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Literature Teaching Unit

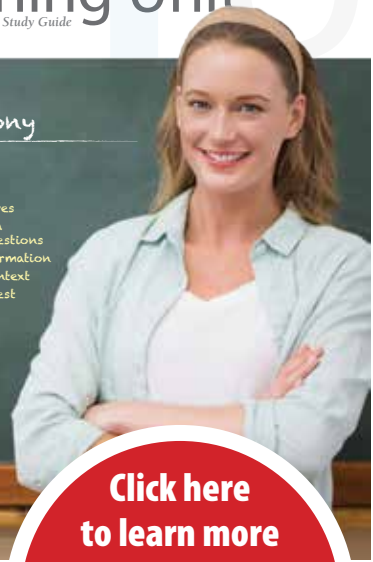
Chapter-by-Chapter Study Guide



The Red Pony

by John Steinbeck

- Learning objectives
- Study Guide with short-answer questions
- Background information
- Vocabulary in context
- Multiple-choice test
- Essay questions
- Literary terms



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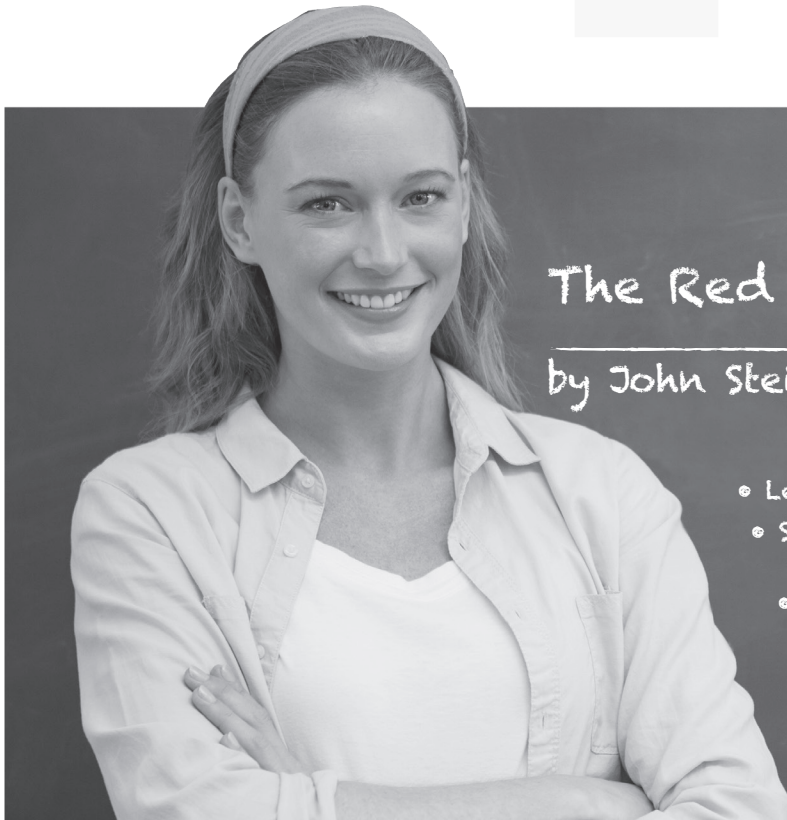
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P.O. Box 658, Clayton, DE 19938
www.prestwickhouse.com
800.932.4593

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Item No: 300925

Objectives

By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:

1. identify the genre to which the work belongs, the episodic novel.
2. describe life among a ranching family in California during the early twentieth century.
3. demonstrate how Steinbeck uses objectivity in describing characters and situations.
4. make inferences about the characters from the objective detail Steinbeck gives.
5. compare the style of the novel to that of a bildungsroman, or coming-of-age novel.
6. discuss “naturalism” and “realism” and find evidence of each in the novel.
7. identify Steinbeck’s use of the third person, partially omniscient, point of view, which at times reveals Jody’s thoughts.
8. explain how the parts of the novel are related as they follow the development of Jody’s maturity.
9. recognize and discuss the following thematic ideas in *The Red Pony*:
 - A Maturity comes with the acceptance of the harshness of reality.
 - B Sensitivity is developed in people when they are able to share with others who care for them and who have experienced suffering like theirs.
 - C Gains are made when people unify and support each other.
 - D The dignity of the old should be respected.
 - E The imagination, often used only by children, provides an escape from reality.
10. explain the terms dramatic foil and static and dynamic characters.
11. compare and contrast the main characters of the novel.
12. identify and explain unifying aspects of the novel.
13. identify and explain cause and effect relationships within the novel.
14. recognize and discuss the numerous life lessons Jody learns throughout the novel.
15. discuss the significance of the section titles in the novel.
16. prove that Steinbeck believes that it is the very old and the very young people who are the most natural.

Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. What do you think is significant about the title of the novel? Is Gabilan's story the central tale of the book?
2. Some critics claim that the novel is more like a series of short stories rather than one long tale. Do you agree or disagree? Explain your answer.
3. Discuss Jody's relationship with his father. Do you think it changes over the course of the novel? Explain your answer.
4. There are numerous human characters in the novel, but only four seem to be in every section. Who are the four main characters of the novel? What are their relationships to each other?
5. Billy Buck is presented in many different ways throughout the novel. These include: a father figure, worker, cowhand, son, and doctor. Examine the many roles Billy plays. Which do you think is the most important?
6. The book is written in a limited omniscient, third person point of view. Why do you think Steinbeck chooses this style of narration?
7. Gabilan appears twice in the novel. What is the symbolic reasoning behind this?
8. Most of the novel focuses on events that occur on the Tiflin's ranch. However, some events do take place off the ranch. How do the settings differ in their effect on the tone and mood of the novel?
9. Discuss the relation between Billy Buck and Carl Tiflin. How does their relationship change in the course of the novel?
10. Death is a recurring theme throughout the novel. Why do you think Steinbeck has his young protagonist face such harsh realities?
11. In what ways do you think Jody is a typical ten-year-old boy?
12. Explain what effect, if any, Gabilan (the horse) has on Jody's maturity. What does he learn from the horse and his relationship with it?
13. Explain some of the ways that Steinbeck reinforces the theme of responsibility in the novel.
14. Steinbeck himself grew up in Salinas, California, the setting for *The Red Pony*. What aspects of realism does he add to make the setting of the story more believable?

The Red Pony

Part I—The Gift

VOCABULARY

bunkhouse – a building where farm and ranch workers live
carion – decaying flesh
chambray – a light, woven fabric
contemplative – thoughtful
corral – a place to hold cattle
curried – rubbed down and cleaned an animal's coat
disciplinarian – one who is strict and controlling
fallible – able to be wrong
hackamore – a rope harness
jangling – making harsh noises, clinking
oilcloth – a waterproof cloth
putrefied – rotted, decayed
reservations – doubts, hesitations
skinned – peeled, removed

1. In the first few pages, three of the novel's major characters are introduced. Identify and describe Billy Buck, Jody, and Carl Tiflin.

2. When Carl remarks to Billy, "But a man needs company. Besides your throat gets pretty dry," "dry throat" refers to which of Billy and Carl's social hobbies?

3. Jody is described as destroying a muskmelon while on his way back home from his morning walk and then concealing it. Why do you think he considers it a "bad thing to do?"

5. What is ironic and allusive about the Gabilan Mountains?

6. Re-read Steinbeck’s description of Gitano. The author is using objective details to infer certain aspects of Gitano’s character. What are these inferences?

7. When Gitano asks Jody “Do you live here,” the narrator describes the boy as being “embarrassed.” Why do you think Jody is embarrassed?

8. Explain the significance of the following line: “Jody’s mother was silent for a little, and curious homesick thoughts ran through her mind, but quickly she cleared them out.”

9. In your opinion, how does Carl treat Gitano? Do you think he is justified in not allowing Gitano to stay? Explain your answer.

10. The Tiflins’ horse, Easter, has an obvious symbolic purpose. What does the name suggest about the horse?

11. What parallels does Carl see between Gitano and Easter?

Part IV—The Leader of the People

VOCABULARY

contemptuously – scornfully
convened – gathered
dirge – a funeral song
disconsolately – cheerlessly
gaiters – coverings of the lower leg
judiciously – showing good judgement
mimicked – imitated
ominously – threateningly
profanity – offensive language
reverence – deep respect
unseemly – improper
westering – going westward

1. This section starts as Jody exits the house from breakfast. What is the literary term for stories that begin in the middle of the action?

2. What similarities exist between the openings of sections three and four?

3. What does the term Big Britches mean? Why is Jody called Big Britches?

4. How does Carl react to the news that his father-in-law will be coming for a visit?
