

This guide was prepared using the 1995 Pocket Books edition, © 1970, 1995. Other editions may differ.

SYNOPSIS

Chap. 1: Cotton (age 15) is the leader of a misfit group of six adolescents sharing a cabin at an Arizona summer camp for boys. As the novel opens, the boys fall into an uneasy sleep, having witnessed something that day that traumatized them on their way back from a campout. Cotton soon discovers that the younger of the two Lally brothers is missing from the cabin, and he rouses the other cabinmates (all age 14) to search for Lally 2 (age 12). The first of many italicized flashbacks tells us something about camper Goodenow, a sissy who wets his bed and cries with homesickness.

Chap. 2: The boys catch up with Lally 2, who insists they "oughta all go" on the mission they've all been thinking about since getting back to camp. To accomplish this unnamed mission, the boys will have to travel one hundred miles each way, that night, and it's already 11:30. Teft says he can steal and drive a vehicle, and the boys unanimously agree to go. A flashback gives us the background about Box Canyon Boys Camp: "Send Us a Boy—We'll Send You a Cowboy!" is its slogan. Affluent parents send their boys for an eight-week session that aims to make them men through competition among the six teams from the camp's six cabins. Cotton has taken into his cabin the five misfits that no one else would have. They fail at all the camp's contests but have achieved some successes at escapades of their own making. Another flashback reveals Lally 2 as an insecure little boy neglected by his wealthy parents who depends on thumb-sucking, his foam rubber pillow, and his imaginary friends the Ooms for comfort.

Chap. 3: The boys fail to steal a camp truck, so they take their horses (each boy has had his own horse to ride and take care of during the camp session) and set out for the nearby town of Prescott. A flashback explains the camp's point scoring system: At the end of each week, cabin groups are ranked according to the scores they accumulated in that week's daily competitive activities, earning tribal names, trophies, and privileges. The lowest-ranked group, of course, is Cotton's; they are awarded the name of Bedwetters and the trophy of a white chamber pot.

Chap. 4: Riding out of camp complete with a .22 rifle Teft has taken, the boys feel like the heroes of the Western movies they are all so fond of: "some men with guns, going somewhere, to do something dangerous." A flashback tells us that Sammy Shecker is the fat son of the famous comedian Sid Shecker.

Chap. 5: The boys tie up their horses and proceed into Prescott on foot. When Teft fails to bag the first two cars he considers, the group's solidarity and purpose begin to unravel, but the boys re-bond in a group huddle and face-touching they call "bumping." Teft successfully hot-wires a Chevy pick-up, and the boys head out of town in it. A flashback reveals

Goodenow's oedipal relationship with his mother until her remarriage and the distant, disapproving treatment he receives from his stepfather. The surprising Teft, we also learn, has ferreted out a stash of forbidden items and used them to neutralize their nasty junior counselor, Wheaties, who had pronounced each of them a "ding"—"something or somebody which didn't fit anything or anywhere.... Therefore it had no excuse for being or living."

Chap. 6: Teft guides the laboring old Chevy up the climb to the 7,000-foot elevation of the Mogollon Rim. A flashback explains the camp's raiding system: If you can steal the trophy of a higher-ranking tribe in a night raid, you win that tribe's rank for the week. The Bedwetters fail miserably in their first attempted raid; Cotton assumes leadership of the group and starts whipping them into some semblance of manly behavior.

Chap. 7: When Cotton allows a stop in Flagstaff for food, the boys encounter a pair of antagonistic young westerners who follow them out of town and force Teft to pull the Chevy off on the side of the road. Teft drives them off with the .22, which thrills all the other boys. A flashback reveals that, in response to his parents' frequent absences, Billy Lally (Lally 2) withdraws into his own fantasy world accompanied by infantile behavior such as bed-wetting and thumb-sucking, along with bad dreams and night terrors. Also, Teft had been placed aboard the planes like a prisoner for the trip from New York to Arizona and created havoc with the flight crews.

Chap. 8: At 2:30 a.m., Teft turns the Chevy off onto the side road they had traveled over the previous afternoon. But Teft has made a stupid mistake; the truck runs out of gas. Flashbacks tell us how his cabinmates forced Shecker to stop compulsively being "on" like his comic father, and how the Bedwetters had defiantly ridden their horses to the local drive-in to see a western movie that the camp rules and scoring system forbid to them.

Chap. 9: Without wheels, the group again begins to disintegrate. Cotton sees this as a crucial moment: either the boys try to go ahead with the mission on their own without Cotton's leadership, or they really are losers who have blown everything Cotton has done for them this summer to give them self-confidence and some maturity. Cotton votes to abandon the mission, but Lally 2 and then all the others resolutely head off to continue the mission. They have passed his test, and Cotton rejoins them. The flashback reveals that Cotton has been through a succession of stepfathers, one of whom generously left Cotton's mother wealthy.

Chap. 10: The boys reach their objective: a campground with pens, fences, and a killing ground, where the boys slip and stumble through blood. Earlier in the camping session, Goodenow had threatened suicide after Cotton enforced his rule about no contact with parents; Cotton explained the rule was necessary—"If they were ever to act their age, if they were ever to stand on their hind legs and spit life in the eye,

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they must begin now, this summer."

Chap. 11: The event that so traumatized boys is now described. On their way back from the campout, the boys convinced Wheaties to drive into the "Buffalo Preserve — Arizona Game and Fish Department." They arrived on a day when the buffalo herd was being culled. Inexpert shooters were given a chance, one at a time, to shoot individual buffalo that were herded out of pens for this purpose; most of the animals died horribly, while the atmosphere among the spectators and shooters was festive. (This horrific scene replays itself in a dream Cotton has in the opening pages of the novel, with himself and his cabinmates as the buffalo.) In the flashback, Shecker fails to live up to his livid father's high expectations at his bar mitzvah.

Chap. 12: Wheaties had refused to leave until all 30 of that day's buffalo were slaughtered. The boys returned to camp in horrified silence, thinking of the remaining 30 animals still in pens for the next day's shooting. Flashbacks reveal that the Lally brothers have been in competition for their neglectful parents' attention since infancy, and teeth-grinding Teft has a history of apparently motiveless car theft and joy-riding.

Chap. 13: The boys investigate the buffalo pens, in awe of the mammoth, majestic creatures up close. Cotton works out a way to open the gates, but the buffalo wheel and return to their original pen. Earlier at camp, Lally 2 won a camp contest after he bonded with his assigned mare, Sheba, in a mother-and-foal way.

Chap. 14: A bumping session rebonds the group, and they try again to free the buffalo, this time succeeding in driving the herd out of their pen by flinging flashlights, hats, and radios at them. Earlier, the midnight ride to the movie had started the Bedwetters on the road to self-respect; the second raid showed the camp that they were not complete psychoneurotic losers. Luring all the campers out of their cabins with a cry of "Horses loose!" Cotton and his boys had managed to steal every other tribe's trophies, then anonymously left them lined up, each stuffed animal head trophy shot between the eyes. Raiding now ceased, along with the weekly presentation of the chamber pot trophy.

Chap. 15: The boys celebrate their success with nips of whiskey and a buffalo dance, only to discover that the tame buffalo are grazing near the pens. Cotton explains they will have to lure the buffalo a few miles to the fence at the back of the preserve, at the edge of the Mogollon Rim, offering bits of hay from the bed of a Game and Fish pickup truck. Flashbacks tell us that Goodenow's stepfather had sent the boy off to camp to change him from a bed-wetter to a man, and Cotton, yearning to be old enough to fight in Vietnam, realized one day that his mother was afraid of his impending manhood because then she would manifestly no longer be a girl.

Chap. 16: Strongman Shecker breaks the wire around the hay bales and Teft eases the pickup into the midst of the buffalo herd; animals and boys bond, and the buffalo begin following the hay-dropping truck. Flashbacks show Lally 1 expressing his hatred of his brother by killing Lally 2's pets and setting fire to the foam-rubber comfort-object pillow, and Teft using his car-theft career to avoid the perfection and imitation demanded of him by his well-off father, who has bundled Teft off for a summer of discipline at camp.

Chap. 17: The boys begin to suffer from nervous exhaustion, but they keep tending the following herd. A flashback recalls a humiliating pie-eating contest fat Sammy Shecker's

father forced him into.

Chap. 18: Dawn comes as the hay supply dwindles, and the boys finally arrive at the far fence. Lally 1 remembers the fun he and his brother had once on an ocean liner when they released all the passengers' many poodles.

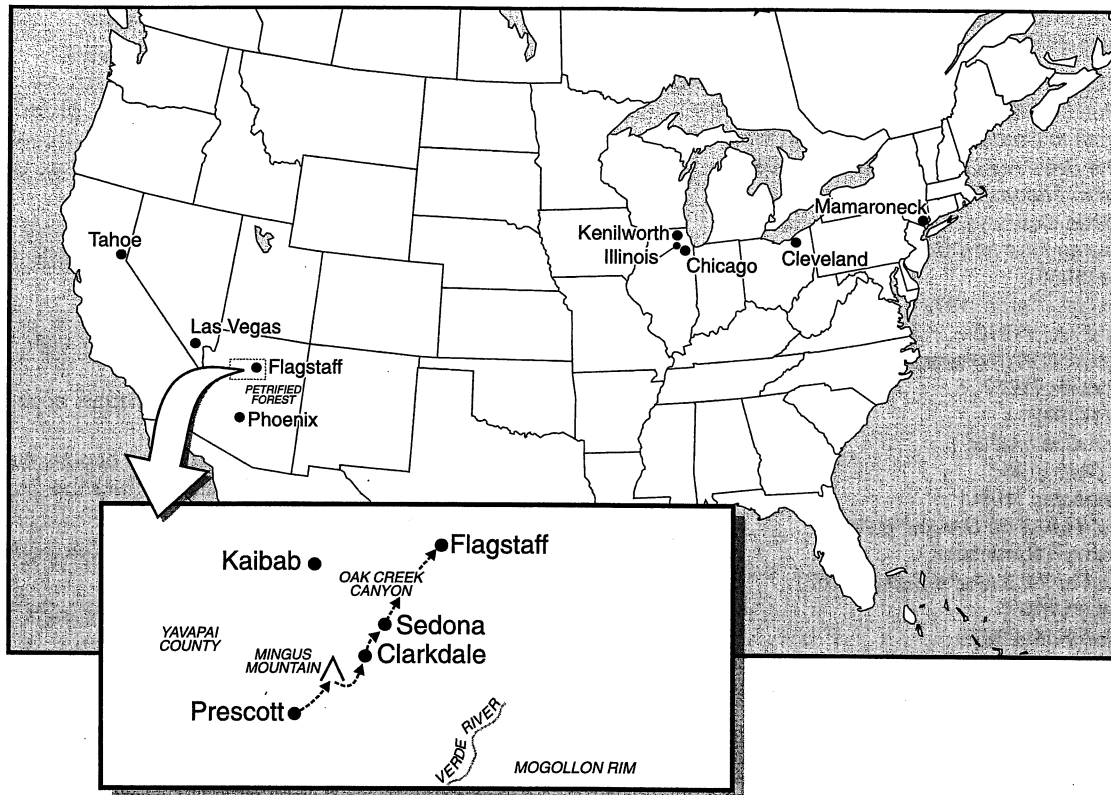
Chap. 19: The fence is tall, sturdy, chainlink, and the exhausted boys can't budge it. A pursuing jeep and two pickups appear on the horizon; Teft fires the rifle to try to slow them down. A flashback describes the Bedwetters' third triumph, when Cotton goaded them into completing a grueling hike back up from the Grand Canyon, winning a bet against other campers. Cotton had then set them free by flinging the chamber pot into the Canyon, into oblivion.

Chap. 20: Cotton, struggling with the unfamiliar clutch and transmission, rams the pickup into the fence, opening a gaping hole. He then drives around the buffalo and, leaning on the horn, herds the animals through the fence. Two bulls split the herd apart on the edge of the Mogollon Rim, leading the buffalo off to freedom. Mission accomplished! But the pickup truck continues straight ahead, soaring and diving and disappearing over the edge of the rim with John Cotton inside. The surviving Bedwetters face the advancing adults "frightened and defiant,...bawling in their sorrow and jeering in their triumph."

TIME LINE

- 1960 John F. Kennedy is elected U.S. president; lunch-counter desegregation sit-ins begin; *To Kill a Mockingbird* is published; "The Twist" by Chubby Checker is a hit.
- 1961 Bay of Pigs happens; "Where Have All the Flowers Gone" hits the charts; Freedom Rides begin.
- 1962 Cuban missile crisis; *Silent Spring* is published; Supreme Court issues ruling on school prayer.
- 1963 President Kennedy is assassinated, succeeded by Lyndon Johnson; March on Washington highlighted by Martin Luther King, Jr.'s, "I Have a Dream" speech; *Leave it to Beaver*, *Gunsmoke*, and *Bonanza* are popular TV shows.
- 1964 Vietnam War escalates; student protests on U.S. college campuses begin; Civil Rights Act passed; the Beatles and Diana Ross and the Supremes are popular.
- 1965 Civil rights demonstrations begin in Selma, Alabama; U.S. air attacks on North Vietnam begin; Watts riots begin; Malcolm X is assassinated; Voting Rights Act is passed.
- 1966 Vietnam War expands to Cambodia; race riots in U.S. cities; Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy is popular.
- 1967 U.S. peace talks with Hanoi begin; more race riots; *Rolling Stone* magazine begins publication.
- 1968 Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert F. Kennedy are assassinated; Richard Nixon is elected U.S. president; Tet Offensive in Vietnam; film *The Graduate* is released.
- 1969 *Apollo XI* astronauts land on the moon; trial of the Chicago 8 begins; U.S. troop withdrawals from Vietnam begin; first Woodstock event occurs; all-male colleges like Yale begin admitting women.
- 1970 *Bless the Beasts and Children* is published; Ohio National Guard soldiers kill four students at Kent State University; "Doonesbury" comic strip debuts.

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- 1971 Pentagon Papers are published; *All in the Family* debuts on TV.
- 1972 First events of the Watergate scandal occur.
- 1973 Senate begins Watergate hearings; Vietnam War ends with cease-fire agreement.
- 1974 Richard Nixon resigns the presidency; Gerald Ford succeeds him.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Glendon Swarthout was a prolific writer of short stories and novels, including westerns, comedies, mysteries, and books for young readers. He is best known and admired for *Bless the Beasts and Children*, whose Western U.S. setting is also a feature of other Swarthout novels. He was born in 1918 in Michigan, where he grew up and which provides the setting for more of his fiction. He graduated from the University of Michigan in 1939 and in 1940 married Kathryn Vaughn, with whom he went on to cowrite a number of children's books; the couple had one son. He served in the U.S. Army from 1943 to 1945, earned his Ph.D. from Michigan State in 1955, and taught English at several universities in the 1940s and 1950s, including Michigan, Maryland, and Michigan State. After moving to Arizona and teaching at Arizona State University, Swarthout became a full-time writer in 1963.

His first novel, *Willow Run* (1943), was set in a World War II bomber factory in Michigan. His next novel, *They Came to Cordura* (1958), was set during the Pancho Villa era of U.S.-Mexico border skirmishes, as was *The Tin Lizzie Troop* (1972). Other Swarthout novels with a Western setting include *The Shootist* (1975), which focuses on the last of the

Old West gunfighters in 1901, and *The Cadillac Cowboys* (1964), a satiric picture of today's West. Several Swarthout novels have been adapted as movies, including *Bless the Beasts and Children*, *The Shootist*, *They Came to Cordura*, and *Where the Boys Are*. Swarthout's awards include the O. Henry Prize, 1960; the National Society of Arts and Letters Gold Medal, 1972; and the Spur Award, 1975, and the Owen Wister Award, 1991, of the Western Writers of America. Swarthout died in 1992 of emphysema in Scottsdale, Arizona.

CRITICS' CORNER

In his review of *Bless the Beasts and Children* in *Harper's*, Richard Schickel gives a capsule summary of Glendon Swarthout's virtues as an author: "[He] is a good, entertaining writer—exuberant, optimistic, maybe a little childlike (in a nice way) in his love of archetypal characters and situations, but always intelligent and alive." *Bless the Beasts* is Swarthout's most popular work, having sold over two million copies around the world; it is now considered a young adult classic. In his review, Schickel went on to say, "I like the juxtaposition of the primal innocence of the great animals with that of the boys, the brevity and tension of the book and, damn my eyes, its earnest morality....He is a stylist who also entertains and instructs and I say good for him. It is not as easy as it sounds." *Saturday Review* characterized the novel as "a compassionate book, a true book, a book of the heart; it is also a compelling drama that grabs you with a grip that can't be pried loose....With *Bless the Beasts and Children*, Glendon Swarthout has added something fine and important to the literature of our age." *Library Journal* found the novel to

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be "a moving, tragic, and sociologically potent work" and added, "[T]his unusual novel is one of the best fictional studies of adolescence this reviewer has read in some time."

OTHER BOOKS BY GLENDON SWARTHOUT

Willow Run (1943)
They Came to Cordura (1958) (Columbia film, 1959)
Where the Boys Are (1960) (MGM film, 1960)
Welcome to Thebes (1962)
The Cadillac Cowboys (1964)
The Eagle and the Iron Cross (1966)
Loveland (1968)
The Tin Lizzie Troop (1972)
Luck and Pluck (1973)
The Shootist (1975) (Paramount film, 1976)
The Melodeon (1977)
Skeletons (1979)
Cadbury's Coffin (1982)
The Old Colts (1985)
The Homesman (1988)
Pinch Me, I Must Be Dreaming (1994)
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GENERAL OBJECTIVES

1. To analyze the ways in which children can be emotionally abused by their parents, and the results of such abuse
2. To examine the issues of mistreatment of animals and animal rights
3. To become familiar with the southwestern U.S. landscape
4. To learn about the natural history of buffaloes and their place in U.S. history
5. To become familiar with the mystique of the Old West and the cowboy and its impact on U.S. consciousness
6. To discuss the concept of male bonding and various male initiation rituals
7. To look at the validity of competition and peer pressure as effective means of promoting maturity and adult behavior
8. To consider ways in which alienated young people can find their comfortable place in society

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To identify the specific ways in which the six boys who are members of the Bedwetters group have been impacted by their various family dysfunctionalities
2. To consider the ruling premise of Box Canyon Boys Camp, and its validity
3. To understand the mission the Bedwetters boys choose to attempt, the reasons for it, and the effects it will have on the boys
4. To trace the specific route and landscape the boys function in and travel through during their eight-week stay at the camp
5. To understand the ways in which this novel is set in the culture of the 1960s
6. To identify specific ways in which popular culture and the Old West/cowboy mystique affect the boys and their actions
7. To note the parallels between the boys and the buffalo that the novel draws
8. To discuss the issues about hunting, guns, and treatment of animals raised by this novel
9. To explore the creative uses of flashback in fiction
10. To identify the uses of religious symbolism in the novel

LITERARY TERMS AND APPLICATIONS

To enhance students' appreciation and understanding of the novel, present them with these terms.

epigraph: a quotation or motto at the beginning of a literary work, or a chapter of a work, that relates to the book's theme or atmosphere. The epigraph to this novel is the nursery rhyme "Little Boy Blue"; the author's son explains the relevance of this rhyme in his Introduction p. xx.

flashback: a scene inserted into a film, play, or work of fiction showing events that happened earlier, also known as **analepsis**. The flashback device allows an author to fill in background information about characters and events, explaining things that happened before the time when the work opens. In this novel, the author makes extensive use of flashbacks to create a complex plot structure. Italicized flashback sections in each chapter reveal the family dysfunctionalities that have affected each of the Bedwetters; these flashbacks also reveal key events of the previous seven weeks at Box Canyon Boys Camp that have affected the Bedwetters. Chapters 11 and 12 are also flashbacks that finally describe the horrific event that has traumatized the boys and drives their quest.

metaphor: a figure of speech that compares two things that on the surface are not alike, without using *like* or *as* to make the comparison. This novel is rich in metaphors, such as "the bare cave walls of the cabin" and "a brood of cabins nested in the ponderosa." Language Arts activity #3 in the Across the Curriculum section of this guide involves students in identification and creation of metaphors.

quest tale: the quest is a frequent theme of novels. The quest is for something desirable; this object of the quest can be something of supreme importance that will deeply affect the searcher if found or achieved. In this novel, the boys are on a quest to free the buffalo that are scheduled to be slaughtered in the morning; the success of the quest is of

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supreme importance to the boys because in freeing the animals, they will also free themselves from the dysfunctions that have stunted their lives. (The object of the quest can also be something like buried treasure that has no intrinsic value, other than monetary, but that serves simply to trigger and drive the action of a novel, as in *Treasure Island*.)

symbolism: the use of elements in a literary work that stand for something else. This novel uses religious symbolism in a number of places, which students are asked to identify in Critical Level Question #11 of the Comprehension Study section of this guide.

SETTINGS

The primary setting of the novel is the Prescott-Flagstaff area of Arizona; the rugged beauty of the landscape strongly pervades the book. Cotton and the other Bedwetters are spending an eight-week session at Box Canyon Boys Camp outside of Prescott, nestled in a canyon among ponderosas at an elevation of 3,000 feet. The camp features splitlog cabins, a corral and tack barn, chow hall, rifle range, ballfield, latrines, truck shed—and intense competition. A sand road leads up the canyon throat to the paved road into Prescott, a typical Arizona town full of “billboards and antique shoppes and rock shops and gas stations and curio emporiums and junkyards” and motels, bars, and used car lots. There, the boys attend a drive-in movie in defiance of camp rules and Teft steals a Chevy pickup to take them on their quest. From Prescott, Teft drives the boys toward Flagstaff, up Mingus Mountain, through Jerome and Clarkdale and Sedona and Oak Creek Canyon (a route students can trace on a map), and finally up the 7,000-foot elevation of the Mogollon Rim, a spectacular, sheer limestone scarp that brings them to the Mogollon Plateau and Flagstaff.

Located on Route 66, Flagstaff is characterized by a tawdry, depressing commercial strip of a main street; the boys have an unpleasant encounter here in a hamburger joint with two young male westerners. Out of Flagstaff, Teft tools along the highway and then turns off on a dirt, heavily corduroyed singletrack road that dips into gullies and dry washes and leads to the Arizona Game and Fish Department's Buffalo Preserve. Here, the boys witnessed the horrifying slaughter of semi-tame buffalo, driven from pens into a large open area to be brutally killed by unskilled shooters. Working together, the boys are able to open the gates of the complicated series of pens and lead the buffalo over several miles of open, dry ground to freedom outside the fenced preserve, on the very edge of the Mogollon Rim.

The flashbacks take us briefly to scenes from the boys' home bases and places they have been with their parents: Rocky River and Shaker Heights, Cleveland suburbs; a fishing camp in Quebec; New York City; Las Vegas; Kenilworth, Illinois; Mamaroneck, New York; Kennedy and O'Hare airports.

CROSS-CURRICULAR SOURCES

For more information about Arizona and the Southwest, buffalo, cowboys and the Old West, the 1960s, animal rights, problems of adolescence, and other subjects and issues deriving from the novel, consult these sources.

Fiction

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THEMES AND MOTIFS

A study of the central issues and situations in *Bless the Beasts and Children* should include these aspects.

Themes

- mistreatment of animals and children
- the quest
- kinship of humans and animals
- primal innocence of beasts and children
- male bonding and masculine identity rituals
- coming of age
- effects of dysfunctional families
- competition and peer pressure
- individualism and alienation
- impact of media and popular mythology
- liberating effects of freeing those who are oppressed

Motifs

- buffalo preservation
- Native American culture
- hunting, trophies, guns
- American West and cowboy mystique
- western movies
- Southwest landscape and scenic places
- 1960s culture
- religious symbolism

MEANING STUDY

Below are words, phrases, or sentences that have a particular meaning in the book. Explain each as it relates to the book. Use the page numbers given in parentheses to reread the term in context if you wish.

1. a box canyon (Chap. 1, p. 1)
gullies and dry washes (Chap. 8, p. 70)
(*These are all common features of the Southwestern landscape where the novel's events take place. A canyon is a deep narrow valley with very steep sides, often with a stream flowing through it. A box canyon is closed off at one end and so can be used to pen in herds of animals. A gully is a trench worn in the earth by water that runs after rains; a wash, or dry wash, is the dry bed of a stream. The dirt road Teft drives along toward the buffalo preserve is full of gullies and dry washes.*)
2. recoiling upon his haunches (Chap. 1, p. 3)
(*This is part of Cotton's dream, triggered by the buffalo slaughter he and his cabinmates witnessed that afternoon. In the dream, Cotton and the other Bedwetters become the buffalo at the preserve, herded out for slaughter by the shooters. In this phrase, Cotton the buffalo has charged into the restraining fence so hard that he springs back down onto his hindquarters. The use of the word "haunches" confirms that Cotton is dreaming of himself as an animal in this sequence.*)
3. Colicky yearlings they might have been. (Chap. 2, p. 16)
(*Here, the campers are compared to year-old horses functioning poorly because of the babyish abdominal complaint of colic. The camp's program of competition is designed to whip these youngsters into disciplined, more mature shape.*)
4. ...presented with a large white chamber pot. (Chap. 3, p. 24)
(*Before the days of indoor plumbing and toilets, people would keep a chamber pot in their bedroom in which to relieve themselves during the night rather than having to make a trip to the outhouse. At Box Canyon Boys Camp, each of the six groups is given a particular animal-head trophy depending on their score ranking for the preceding week—except for the lowest-scoring group, which is presented with a chamber pot, an exercise designed to humiliate the members of that group and spur them into competing keenly the next week to raise their status. The Bedwetters defiantly adopt their chamber pot as their banner, until Cotton flings it into the Grand Canyon in recognition of their achievement there.*)
5. Cotton cinched up...flipped stirrups down....the rifle barrel pointed over Teft's pommel. (Chap. 4, pp. 27-28, 30)
(*These are some of the details about saddling up a horse, a skill the boys have learned well at camp. Cotton puts the saddle on his horse, then secures it by tightening the cinch, a strong girth around the horse's belly. Cotton has pushed the stirrups aside while cinching; now he flips them down into position so he can use the left-side one to mount the horse; while riding, he'll keep his feet in the stirrups, which will help him keep his seat. The pommel is another feature of the western saddle, a knob at the front and top of the saddlebow that a lasso or something similar can hang from.*)
6. affluent metropolitan suburbs (Chap. 2, p. 16)
(*The managers of Box Canyon Boys Camp draw their*

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campers from the wealthy suburbs outside of large cities in the East and Middle West, because their families can afford the camp's high fees. The Bedwetters are examples of this. All come from wealthy families. Cotton and Goodenow live in affluent suburbs of Cleveland, the Lallys are from an affluent suburb of Chicago, and Teft is from an affluent suburb of New York City. Shecker is from New York City itself.)

7. He was passed on to the school psychologist, who quickly diagnosed the oedipal relationship. (Chap. 5, p. 34)

(In an oedipal relationship, a boy's sexual feelings toward his mother don't resolve as the child gets older; the boy maintains an unhealthy closeness to his mother, more like a lover-and-woman than a son-and-mother relationship. The name comes from Oedipus, who in fulfillment of an oracle kills his father and marries his mother, unaware of their true relationship to him. In this novel, Goodenow shared his mother's bed from the time his father died when the boy was four until his mother remarried when he was twelve. Now cut off from this closeness with his mother by his new stepfather, Goodenow is experiencing panic attacks about going to school and being separated from his mother.)

8. bar mitzvah (Chap. 11, p. 97)

(A bar mitzvah is a solemn ceremony admitting a 13-year-old Jewish boy as an adult member of the religious community. To demonstrate that he has successfully completed a course of study in Judaism, the boy reads a section of the Torah, in Hebrew, to the congregation, as Shecker does at his bar mitzvah. But Shecker's father hasn't given Sammy enough time to memorize the speech Sid has written for him to deliver at the ceremony, so Sammy disgraces himself by completely forgetting what he's supposed to say, infuriating his father in the process.)

9. roughcut 4-by-8's...plank catwalks...2-by-6's (Chap. 13, pp. 109-10, 112)

(These are standard measurements for pieces of lumber, in this case the wood used for building the pens that hold the buffalo. Originally, a 4-by-8 was 4 inches by 8 inches in dimension, and a 2-by-6 was 2 inches by 6 inches; the terms are still used, but the actual dimensions of the dressed wood are somewhat smaller than the actual inches named. The 4-by-8's are large and sturdy, an indication of the strength of the penned animals. The pens are very tall, too, because buffalo stand 6 feet or more at the hump; in order to have access to the pens, planks lie across the tops of the walls to form narrow walkways, or catwalks. The boys go out on the catwalks to view the buffalo up close.)

10. The sibling rivalry between Lally 1 and 2 bordered on the psychotic. (Chap. 16, p. 136)

(Sibling rivalry is competition between brothers and/or sisters. A certain degree of rivalry between siblings is normal, but the Lally brothers' rivalry is abnormally intense because they have been forced since Billy's birth to fight each other for the few shreds of attention their neglectful, self-centered parents occasionally bestow. Lally 1 hates his younger brother and manifests this hatred by killing his brother's pets at camp and also setting his brother's comfort pillow on fire. Lally 2 competes

by withdrawing into infantile behavior, which he discovers gives him an advantage over his older brother.)

COMPREHENSION STUDY

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important, and you should be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages in the book.

Questions 1-4 (Literal Level)

1. What details set this novel in its time period of the late 1960s?

(Exact examples of details will vary, but may include the following: The boys constantly listen to contemporary music of the time on their transistor radios, including artists such as the Temptations, Peaches and Herb, and Country Joe and the Fish. Cotton yearns to become old enough to go and fight in the ongoing war in Vietnam. Teft calls the two young westerners who accost the group "hippies." The Bedwetters watch the movie *The Professionals* at the local drive-in. Route 66 is still the central east-west conduit of the U.S.; it has not yet disappeared into the interstate highway system. Arnold Palmer is a current golf player.)

2. In what ways are the families of the six Bedwetters dysfunctional, and what effects do these various dysfunctions have on each boy?

(Cotton's mother has married and divorced three times, leaving Cotton to grow up without a male role model. She doesn't want to acknowledge that her son is becoming a young man, because then she wouldn't be young any more. Cotton expresses his mixed-up emotions by going into near-catatonic states when trying to impose his will on a situation that isn't going the way he wants.

Goodenow has an oedipal fixation on his mother, who allowed the boy to sleep with her between the ages of four and twelve, when she remarried and the stepfather kept his distance from the boy. Goodenow is now petrified to be separated from his mother and shows his distress by bedwetting, crying, and threatening suicide.

Teft's father has always demanded perfection of the boy while also expecting Teft to follow exactly in his footsteps. Teft sabotages his father's expectations by stealing cars and expresses his anxieties by grinding his teeth in his sleep.

Shecker's father is a self-absorbed, famous comedian who indulges, humiliates, and completely dominates the boy. Shecker reacts with compulsive behavior—he compulsively eats, compulsively bites his nails, compulsively mimics his father's comic routines, remains compulsively "on" at all times.

The Lally brothers have been in keen competition for the attention of their jet-setting, neglectful parents since Billy's infancy. Lally 1 expresses his anger by head-banging temper tantrums and by attacking surrogates of his brother like Billy's pets and comfort pillow. Lally 2 expresses his sense of parental rejection by regressing to infantile behavior [thumb-sucking, bed wetting, night terrors, clutching his comfort object] and inventing his comforting friends of the sauna, the Ooms. At the outset, none of these boys except Cotton is remotely equipped to deal with the camp's competitive, aggressive, peer-pressure atmosphere.)

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3. What mishaps, mistakes, disappointments, and frustrations do the boys experience and pull through on their quest to get to the buffalo reserve?

(The boys hit a setback at the very outset of this mission when they cannot push the pickup truck out of camp where it would be safe to start the vehicle. Teft is thwarted by the arrivals of a motel guest and a police patrol car from "borrowing" a vehicle in Prescott, which triggers the group's first near-disintegration. Lally 1 and Shecker threaten mutiny in Flagstaff, insisting on a food stop. Interference by the two young cowboys almost derails the entire mission, until Teft uses the .22 to save the day. But then Teft the savior discovers he has made a stupid mistake: the pickup runs out of gas on the side road leading to the preserve. Without wheels, the group again begins to disintegrate, but then each boy individually recommits to the mission and goes on, with the group finally arriving together at the buffalo pens.)

4. In what ways do the boys in the Bedwetters group identify with the cowboy and Old West mystique?

(The boys are "mad for western movies." Setting out on their mission to save the buffalo, they see themselves as similar to the characters in The Professionals and scores of other western films: "some men with guns, going somewhere, to do something dangerous." They start out on horseback, like cowboys, leaving Box Canyon camp by "charging through the gate and over the silver screen and into history like cavalry," shouting "Eee-yah! Eee-yah!" They quote lines we might hear in cowboy tales or movies, like "Smile when you say that, stranger" and "So long, partner." At the end of their mission, strung out from nervous exhaustion, the boys sing a garbled version of the classic cowboy ballad "Home on the Range." And when they release the buffalo from the pen, the boys celebrate like cowboys at a saloon, sipping from airline liquor bottles while Cotton gives a toast, "Here's to the best damn buffalo cowboys in the West.")

Questions 5-8 (Interpretive Level)

5. In what ways is the value system at Box Canyon Boys Camp warped?

(The value system at the camp is based on a culture of aggressive competition that forces progressively less athletic, less coordinated, younger, and less competitive groups into lower ranks. Members of the lowest-scoring group each week are ritually humiliated at the weekly powwow by presentation of the chamber pot "trophy" and are made the object of derision for that week by being pinned with the group name of Bedwetters. This combination of rewards for success at unceasing competition and humiliation for those at the bottom of the heap is presented to the boys as a reflection of admirable masculine values. In addition, the system of encouraging capture of higher groups' trophies rewards successful cunning and stealth for those who can't win through outright athletic ability.)

6. *Bless the Beasts and Children* is often described as a quest tale. What is the quest of this novel? Why do the boys undertake this quest?

(After they witness the horrifying slaughter of the buffalo, each boy in the Bedwetters group is seized by an urge to return to the preserve and free the remaining buffalo that are slated to be shot the following day. This is the boys'

way of atoning to the massive creatures for the dreadful murders their fellow human beings have committed against the other buffalo that day. Perhaps unconsciously, the Bedwetters sense that pursuing this noble, idealistic mission will somehow also cleanse and free them from their individual emotional dysfunctions.)

7. How are the Bedwetters transformed by carrying out their self-appointed mission?

(Life with their dysfunctional parents has left each Bedwetter with low self-esteem, a feeling of self-worthlessness. In freeing the cruelly abused animals, the boys are symbolically also freeing themselves from the abuse of their parents and taking charge of their lives as capable, self-sufficient youngsters moving toward manhood. Goodenow, freed psychologically from his excessive tie to his mother and able to carry himself like a young male, is able to tell how his stepfather questioned whether he was a boy or a girl. Lally 2 for the first time talks about his imaginary friends the Ooms, because he'll no longer need them the way he did before, and he's now capable of leaving his foam rubber comfort pillow behind. Lally 1 can let go of his pathological sibling rivalry enough to tell about the fun he and Billy had on the ocean liner by setting free the poodles. Cotton has achieved his objective for these boys: Even after they return home, they will be free of their former terrors, fears, and insecurities.)

8. What parallels does the novel draw between the boys and the buffalo?

(The buffalo are being cruelly abused by their supposed caretakers, who violate the tame creatures' trust by setting them up to be horribly killed by inept shooters. Similarly, the boys have been abused in various ways by their parents and stepparents, who, instead of being nurturing, loving caretakers have acted in neglectful, unresponsive, domineering, and self-serving ways toward their children. Both animals and children are innocent creatures, and society owes them special concern and protection, as the title of the book suggests. Yet neither buffalo nor these boys seem to have a useful place in modern society; the animals exist in managed herds on preserves, and the boys start out as "dings," creatures that don't fit anywhere, certainly not into their parents' lives. The bumping technique of fostering mutual support and encouragement that the boys use is similar to buffalo behavior. By the time the boys arrive at the buffalo pens, they are physically like the animals: suffering from lack of food and water. And when Teft eases the pickup truck and the boys into the middle of the buffalo herd, the children and animals mingle nearly as one, "as kindred.")

Questions 9-11 (Critical Level)

9. What message does this novel present to readers about hunting and the treatment of animals?

(The novel is a harsh indictment of hunting, presenting it as cruel. It results in painful, terrifying death for innocent, inoffensive animals who are sacrificed to satisfy a primitive, cruel blood lust of selfish, insensitive human beings. The author pleads for the humane treatment of animals, the obligation of human beings to share the planet with the beasts in a thoughtful, caring, nurturing manner.)

10. In what way are flashbacks a crucial part of the novel's structure?

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(The author uses italicized flashbacks to fill the readers in gradually on each Bedwetter's family background, thus explaining the roots of each boy's dysfunctionality in a series of short segments. These flashbacks also reveal, again gradually and in short segments, the structure and purpose of Box Canyon Camp, how and why this particular group of boys became cabinmates, the humiliations the Bedwetters have suffered at camp and also their beyond-the-rules triumphs. Chapters 11 and 12 are themselves flashbacks, finally revealing what the boys witnessed that has so traumatized and horrified them. By interweaving flashbacks with current narration, the author piques the readers' interest as we keep trying to understand just what is this mission the boys are going on, just why the boys are so dysfunctional, and just what they witnessed that afternoon. This makes for a much more varied and challenging plot progression than straight linear narration.)

11. What examples of religious symbolism do you find in the novel?

(John Cotton, who has the same initials as Jesus Christ, is a savior figure like Christ—he leads the mission to save the buffalo and has deliberately set himself the camp-long mission of saving his misfit cabinmates from their own dysfunctionality. Like Christ, Cotton sacrifices himself in the process of saving the others. In Flagstaff, Shecker jokes that the boys are a rock band called "Before Christ," which might be another religious reference to the group as a band of followers of Christ [Cotton], but also might simply be Schecker's first thought of how to explain the initials "BC" on their jackets. The pickup truck that carries Cotton off the Rim is called a "Judas" truck, which can be taken as a reference to Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Christ to his death just as the truck betrays Cotton to his death. Cotton's ritual sharing of alcohol with the boys shortly before his death could be interpreted as a parallel with Christ's sharing of wine with his disciples at the Last Supper, just before his death. The title of the book, too, certainly sounds biblical, although it is not. The mingling of the boys and the buffalo herd in Chapter 16 seems to evoke images of the Garden of Eden, with people and animals living in peace together. The West itself is referred to as the Land of Canaan, the promised land selected for the chosen people by God.)

Questions 12-14 (Creative Level)

12. Write some letters home from camp from one or more of the Bedwetters.
13. Write a newspaper account of the boys' release of the buffalo and Cotton's death, or create a news broadcast of the event.
14. Create a scene when one of the Bedwetters arrives home after the camp session is over and interacts with his parents/stepparents and any other family members.

ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Art

1. Illustrate typical aspects of the Native American groups that Box Canyon Boys Camp names its tribes after: the Apache, Sioux, Comanche, Cheyenne, and Navaho.
2. Create a poster that shows and explains the various items used for harness of a saddle horse.

3. Create and model in class the various headgear that the Bedwetters boys wear. Also, along with classmates, create individual headgear for yourselves that expresses some aspect of your individuality.
4. Make a scale-drawing layout or a scale model of Box Canyon Boys Camp.
5. Design your ideal pickup truck or car.

Geography/Geology

1. In an audiovisual presentation, show the various exciting ways in which tourists, hikers, backpackers, and other visitors can experience the Grand Canyon.
2. Trace the Bedwetters boys' trip from Prescott to Flagstaff and the buffalo preserve on a map, noting geographic/geologic landmarks along the way.
3. Create a multimedia report on the geography, flora, fauna, climate, and so on of the U.S. Southwest and Arizona, paying special attention to the Mogollon Rim. Or, explain the geology that has created the Mogollon Rim.

History and Social Studies

1. Research and report on the details of and connections among the battles mentioned in the novel: Dak To and Khe Sanh, Anzio, and Little Big Horn.
2. Research and report on the many social issues that were subjects of sometimes violent controversy and protest during the 1960s, including especially civil rights/race relations and the Vietnam War. Illustrations would add to the drama of your report. How have any of these issues been resolved since the sixties? In what ways are any of these issues still topics of discussion today?
3. Create a presentation on the Old West and cowboy mystique and its persistence through U.S. society to the present day.
4. Develop a class display and report on mining in the Old West and mining in the West today.
5. Research and then conduct a class debate on issues regarding animal rights and ethical treatment of animals.

Language Arts

1. Find and read Glendon Swarthout's short story that was a precursor of *Bless the Beasts and Children*, "Going to See George," in *Esquire* magazine, July 1965. Compare the theme and message of the story and the novel.
2. Read *Lord of the Flies* and compare its message about human nature with that in *Bless the Beasts*.
3. This novel is especially rich in metaphors. Collect at least 10 of the metaphors in the novel that you find especially vivid. Then write at least 10 of your own, striving to make interesting, vivid, unusual comparisons.

Mathematics

1. The novel reports that it takes between six and seven hours to kill thirty buffalo. Calculate how much time is therefore required to kill each animal. Do you think this is an efficient (let alone humane) way to do the "culling" of the buffalo herd?
2. After tracing the route of the boys' trip from Prescott to Flagstaff and the buffalo preserve, calculate the number of miles traveled and figure how many miles per hour they would have to travel to get to the preserve in time to save the animals.
3. Go on-line on the Internet to research the purchase of a

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pickup truck you'd like to own. Look into various makes and models, available options, and prices, and then calculate costs of buying or leasing. Can you find a truck that you'd want that you could afford to buy?

Music

1. Play the Carpenters and the Andy Williams songs inspired by *Bless the Beasts and Children*. Do you think they express the theme and feelings of the novel well? You could also compose your own song to express your feelings about and interpretation of the novel.
2. Create a musical event for the class featuring the many songs mentioned in the novel that the boys liked to listen to, plus any others from that era that you appreciate.
3. Put on a performance of traditional western songs, such as "Home on the Range" and "Red River Valley."

Psychology

1. Find out about popular psychology practices of the 1960s such as transactional (T-group) therapies and encounter sessions. Are any of these practices reflected in this novel?
2. Research and report on the causes and treatments of the various dysfunctions of the Bedwetters boys, including extreme sibling rivalry, infantile regression, oedipal relationships, and other reactions to parental neglect and emotional abuse.
3. Examine the ways in which Box Canyon Boys Camp does or does not offer a twisted version of masculine values, and the ways in which and reasons why the Bedwetters group fashions its own version of masculine initiation rituals.

Science and Health

1. Create a pamphlet about the natural history of the buffalo for distribution at a buffalo preserve. Include illustrations, a field guide to the buffalo's preferred environment, descriptions of the animal's behavior, and similar information.
2. Author Glendon Swarthout died of emphysema. Research and report on the causes, symptoms, and treatment of this disease.
3. Demonstrate and explain the scientific principles involved in hot-wiring a car.
4. Report orally or in writing, with illustrations, about piranha.

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

1. View a variety of Western films, including classic westerns such as *Shane*, *Stagecoach*, and *High Noon* and "anti-westerns" such as *The Professionals*, *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, *The Wild Bunch*, and *The Magnificent Seven*. What does each film portray about the mystique of the Old West and cowboys, and how do the two types of film differ in that portrayal?
2. Investigate the current practices relative to culling of government-sheltered buffalo herds. Are practices much different today from what is depicted in this novel?
3. View the Stanley Kramer film version of *Bless the Beasts and Children*. Discuss in class the ways in which the film presents the plot, characters, setting, and theme in the film as compared with the novel.
4. Record your dreams for a week or two and try to delve into their meanings.

5. Invite a recreational hunter or shooter to class to speak on the uses of guns and gun safety.
6. Create a classroom display of impressive muscle and performance cars of the 1960s and 1970s, like the one driven by the two young men who harass the Bedwetters.
7. Locate, get information on, and plan a trip to one of the U.S. buffalo preserves. If at all possible, visit one of these preserves and share photos of your experience with classmates.
8. Create and act out with classmates the scene when the surviving Bedwetters return to Box Canyon Boys Camp.
9. Draw up a list of the laws the Bedwetters broke in the course of carrying out their mission. Then debate with classmates what each boy's punishment should be.
10. Discuss with classmates whether or not you think Cotton's prediction would turn out to be correct: "We think tonight's something we have to do....But if we think it'll make us heroes or any movie junk like that—it won't. No one else will give a damn but us. In fact, it'll make a lot of people mad enough to shoot us."

ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT

1. Create a character description of each of the six Bedwetters; include a physical and a behavioral description, tell where each boy lives, and describe the boy's family situation and the effects this has had on the boy.
2. Create an illustrated promotional brochure for Box Canyon Boys Camp, proudly featuring its slogan, "Send Us a Boy—We'll Send You a Cowboy!" and suggesting how this might be accomplished through camp activities.
3. Referring to Western movies, the novel says, "For this is the marrowbone of every American adventure story: some men with guns, going somewhere, to do something dangerous." Explain how the events of this novel fit this description.
4. Explain what the author means when he says of the buffalo killings: "There was more here than mere destruction. The American soul itself was involved, its anthropology." How would you account for the boys' intense reaction to the buffalo slaughter?

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VOCABULARY TEST

Match each underlined word with its meaning listed below. Write the letter of the meaning in the space next to the sentence number.

- | | | | |
|------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-------------|
| a. all-powerful | f. stimulate to action | k. deep disgrace | p. foolish |
| b. agreed by all | g. exploded into action | l. swerved | q. tolerate |
| c. rhythmic beat | h. sniffed inquiringly | m. about to occur | r. wailed |
| d. sticky | i. meaningless language | n. temporary end | s. crooked |
| e. concerning | j. happy & lighthearted | o. moaning sound | t. indecent |

- ___ 1. The passing wind trembled in the pines, with a sough of loss.
- ___ 2. The animals snuffed one another through dilated nostrils.
- ___ 3. Raging, the bull buffalo stood. Omnipotent, glaring at the line of humans, he centered on the muzzle of a rifle.
- ___ 4. Dionne Warwick ululated soul.
- ___ 5. For five minutes they double-timed, in and out of stiplings of moonlight, the cadence of their footfalls muted by sand.
- ___ 6. In sleep it was torn from their lips together with the gibberish of protest.
- ___ 7. "Okay, we vote." It was unanimous.
- ___ 8. If you wanted to avoid the ignominy of being low boys on the totem pole, you might.
- ___ 9. This western movie was a fundamental film, a yarn innocent and scabrous, brutal and principled, true and a liar.
- ___ 10. Wheaties attempted to peptalk them into shape—his shape—and in general made a fatuous, all-round horse's ass of himself.
- ___ 11. "In the West," said Teft, apropos of nothing in particular, "everything sticks, stings, or stinks."
- ___ 12. Teft braked and slewed onto gravel and then they were turned and through the open gate.
- ___ 13. "Anything I can't abide is a driplip dude kid."
- ___ 14. They had been walking in, had put hands upon, something wet and cold and viscid.
- ___ 15. Over the impending ceremony he had night sweats for weeks.
- ___ 16. Again Teft could or would not explain his motive, standing mute, hands in pockets, smiling that oblique, tilted smile.
- ___ 17. To galvanize them, Cotton barked boots on, everybody.
- ___ 18. But this time Cotton was not granted surcease from his fit.
- ___ 19. The buffalo herd detonated.
- ___ 20. The morning sun was steadfast now, the air blithe as a cool bottle of cola.

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COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Matching (20 points)

Read each character description. In the list below, find the character who matches the description. Write the letter of the character in the space next to the description number. Use each name only once.

- | | | | | |
|-------------|------------|------------|-------------|---------------------|
| a. Cotton | c. Teft | e. Lally 1 | g. Wheaties | i. Shecker's father |
| b. Goodenow | d. Shecker | f. Lally 2 | h. Sheba | j. Cotton's mother |

- ___ 1. Bed-wetting 14-year-old with an unsympathetic stepfather.
- ___ 2. Babyish 12-year-old devoted to his pillow, thumb-sucking, and imaginary friends.
- ___ 3. Camp counselor discovered with whisky, cigarettes, and sex magazines.
- ___ 4. Woman who needs money and younger boyfriends.
- ___ 5. Fat boy who is a compulsive eater and compulsive talker.
- ___ 6. Tooth-grinder who hates authority and is adept at bypassing anything secured by locks or keys.
- ___ 7. Leader in spite of himself who yearns to fight in the Vietnam War.
- ___ 8. Boy who hates his younger brother and indulges in head-banging temper tantrums.
- ___ 9. Surrogate mother-figure to one of the campers.
- ___ 10. Famous comedian.

Part II: Short Answer (30 points)

Write a one- or two-word answer to each of the following questions.

- 1. In what U.S. state do the boys attend camp and go on their mission to save the buffalo?
- 2. In what way are Lally 1 and Lally 2 related?
- 3. What precious item belonging to Lally 2 does Lally 1 burn?
- 4. Who is the author of this book?
- 5. What name is given to the lowest-scoring group at the camp?
- 6. What trophy do Cotton and his group "win" for having their lowest weekly score?
- 7. What weapon does Teft bring along on the mission?
- 8. What habit of Goodenow's has gotten his stepfather very angry?
- 9. In what town do the boys meet up with two hostile young men at hamburger joint?
- 10. What does Teft forget to buy, a mistake that causes a big problem?
- 11. What scornful name meaning "useless creatures" does the nasty counselor give the boys?
- 12. At what solemn ceremony does Sammy Shecker embarrass himself and enrage his father?
- 13. What do the boys use to lure the buffalo to follow them and their truck?
- 14. What babyish behavior does Lally 2 indulge in often, besides bed-wetting?
- 15. What crimes has Teft committed that have gotten him into trouble with the law?

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Part III: Multiple Choice (20 points)

Underline the choice that correctly completes each of these sentences.

1. Cotton's hair is (brown, blond, red, spiked).
2. The boys visit the Buffalo Preserve on their way back from a campout in (Yosemite, the Petrified Forest, Acadia, the Badlands).
3. Five of the camp groups are named for (Indian tribes, wild animals, U.S. states, sports teams).
4. Cotton and his cabinmates are crazy for (girls, sports, hunting, western movies).
5. The people who kill the buffalo at the preserve are called (hunters, shooters, murderers, deputies).
6. The Lallys experience extreme (sibling rivalry, headaches, epileptic fits, catatonic fits).
7. Shecker loses a (pie-eating, slam-dunk, debate, bragging) contest set up by his father.
8. Teft tells a story about Ralph, his cousin's pet (skunk, goldfish, piranha, dog).
9. Cotton fondly remembers fishing in Quebec with his (mother, cousin, father, stepfather).
10. Four of the boys in the Bedwetters group are (twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen) years old.

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Write a character sketch of one of the boys in the Bedwetters group. Give a brief physical and behavioral description, describe the boy's family situation, and explain how the family situation is negatively affecting this boy.
2. Describe the role radios play in the novel.
3. In what ways are the boys and the buffaloes similar?
4. What influences do western movies have on the boys?

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COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Matching (20 points)

Read each quotation. In the list below, find the character who spoke the words. Write the letter of the character in the space next to the quotation number. You will use each name only once.

- | | | | | |
|-------------|------------|------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| a. Cotton | c. Teft | e. Lally 1 | g. Wheaties | i. Shecker's father |
| b. Goodenow | d. Shecker | f. Lally 2 | h. Cotton's stepfather | j. Camp Director |

- ___ 1. "I wish I was in Vegas right now. They cut the steaks special for my father in Vegas."
- ___ 2. "I wish to emphasize that the rankings, and therefore the tribal names and trophies, are up for weekly grabs."
- ___ 3. "Teft, goddammit, Teft, I can't tell you! But that was beautiful! Beautiful!"
- ___ 4. "My timmy brother and me, did we have a ball on a boat once."
- ___ 5. "You're a jimdandy, Johnny. I wish I could keep you."
- ___ 6. "I got us wheels and I drove us."
- ___ 7. "Always play it big. So you gambled. Gamble big. So you were a *fresser*, a pig. Be a big *fresser*."
- ___ 8. "I started out by own self and I'm still going and if anybody wants to tag along, they can."
- ___ 9. "The six of you are the pee-poorest assortment of snotnose, big-mouth, crybaby dings ever enrolled in this camp."
- ___ 10. "My stepfather told my mother, I heard him, to make up her mind if I was a boy or a girl."

Part II: Fill-In (30 points)

Write one or two words in each blank to make each statement true.

- The boys in Cotton's cabin need their transistor _____ to help them get to sleep.
- To express his anger, Lally 1 kills Lally 2's _____.
- Lally 2 has imaginary friends that he calls the _____.
- Teft steals a Chevy _____ to drive on the mission.
- Cotton and his group are attending _____ Boys Camp.
- The motto of the boys camp is "Send Us a Boy, We'll Send You a(n) _____."
- Five of the six trophies awarded to camp groups are _____.
- Sam Shecker's father is the famous _____ Sid Shecker.
- The exhausted boys garble in their heads the words to the classic western song "_____ on the _____."
- Low-ranking groups at the boys camp can improve their status by conducting successful _____.
- The boys start their mission in the town of _____, where Teft steals a vehicle.
- The buffalo killing is supervised by the Arizona _____ and _____ Department.
- The boys break the rules by riding out of camp and going to see a(n) _____.
- Lally 2's friends the Ooms live in the _____ at his family's house.
- Cotton dies as the truck he's driving crashes over the Mogollon _____.

BLESS THE BEASTS AND CHILDREN

Part III: Multiple Choice (20 points)

Underline the choice that correctly completes each of these sentences.

1. Cotton has a terrible dream in which he and his cabinmates are (horses, criminals, buffalo, snakes).
2. Goodenow insists on bringing the (buffalo head, chamber pot, pillow, cell phone) along on the mission.
3. Teft insults the two young westerners on the road by calling them (nerds, idiots, hippies, skids).
4. Teft and Cotton have traveled to the camp via (bus, car, train, plane).
5. Lally 2 wins a barrel race at camp with his horse (Wheaties, Old Buff, Sweetie, Sheba).
6. Shecker uses his strength to break some troublesome (horses, fences, baling wire, chains).
7. Cotton yearns to fight in the (Korean, Vietnam, Gulf, Bosnian) War.
8. To release the buffalo, the boys have to (open the pen gates, drug the animals, bribe the guard, bridle the animals).
9. Cotton experiences severe (headaches, catatonic fits, sibling rivalry, paranoid delusions).
10. Twice at camp, Goodenow (threatens suicide, stops eating, kills his pets, attacks the camp director).

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Write a character sketch of one of the boys in the Bedwetters group. Give a brief physical and behavioral description, describe the boy's family situation, and explain how the family situation is negatively affecting this boy.
2. What instances of cruelty do you find in this novel?
3. What mission do the boys go on, and why?
4. How is success measured at the boys camp?

BLESS THE BEASTS AND CHILDREN

ANSWER KEY

VOCABULARY TEST

- | | | | |
|------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. o | 6. i | 11. e | 16. s |
| 2. h | 7. b | 12. l | 17. f |
| 3. a | 8. k | 13. q | 18. n |
| 4. r | 9. t | 14. d | 19. g |
| 5. c | 10. p | 15. m | 20. j |

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Matching (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. b | 6. c |
| 2. f | 7. a |
| 3. g | 8. e |
| 4. j | 9. h |
| 5. d | 10. i |

Part II: Short Answer (30 points)

- | | |
|----------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Arizona | 9. Flagstaff |
| 2. brothers | 10. gas |
| 3. foam pillow | 11. dings |
| 4. Glendon Swarthout | 12. bar mitzvah |
| 5. Bedwetters | 13. hay (bales) |
| 6. chamber pot | 14. thumb-sucking |
| 7. rifle | 15. car theft (joy-riding) |
| 8. bed-wetting | |

Part III: Multiple Choice (20 points)

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. red | 6. sibling rivalry |
| 2. the Petrified Forest | 7. pie-eating |
| 3. Indian tribes | 8. piranha |
| 4. western movies | 9. stepfather |
| 5. shooters | 10. fourteen |

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Matching (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. d | 6. c |
| 2. j | 7. i |
| 3. a | 8. f |
| 4. e | 9. g |
| 5. h | 10. b |

Part II: Fill-In (30 points)

- | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. radios | 9. Home (on the) Range |
| 2. pets (horned, rabbit) | 10. raids |
| 3. Ooms | 11. Prescott |
| 4. pickup (truck) | 12. Game (and) Fish |
| 5. Box Canyon | 13. drive-in movie |
| 6. Cowboy | 14. sauna |
| 7. animal heads | 15. Rim |
| 8. comedian | |

Part III: Multiple Choice (20 points)

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------------|
| 1. buffalo | 6. baling wire |
| 2. buffalo head | 7. Vietnam |
| 3. hippies | 8. open the pen gates |
| 4. plane | 9. catatonic fits |
| 5. Sheba | 10. threatens suicide |

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

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