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Study Guide

for

Bearstone

by Will Hobbs



New York, New York Columbus, Ohio Woodland Hills, California Peoria, Illinois

Meet Will Hobbs



As I write about the crucial choices facing people today, their struggle for identity, their relations with others, I hope also to be increasing their awareness of their relationship with the natural world. . . . I'd like my readers to appreciate and to care more about what's happening with wild creatures, wild places, and the diversity of life.

—Will Hobbs

Will Hobbs was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in 1947. Shortly after his birth, his father, an engineer for the U.S. Air Force, was transferred to the Panama Canal Zone and moved his family there. Like many other children of military families, Hobbs and his siblings lived in several different places as they were growing up. For the Hobbs family, the transfers took them to Virginia, Alaska, California, and Texas.

Hobbs was almost old enough to go to school when his father was transferred to Anchorage, Alaska. The four years that Hobbs lived there made a deep impression on him. He remembers Alaska as the place where he discovered the joys of reading. He was especially impressed by the novel *Call It Courage* by Armstrong Sperry, in which a young boy overcomes his fear of the sea.

Writing a novel became Hobbs's secret goal. When he did begin writing as an adult, he often wrote about young people's learning to overcome their fears in a wilderness setting.

Back in California by the time he was eleven, Hobbs was active in scouting, often backpacking in the Sierra Nevada, a mountain range in the eastern part of the state. As a high school and college student, he worked summers as a guide and camp director at a Boy Scout ranch near Cimarron, New Mexico. After earning a bachelor's and a master's degree in English at Stanford University in California, Hobbs moved to Durango, Colorado, where he taught in junior high and high schools.

Hobbs began writing *Bearstone* in the summer of 1980, while he was still teaching. The novel was published nine years later. The character of Cloyd Atcitty is based on a student at the group home in which Hobbs's wife taught. That of Walter Landis is based on a rancher with whom Hobbs worked one summer.

Although Hobbs says he often bases his novels on people he has met, on an image that has caught his attention, or on something he has read about, he likes to have firsthand knowledge of the wilderness settings for his novels. He researches the settings, reads all he can find about historical events that have taken place there, and, most important, spends time in the actual wilderness.

Introducing the Novel

. . . the hurt you get over makes you stronger.

—*Bearstone*, chapter 11

Walter Landis, the kindly rancher in *Bearstone*, makes an important statement when he says, “the hurt you get over makes you stronger.” Both he and young Cloyd Atcitty, the main character, have experienced hurtful situations before they meet at Landis’s isolated ranch in the mountains of southwestern Colorado. During their time together on the ranch, the two learn more about themselves as they develop a relationship with each other and with the rugged wilderness around them. In the process, both grow stronger.

In all of Will Hobbs’s books, young characters face challenges that make them stronger. They learn many things about themselves and about other people. In addition, they learn the importance of preserving the natural environment. Of his books, Hobbs says:

My first hope for my novels is that they tell a good story, that the reader will keep turning the pages and will hate to see the story end.

Beyond that, I hope to be inspiring a love for the natural world.

Hobbs developed his love for the outdoors as a child. His parents enjoyed the outdoors and involved their children in backpacking, fishing, and other sports. He recalls the time he spent in Alaska:

I remember the beauty of . . . the place becoming a part of me. I think the feeling started there. I remember when the ship pulled out as we were leaving Alaska, I was standing at the stern and watching the mountains recede, and the tears were streaming down my face.

THE TIME AND PLACE

After reading a newspaper account of the killing of a grizzly bear in the San Juan Mountains, in southwestern Colorado, Hobbs began thinking of a story that would involve a

Native American boy and the last grizzly in Colorado. Hobbs knew this setting well. He and his wife lived in Durango, located in the San Juan Mountains and near the Weminuche Wilderness Area. The largest federally protected wilderness in Colorado, the Weminuche Wilderness Area covers about 490,000 acres. It is popular with mountain climbers, horseback riders, backpackers, hikers, and campers. Many visitors enjoy hunting and fishing in the area.

Hobbs uses many real locations in *Bearstone*. The novel opens in Window Rock, a real town located on the Navajo Reservation in northeastern Arizona and named for an opening in the sandstone cliffs. The group home in which Cloyd lives before being sent to Walter’s ranch is located near the author’s home in Durango. White Mesa, where Cloyd’s grandmother lives, is in southeastern Utah, near the town of Blanding.

Hobbs incorporates features of the Weminuche Wilderness Area—the Piedra and Pine Rivers—into the wilderness portion of the novel. Hobbs says that writing *Bearstone*:
fulfilled my dream of setting a story for others to enjoy in the upper Pine River country of the Weminuche Wilderness, one of my three favorite places in the geography of my heart.

The Pine River has a special place in the author’s memories because he made three trips up the river with his father. “It’s my idea of heaven on earth,” Hobbs says.

Cloyd’s Ute heritage is an important aspect of the novel. The Ute (pronounced *yoot*) are one of the several groups known as the Great Basin Indians. Before Europeans settled the area, the Ute lived in the mountains and plains of what is now Colorado, Utah, and northern New Mexico. They survived by gathering food such as berries and roots; by hunting rabbits, antelope, and birds; and by fishing. The arrival of Spanish explorers in the 1630s and 1640s

brought an important change to the Ute way of life—the use of horses. Horses made hunting much easier—especially the hunting of buffalo, which soon became one of

the Ute’s main resources. In addition, horses allowed the Ute to get away from their enemies quickly and to transport their goods to a central, more permanent camp.

Did You Know?

In the 1990 census, about 1.9 million people were counted as Native Americans. About one million Native Americans live on or near a reservation. The Cherokee, who live mostly in Oklahoma and North Carolina, number about 370,000—one-fifth of all Native Americans. Next in size of population are the Navajo, Sioux, and Chippewa.

In the late 1800s, the U.S. government placed the Ute on reservations in southwestern Colorado and Utah. Reservations were established by federal law in 1830 as land set aside for Native Americans and called Dependent Domestic Nations. To claim this land and the benefits that might come from living there, the groups often had to leave the regions where their ancestors had lived for

centuries. In some cases, the reservations were located on rugged, arid land that the white settlers did not want. The federal government provided schooling and some services to the reservation dwellers.

On the reservations, the Native American groups chose their own governing bodies, but the power of the bodies was limited. In the 1970s, federal legislation gave reservations greater ability to govern and plan for themselves. Now, governing bodies on reservations can levy taxes, acquire businesses, and appoint judges.

Today there are 278 reservations. The largest is the 16-million-acre Navajo Reservation, located in northeast Arizona, northwest New Mexico, and southeast Utah.

Before You Read

Bearstone Chapters 1–8

FOCUS ACTIVITY

Think of a time when you set yourself a challenging goal and then worked hard to meet it. What made you work so hard? How did you feel when you achieved your goal?

Journal

In your journal, describe the goal, your reasons for working hard to meet the goal, and your feelings when you achieved it.

Setting a Purpose

Read to discover the challenging goal that a teenager sets for himself.

BACKGROUND

Point of View

In the study of literature, **point of view** is the relationship of the **narrator**, or storyteller, to the events of the story. *Bearstone* is told from the **third-person point of view**. The third-person narrator is an “outsider” who describes what happens but does not take part in the action or events.

Sometimes, a third-person narrator knows what all the characters are thinking. In *Bearstone*, for example, the narrator describes the unspoken thoughts of Cloyd and Walter. This kind of third-person narrator is called **omniscient**, which means “all-knowing.”

Did You Know?

The state of Utah is named after the Ute, who once dominated eastern Utah and western Colorado. After the discovery of gold in California in 1848, growing numbers of settlers moved west. The travel routes of these settlers went through the Great Plains and Great Basin areas, often causing conflict with Native American groups already living there. In the 1870s and 1880s, pioneer miners forced the Ute from their lands. Northern Utes settled in the Uintah-Ouray Reservation in northeastern Utah, while Southern Utes were restricted to a small area in southwestern Colorado. Today, about four thousand Ute live on reservations in Colorado and Utah.

VOCABULARY PREVIEW

admonish [ad mon'ish] v. to warn; to scold

devoid [di void'] adj. empty; bare

gingerly [jin'jər lē] adv. cautiously; carefully

peer [pēr] v. to peek; to try to see

relentlessly [ri lent'lis lē] adv. sternly; without stopping

skitter [skit'ər] v. to step quickly

skittish [skit'ish] adj. restless; jumpy

tediously [tē'dē əs lē] adv. boringly; uneventfully

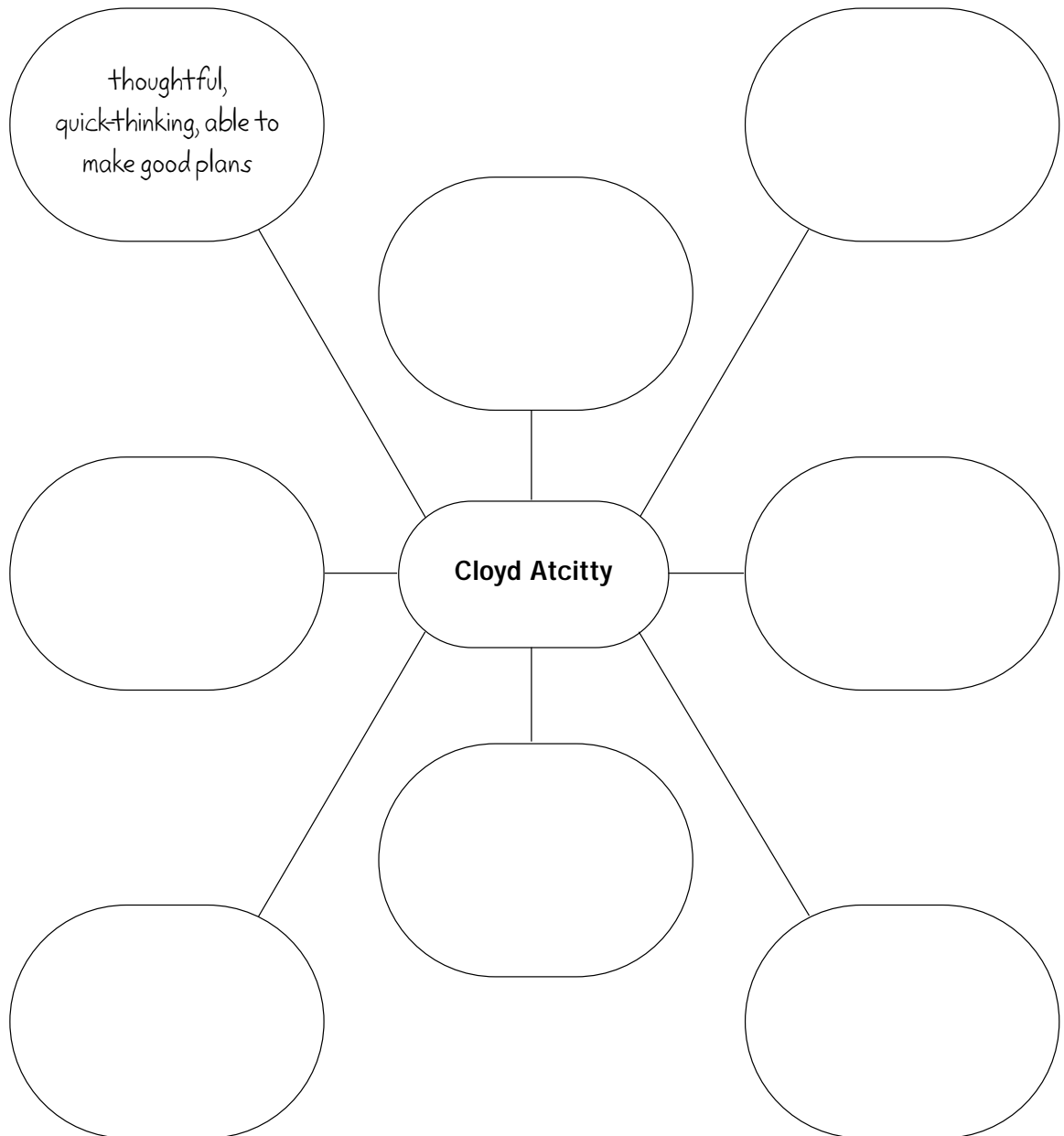
trifle [tri'fəl] v. to treat lightly

wither [with'ər] v. to dry up; to die

Active Reading

Bearstone Chapters 1–8

The narrator describes some of Cloyd Atcitty’s personal qualities and characteristics. Other qualities and characteristics are revealed in Cloyd’s words, thoughts, and actions. Use the web diagram on this page to make a list of Cloyd’s personal qualities and characteristics—both positive and negative—as you learn about them in this section of the novel. Write the qualities, along with comments you have about them, in the circles connected to the circle with Cloyd’s name.



Responding

Bearstone Chapters 1–8

Personal Response

Do you think that things will turn out well for Cloyd? Explain your answer.

Analyzing Literature

Recall and Interpret

1. Where does Cloyd live at the beginning of the novel? Why doesn't he live with his family? How does he feel about the change in his living arrangements?

2. Where does Cloyd find the bearstone? In your opinion, what is the meaning of the secret name Cloyd chooses? What change do you notice in Cloyd after he finds the stone?

3. What motivates Cloyd to work so hard to complete the fence? How do his motivations compare with those you wrote about in the **Focus Activity**?

4. Who is the red-haired man? Why does Cloyd dislike him? Support your response with details from the story.

Responding

Bearstone Chapters 1–8

Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

Evaluate and Connect

5. Imagine that the story is told from Walter’s point of view. What sorts of things would you learn from Walter that you do not learn from the third-person narrator? What things would Walter not know? Do you feel the novel would be weaker or stronger with Walter as the first-person narrator? Explain your answer.

6. At several points in the first section, Cloyd refers to traditional beliefs of the Ute people. Describe some of these beliefs. Do you think that reading fiction is a good way to find out about other cultures? Explain.

Literature and Writing

A Letter about Cloyd

Cloyd’s feelings about Walter and about living on the farm change in this section. Imagine that you are living on Walter’s farm and are getting to know Cloyd. Write a letter to a friend describing how Cloyd’s reactions to his new life and friend change during this section. Skim chapters 1–8 to review Cloyd’s words and actions. Supply your own explanations for why he acts the way he does. End your letter by predicting how Cloyd’s friendship with Walter will turn out.

Extending Your Response

Literature Groups

In chapter 7, the narrator says Cloyd “woke up feeling bad, and he didn’t know why. He only knew he wasn’t very happy.” In your group, examine the events that lead up to this chapter. Look for clues about why Cloyd might be feeling bad. How would you explain his mood? Then discuss how you feel when you are in a similar mood. Compile a list of ten suggestions your group might make to Cloyd to help him feel better.

Maps

Create a map of the San Juan Mountain region, using reference materials such as a road atlas; the Internet; and topographical, relief, or other special feature maps. Include on your map major cities and towns, rivers, lakes, mountain ranges, peaks (with elevations), key roads and passes, national forest boundaries, state lines, and other outstanding features. Show your map to the rest of the class.

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Before You Read

Bearstone Chapters 9–15

FOCUS ACTIVITY

Do you believe a person becomes stronger when he or she overcomes difficulties? Why or why not?

Journal

Write in your journal about a time in your life when you overcame a difficulty. What did you learn from the experience? Did it make you a stronger person? Did it teach you how to overcome other difficulties?

Setting a Purpose

Read to discover how Cloyd faces his difficulties.

BACKGROUND

Kings of the Mountain

The author describes two kinds of bears—black bears (also called American bears) and grizzly bears. The black bear is the most common bear in North America. It lives in forests, feeding on berries, pine cones, roots, small mammals, and fish. A full-grown black bear can weigh six hundred pounds and stand six feet tall. In spite of its name, the black bear can also be blue-black, grayish, or even cinnamon in color.

Grizzly bears can weigh up to nine hundred pounds and stand eight feet tall. Though grizzlies once lived from Mexico to Alaska, more than half of all grizzly bears now live in Alaska. Their fur is brown or tan with silver tips. This “grizzled” effect gives the bear its name. The diet of the grizzly bear is similar to that of the black bear. Grizzly bears are fast and can run up to thirty miles an hour.

Did You Know?

In this section of the novel, you’ll learn about the gold mine that Walter abandoned earlier in his life. Gold had a powerful influence on the settling of the West. It led to conflicts among settlers. After gold was discovered in the region, Native Americans were forced by the U.S. government to move from their homelands.

From the earliest times, people have valued gold. The dense, heavy, shiny metal can be easily made into coins, jewelry, and other decorative objects. Today gold is also used in electronics and dental work.

VOCABULARY PREVIEW

crane [krān] *v.* to stretch one’s neck

dubious [dōō’bē əs] *adj.* doubtful

ford [fôrd] *v.* to cross a river

grades [grāds] *n.* slopes

plumb [plum] *v.* to make something vertical

revelation [rev’ə lā’shən] *n.* sudden understanding

trudge [truj] *v.* to walk wearily

vanquish [vang’kwish] *v.* to defeat; to conquer completely

Active Reading

Bearstone Chapters 9–15

The second part of chapter 13 contains many vivid descriptions. These descriptions appeal to the five senses: sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch. As you read this section, use the chart below to keep track of descriptive words and phrases. Write the word or phrase in the proper column.

Sight	Sound	Other Senses
<p>astonishingly green mountains that stabbed</p>	<p>lay gasping in the grass</p>	<p><u>touch</u>—pain coursed through his leg</p>

Responding

Bearstone Chapters 9–15

Personal Response

What was your reaction to Walter's telling a lie? Do you feel that Walter did the right thing? Why or why not?

Analyzing Literature

Recall and Interpret

1. What happens to make Cloyd angry while he is cutting the juniper trees? In your opinion, why does he take out his anger on Walter?

2. What is the "Pride of the West"? Explain what it represents to Walter.

3. At the end of this section, what is Cloyd's attitude toward working in the mine? What does Cloyd's attitude suggest about him? About his relationship with Walter?

Responding

Bearstone Chapters 9–15

Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

Evaluate and Connect

4. In chapter 9, Cloyd thinks of Walter as a “fussy old white man.” Cloyd has never before referred to Walter as white. Why does he do it at this point? In your opinion, is his reaction true to life? Why or why not?

5. In what ways could chapter 12 be considered a turning point in the novel? What happens in this chapter that changes the relationship between Cloyd and Walter? How might the change affect the rest of the story?

Literature and Writing

Matters of Life and Death

Walter shares his philosophy about life and death with Cloyd when they visit the graveyard where Walter’s wife is buried. Summarize Walter’s philosophy in your own words. Then review your response to the **Focus Activity**. Do you agree or disagree with Walter’s philosophy? Write an editorial for your school newspaper supporting or rejecting Walter’s philosophy of life.

Extending Your Response

An Oral History

Imagine that you are Cloyd and that you want to interview your grandmother on tape for an oral history project. Make a list of questions you would like to ask her. Then examine the novel to see what kinds of information she might have to offer in her answers. Write your questions and her answers in the form of an interview.

Learning for Life

A Performance Review

When Cloyd returns from Utah to live at Walter’s farm, he apologizes for his hurtful actions. Walter replies, “I like to think . . . that the hurt you get over makes you stronger.” Does the hurt Cloyd feels in this section make him a stronger person? Analyze this portion of the novel to find three qualities that Cloyd could strengthen to become a stronger person. For each of the qualities, prepare an evaluation of Cloyd’s performance and give him a letter grade. If you see evidence of improvement in his behavior, evaluate the change and explain why he may have improved.



Save your work for your portfolio.

Before You Read

Bearstone Chapters 16–22

FOCUS ACTIVITY

Think of a time when you have been in a beautiful natural setting or observed a colorful sunset or an awe-inspiring storm. What were your reactions to the scene?

Think-Pair-Share

Describe to a partner where you were, what kind of setting you were in, and how the experience affected you.

Setting a Purpose

Read to find out about Cloyd's and Walter's experiences in a beautiful natural setting.

BACKGROUND

Animals at Risk

Plants and animals at risk are listed in one of two categories. *Endangered species* are in danger of extinction, or disappearing forever. *Threatened species* are close to the point of becoming endangered. The grizzly bear is currently listed as threatened. A look at the numbers tells why. In 1800 an estimated fifty thousand grizzlies roamed the western United States. By 1975 the number dwindled to fewer than one thousand. In that year, the grizzly became a protected species, which guaranteed increased safety and efforts to restore their populations in selected areas such as Yellowstone National Park.

Plants and animals have become endangered because of the spread of farming, grazing, home construction, and road-building in their habitat, or living area. Other factors that may endanger a species are the clearing of forests, the hunting of the species by humans or other animals, and the arrival of new species. Animals that either are or have been declared endangered include the gray wolf, the Florida manatee, the spotted owl, the Chinook salmon, and the California condor.

Did You Know?

The Weminuche Wilderness Area, named for a group of Ute who lived in the region, is located in the San Juan and Rio Grande National Forests of southwestern Colorado. The area has three mountains that rise above 14,000 feet. Because so much snow falls on the mountains, the Weminuche is an important source of fresh water for the towns and cities of southwestern Colorado. The snow melts and runs off the mountain slopes into rivers and streams.

VOCABULARY PREVIEW

abruptly [ə brupt' lē] *adv.* suddenly; quickly

burly [bur' lē] *adj.* husky; stocky

confluence [kon' flōō əns] *n.* flowing together; meeting

scuttle [skut' əl] *v.* to run quickly

sheer [shēr] *adj.* steep; straight up and down

skeptically [skep' ti kəl lē] *adv.* with doubt; suspiciously

strenuous [stren' ū əs] *adj.* exhausting; difficult

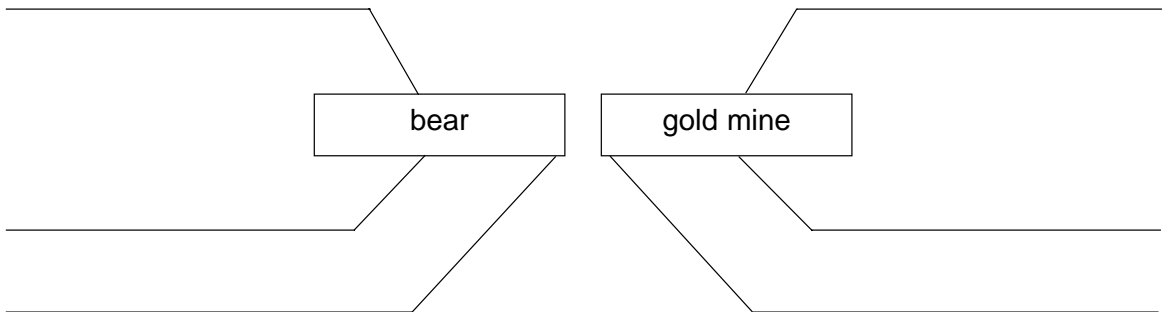
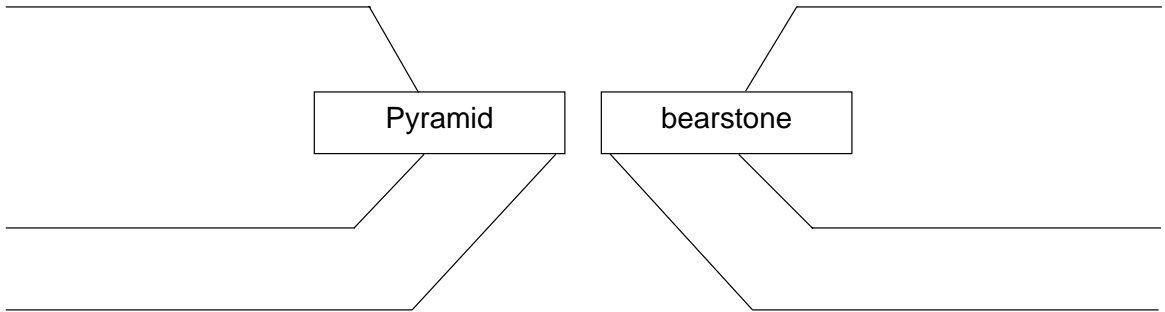
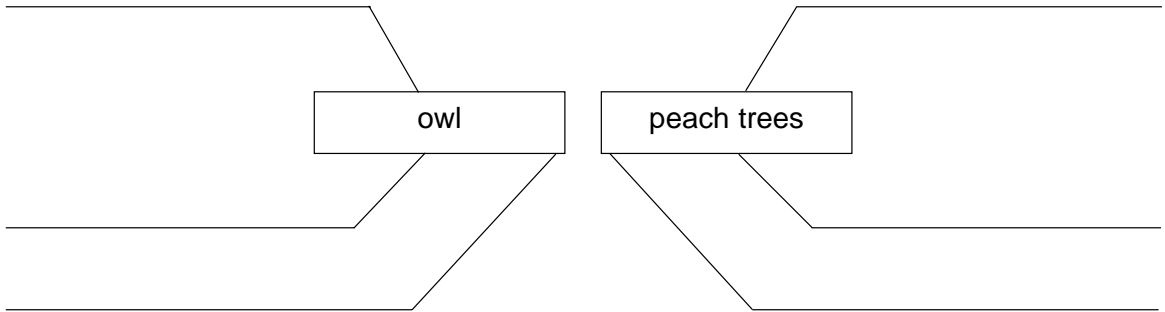
uncanny [un kan' ē] *adj.* unexplainable; astonishing

Active Reading

Bearstone Chapters 16–22

The last section of the novel contains several important symbols. A **symbol** is a person, place, object, or situation that represents more than itself. Symbols often represent values and qualities like courage or patriotism. As you read the last section of *Bearstone*, use the diagram on this page to record meanings that are associated with the symbols listed.

Cloyd's guilt



Responding

Bearstone Chapters 16–22

Personal Response

Are you satisfied with the ending of *Bearstone*? If so, explain why. If not, describe the kind of ending that you might prefer and the reasons why you would prefer it.

Analyzing Literature

Recall and Interpret

1. How is Walter injured? What decision led to the injury?

2. What does Cloyd do when he approaches the dead bear? Why does he feel he needs to do this?

3. What important decision does Cloyd make when the game warden asks him if he knew about the dead bear? In your opinion, why does Cloyd make this decision? Support your opinion with details from the book.

Responding

Bearstone Chapters 16–22

Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

Evaluate and Connect

4. How successful is the author in describing Cloyd’s experience on the Pyramid? What, if anything, did you find convincing about the writing?

5. Cloyd thinks of revenge as a kind of poison. List some examples from literature and real life that support this opinion. Why did the people involved seek revenge? What were the results? Could the situation have been addressed in a more positive way?

Literature and Writing

A New Cloyd?

By the time the novel ends, Cloyd has changed and learned something new about himself and his place in society. Write a summary of how Cloyd has changed. You may want to discuss questions like these: What does Cloyd learn in the novel? What new beliefs has he developed? How has his understanding of himself and his place in the world changed?

Extending Your Response

Literature Groups

At the end of chapter 21, Cloyd recalls his grandmother’s way of saying good-bye and decides that returning to live with Walter “was all part of learning what it meant to live in a good way.” In your group, discuss what “living in a good way” means to Cloyd. Find examples in the text that support your argument. Then discuss what living in a good way means to you. What kinds of activities, feelings, and values are part of living in a good way? What things work against living in a good way? How hard is it to do the things you know contribute to living in a good way?

Art Connection

Work together with a group of six other people to create illustrations for chapters 16–22 of the novel. Each person should be responsible for illustrating one event from a chapter. Choose a scene from your chapter. Read it carefully to note details. Then use a medium of your choice to make an illustration. Assemble your group’s illustrations into a folder, and share them with the rest of the class. Read aloud the passage on which each illustration is based, and explain why you made the artistic decisions you did.

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“I Know Who I Am”

Brent Ashabranner

Before You Read

Focus Question

Think of a time when you found yourself in an unfamiliar place. Were you uneasy? What memories or knowledge did you call on to strengthen your self-confidence in the situation?

Background

Brent Ashabranner’s book *To Live in Two Worlds* is made up of interviews and first-person accounts of young Native Americans. René Cochise, an intern at the Council on the Aging in Washington, D.C., tells her story to Ashabranner. In the interview, Cochise, a descendant of a great Apache leader, describes her feelings about living in the dominant culture while trying to maintain her Native American identity and honor her heritage and traditions.

Responding to the Reading

1. What is unusual about where René’s grandmother chooses to live? Why do you think she made this choice?

2. René mentions that sometimes teachers did not expect Native American students to do their best work. What effect might the attitudes of such teachers have on Native American students? What effect do you think such expectations would have on you?

3. What does René notice about some of the Native Americans she has met in Washington, D.C.? Why does she feel that the same thing would not happen to her?

4. **Making Connections** René feels that living away from the Apache reservation and gaining experience in Albuquerque, Las Cruces, and Washington are positive things. Do you think that Cloyd would agree with her, based on what happens to him at Walter’s farm and in the mountains? Explain.

Learning for Life

Imagine that you are either Cloyd Atcitty at the end of *Bearstone* or René Cochise during her internship in Washington, D.C. On a separate sheet of paper, write a letter to the other person in which you describe your recent experiences. Explain why these experiences have helped you understand your own identity and your place in society.

The Haste-Me-Well Quilt

Elizabeth Yates

Before You Read

Focus Question

Think of an object that you treasure. It could be a book, a piece of jewelry, an article of clothing, a painting, or a photograph. What feelings do you have when you look at or use this object? What mental pictures does it evoke?

Background

Elizabeth Yates has written over fifty books for young readers. She is best known for *Amos Fortune*, *Free Man*, which won the 1951 Newbery Medal. She enjoys gardening and sewing, which are skills she gives to her characters in “The Haste-Me-Well Quilt.” In this short story, Yates describes the everyday magic created by a loving family.

Responding to the Reading

1. When Simon asks if the quilt is a magic one, Grandmother replies, “Perhaps, but a very special kind of magic.” How would you describe the magic of the quilt?

2. Lucy explains that she could not go to art school and that scissors, thread, thimble, and calico are her artist’s tools. What do you think she means?

3. How does Lucy define magic when Simon claims there is magic in the quilt? How can you tell that Simon accepts this meaning by the end of the story?

4. **Making Connections** The quilt in this short story is the object that leads Simon to understand the importance of being happy in what one is doing. What object in *Bearstone* plays a similar role? Compare what Simon and Cloyd learn from these objects.

Art Connection

The quilt contains a record of Simon’s great-great-grandmother’s life in England. If you were to make a quilt that contained pictures of things you wanted to remember, what scenes and objects would you place on it? On a separate sheet of paper, draw two scenes that you would include on your own haste-me-well quilt.

Prayer to a Dead Buck

Navajo prayer translated by W. W. Hill

Before You Read

Focus Question

Traditionally, most Native Americans, even though they had great respect for living creatures, killed animals for food and other essentials. What conflicting feelings might a person who has just killed an animal for these reasons experience?

Background

The Navajo poem “Prayer to a Dead Buck” was recited by hunters after returning from a successful deer hunt. The poem mentions turquoise as part of the ritual. If the first deer killed in the hunt was a buck, a turquoise bead was placed between its horns. If the first deer killed was a doe, a white-shell bead was placed on its head.

Responding to the Reading

1. Which words are repeated several times in the prayer? What is the effect of this repetition?

2. The speaker prays that both he and the deer will continue to live beautifully. In what way can the dead deer continue to live?

3. The speaker of the prayer seems to have great respect and even love for the animal he has just killed. Do you think it is possible for a hunter to love and respect an animal that is being hunted? Explain.

4. **Making Connections** How would you describe the speaker’s attitude toward life and death? How would you describe Cloyd’s attitude in *Bearstone*? In what ways are their attitudes similar?

Creative Writing

When Cloyd finds the dead grizzly bear at the end of *Bearstone*, he asks the bear for forgiveness. Reread this section at the end of chapter 19. Then, on a separate sheet of paper, write something that Cloyd might have recited kneeling next to the grizzly. Keep in mind Cloyd’s feelings about the bear’s death.

The Wounded Wolf

Jean Craighead George

Before You Read

Focus Question

Do you believe that animals have thoughts and feelings, just like humans? What are some reasons for your answer?

Background

Jean Craighead George is known for her gripping tales of survival, her sensitive portrayal of animals, and her understanding of Native American cultures. Among her popular books are the Newbery Medal-winning story of an Inuit (Eskimo) girl, *Julie of the Wolves*; the survival story *My Side of the Mountain*; and *The Talking Earth*, about a Seminole Indian girl. Her short story “The Wounded Wolf” was published in 1978.

Responding to the Reading

1. How was Roko injured? What animals are following him? Why?

2. What things in the story tell you that the author has studied wolf behavior?

3. What finally happens to Roko? Does it seem realistic to you that the other wolves appear to care about Roko?

4. **Making Connections** Compare the physical struggle of Roko in *The Wounded Wolf* with the inner struggle that Cloyd faces in *Bearstone*.

Science Connection

In the United States, almost five hundred animal species are endangered or threatened. Do you know what animals are on the endangered or threatened species list in your state? Using library resources or the Web site of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, do research to find out what animals are on your state’s endangered species list. Pick one or two of the animals on the list and write a few brief paragraphs that describe the animal and the possible reasons it is endangered or threatened. Then find a picture of the animal(s) using available resources, or create your own drawing(s), and give a short oral presentation to the class about the animal(s). As a class, display the pictures of the endangered and threatened animals. To each picture, attach a short description of the animal.

The Black Fox

Betsy Byars

Before You Read

Focus Question

If you saw an animal you had not even known existed, how would you feel? Would you tell others about it?

Background

Betsy Byars, born in 1928 in Charlotte, North Carolina, has written over fifty books for young adults. Her novels have received many awards, including the 1971 Newbery Medal for *Summer of the Swans* and the 1981 American Book Award for *The Night Swimmers*. “The Black Fox” is the story of a young boy’s chance encounter with a unique animal.

Responding to the Reading

1. What is Tom’s attitude toward the farm at the beginning of the story? Does this attitude change at the story’s end? Explain.

2. Why does Tom eagerly await the mail each day? Are any of the items for him?

3. Tom initially believes that both his mom and his friend Petie are having more fun during the summer than he is. How might seeing the fox change his opinion of what is fun and what is not?

4. **Making Connections** Compare and contrast Cloyd’s experience with the bear in *Bearstone* and Tom’s experience with the fox in “The Black Fox.”

Internet Connection

Using *wildlife protection* as your key words, compile a list of ten Internet sites related to the preservation of animals in the wild. Share with your class the list of sites and at least three things you learned from the sites.