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## Study Guide

for

# The Yearling

by Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings



 **Glencoe  
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# Meet Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings



*It seems to me that the earth may be borrowed but not bought. It may be used, but not owned. It gives itself in response to love and tending, offers its seasonal flowering and fruiting. But we are tenants and not possessors, lovers and not masters.*

—Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings

It is no surprise that writing about the land became a central focus in Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings's life. Born in Washington, D.C., in 1896, Rawlings's happiest memories were of weekends spent at her family's farm in Maryland and of summers spent at her maternal grandfather's farm in Michigan. She was a bright child who learned to read at an early age. Encouraged by her parents to write, she won a two-dollar prize for a story that she submitted to the children's page of the *Washington Post* when she was eleven.

*The Yearling* has its origins in Rawlings's childhood. In an article she wrote for a Voice of America radio broadcast overseas, she said about the book's beginnings:

*I remember a very special sort of April day, the day I describe in the first chapter of *The Yearling*. I remember the delirious excitement I felt. And at the height of my delight, . . . I understood suddenly that . . . beyond this carefree moment life was waiting with its responsibilities. . . . As I became a writer, I thought back often to that April day and . . . I said to myself, "Sometime I shall*

*write a story about the job of childhood, and the strange foreknowledge of maturity."*

As an English major at the University of Wisconsin, Rawlings was elected to the Phi Beta Kappa honorary society in recognition of her outstanding scholastic achievement. She excelled at creative writing and acting. She also served on the staffs of the yearbook and the literary magazine, where she met Charles Rawlings, her future husband.

After graduating from college, Rawlings moved to New York City, where she hoped to get a job at a publishing house. Eventually, she did find work as a writer and editor for the War Work Council at the national headquarters of the YMCA, but the job was not particularly creative. In her spare time, she tried, with little luck, to sell her poems and short stories. She married Charles Rawlings a year later and moved to Louisville, Kentucky, where the couple found jobs writing for a local newspaper. Later they moved to Charles's hometown of Rochester, New York. While her husband traveled as a shoe salesman, Rawlings wrote for the local newspapers. By 1922 she was writing feature articles and conducting celebrity interviews. Rawlings later credited her newspaper work with teaching her more about writing than she had learned in her classes. However, she continued to have little luck selling her fiction and began to question whether she would ever achieve her lifelong dream of becoming a famous author.

Unhappy about their jobs and tired of city living, Rawlings and her husband bought an orange grove in Cross Creek in north central Florida and moved there in 1928. The move gave Rawlings a new focus and inspiration. She began writing about the hard, simple life of her neighbors and the harmony in which they lived with their wild surroundings. For the next twenty-five years she created literature out of her experiences in Florida. Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings died of a cerebral hemorrhage in 1953 at the age of fifty-seven and is buried in her beloved Florida backcountry.

# Introducing the Novel

*As a 'Southern' regionalist Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings was unique in having the insider's commitment of love for place, but also the outsider's objectivity, so that she could write of her chosen home with passion and sympathy but without the film of bias or prejudice peculiar to the place.*

—Gordon E. Bigelow, critic

In her own lifetime, Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings was best known as a regional writer—one who set her stories in a specific geographical area and presented its distinct culture through the history, speech, habits, customs, and folklore of its inhabitants. This classification frustrated the author, because she felt that regionalism should be a basic part of every piece of literature, much like the colors in a painting or the musical notes in a symphony. She believed that the truly great writer should be capable of taking material from any time or place and turning it into a universal thing of beauty.

With *The Yearling*, however, critics conceded that Rawlings had achieved something greater than regionalism. Although *The Yearling* vividly depicts a certain time and place, its message speaks to people everywhere. Lloyd Morris summed up the novel's appeal when he stated that Rawlings *plunges us deeply into the hearts and the perceptions of a child, a wise man, and a brave woman. It recreates for us those fundamental attitudes of the human spirit which make life enduring, and those inalienable experiences of love and beauty which enable us to live it without shame.*

Samuel I. Bellman, one of Rawlings's biographers, agrees: "This novel elevates the writer to the rank of those special authors who at least once in their lives are capable of giving us dreams to dream by and words to shape those dreams."

Rawlings received many letters from her fans—complete strangers who wanted her to know what had touched them most about the book. For example, the curator of the Museum of Comparative Zoology in Cambridge, Massachusetts, commented on her ability to authentically evoke a boy's

thoughts and feelings and to accurately portray natural history. A woman with two boyfriends reported that she had both men read *The Yearling*. She then decided to marry the one who responded more warmly to the book. Other readers cherished the novel for its descriptions of nature, its poetic qualities, or its humor. One young boy even wrote that he had always thought his father liked his sisters better than him, but that reading the novel made him realize that they had always paid more attention to their father than he had. He thought that with Jody, the novel's main character, as his inspiration, the novel would "start a better love" between him and his father. *The Yearling* carries a message that everyone can understand:

*Ever' man wants life to be a fine thing, and a easy. 'Tis fine, boy, powerful fine, but 'tain't easy. Life knocks a man down and he gits up and it knocks him down again. . . . What's he to do then? . . . Why, take it for his share and go on.*

## THE TIME AND PLACE

Both Florida coasts are well known to tourists, and a few cities, such as Orlando, are known as the homes of theme parks and other similar attractions. In contrast, few Americans are familiar with central Florida, a beautiful and unique area.

One of the qualities that make north central Florida unusual is its location. It is situated where the northern temperate zone passes into the semi-tropics. As a result, the area has the plant life of both zones as well as an approximation of all four seasons. During a short winter, when frosts are common and much growth is dormant, animals rest for long periods, even if they do not actually hibernate. Spring is a time of blossoming, particularly for the fruit trees. The trees bloom anywhere from late January to early March. May, sometimes the hottest month of the year, is the dividing line between spring and summer. The rains begin in June and last until mid-August. After this, the steadiness of the sun and its withering effect on plant life through October signal the presence of autumn.

*The Yearling* takes place in the late 1800s in the Big Scrub, a semiwilderness area located between the Oklawaha and St. Johns rivers. Measuring about fifty miles long and twenty-five miles wide, the area today falls within the Ocala National Forest.

The Baxters farm an area known as a *hammock*. Hammock soil is dark and rich, made up of centuries of leaves from live oak, palm, sweet gum, holly, ironwood, hickory, and magnolia trees.

In chapter 14, Penny Baxter plans to search the “prairies” for his missing hogs. The term *prairies* is misleading in this context, because instead of flat, rolling land, Penny is talking about wet, flat areas around the larger lakes of the area. More like marshes, the prairies Penny searches are home to water grasses.

The uniqueness of the area’s vegetation is perhaps best captured in the opening pages of

Rawlings’s first novel, *South Moon Under*:

*The scrub rolled towards its boundaries like a dark sea. It cast itself against the narrow beach of swamp and hammock that fringed the rivers. The two types of growth did not mingle, as though an ascetic race withdrew itself from a tropical one and refused to inter-breed. The moisture along the rivers gave a footing for the lush growth of cypress in the swamp; of live oak, magnolia, hickory, ash, bay, sweet gum and holly that made up the adjoining hammock.*

In *The Yearling* Rawlings emphasizes the silence of the scrub, its wildness and loneliness. Other than occasional hammock areas, the soil is so dry and sandy that, historically, few people were attracted to the area. Those who did come to live there had to be resourceful and self-supporting.

### Did You Know?

Today, the woods of central Florida remain much as they were when Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings made her home at Cross Creek. The area remains fairly isolated, even though its major industries—tourism and fruit production—have attracted attention. A few stores provide groceries and other supplies, but large-scale shopping centers have yet to infiltrate the low rolling hills of the peaceful wilderness. For every new house built, an older one sits empty, abandoned or relegated to a

part-time residence. Roads meander through rural neighborhoods.

This area is home to numerous large and small lakes. Most lakes in central Florida were formed by sinkholes, cave-ins that occur when a limestone layer under the surface of the earth erodes. The waters are home to various species of plant and animal life, including palm, hickory, and pine trees; lilies, orchids, and morning glories; and alligators, foxes, and herons.

# Before You Read

## *The Yearling* Chapters 1–13

### FOCUS ACTIVITY

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Do you believe that parents should be strict with their children or lenient? Why?

#### Journal

In your journal, briefly explain which style of parenting you think is better and why.

#### Setting a Purpose

Read to discover the kind of parents Jody Baxter has.

### BACKGROUND

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#### Did You Know?

Today the word *cracker* is considered offensive when used to describe a poor white person of the rural southeastern part of the United States. The term was once, however, a common label for people like the Baxters and the Forresters, hardworking farmers and hunters who depend on the land to keep them alive. The term is thought to refer to the cracked corn that the farmers and hunters used to eat or from the loud crack of the bullwhip they used to move and control cattle. According to many historical sources, these men and women came to Florida from the Appalachian Mountains. They worked in the Florida forests until the logging industry destroyed most of the large trees, after which they turned to farming to scratch out a living.

#### Figurative Language

Writers help readers visualize the experiences of their characters by creating vivid comparisons. In a **simile**, the words *like*, *than*, or *as* signal a comparison between two dissimilar things. In the simile, “He . . . cut a twig as even as a polished pencil,” for example, Rawlings helps readers visualize what a talented woodsman Jody is by comparing the twig that he cut to a pencil.

Another way that writers help their readers share the experiences of a character is through **personification**. This is a type of figurative, or descriptive, language in which an idea, object, or animal is given human characteristics, as in “The dusky glen laid cool hands on him.” By giving the glen human attributes like hands, Rawlings shows the close relationship that the characters have with nature.

### VOCABULARY PREVIEW

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**cotillion** [kə til' yən] *n.* formal ball; lively dance

**deprecatory** [dep' rə kə tōr' ē] *adj.* mildly critical or uncomplimentary, especially of oneself

**expedient** [iks pē' dē ənt] *adj.* appropriate to a particular purpose

**heresy** [her' ə sē] *n.* a controversial or non-traditional opinion or doctrine

**indolently** [ind' əl ənt lē] *adv.* lazily

**prolific** [prə lif' ik] *adj.* producing something in great abundance

**replete** [ri plēt' ] *adj.* filled; abundantly supplied

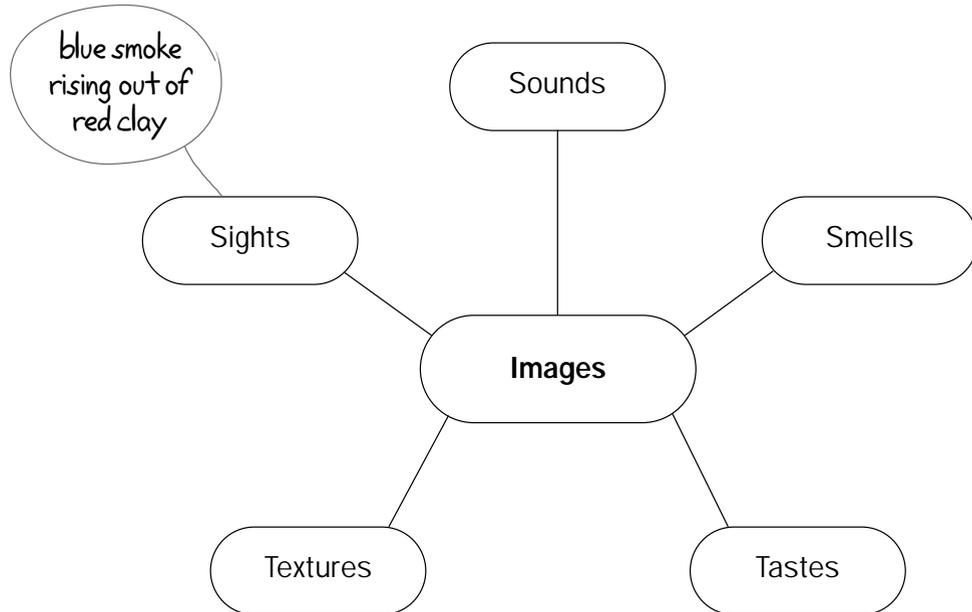
**rudiments** [rōō' də mənts] *n.* fundamental elements or principles

**venerable** [ven' ə r ə bəl] *adj.* commanding respect as a result of age, dignity, character, or position

# Active Reading

## *The Yearling* Chapters 1–13

*The Yearling* contains many vivid images, or descriptions that appeal to the five senses. As you read, use the cluster diagram below to take notes on images that you find especially interesting or effective.



# Responding

## *The Yearling* Chapters 1–13

### Personal Response

In your opinion, is Ora too strict a parent? Is Penny not strict enough? Review the entry that you wrote for the **Focus Activity**, and explain which person you think is the better parent and why.

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### Analyzing Literature

#### Recall and Interpret

1. At the beginning of the novel, what is the one thing that Jody feels he is missing? What does this feeling suggest about Jody's life?

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2. How does Penny react when Jody plays in the glen instead of doing his chores? How might Penny's experiences as a boy have influenced his attitude toward Jody?

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3. Who is Fodder-wing? How did he get his name? Why does Jody like him?

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4. Who is old Slewfoot? Why does Penny want to hunt him down?

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# Responding

## *The Yearling* Chapters 1–13

### Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

#### Evaluate and Connect

5. Penny and Ora have conflicting opinions about the Forresters and about Jody’s contact with the family. Contrast Penny’s and Ora’s attitudes, and explain which attitude you think is right. Be sure to include your reasons for taking one side or the other.

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6. When Buck Forrester and Oliver Hutto fight over a young woman they both like, Jody is torn between his loyalty and affection for both Oliver and Fodder-wing. Jody finally decides to take Oliver’s side. Why does he make this decision? Would you have made the same one? Why or why not?

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### Literature and Writing

#### Analyzing Motivation

At the end of chapter 1, Jody experiences pure joy on a perfect spring day. In the rest of the first section, you learn about the factors that have made this experience possible, such as his father’s reasons for choosing a home in a remote location. Imagine that you are Jody and must explain your feelings to someone who lives in the city and who has never had this kind of experience. Use details from the book to explain why you feel joyous and love living where you do.

#### Extending Your Response

##### Literature Groups

What is Penny Baxter like? If you could use only one or two words to describe him, what would they be? In your group, review and take notes on how Penny acts and what he says and thinks. Based on your notes, write a list of words that describe Penny. Choose two or three words that sum up Penny’s character, and explain your choices to others in your class.

##### Science Connection

In *The Yearling* Jody and his family are dependent on the nearby sinkhole for their water. Although Rawlings provides an explanation of sinkholes, additional scientific information will enhance your understanding of these natural “accidents.” Using print and Internet resources, investigate what a sinkhole is and why Florida has so many. You may want to focus your investigation on ancient sinkholes, such as the one in northwest Gainesville called the Devil’s Millhopper, or on record-breaking sinkholes, such as the 1981 collapse in Winter Park, Florida.



Save your work for your portfolio.

# Before You Read

## *The Yearling* Chapters 14–22

### FOCUS ACTIVITY

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How do people work through the loss of a loved one or another great loss?

#### Discuss

As a class, discuss ways in which people can work through grief and learn to deal with their loss.

#### Setting a Purpose

Read about Jody's loss and about how he comes to terms with it.

### BACKGROUND

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#### Did You Know?

When Jody takes in the orphaned fawn, the deer is very young and is still walking on wobbly legs and nursing. It is not yet a yearling—an animal that is one year old. Flag, as Jody names his new pet, was probably born in late March or early April. If the fawn is like most, it weighs about six pounds. His red coat is probably dappled with small white spots, which help him blend in with his surroundings. His fur makes him indistinguishable from the red clay of the soil, and the white markings on his coat look like spots of sunlight on the leaves and branches around him. These characteristics help protect young deer from their predators.

Fawns generally remain hidden for a week or two unless their mother is with them. This period of hiding gives the fawns' legs a chance to develop strength so that the young deer can accompany their mother when she forages for food.

Initially, Jody would have had to feed Flag six or more times a day. Even at four months, a twenty-five-pound fawn still nurses, although it is beginning to nibble on young, tender leaves and shoots as well as on berries. Soon it will add grasses and lichens to its diet. Because it has no upper front teeth, it seizes vegetation in its mouth, breaks or twists it off, and then swallows it without chewing. Later, while resting, it coughs up cuds of undigested food, grinds them up with its strong side teeth, and swallows them again. Animals that chew their cuds are called ruminants.

By the time Flag is five to six months old, his coat will have turned brown, and the spots will have disappeared. Had he been in the wild during the summer and fall, he would have spent early mornings and evenings eating apples, dried corn, acorns, nuts, and mushrooms. He would have needed to store up layers of fat to help him survive the winter, when food was scarce.

### VOCABULARY PREVIEW

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**depredations** [dep' rə dā' shəns] *n.* damages or losses

**implacable** [im plək' ə bəl] *adj.* hard-hearted; impossible to change

**marauder** [mə rō' dər] *n.* a person who raids in search of valuables

**paradox** [par' ə doks'] *n.* a seemingly contradictory statement that may be true

**pungency** [pʊn' jən sē] *n.* a sharp, penetrating smell

**quiescent** [kwī es' ənt] *adj.* being still or at rest

**staunch** [stōnch] *adj.* firm and steadfast; faithful

**stolidly** [stol' id lē] *adv.* with little emotion; impassively

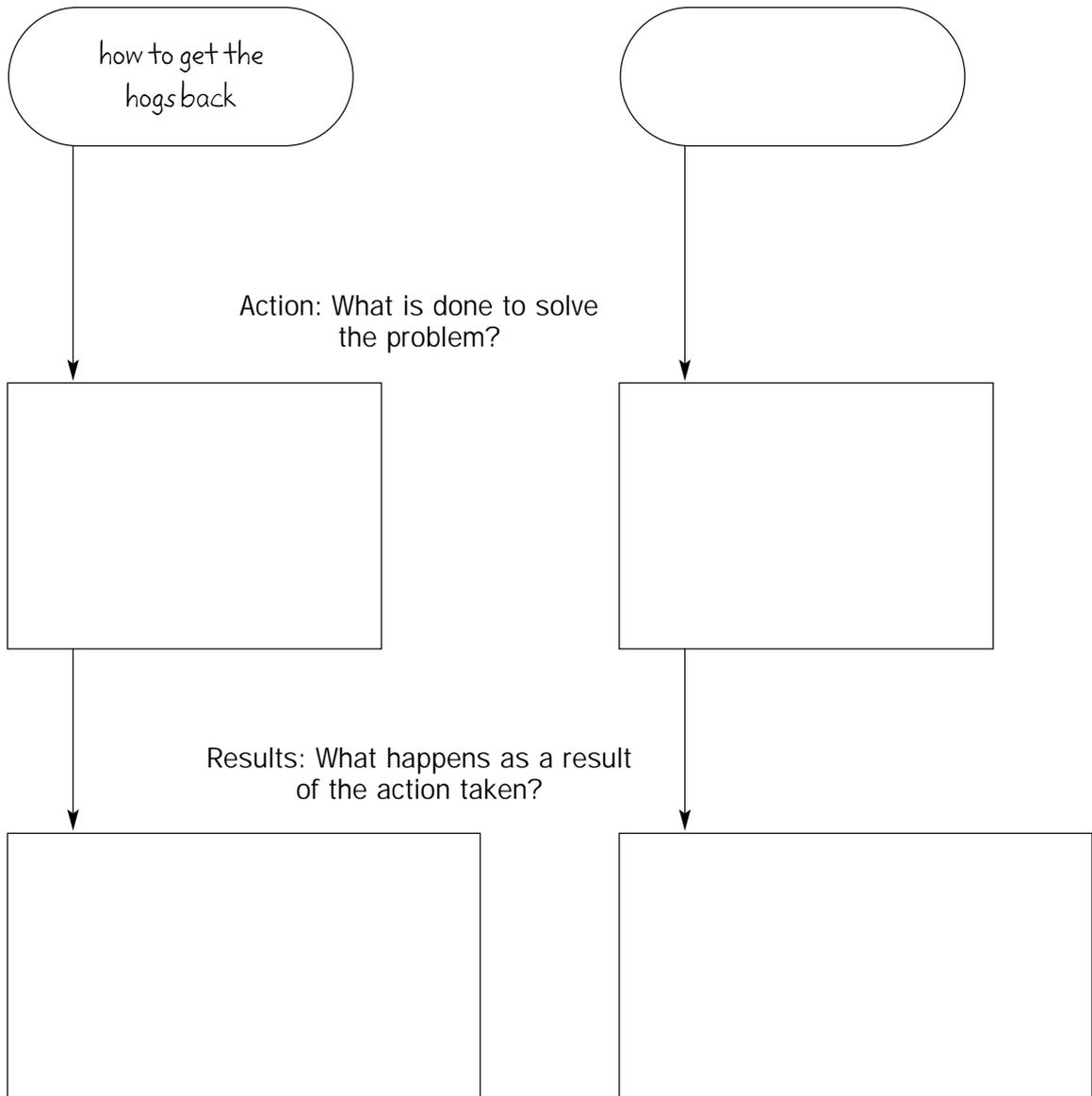
**tacit** [tas' it] *adj.* not spoken; implied by or inferred from actions or statements

# Active Reading

## The Yearling Chapters 14–22

In the study of literature, *conflict* refers to a struggle between opposing forces. *The Yearling* contains a number of different conflicts that move the story forward. Choose at least one conflict in addition to the one provided below. Then fill out the diagrams to analyze how conflict affects the story.

Conflict: What is the problem?



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# Responding

## *The Yearling* Chapters 14–22

### Personal Response

Do you think Jody was right to bring the orphaned fawn home with him? Why or why not?

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### Analyzing Literature

#### Recall and Interpret

1. Why did the Forresters trap and take the Baxters' hogs? Why is the loss of the hogs so serious a problem for the Baxters?

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2. When and why does Jody keep a vigil by his father's bedside? Why does Jody think of the fawn during the vigil?

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3. Why did Fodder-wing think Flag was a good name for Jody's fawn?

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4. How does Jody come to terms with Fodder-wing's death? Review your answer to the **Focus Activity**. Did Jody's way of coping appear on your list? If not, would you add it? Why or why not?

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# Responding

## *The Yearling* Chapters 14–22

### Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

#### Evaluate and Connect

5. Evaluate the effects of the flood on the Baxter household. Why are the consequences of the flood so devastating?

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6. Did you expect anyone from the Forrester family to help the Baxters? Why or why not? Would you have been able to overlook your hard feelings to take over Penny Baxter's chores until he recuperated? Explain your reasons.

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### Literature and Writing

#### Idioms

Penny and Ora Baxter, Ma and Pa Forrester, and Grandma Hutto often deliver their common-sense observations in idioms, or brief, colorful sayings that characterize a particular region. For example, Penny says of Easy Ozell, Grandma Hutto's helper, "He's sure got a low eye for a high fence," meaning that Easy does not stand a chance of getting Grandma to pay attention to him as a man. Find other examples of idioms in the novel, and select one that you find interesting. Then, in a paragraph or two, explain what the idioms means and how it relates to the characters and plot.

#### Extending Your Response

##### Literature Groups

*The Yearling* contains many exciting conflicts involving nature. As a group, choose a conflict that you find especially interesting, and discuss what makes it so. Is it the narrator's description? The characters involved? The suspense of wondering how the conflict will turn out? Share your conclusions with others in your class.

##### Learning for Life

A eulogy is a special speech of praise that is delivered at a funeral. Imagine that you are Jody and that the Forresters have asked you to eulogize Fodder-wing. In your speech, describe Fodder-wing's best qualities and explain why he will be missed.



Save your work for your portfolio.

# Before You Read

## *The Yearling* Chapters 23–33

### FOCUS ACTIVITY

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Almost everyone feels like running away from his or her problems from time to time. What do you suppose makes people feel this way?

#### Discussion

With a group of your classmates, discuss your response to the question above. What are the disadvantages of running away? Are there any advantages? What might someone learn from the experience?

#### Setting a Purpose

Read to find out how Jody learns to cope with his problems.

### BACKGROUND

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#### Point of View

Although *The Yearling* often gives the impression that it is told from the point of view of twelve-year-old Jody Baxter, the narrative point of view is actually **third-person**. This point of view allows the author to give readers direct access to Jody's and other characters' thoughts, feelings, and reactions and to interpret or comment on the action in a more detached way.

The beginning of chapter 2 illustrates how Rawlings accomplishes these effects. The chapter begins as a record of Penny Baxter's thoughts as he lies in bed. The third-person narrator then provides necessary background information about Penny's past and his reasons for coming to live in the scrub. Finally, the narrator returns to Penny's thoughts. This technique allows the author to move back and forth in time to reveal the character's inner, unspoken thoughts.

#### Did You Know?

The Florida black bear is an intimidating animal. Though it may look awkward, it can run very fast and climb trees with amazing ease because of its sharp, curved claws. It uses its powerful front paws to subdue prey, and it can easily kill a small creature. The black bear has a good sense of hearing, and its sense of smell is especially keen.

### VOCABULARY PREVIEW

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**blithe** [blīth] *adj.* carefree and lighthearted

**condescension** [kon' di sen' shən] *n.* the act of dealing with people in a patronizingly superior manner

**emaciated** [i mā' shē āt əd] *adj.* extremely thin; starved

**harbinger** [här' bin jər] *n.* an indication of something to come

**inexorable** [i nek' sər ə bəl] *adj.* incapable of being stopped; relentless

**mollified** [mol' ə fīd] *adj.* soothed

**ribald** [rib' əld] *adj.* characterized by vulgar humor

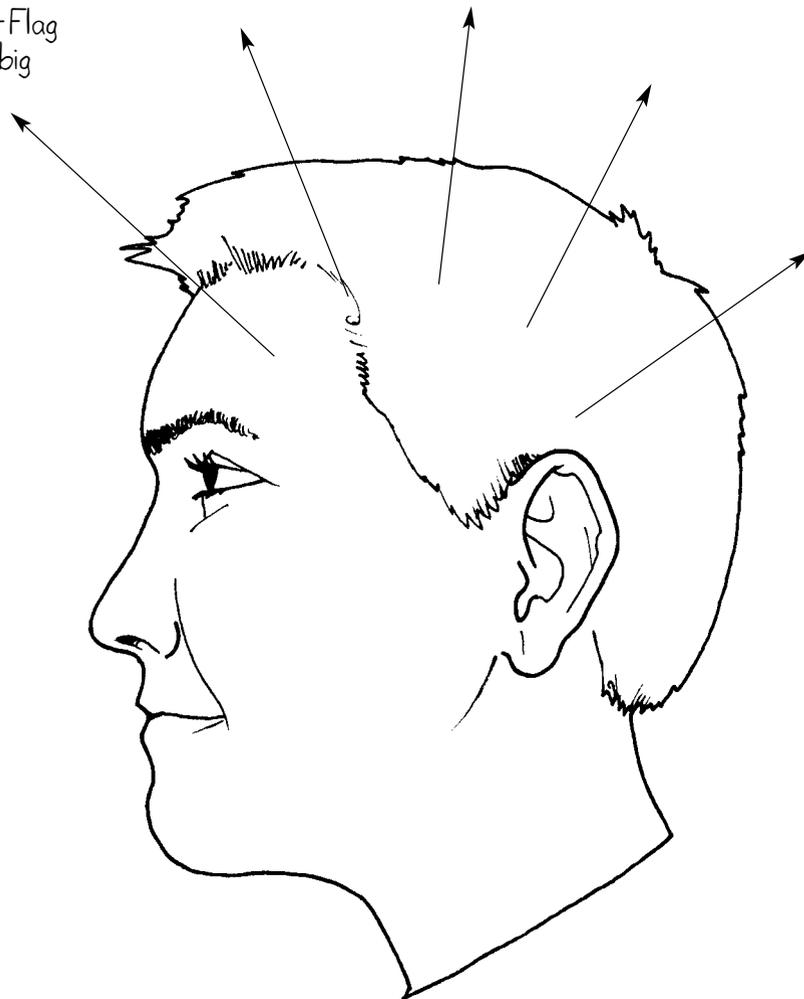
**voracity** [vô ras' ə tē] *n.* ravenous hunger

# Active Reading

## *The Yearling* Chapters 23–33

In this last section of the novel, Jody is tormented by what to do about his growing, mischievous fawn. As you read, write down the many conflicting thoughts and feelings Jody experiences. Also take note of what Jody comes to realize at the end of the novel.

realizes that Flag  
is getting big



# Responding

## *The Yearling* Chapters 23–33

### Personal Response

What was your reaction to the death of Flag? Explain.

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### Analyzing Literature

#### Recall and Interpret

1. Why does Penny insist on hunting the wolves rather than poisoning them?

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2. How do the Forresters plan on paying the Baxters for their share of the bear meat?

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3. Why does Grandma Hutto tell Oliver a lie about how the fire started in her house?

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# Responding

## *The Yearling* Chapters 23–33

### Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

#### Evaluate and Connect

4. When Jody meets Nellie Ginright, he decides that women come in breeds, just like dogs. Why does he make this comparison? Do you agree with him? Why or why not?

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5. Review your response to the **Focus Activity** you completed before reading the final section of the novel. How would Jody have responded to the same questions had he been a member of your group?

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### Literature and Writing

#### Choosing a Title

Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings considered a number of different titles for the novel, including *The Sinkhole* and *Juniper Creek*, before she chose *The Yearling*. What would you have called the book if you had written it? If you think the title she chose is fitting, what do you think makes *The Yearling* an especially good title for this novel? Explain your opinions in a paragraph or two.

#### Extending Your Response

##### Literature Groups

With your literature group, look for places in the novel where the point of view shifts from Jody's unspoken thoughts to more detached third-person observations. As you encounter each example, discuss why the shift occurs and what it contributes to your understanding of the plot or the characters. Take notes on your conclusions, and use the notes to share your ideas with others in your class.

##### Internet Connection

Research the wildlife that lives in your state. What are some of the problems faced by the wildlife? What problems do wild animals pose to the human population? Plan an Internet Web site that shows the interactions between wildlife and the human population in your state. Use pictures from magazines or your own drawings to illustrate your Web site.



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# Baby Deer Do Need Your Help

## Feeding Deer in Winter

Nate Tripp

Jerome B. Robinson

### Before You Read

#### Focus Question

What motivates people to help wild animals in distress?

#### Background

Animal lovers who try to rescue wild deer in distress sometimes do more harm than good. Writer Nate Tripp explains why deer lovers should follow the motto “If You Care, Leave Them There!” Writer Jerome B. Robinson describes what people can do to help deer when food is scarce.

### Responding to the Reading

1. According to Tripp, what is the purpose of the hiding behavior exhibited by fawns?

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2. Sum up the protective behaviors that does display. What do people sometimes mistakenly think the does' actions mean? How might a knowledge of animal behavior help people protect wildlife?

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3. According to Robinson, why is supplemental feeding harmful to the wild deer population?

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4. Evaluate the research that Robinson conducted to write the article. What authorities on animal life does he quote? What facts and statistics does he provide? What are the sources of these facts and statistics? In your opinion, are these sources reliable? Why or why not?

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5. **Making Connections** Compare and contrast Jody's attitude toward Flag with Tripp's and Robinson's attitudes toward wild deer. In what ways are their attitudes similar? In what ways are they different?

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### Learning for Life

With a partner, identify a community environmental problem such as air, noise, or water pollution. Together, do research to find out what you and others in your community can do to help solve the problem. Sum up your findings in a rhyming motto like Nate Tripp's, and create a poster to help educate your classmates.

# The Cub

Lois Dykeman Kleihauer

## Before You Read

### Focus Question

What qualities or characteristics do you think are important in a positive relationship between father and son?

### Background

Lois Dykeman Kleihauer, born in 1907, was an author and a poet. In this story she describes the process of growing up and the evolving relationship between a father and a son.

## Responding to the Reading

1. How does the father's strength affect the boy's view of the world as he is growing up?

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2. Why does the boy challenge his father over and over again? Why do you suppose the boy cries after he wins?

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3. Do you think the father and son will wrestle each other again? Why or why not?

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4. **Making Connections** Compare Jody's progress toward manhood with that of the boy in "The Cub." What kinds of conflict do they experience that mark their initiation as adults? How do their fathers contribute to the boys' maturation processes? Give examples from both texts to support your answer.

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## Creative Writing

At the end of the short story, the reader can only guess at the feelings of the mother, father, and son. With two other classmates, write a follow-up scene in which the three characters discuss what has just happened and how they feel about it. Try to end the scene with a satisfying, interesting, and believable resolution. Then perform your scene for the class.

# The Day Before Spring

Ann Haymond Zwinger

## Before You Read

### Focus Question

What can a storm, the change of seasons, or the birth of an animal teach you about life in general?

### Background

One of the most important skills required of a naturalist is observation—the act of looking at an object or event carefully and objectively. Ann Haymond Zwinger is a scientist who uses her observations as a jumping-off point for reflection. In this reading Zwinger describes her search for the first signs of spring around her home near Pikes Peak in Colorado. Zwinger is also the author of *Downcanyon: A Naturalist Explores the Colorado River Through Grand Canyon*, which won the Western States Book Award for Creative Nonfiction.

## Responding to the Reading

1. Why is finding signs of spring so important to the author?

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2. Recall that a simile is a figure of speech using *like* or *as* to compare seemingly unlike things. What are some similes the author uses to describe the first signs of spring? What do these similes add to the article?

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3. What impressions do you get of the author's personality based on what she says about herself and on what she chooses to describe?

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4. **Making Connections** Imagine that Jody Baxter and Ann Haymond Zwinger had the chance to compare notes about spring. What similarities and differences might they find in their observations and notes?

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## Nature Writing

Choose an object or event from nature, such as a flower or seashell, a shooting star, the movement of clouds, or the nest-building techniques of a particular bird, and describe it in detail. Use words and similes that will help your readers envision what you are describing.

# from Living with Wildlife

the California Center for Wildlife

## Before You Read

### Focus Question

What would you do if you found that a family of raccoons had taken up residence in your attic or if you found a baby bird with a broken wing in your backyard?

### Background

*Living with Wildlife* is a Sierra Club Book put together by the California Center for Wildlife along with Diana Landau and Shelley Stump. Both the Sierra Club and the California Center for Wildlife are known for their dedication to researching and protecting the ecology and resources of the earth. The following reading offers advice on how to enjoy wild creatures while protecting their homes and ways of life.

## Responding to the Reading

1. What are some of the reasons the authors give for not keeping wild animals as pets?

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2. What events might cause wild animals like deer and raccoons to come into conflict with humans?

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3. What are some ways to maximize wildlife contact but minimize damage?

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4. **Making Connections** Based on your reading of this selection, how would you evaluate the Baxters' final decision concerning Flag?

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## Learning for Life

Educate the members of your community by writing an editorial that suggests ways in which people can best share the environment with wildlife. For example, you might concentrate on the negative effects of birdfeeders or ways to secure garbage cans to prevent animals from breaking in. Begin your editorial with reasons why humans must be sensitive to the needs of wild creatures.

# from *Animal Partners:* Training Animals to Help People Patricia Curtis

## Before You Read

### Focus Question

What instances can you describe of animals helping people?

### Background

Patricia Curtis has written numerous books on all kinds of animals, including animals that help people. In *Animal Partners: Training Animals to Help People*, Curtis has collected stories about animals who are used in therapy. The following selections are about two different programs that use animals to help heal troubled or emotionally disturbed children.

## Responding to the Reading

1. In what ways were animals able to help Josephine, Raoul, and Chris?

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2. Why do you suppose that troubled children and prison inmates can more easily have compassion for animals than for other human beings?

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3. What kinds of characteristics would you look for in an animal that is going to work with special populations, such as emotionally disturbed children or the elderly? Explain.

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4. **Making Connections** What kinds of emotional support characterize Jody's and Fodder-wing's relationships with their animals? In what ways are those relationships therapeutic?

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## Research and Present

With a partner, find out how organizations such as Pet Partners of Delta Society or Canine Companions for Independence train animals and their human counterparts for work in different fields. Draft a letter to one of the organizations in the field of animal-assisted therapy, explaining what you are researching and asking for specific information about the organization's program and methods of training. Request that the organization send you any available materials about its program, such as a brochure, a video, or a training manual. Remember to express your appreciation for the organization's time and efforts. Present your findings to the class.