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Teaching Unit™

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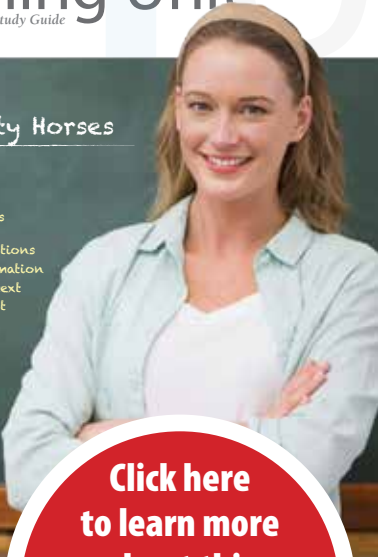
Prestwick House
Literature
Teaching Unit
Chapter-by-Chapter Study Guide



All the Pretty Horses

by Cormac McCarthy

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



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All the Pretty Horses

Objectives

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

1. define the term *bildungsroman*, and explain how this novel is a *bildungsroman* for the protagonist John Grady.
2. describe the author's style and identify the specific narrative techniques the author employs to create his style, including:
 - the use of allusion
 - the use of dialect
 - a slow exposition
 - free indirect discourse
 - the lack of quotation marks
 - untranslated Spanish passages
 - the repetition of phrases (anaphora)
3. identify the ending of the cowboy era as a major theme of the novel, find examples from the text that illustrate this ending, and discuss how the changing times affects the protagonist.
4. discuss how the motif of blood is central to the story by giving examples of where it is used and why it is an appropriate symbol for the novel.
5. discuss how John Grady's relationship to horses affects the story and informs the reader about his character.
6. identify the theme of adolescent rebellion against parental authority figures, give examples of its occurrence in the text, and discuss why it is a significant aspect of the story.
7. discuss the significant impact of war on various characters in the novel
8. examine John Grady's parental figures and identify how he feels about each and the impact they have had on his life.
9. discuss the role women play in the novel, especially in relationships with the protagonist, and identify what constraints society places on women during this time period.
10. explain the role physical violence plays in the novel and how it contributes to the protagonist's maturation.

All the Pretty Horses

Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. Identify three scenes in the novel in which the author either uses the imagery of blood to describe the landscape or a character's real blood is a major part of the scene. Why do you think blood so frequently comes up throughout the novel? How does this motif relate to themes in the novel?
2. Describe the various ways the author attempts to create authenticity in his dialogue. Do you find these methods add value to the story or make the story more difficult to understand for the reader? Why or why not? Give examples of points in the text that support your position.
3. In what ways is John Grady's father somewhat of a disappointment to him? What are the positive aspects of their relationship? What impairs his father's ability to be a good parent?
4. Describe how the changes in John Grady's hometown relate to larger shifts in the Southwestern way of life. Compare the era that is passing in the novel to the one that seems to be arriving.
5. What is the significance of John Grady's father's comparison of modern people to the Comanche Indians? How does this frame the rest of the novel and relate to its main themes?
6. Describe the various issues John Grady has with his mother. What is the source of their problems? Does John Grady have any other mother figures in the novel?
7. Characterize the role Rawlins plays in the novel. At what points in the novel do his good instincts predict danger? Ultimately, how is he similar or different from John Grady?
8. Explain how Rawlins and John Grady earn respect when they first arrive at the hacienda. What does this undertaking reveal to the reader about their characters and values?
9. Compare and contrast the two romantic relationships that end for John Grady during the novel. Who was responsible for the end of each relationship? How has each affected him, and how does he feel about the ending of them?
10. A number of characters introduced early in the novel are mirrored or reflected in later characters. Identify two of these pairs and the similar roles they play in John Grady's life.
11. Why do you think both John Grady and Don Héctor believe cattle is the only wealth proper to man? What does this reveal to you about their values and characters?
12. Discuss how main characters in the novel are affected by the history of their families. Explain how major historical events, such as wars, also shape the lives of many characters.

5. Discuss the repetition of the word “blood” in this chapter. What do you think the author is trying to convey?

6. Identify a simile from this chapter.

7. The author describes the main character as standing “like a man come to the end of something.” What do you think the author is suggesting is coming to an end?

8. The name of the main character is not revealed until the sixth page of the book. The author continues to slowly reveal basic facts about the story throughout the first chapter. How does this slow exposition affect the reader? Why might the author have chosen to do this?

9. What year did John Grady’s grandfather die?

10. What does the information about the grandfather’s seven brothers add to the reader’s understanding of John Grady’s family history and his home?

11. Why does John Grady’s grandfather reflect upon the laws of “primogeniture”?

39. What is Goshee, and why was John’s mother so important to his father while he was there?

40. Why does John Grady’s father compare modern people to the Comanche? Why is this comparison significant?

41. How would you describe the tone and style of the novel so far? What is the author’s attitude to the subject matter he is describing?

42. What are Rawlins and John Grady planning on doing? Why?

43. What happened between Mary Catherine and John Grady? Why does she come over to talk to him?

44. Mary Catherine says, “Everything’s talk isn’t it?” and John Grady responds, “Not everything.” What do you think he means?

8. How does the sight of the beautiful woman, while he is riding the grullo, affect John Grady? Who is she?

9. Interpret how the vaqueros now feel about the boys based on the quote, “when John Grady pointed and asked that it be passed there came hands from both sides of the table to take up the dish and hand it down in this manner like a ceremonial bowl.” Do you think John and Rawlins intended to have this result from their work?

10. In what war do you suppose Luis, the mozo, fought?

11. Luis says that horses love war just as men do. He also repeats what his father told him, “No man who has not gone to war [on] horseback can ever truly understand the horse...” What do you think of this claim, in light of how well John Grady seems to understand horses?

12. What does Luis tell the young men about horses and souls?

13. “He said that among men there was no such communion as among horses and the notion that men can be understood at all was probably an illusion.” Explain what Luis means by this statement.

24. Why does John Grady go to Pérez again?

25. What is Pérez referring to when he says, “It is not a matter of finding. It is only a matter of choosing.”

26. What does Pérez believe is the difference between Americans and Mexicans?

27. What is the significance of the tattoos the man has?

28. Explain how John Grady comes to kill the cuchillero.

29. Where is John Grady when he awakes? What is his condition?

30. Why does John Grady think about his father in Goshee while he is recovering?
