

Objective Tests
and
Thinking/Writing Prompts

for

Old Yeller

By Fred Gipson



A Novel Teaching Pack

By Margaret Whisnant

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Old Yeller

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ONE

Pages 1-14



Write the letter of the correct answer in the blank before each question.

- _____ 1. Which of the following was **not** a reason for Old Yeller's name? (A) His short hair was a dingy yellow. (B) He would immediately start barking as soon as Little Arliss yelled for him to chase a rabbit. (C) The sound he made was closer to being a yell than a bark.
- _____ 2. When Old Yeller strayed up to the log cabin on Birdsong Creek, (A) he made Travis so mad at first he wanted to kill the dog, (B) Papa tried for more than a week to run him off, (C) he chased the chickens and the cattle.
- _____ 3. Old Yeller's story took place in the late 1860's right after (A) the Revolutionary War, (B) the Civil War, (C) the Spanish American War.
- _____ 4. Travis and his family lived in (A) Kansas, (B) Oklahoma, (C) Texas.
- _____ 5. Papa and other Salt Licks settlers combined their steers and trailed them to a new cattle market in Abilene, Kansas, because (A) the family needed the cash money, (B) there was not enough good pasture around Birdsong Creek, (C) the price of beef was predicted to fall in a few months.
- _____ 6. Some of the men hesitated to go on the six-hundred mile drive because (A) there were warring Indians in the territory they would have to cross, (B) it was not certain the cattle were strong enough to make the trip, (C) they would be gone for months, leaving the womenfolks and children of Salt Licks to make out the best they could.
- _____ 7. The day Papa left, Mama was trying to keep from crying, but five-year-old Little Arliss was howling because (A) the sight of Papa on a horse always frightened him, (B) he couldn't go with Papa, (C) he could sense that Mama was upset.
- _____ 8. The day Papa left, how old was Travis? (A) twelve years old, (B) fourteen years old, (C) sixteen years old.

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TWO

Pages 15-20



Write either **True** or **False** in the blank before each statement.

- _____ 1. Travis found Old Yeller at daylight in the dog run where he had helped himself to a side of middling meat.
- _____ 2. Old Yeller was big, ugly, thin and starved looking, one of his ears had been chewed clear off, and his tail had been bobbed close to the rump.
- _____ 3. Old Yeller covered in shame and fear when Travis saw that he had eaten the last of the family's hog meat.
- _____ 4. Old Yeller lay on the ground and hollered because Travis kicked him twice as hard as he could.
- _____ 5. Little Arliss threatened to wear Travis to a frazzle if he didn't quit kicking his dog.
- _____ 6. Little Arliss hit Travis with a stick and was ready to fight Mama to protect his dog.
- _____ 7. Travis knew the dog didn't belong to anyone in Salt Lick, so he agreed with Mama right away about keeping the dog.
- _____ 8. Because Old Yeller had climbed on top of a meal barrel to reach the meat hanging from the rafters, Mama said he was a smart dog.
- _____ 9. Travis had a dog when he was little, and Mama said it was fair that Arliss had one to keep him from being lonely.
- _____ 10. Mama had no idea that Travis was planning to find a way to get rid of the dog.

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THREE

Pages 21-33



Write either **Yes** or **No** in the blank before each question.

- _____ 1. Did Travis take Jumper when he went hunting because he could travel farther if he had a mule to ride?
- _____ 2. As he rode along Birdsong Creek and a rocky ridge, did Travis think about how fine it would be if he were riding his own horse instead of an old mule?
- _____ 3. Was one of the reasons Travis didn't take Jumper close to the Licks was that the mule was gun shy?
- _____ 4. Did Travis circle the Licks so he would be in a place where the wind would be coming toward him instead of from behind him?
- _____ 5. Had Papa taught Travis that if he sat in front of a tree a deer could not see his shape?
- _____ 6. Did hogs and cattle and wild animals come to the Licks for the salt that was in the black streaks in the rocks?
- _____ 7. Did the killer animals like bear, panthers, and bobcats come to the Licks only at night when the game animals weren't around?
- _____ 8. Did Travis not shoot at the little band of javelina hogs because they weren't good to eat?
- _____ 9. Did Travis warn the doe when he laughed at some squirrels playing in the trees?

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FOUR

Pages 35-46



a high knoll
Travis
Old Yeller
Roany

the two-wheeled Mexican cart
lost the fight
laugh your head off
killed him

Chongo
Little Arliss
a big fight
the cabin door

danger
a split-rail fence
Mama
a rawhide whip

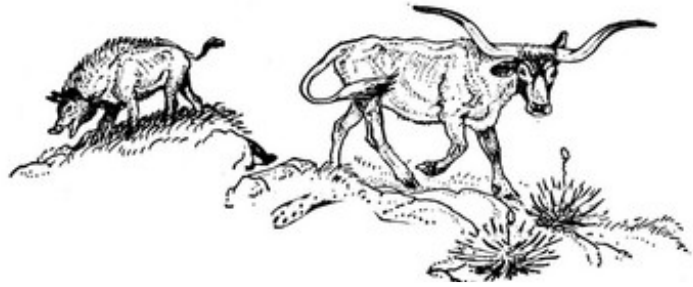
From the list above, choose the name, word, or phrase that fits each clue below and write it in the blank. **All** answers will be **used at least once**. **Some** answers will be **used more than once**.

- _____ 1. She grabbed Travis by the hand and dragged him into the safety of the cabin.
- _____ 2. He put off hoeing weeds out of the corn because he liked to see a fight between bulls or boars or almost any wild animal.
- _____ 3. Papa had built the cabin on one of these and cleared out all the brush and trees from around it so he could get a clear shot at any Comanche or Apaches coming to scalp the family.
- _____ 4. Travis gave one of the bulls this name, which was a Mexican word that meant *drop horn*.
- _____ 5. Travis, Mama, and Little Arliss sat on the one around the cabin to watch the fight.
- _____ 6. He charged from behind the cabin bristled up and roaring to run the bellowing bulls away from the house.
- _____ 7. Roany slammed Chongo against it so hard that big chunks of dried-mud chinking fell from between the logs.

Old Yeller

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Whole Book Test



Write the **letter** of the correct answer in the blank before each question.

- _____ 1. Old Yeller's story took place in the late 1860's right after (A) the Revolutionary War, (B) the Civil War, (C) the First World War.
- _____ 2. Travis and his family lived in (A) Kansas, (B) Oklahoma, (C) Texas.
- _____ 3. Which of the following was **not** a reason for Old Yeller's name? (A) His short hair was a dingy yellow. (B) He would immediately start barking as soon as Little Arliss yelled for him. (C) The sound he made was closer to being a yell than a bark.
- _____ 4. Papa and other Salk Licks settlers left their families to take a herd of steers to market in Abilene, Kansas, because (A) the family needed the cash money, (B) there was not enough good pasture around Birdsong Creek, (C) the price of beef was predicted to fall in a few months.
- _____ 5. While Papa was gone, Travis had the responsibility of (A) being the man of the family, (B) seeing that the food they had stored for the family was kept safe, (C) helping Mama as much as he could with the farm work.
- _____ 6. When Papa left, Travis was (A) twelve years old, (B) fourteen years old, (C) sixteen years old.
- _____ 7. Though Papa said he needed a dog, what Travis really wanted was (A) to ride to Abilene with Papa, (B) a horse, (C) a team of fine mules and a wagon.
- _____ 8. When Old Yeller strayed up to the log cabin on Birdsong Creek, (A) he made Travis so mad he wanted to kill him, (B) Papa tried for over a week to run him off, (C) he chased the chickens and the cattle.
- _____ 9. Bell, the dog that Travis had when he was younger, (A) had been stolen by bandits, (B) died protecting Travis from a bear, (C) died from a bite from a chopped off rattlesnake head.
- _____ 10. Old Yeller got to stay because (A) Mama said Little Arliss needed a dog to keep him from being lonely, (B) Travis thought he would make a good hunting dog, (C) he barked at everything he saw, and the family needed to be warned of danger.
- _____ 11. Which of the following was **not** something that five-year-old Little Arliss liked to do? (A) catch varmints, (B) take off his clothes and play in the pool that was the family's drinking water, (C) sneak out of the house at night and go exploring.
- _____ 12. How did Little Arliss protect Old Yeller? He (A) threw rocks, (B) screamed and cried, (C) hid the dog under the bed.

Old Yeller

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***Something to Think About. . .
Something to Write About. . .***



1. The story of Old Yeller makes no mention of Travis going to school. As a pioneer boy growing up in Texas after the Civil War, he would need an education much different from that of today's young people.
 - What things did Travis have to know that you would have no need of?
 - What things must you know that would have had no value to Travis?
 - What about Lisbeth? What skills would she have been required to master? How are things different for modern girls?
 - Do you think Travis, Lisbeth, and Little Arliss had more time or less time to do as they pleased than you do? Explain your answer.
2. Papa left his family to help drive cattle to Abilene because they needed cash money. Travis was expected to take over the role of the man of the family.
 - Do you think Papa did the right thing? Why or why not?
 - Was Papa's request fair to Travis? Were there any other choices?
3. Fathers, and sometimes Mothers, still leave their families for extended periods of time today.
 - What are the reasons that modern families are sometimes forced to separate?
 - How are the challenges faced by those left behind different from the obstacles Travis and his family faced? How are they the same?
 - How do modern communication options help in these situations?
4. Life often gives us what we **need** instead of what we **want**.
 - How was this true for Travis? How was it true for each member of the family?
 - Write a narrative about a time in your own life when you got what you needed, but not what you wanted. Were you happy with the way things turned out?

About Your Novel Teaching Pack

Objective Tests

The objective tests have multiple functions. In addition to their obvious application, they also serve as tools that can *improve **comprehension skills** by providing practice in understanding plot structure and recognizing important story elements.*

Rationale:

Focus on the Plot. . .

Whether they are aware of their ability or not, all good readers sense the **rhythm** of the **connected** events that compose the plot of a novel, and consequently **comprehend** the story. They are in tune with cause and effect, behavior and consequence, sequence—the heartbeat of the narrative.

This “plot rhythm” forms the framework for the objective tests. The chain of events that tell the story have been pulled from the novel and reformatted into a series of sequential questions, none of which require **interpretation**. They are intended to **draw student attention to the fact that something happened**, not to what the incident means. That comes later.

In addition to their testing function, teachers may use the pages to strengthen their students’ ability to **Summarize**: With only the questions as a guide, have students write a summary of the chapter. For a set of ten questions, limit the number of sentences they may write to seven or fewer. When they work with twenty or more questions, allow no more than twelve sentences.

Report the News: Ask your students to write a newspaper article based on the events identified in a set of questions and the *who, what, when, where, why* elements. Some information needed to complete this assignment may be located in previous chapters.

Twist the Plot: Choose one or two questions from each chapter and change its answer—true to false, no to yes, etc.—to demonstrate how changing a single (or several) events would (or would not) change the story. This process can be used to help students become proficient in distinguishing major plot movers from minor story details.

The Characters. . .

Too often, when they are asked to describe a story character’s personality, the only answer many students can muster is “nice.” This portion of the Novel Teaching Pack, coupled with related activities from ***Something to Think About, Something to Write About***, is a smorgasbord of opportunities for those teachers who wish to eradicate “nice” from their students’ vocabularies!

Questions that identify a character’s personality and/or motivation are purposely and carefully included with the plot movers. Again, the questions do not require **interpretation**. They simply establish that someone did or said something—knowledge that is invaluable when character analysis is required.

Implied Meaning and Story Clues. . .

The objective tests include items that establish the existence of story components carrying **implied meaning**. **Story clues** that tantalize the reader with hints of future events also appear as question. At this point in the novel study, as before, **interpretation** is not the goal. **Awareness** of the **facts** is the target.

Developing/Improving Listening Skills. . .

Listening skills are rightfully included on every list of state competency requirements. Rather than always requiring students to answer test questions on a printed page, why not surprise them occasionally by doing the test orally and meeting competency goals at the same time?

Discussion Guide Capability. . .

The objective tests are helpful discussion guides. Use individual items on these pages to draw student attention to sequence, cause and effect, story clues (foreshadowing), character traits, recognizing and interpreting implied meanings, etc. These “thinking out loud” sessions are an **important building block** for the next learning phase.

Something to Think About. . . Something to Write About. . .

In this section, students pack up what they already know about the novel and go exploring into its every nook and cranny. Some activities require the simplest interpretation or application, while others will challenge the most proficient thinkers. There is a high probability that young scholars, even reluctant ones, will label some of the selections as *fun*.

Rationale:

Guidelines. . .

Most of the items in this section are based on the skills presented in the *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (Bloom's Taxonomy)*. There are two reasons for this choice. First, it mirrors the Novel Teaching Pack's primary purpose of building a variety of sophisticated thinking skills on a foundation of basic knowledge. Second, in following the taxonomy guidelines, activities that correlate with many state educational standards emerge automatically.

Levels of Difficulty. . .

A variety **difficulty levels** to accommodate the needs of individual students, including the gifted, is an integral part of this component. However, **all** items from this section are intended to **challenge** and **sharpen** thinking abilities.

Activities. . .

Something to Think About/Something to Write About includes activities that require students to choose and use precise, appropriate, and meaningful **vocabulary**. These exercises involve choosing a word or a group of words to describe a character's personality or behavior. The following example is from *Because of Winn-Dixie*.

Opal comforted Winn-Dixie during thunderstorms, holding on to him tight so that he wouldn't run away. She decided that the best way to comfort Gloria was to read a book to her, loud enough to keep the ghosts away.

From the list of words below, all of which can correctly describe Opal's behavior, which *two* do you think are the best? Cite facts from the story and the words' definitions to support your choices.

<i>empathetic</i>	<i>compassionate</i>	<i>nurturing</i>	<i>warmhearted</i>
<i>sympathetic</i>	<i>loving</i>	<i>devoted</i>	<i>benevolent</i>
<i>unselfish</i>	<i>generous</i>	<i>thoughtful</i>	<i>considerate</i>

In each case students work with a given collection of terms, all of which can be correctly applied to the character(s) in question. However, the individual words have varying strengths of meaning. It is the student's task to analyze both the character's behavior and the words, make choices, and then cite events from the story to support his/her selection.

Options, options, and more options. . .

Something to Think About, Something to Write About gives teachers **pick-and-choose options** for

<i>individualizing assignments</i>	<i>homework</i>
<i>group work</i>	<i>short-term and long-term projects</i>
<i>whole class activities</i>	<i>differentiating assignments for two or more classes</i>
<i>capitalizing on student interest</i>	

Final Note

The Novel Teaching Packs are designed for use as supplementary material that supports a total reading program. It is my goal to provide busy teachers with a classroom-ready, practical resource loaded with motivational and learning opportunities for their students. It is my hope that your purchase will prove to be a hard-working instructional component for years to come. Thanks for choosing one of my products for your classroom.



Margaret Whisnant, Author