflin family.
3. Why do you think Carl Tiflin resents his father-in-law's stories so much? How is Tiflin's attitude consistent with his behavior in earlier stories?
4. What does Grandfather seem to mean by "westering"? What symbolic significance does he place on "the crossing"?
5. What happens to Grandfather when he overhears his son-in-law's criticisms? What was your own reaction to these criticisms?
6. What change in Jody is reflected by his loss of interest in killing the mice?
7. What might the final scene with the lemonade symbolize in Jody's life? What might it symbolize in Grandfather's life?
8. Do you agree with Grandfather's view about the lack of frontiers in modern American life? Explain.

Writing Activity Compare and contrast this story with "The Great Mountains." What do Grandfather and Gitano have in common? What view of the West do the stories convey?

Pulling It All Together

Writing Write a series of at least three magazine feature articles, each portraying a different character who appears in these stories. Describe the person's life and achievements, or focus on one experience.

Oral Anecdote An anecdote is a brief account of an interesting event in someone's life. Choose one incident from the four stories, and recount it as if you were the character to whom it happened. For example, you might write as Jody describing the visit of Gitano or as Grandfather describing his journey west.