

# A DAY NO PIGS WOULD DIE

## LIVING LITERATURE SERIES

ROBERT NEWTON PECK

A PERMA-BOUND PRODUCTION

TEACHER'S GUIDE

GUIDE WRITTEN BY MARY ELLEN SNODGRASS

*This guide was prepared using the 1994 Random House Sprinter edition, © 1972. Other editions may differ.*

### SYNOPSIS

**Chap. 1:** In mid-April, 12-year-old Rob Peck skips school at recess because Edward Thatcher ridiculed his Shaker clothes. Halfway home, he discovers Apron, farmer Ben Tanner's prize Holstein milker, in hard labor. For leverage, Rob ties the calf's head to a dogwood with his pants and kicks Apron in the udder to force her away. The calf rips free, with the afterbirth splattering over Rob. To ease Apron's breathing, he yanks out a goiter. Apron bites his arm and drags him bare-bottomed through stickers. He sinks into blackness.

**Chap. 2:** Awakening in a fog, Rob hears someone calling his father, Haven, and realizes that he is lying in a wool horse blanket. He hears Lucy, his mother, and knows that her oldest sister, Aunt Carrie, is also present. Haven thanks Tanner for rescuing Rob. Tanner identifies the goiter, which Rob clutches in his hand while his mother stitches up his hurts with sewing thread. Haven carries him to his room. Rob explains about the calf and his torn pants, which he left on the ridge. Haven is not pleased that he skipped school, but rewards him with two beads of spruce gum, an apple, and a twig of sumac for a whistle. Rob smells the odor of pigs on Haven, who kills pigs for Clay Sander.

**Chap. 3:** On Saturday nearly a week later, Rob helps his father reset a fence post. Tanner gives Rob a pig as his reward for birthing the twin calves, Bob and Bib. Haven objects that the gift conflicts with Shaker ways. Tanner replies that the pig is a present for Rob's February birthday and asks Haven to help him yoke the bulls in fall. Rob names his pig Pinky. Haven cites Shaker law, which requires that Pinky have a pen separate from Solomon the ox and Daisy the cow.

**Chap. 4:** Rob feeds Pinky well. He and Haven use Solomon, a chain, and a capstan to pull the corn crib into place to make a pen. Rob questions how he observes Shaker principles, since he is unable to read and disdains the law that keeps him from watching the Greemobys (Green Mountain Boys) play baseball on Sunday. Haven takes pride in sound farming practices and in killing pigs to pay for their land.

**Chap. 5:** On Sunday, the family boards the wagon and goes to church. That afternoon, Rob takes Pinky for a walk and builds a flutterwheel. Pinky encounters a frog, crawdad, and crow. Rob tells Pinky how he was named for Major Robert Rogers, a Shaker frontiersman.

**Chap. 6:** Ten weeks later, Rob races home with his last report card and finds Aunt Matty Plover, a distant cousin and former English teacher who visits from Learning. Rob shows his report card to Lucy and Aunt Carrie, who can't read. Aunt Matty sees the D in English and tutors him in diagraming a sentence.

**Chap. 7:** While walking Pinky on the ridge north of the house, Rob sees a hawk kill a rabbit. He feeds Pinky sorghum, grain, fish, and fresh water. He anticipates when Pinky will be bred to Samson, Tanner's boar.

**Chap. 8:** On a stormy night, May Hillman visits. Haven sends Rob to hitch Solomon to the long wagon. They journey to the Meeting House, where Sebring Hillman desecrates the graves of Letty Phelps, a suicide, and her drowned infant girl. Haven objects because Letty was his kin. Sebring loads the child's coffin on his wagon so he can rebury it on his land under the Hillman name. Rob, Haven, and Sebring return to the Peck kitchen. The Hillmans leave together with the baby's coffin.

**Chap. 9:** Aunt Carrie and Lucy discuss the Widow Bascom, whose hiring of Ira Long, a farm hand, over two years after Vernal Bascom's death incites gossip. Rob recalls that she hit him with a broom handle for running through her strawberry patch with his friend, Jacob Henry. Another time, she rewarded him with buttermilk and gingersnaps for moving flower pots. Ira told Rob that Ben Tanner was taking Bob and Bib to the Rutland Fair. Tanner invites Rob to go to Rutland to show off the oxen. He also invites Pinky, whom Rob can show with the other livestock. Haven explains that there will be no spending money, but Aunt Carrie promises to give Rob ten cents.

**Chap. 10:** On fair day, Haven reminds Rob of his manners and drives him to the Tanner farm. He has his picture taken, walks Bob and Bib around the ring, then spends his dime for soap to scrub Pinky before the judges examine the children's 4-H projects. Rob gets so excited that he vomits on the judge's shoe. Pinky wins a blue ribbon for best-behaved pig.

**Chap. 11:** During the night, a weasel rifles the henhouse. Haven sends for Ira Long's terrier Hussy to put with the weasel in a barrel to make the dog hate weasels. The fight kills the weasel, but Haven has to destroy the dog because of its injuries. Rob chastises Ira for cruelty and buries Hussy.

**Chap. 12:** Pinky is shipped back from the fair. Haven fears that Pinky is barren, since she hasn't gone into heat. Lucy sends Rob to fetch a squirrel so that she can have the nuts from its stomach for a chocolate cake. Haven complains that spanner worms have destroyed the apple orchard and learns that Rob smoked them on a windy day. They discuss the qualities that make a good farmer. That fall, Rob yearns for a store-bought coat. His father reminds him that Plain People make do without frills. He explains that he is dying and that since Rob's four sisters left home and his two brothers were stillborn, there is no one else to care for family and farm, which will be paid for in five more years.

**Chap. 13:** In November, Pinky is still not ready to breed. Tanner delivers Samson, whom he turns into the crib with Pinky. He strikes a bargain for the fee: Rob must pay either fifty dollars or two picks of the litter. The breeding causes

## A DAY NO PIGS WOULD DIE

Pinky pain. Rob wants to rescue her, but Ben warns him that the boar is dangerous during mating. Tanner asks about Haven's health. Rob replies that his father never rests. He adds that his teacher thinks he might be something more than a farmer. Tanner reminds him that good farmers are stewards.

**Chap. 14:** The winter is cold and the apple crop inadequate. Haven tries to hunt deer to augment their food, but a lung ailment makes him cough. He begins sleeping in the barn so that he won't disturb Lucy. One dark Saturday in December, Haven decides that he and Rob must slaughter Pinky. Haven's emotion inspires love in Rob, who kisses his bloody hand. Haven weeps.

**Chap. 15:** On the third of May, Rob finds his father dead in the barn. Rob tells the neighbors. Wilcox, the county corner, comes to prepare the body and brings a coffin donated by Shakers. Rob digs a grave in the orchard, then dresses in his father's oversized trousers and shirt. He rails at heaven for his poverty. Tanner treats Rob like a fellow farmer. As eldest son, Rob makes the funeral address, then watches as his father is lowered into the ground. Tanner offers his assistance. Rob tends the chores, eats his evening meal of beans, then goes to the orchard to bid good night to his father.

### TIME LINE

- 1724** First permanent settlement in Vermont.  
**1731 Nov. 7** Robert Rogers is born in Methuen, Massachusetts.  
**1736 Feb. 29** Ann Lee is born in Manchester, England.  
**1738 Jan. 10** Ethan Allen born in Litchfield, Connecticut.  
**1755** Robert Rogers enlists in the New Hampshire militia and serves as a spy and as captain of Rogers' Rangers, who adopt Indian strategy of stealth and camouflage in skirmishes against the British.  
**1758** In Manchester, England, Ann Lee joins the Shaking Quakers, who speak in tongues, confess their sins in detail, and manifest the Holy Spirit.  
**1759** Robert Rogers burns a village of Saint Francis Indians and kills 200.  
**1760** Rogers's Rangers help capture Montreal.  
**1763 July-August** Robert Rogers fights Indians in Pontiac's Rebellion.  
**1765** Robert Rogers suffers severe debt, goes to England, and publishes "Journals" and "A Concise Account of North America."  
**1766** Robert Rogers publishes "Ponteach, or the Savages of America," a dramatic epic poem.  
**1769** Ethan Allen settles in Bennington, Vermont.  
**1770** Ethan Allen is colonel of the Green Mountain Boys. Governor William Tryon proclaims him an outlaw and sets a price for his capture.

After being jailed for disrupting Anglican worship with speaking in tongues and dancing, Ann Lee has a vision of Adam and Eve's corruption by lust and determines that Shakers should be celibate, a practice that weakens the group.

- 1774** Ethan Allen publishes a tract defending Vermont against New York's claims on its territory.

Ann Lee migrates to New York and establishes a mission for the United Society of Believers of Christ's Second Appearing, also called the Alethians or Millennialists.

- 1775 May 10** Ethan Allen and Benedict Arnold capture Fort Ticonderoga.

**May 11** Ethan Allen seizes Crown Point and control of Lake Champlain from the British.

Congress recognizes the legitimacy of the Green Mountain Boys and grants pay equal to soldiers of the Continental army.

Ethan Allen is admitted to the New York Assembly and proposes an invasion of Canada.

**Sept. 25** In Canada, Allen is taken prisoner and shipped to England.

- 1776** Robert Rogers forms the Queen's American Rangers.

**1777 Jan. 15** Vermont or "New Connecticut" declares itself independent.

**June 4** Vermont adopts its official name, which derives from Latin for "green mountain."

**July 2-8** Vermont frames a constitution at the Windsor convention, outlaws slavery, and guarantees the vote to male citizens.

**Aug. 16** The Green Mountain Boys defeat General Burgoyne at Bennington.

- 1778 May 6** In a prisoner exchange, Ethan Allen is returned to Vermont. He becomes major general of the Vermont militia.

**1779** Ethan Allen publishes "A Narrative of Colonel Ethan Allen's Captivity" and "A Vindication of the Opposition of the Inhabitants of Vermont to the Government of New York."

**1780** Robert Rogers returns to England.

**1781** Mother Ann Lee initiates a missionary tour of New England.

**1784 Sept. 8** Mother Ann Lee dies.

**1787** Ethan Allen settles in Burlington.

**1789 Feb. 12** Ethan Allen dies.

**July 7** The Green Mountain Boys lose the Battle of Hubbardton.

**1791 March 4** Vermont joins the Union as the fourteenth state.

**1795 May 18** Robert Rogers dies in London.

**1801** Issachar Bates sets out on a ten-year pilgrimage to the Ohio Valley and converts 1,000 settlers to the Shaker faith.

**1819 June 26** Abner Doubleday is born in Ballston Spa, New York.

**1839** Legend credits Abner Doubleday with the invention of baseball in Cooperstown, New York.

**1846** Abner Doubleday serves in the war with Mexico.

**1861 April 12** Abner Doubleday fires the first Union gun to defend Fort Sumter.

**1863** Abner Doubleday is immortalized for his heroism at Antietam and Bull Run with a bronze statue at Gettysburg.

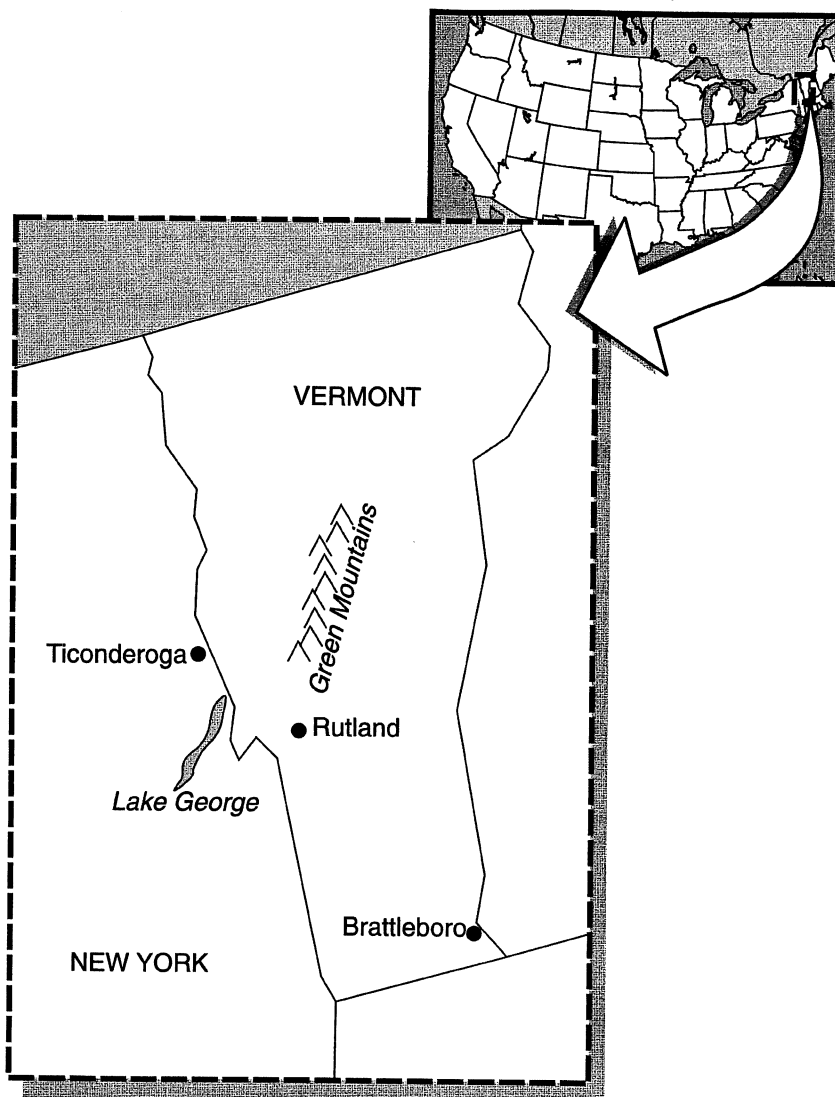
**1893 Jan. 26** Abner Doubleday dies in Mendham, New Jersey.

**1894** The number of shakers declines to 1,000.

### BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Born near Fort Ticonderoga, Vermont, on February 17, 1928, Robert Newton Peck III was the youngest of seven children of taciturn Shakers Lucile and F. Haven Peck. Like Haven, an illiterate Vermont farmer, Peck has been a farmer and is an unsophisticated, downhome man who snow-skis,

## A DAY NO PIGS WOULD DIE



loves horses and public speaking, dresses in cowboy gear, plays ragtime and poker, sings in a barbershop quartet, and speaks with a raspy Vermont twang. He claims to be "as sophisticated as a turnip" and states as his personal motto, "Wish not for apples. Grow strong trees."

The first in his family to read and write, Peck attended a rural one-room school along with other children of lumberjacks, mill workers, and farmers. From his teacher, Miss Kelly, to whom he has dedicated some of his works, he learned the basics plus her two specialties, manners and cleanliness. She read him *Tom Sawyer* and *The Wind in the Willows*. He respected the few books of the school's library and admired Charles Lindbergh, Calvin Coolidge, Mark Twain, Booker T. Washington, and Ty Cobb. At home, when literate visitors stayed for supper they read from the Bible, the family's only reading material.

From 1945 to 1947, Peck served in the U.S. Army before studying law at Rollins College and Cornell University. He has worked as a hog killer, lumberjack, paper mill worker, copywriter, advertising executive, and director of the Rollins

College Writers Conference. From 1972-1989, he churned out the autobiographical *A Day No Pigs Would Die*, juvenile novels, a collection of poems, a musical, and three teleplays. Of his first book, he acknowledges that he was searching for a way to pay tribute to his gentle, hard-working father. In retrospect, he calls the book "the Bar Mitzvah of a gentile boy."

Peck's books center on the past, especially his boyhood on the Vermont farm. Some of his works recapture the Revolutionary War in New England, particularly events that occurred at Fort Ticonderoga, the divided loyalties of Tories and patriots, and the heroism of Ethan Allen and his Green Mountain Boys. Peck married librarian Dorothy "Dorrie" Anne Houston, mother of their son Christopher and daughter Anne Houston. The family resides in Longwood, Florida. Still a New Englander in outlook, he describes his forebears as "the granite sentries of liberty, standing free." Peck loves animals and good conversation and encourages readers to write.

### CRITIC'S CORNER

Critics are divided in their evaluations of Robert Peck's literary expertise. Some use descriptives like quaint, harsh,

## A DAY NO PIGS WOULD DIE

brutal, entrancing, sickening, naturalistic, vivid, moralistic, and faintly gamy; others laud his ebullience, sensitivity, and awareness of beauty. They compare *A Day No Pigs Would Die* to *True Grit* and *Addie Pray*. The *Christian Science Monitor* notes, "In showing just how earthy farm life is and how stoic a farmer and his children must be Mr. Peck spares us nothing. Vivid animal mating scenes, butcherings, a cruel economy that forces a boy to help slaughter his beloved pig and his father to insist that he does—we get the lot."

Critic Thomas Farel Heffernan claims that Peck "delivered a heavy dose of ruralism . . . colored by an overly sentimental examination of the boy narrator's psychology. Even worse was the effort to turn the boy into another Huck Finn by giving him cute ways of expressing his incomprehension of the world. Colorfulness via naiveté has its limits and they are as readily detected by young as by old readers."

In his own defense, Robert Peck, who refers to himself as a "Vermont redneck author," points out the need for realism in juvenile fiction: "If you eat meat, you ought to be able to butcher it yourself, instead of tripping blissfully through life thinking that a hamburger is made by DuPont out of soybeans." Of the two professions, writing and slaughtering, Peck attests that writing "sure beats killing hogs."

Peck has earned awards from *Book World* and *Media and Methods* and the ALA Best Books for Young Adults in 1975. He holds a Children's Book Award from the University of Colorado and seven honors from the New York Public Library's Books for the Teen Age. In addition, he has received a *New York Times* Outstanding Books award and four commendations from the Child Study Association of America's Children's Books. In 1981 he won his most prestigious accolade, a Mark Twain award, followed by a Notable Children's Trade Book award from the National Council for Social Studies, a Michigan Young Readers award, and recognition at the Bologna International Children's Book Fair.

### GENERAL OBJECTIVES

1. To discuss the themes of neighborliness and hard work
2. To analyze the role of the Shaker faith
3. To comprehend the exigencies of farm life
4. To discuss the interplay of work and recreation
5. To locate examples of foreshadowing
6. To evaluate harsh lessons in the process of coming of age
7. To describe the beauties of the Vermont setting
8. To explain how the main character learns to face responsibility
9. To characterize the role of farm women as contrasted with that of men
10. To comment on illiteracy and its debilitating effects on adults

### SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To explain why Rob deserves a reward as valuable as Pinky
2. To note Rob's behavior at the fair
3. To contrast Rob's affection for his parents, relatives, and neighbors.
4. To project what kind of farmer Rob will become
5. To contrast Shaker beliefs with those of other religions represented in Learning

6. To note the behavior of father and son during the slaughtering of Pinky
7. To account for the author's inclusion of seemingly peripheral events, such as the removal of the baby's corpse and giggling at the neighbor's house
8. To discuss the significance of the title
9. To describe how Rob pays tribute to Haven Peck
10. To characterize Peck's economy of language in such brief, terse scenes as the slaughter of Pinky and training of Hussy

### LITERARY TERMS AND APPLICATIONS

For a better understanding of Robert Newton Peck's style, present the following terms and applications to his novel:

**aphorism** a concise, often witty truism or principle stated in a brief phrase or sentence to serve as an insightful observation, moral precept, or form of instruction. Examples of wise adages dot the text as Haven and Lucy attempt to bring up their son in the faith of Plain People. The wry advice of "Never miss a chance to keep your mouth shut" characterizes the whole of Rob's childhood. Instead of frolicking with abandon or playing baseball on Sundays with friends, he internalizes the firm self-control that particularizes Shaker philosophy.

**first person narrative** a story or a series of actions told from the vantage point of a single observer. *A Day No Pigs Would Die* examines the relationship between a boy and his parents from the child's point of view. The awareness of adult responsibilities develops slowly as Rob tries to emulate responsible farming attitudes and skills. The end of his childhood comes too quickly and stuns him with the news that he will soon be the farmer, man of the house, livestock keeper, and adult Shaker. The boy's explanation of so fearful a shift from childhood to manhood lends poignance to the narrative and endears Rob for his predictable errors in judgment. Standing alongside his father's plain wood coffin, he becomes the funeral speaker as he watches his childhood descend into the grave along with Haven Peck.

**symbol** a concrete object that stands for a complex or abstract idea or relationship. Pinky, Rob's beloved pet pig, represents Rob's naivete. From beloved companion entranced by a flutterwheel, the pig must be crushed, dismembered, boiled, scraped, and preserved for food, the goal of most farm chores. The loss of Pinky's friendship to a lone country-bred child in a household of grimly fundamentalist adults thrusts Rob into the role of farmer and steward before he has given over his need for a childhood pet.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF SETTING

The milieu of *A Day No Pigs Would Die* establishes the essential rhythm and responsibility of farm work. For Rob, learning about breeding livestock, smoking the orchard in season, and building a pig pen is the stuff of his after-school existence. To his father, Haven Peck, the lessons are more than hard work. Because his days are few, he hurriedly introduces Rob to the serious side of farming, which includes shooting deer for meat and killing pigs for cash to keep the family in meat during a hard winter.

The story opens on a likely setting—a retreat from school in Learning, Vermont, to the thorny hillside where a neighbor's cow struggles in labor and chokes on a goiter. During Rob's intrusion into the birthing, his arm is severely bitten

## A DAY NO PIGS WOULD DIE

from his deep thrust into the animal's throat. He awakens in the serene household where his parents and Aunt Carrie treat his hurts and his father carries him to bed. In subsequent scenes in the house, Peck gives appropriate details of table, chairs, bed, stove, fireside, and mud room without indulging in details. The sparse description suggests that there are no frills in a Shaker home.

The high point of contrast comes in Chapter Ten, when the Tanners escort Rob to the Rutland, Vermont, county fair by buggy. Ostensibly to assist with showing calves, Rob gets into his share of boyish mischief, spends his only dime for soap to lather Pinky for the showing, and overeats enough to throw up at a crucial moment in the judging. Peck emphasizes the group's pose before an old-fashioned camera, the sawdust ring where the boy leads the twin oxen, and the excitement of 4-H livestock performing for judges.

The return to the farm reschedules Rob for a harsh procession of difficult lessons in husbandry. The destruction of Hussy after a bout with a weasel in a barrel ends in burial under green timothy near an apple tree. The starkness of the setting prepares for Haven's interment in the same location, the prettiest spot on the farm. When Rob fetches a squirrel for nuts to go on a cake, he climbs the ridge to a stand of hickory trees and looks out on the autumn scene, "yellow with golden rod. Like somebody broke eggs all over the hillside." The henyard squabble over the squirrel's entrails provokes Rob's conclusion that the world is unfair. After he learns that his father will soon die, Rob turns to the dying embers of the fireside to watch them wink out in a parallel form of dying.

Before the father's passing, Rob survives the mating of Pinky and Samson, a lean apple crop, and winter hunting for deer on the ridge. By snow time, Haven sleeps in the barn to keep his coughing from disturbing the womenfolk. From the warmth of the kitchen and a breakfast of oatmeal, Rob faces a chill barnyard and the death of Pinky and manfully departs at first light to "get it done." The necessary equipment and fire precede the crack of a crowbar on Pinky's head and the boiling of the carcass along the corn cratch that had been Pinky's home. Peck covers the scene with a gray sky, a warning of heavier scenes in the final chapters.

The man-sized work of digging a grave in the family plot in the orchard is not enough to keep Rob occupied. He hunts up chores in the tackroom and stops to examine the patina of hard work and sweat that gilds his father's hand tools. In Rob's room, he stands before a mirror in the too-big clothing he pins together for the funeral. From the parlor window, he observes the arrival of neighbors and friends on "a day no pigs would die." The plain "box of raw unpainted wood" slides onto cross boards in the chill earth. As Rob walks away, he remarks on the absence of a monument. The day continues with work at the milk house and tackroom, supper dishes to wash and dry, and a wistful evening visit to the grave in the farm's "patch of grassless land."

### CROSS-CURRICULAR SOURCES

For more information about death, Vermont, Shakers, Ethan Allen, Green Mountain boys, Abner Doubleday, parenting, values, and other subjects and issues deriving from the novel, consult these sources:

*Acting on Your Values*, Rosen Publishing Group  
*American Revolution*, Center for Humanities

*Dealing with Anger*, Guidance Associates  
*Death and Dying*, Guidance Associates  
*Historic New England* (map), National Geographic  
*New England Almanac*, National Public Radio  
*Northern New England*, Chelsea House  
*Seeking God in a Harried Life*, Christian Science Church  
*Seeking the Shakers*, Hyperion  
*Understanding Your Parents*, Guidance Associates

Also, consult these web sites:

- "Abner Doubleday," <http://www.tulane.edu/~latner/Doubleday.html>.  
"The American Revolutionary War," <http://www.ilt.columbia.edu/k12history/aha/ahacm/html>.  
"American Revolution Timeline," <http://numbers.wap.org/lcharters/lykara/project/timeline.html>.  
"America at War," [http://www.senco.net/suburb/dlswoff/amrev\\_p3.html](http://www.senco.net/suburb/dlswoff/amrev_p3.html).  
"Birth of a Nation," <http://tqjunior.advanced.org/3803/People/people.html>.  
"Fort Ethan Allen, Vermont," <http://personalweb.smcvt.edu/thefort>.  
"The 4-H Farm," <http://www.ics.uci.edu/~pazzani/4H/InfoDirtRoad.html>.  
"Green Mountain Boys," <http://www.anyflag.com/history/greenmt.htm>.  
"The Shaker Home and Inventions," <http://homepage.interaccess.com/~wbider/shaker.html>.  
"The Shaker Museum," <http://www.logantele.com/~shakmus/history.htm>.  
"The Shakers," <http://www.ctd.nwu.edu/skul/shaker/index.html>.  
"The Shakers at Hancock Village," <http://www.hancockshakervillage.org/shakers.html>.  
"The Shakers at Oneida," <http://www.oneida.com/theoneid.htm>.  
"The Shakers at Pleasant Hill," <http://www.farmnatdan.com/shaker.htm>.  
"Vermont: The Green Mountain State," <http://www.greenmntns.com/resources.html>.  
"Vermont," <http://www.pbpub.com>.

### THEMES AND MOTIFS

A study of the central issues and situations in Robert Newton Peck's *A Day No Pigs Would Die* should include these aspects:

#### Themes

- challenge
- family
- stewardship
- farm life
- hardship
- longing
- achievement
- disappointment
- despair
- loss
- maturity

#### Motifs

- belonging to a minority religion
- accepting a life of being different
- coping with loss of a parent

## A DAY NO PIGS WOULD DIE

- learning an adult's responsibility
- accepting the brutality of animal life

### MEANING STUDY

Below are words, phrases, or sentences that have a particular meaning in the story. Explain each. Chapter and age numbers identify the passage from which the item is taken.

1. During recess, he'd point at my clothes and made sport of them . . . I'd teach him not to make fun of Shaker ways. (Chap. 1, p. 3)

*(Robert Peck, whose parents adhere to the teachings of the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing or, more commonly, Shakers, resents Edward Thatcher's taunts at plain clothing. Shakers, who promote hard work, thrift, morality, and faith as strongly as they abhor decoration and frills, dress in simple, homemade garments. Founded in Manchester, England, in 1736 by "Mother" Ann Lee, the group is an offshoot of Quakers or the Society of Friends. At one time celibate, the group shrank because of the lack of a second generation. To make up for children, the original Shaker communes, based near Albany, New York, accepted foundlings and converts.)*

2. I know what that is. It's a goiter. (Chap. 2, p. 10)

*(Apron suffers from an enlargement of the thyroid gland at the front of the neck, which is causing her to choke. Goiter evolves from an accumulation of protein in the thyroid, which can be avoided by supplying farm animals with salt licks containing iodine. This malformation can also occur in human beings and is prevented by regular consumption of iodized salt. The disease is controlled by doses of thyroid hormone or surgical removal of the obstruction.)*

3. Can't keep swine and kine under the same roof. (Chap. 3, p. 24)

*(In the practical wisdom of the Book of Shaker, pigs and cows must be housed separately because of their different needs. Pigs enjoy rooting in mud to moisten their tough hides. Cows, on the other hand, can sicken and die if their hooves decay from too much moisture.)*

4. Before you know it, she'll weigh twenty stone. (Chap. 3, p. 24)

*(Haven Peck predicts that Pinky will need a pen of sizable proportions because she will grow from piglet to a sow weighing nearly three hundred pounds. A stone is an English weight equal to fourteen pounds.)*

5. Papa, it sure is mirthful that somebody who knows history like Miss Malcolm knows it has never heard of a great man like Abner Doubleday. (Chap. 4, p. 34)

*(On his history test, Rob misses a perfect score by one point when he names Abner Doubleday as the Vermonter who played a key part in history instead of Ethan Allen. Doubleday, a native of New York and Civil War hero, is often credited with inventing the game of baseball. Colonel Ethan Allen, a native of Litchfield, Connecticut, led the Green Mountain Boys, a militia regiment, during an uprising over the creation of the state of New Hampshire.*

*Once declared an outlaw, Allen redeemed himself historically by helping Benedict Arnold capture Fort Ticonderoga, New York, on May 10, 1775. A champion of statehood for Vermont [which is named for the two*

*Latin words meaning "green mountain"], Allen died in Burlington, Vermont, two years before the state was admitted to the Union.)*

6. I was named after Robert Rogers, who was quite a man with the Indians in these parts. (Chap. 5, p. 46)

*(A native of Dunbarton, New Hampshire, Robert Rogers led Rogers' Rangers during the French and Indian War. Rejecting a commission in the Colonial army, he moved to England, thereby leaving a taint of suspicion about his loyalties. An author as well as a woodsman, he wrote several works about American Indians: A Concise Account of North America (1765), a verse tragedy entitled Ponteach, or the Savages of America (1766), and A Diary of the Siege of Detroit in the War with Pontiac (published in 1860).)*

7. Them two living under the same roof, without benefit of clergy. (Chap. 9, p. 78)

*(Rob, innocent of the meaning of cohabitation, hears Aunt Carrie bothering over the immorality of Iris Bascom, a widow living in the same house with Ira Long, her hired man. Lucy Peck is less eager to condemn and reminds Carrie self-righteously, "What goes on under a neighbor's quilt is nought to me.")*

*Because Rob follows his mother's example and treats the Widow Bascom and her hired man in neighborly fashion, Iris Bascom passes along to Bess Tanner the fact that Rob would like to go to the Rutland Fair. Rob, ruefully recalling a time when Mrs. Bascom swatted him with a broom for treading on her strawberries, concludes that "having a big hired man around like Ira may be sinful. But I say the Widow Bascom is some improved.")*

8. His grays were called Quaker Lady and Quaker Gent. Other than the fact that one was a mare and the other a gelding, you couldn't tell 'em apart. (Chap. 10, p. 90)

*(Ben Tanner's matched pair of gray horses appear to be twins. Actually, one is a female and the other a castrated male. They take their names from the fact that Quakers rejected bright colors in favor of more somber tones, such as black or gray.)*

9. A man leaned over the fence and said to me, "What's their line, boy?" "Out of Apron, Mr. Tanner's prize milk-er," I said. "The sire bull was his, too." "Beowulf?" "Yes, sir." (Chap. 10, p. 95)

*(In his role as guide to Ben Tanner's show oxen, Rob passes along genealogical information about their dam and sire. Apron, named for the white patch on her belly and neck, is the dam, and Beowulf, obviously named for the hero of England's folk epic, is the sire.)*

10. I kissed his hand again and again, with all its stink and fatty slime of dead pork. So he'd understand that I'd forgive him even if he killed me. (Chap. 14, pp. 139-140)

*(Peck creates a biblical image based on Genesis 22:1-18 in which Yahweh tests Abraham by commanding him to sacrifice his long-awaited son, Isaac. Even though love is not mentioned in this novel, the rich emotional experience that draws tears from son and dying father elicits from Rob a strong statement of his love for Haven.)*

## A DAY NO PIGS WOULD DIE

### COMPREHENSION STUDY

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important and you should defend your answers with passages from the novel.

#### Questions 1-5 (Literal Level)

1. What sensations does Rob connect with his mother?  
(For Rob, Lucy Peck is a warm, motherly source of physical comforts and good food. Carried home from his misadventure in the pasture, Rob, bloody and sore, arrives wrapped in a horse blanket and little else. Through pain Rob hears "Mama's voice, soft and sweet like music; and I could feel her hands on my head and my hair." Even while Lucy prepares to sew up Rob's bitten arm, she murmurs, "The poor lamb." She soothes away his concern for the numbness in his right hand: "That's 'cause it's resting . . . It wants to get well, and so do you. So right about now your Pa and Carrie and I are going to tiptoe out of here and let you get some rest. You earned it."  
Secure in his own room for convalescence, Rob recalls the natural perfume of a farm wife: "crisp and starched, plumping my pillow, and the cool muslin pillowcase touched both my ears as the back of my head sank into all those feathers." After he apologizes for tearing his pants, Lucy reassures him: "I'm preferenced to mend busted pants than a busted boy." Later, he wakes up to eat the hot succotash and warm milk that she brings.  
After Rob's triumphant return from the Rutland fair, he Ben Tanner, and Haven discuss the day's events. It isn't until the Tanners head for home that Lucy Peck runs from the house, "holding out her hands." A gentle, positive influence on Rob's life, she represents unquestioning approval and love. In Rob's description, "I ran to her and hugged her clean and warm and hard as I could." She praises Pinky—the blue ribbon winner—as "the prettiest pig in Learning." Reward from Lucy, as usual, is home cooked food—in this instance, blackberry pie. Once Rob climbs into bed, she concludes his wonderful day with a good night kiss.)
2. Describe Rob's work at the Rutland fair.  
(Ben, knowing Shaker ideas about frills, hires Rob to tend and show his twin oxen, Bob and Bib, in the livestock arena at the fair. Prodded from behind by Mr. Tanner's goad, Rob shakes off his initial shyness and marches "around a big sawdust ring with all the people clapping their hands and pointing at Bob and Bib." Buoyed with pride, he continues parading the animals, walking manfully and tall.  
Before he can rest from the successful showing, Bess Tanner hurries him to the 4-H hog judging. He has no time to freshen up Pinky with a thorough bath and must bargain for an exchange of his only dime for a sliver of saddle soap, which he and Ben apply so that Pinky looks her best. She receives a blue ribbon: "FIRST PRIZE FOR BEST-BEHAVED PIG.")
3. Describe the care that Pinky receives.  
(From the first, Rob makes certain that Pinky gets the best. He feeds her "as much corn, wheat, barley, rye, oats, and sorghum as I could work out of Papa or Mr. Tanner." Likewise, she drinks "Daisy's good fresh milk,

eats fresh-caught fish, and enjoys soybean meal, alfalfa, and tens pounds of water a day—"cold and fresh." Mama remarks, "Rob, you feed that pig better'n you feed yourself." Rob believes the care is worthy it and predicts, "In a year or so, she'd be lying in her crib with a dozen pigs sucking away for glory be."

To account for Pinky's progress, Rob keeps a record, determining that "for every three hundred fifty pounds of feed I give, she ought to weight-gain a hundred." In addition to excellent nutrition, Pinky also receives "shelter and shade," a well-drained crib, and "the sump hole by the brook for mud to roll in." To make sure she isn't bothered by dust, Rob even wets down the yard.)

4. Describe the morning after Haven's death.  
(To keep warm, Haven sleeps in the barn his last winter. On May 3, Rob finds him still lying "on the straw bed that he rigged for himself." Without touching his father, Rob knows that he is dead. Gently, the boy encourages the much-needed rest: "It's all right. You can sleep this morning. No cause to rouse yourself. I'll do the chores. There's no need to work any more. You just rest."  
Equally gentle with his mother and elderly aunt, Rob asks for a basket breakfast for his trip to Mr. Wilcox, the undertaker, because "Papa won't be coming up for breakfast. Not this morning, and not ever again." Rob tackles the fine points of funeral arrangement: letters to his four sisters, news of Haven's death to Matty and Hume Plover and the rest of the family's friends, plans for the few that will come—"maybe six and that's all."  
After digging Haven's grave in the family plot, Rob deliberately looks for a chore to occupy his hands and sets to mending the plowshare he and his father were working on. The close contact with Haven's tools proves comforting because Rob notices the rich patina left by the worker's hands on each handle. Inside a cigar box lies a scrap of paper on which his father had attempted to write his own name.  
Dressing in Haven's old black trousers and shirt with no necktie, Rob ties on a "new pair of work shoes." At noon, the body is prepared for viewing; the mourners arrive, more than double the number that Rob predicted, including some of the men who helped Haven slaughter hogs for Clay Sander. The service and burial are suited to a plain man. Rob sets himself more make-work tasks—scraping a wood shim, putting boric acid in a cut on Solomon's eye, cleaning the tackroom, sharpening a scythe, cutting a piece of sassafras for a new yoke bow. After a meager supper of beans and pork, Rob, the man of the house, sends his mother and Aunt Carrie to bed with a "hot cup of tea.")
5. What words does Rob choose as a fitting eulogy for Haven?  
(The plain funeral for a plain man seems pre-ordered. The body, lying in state on the kitchen table, is separate from the gathering of friends, neighbors, and relatives who come to pay their respects. Rob, "as eldest son," speaks the eulogy, but retains the most moving thoughts for his own savoring: "Being his son was like knowing a king."  
Rob orders the comments about his father from

## A DAY NO PIGS WOULD DIE

home outward to the community. Haven was "devoted husband and father, a working farmer and a good neighbor." Next he lists the immediate family—"wife, four daughters, and one living son." Rob's conclusion testifies to his own faith in God: "We are all grateful to know him. And we ask only that his soul enter the Kingdom Hall, there to abide forever.")

### Questions 6-8 (Interpretive Level)

6. Discuss examples of Shaker wisdom that Haven passes on to Rob.

(Even though Haven Peck is illiterate and must memorize passages from the Bible and from the Book of Shaker in order to remember them, he still manages to set a good example for Rob with ethical, practical wisdom. Much of Haven's focus centers on proper behavior and worthy husbandry. Before Rob sets out for the Rutland fair, Haven advises the boy to "see things to be done" on the Tanners' behalf. After Rob is "breakfasted and basketed," Haven speaks one word, "Manners," but that word summons a lifetime's lessons to the boy's mind.

On the trip to town in Mr. Tanner's two-horse rig, Rob thinks of a witty remark about Ben's preference for pairs, but Haven's words echo in his ear: "Never miss a chance . . . to keep your mouth shut." On Rob's return, Haven asks only about the boy's behavior. Rob eases Haven's concern with a quick "Thank you, Mr. Tanner . . . And thank you, Mrs. Tanner. I had a very good time."

Other examples based on a firm sense of farm logic grounded in thrift seem harsh at times. Describing his job as a pig slaughterer, Haven notes, "Dying is dirty business. Like getting born." After the orchard gives a poor yield of wormy apples, Haven reminds Rob: "One chore done good beats two done ragged." Using Ben Tanner's expertise as a model, Haven concludes, "You can always look to how a farm is tended and know the farmer."

The lessons come closer home as Haven prepares for death. To Rob's question about Doc Knapp's diagnosis, Haven speaks plainly: "No need. All things end, and so it goes." At the climactic moment of their relationship, with Pinky's carcass slimy and oozing at his feet, Rob weeps with his head toward the sky, "hoping God would hear it." Haven completes the boy's initiation into manhood: "That's what being a man is all about, boy. It's just doing what's got to be done.")

7. How does the author view the lifestyle of a farmer?  
(The author speaks through two farmers—Haven Peck and Ben Tanner. After Haven admits his illiteracy, he proudly claims that he can "true a beam to build our barn, or see that the rows of corn in my field are straight as fences." But to Haven, even if town people underestimate his worth, the lot of a farmer is equivalent to wealth: "We have one another to tend to, and this land to tend . . . We have Daisy's hot milk. We got rain to wash up with, to get the grime off us. We can look at sundown and see it all, so that it wets the eye and hastens the heart. We hear all the music that's in the wind, so much music that it itches my foot to start tapping. Just like a fiddle.")

Later, to Ben Tanner's questions about school, Rob readily admits that he gets A's in all but English. To

prove that his teacher does not dislike him, Rob adds, "Miss Malcolm says that I could be more than a farmer." Ben, scandalized by such a slur, retorts, "What better can a man be? There's no higher calling than animal husbandry, and making things live and grow. We farmers are stewards. Our lot is to tend all of God's good living things, and I say there's nothing finer.")

8. How does Ben Tanner show concern for Haven and the future of the Peck family?

(The November morning that Ben brings Samson to breed Pinky, Ben asks Rob about Haven's health. Rob stalls before replying, "Fine . . . Papa's so sturdy, he never missed a day slaughtering his entire life." The half-lie hangs in the air, unpursued by Ben until after their business is complete. Then Ben asks again about Haven, who works extra hard for Clay Sander during early winter. Ben suggests that Haven "ought to take it easy one of these days, now he's got you to man the place.")

At this point, Rob indicates that he has observed his father's work habits and finds no moments of idleness. Even worse, Rob tells Ben, "he works inside himself. I can see it on his face. Like he's been trying all his life to catch up to something. But whatever it is, it's always ahead of him, and he can't reach it."

Ben comments later that he considers Haven a good neighbor. Ben admires the Peck family—the four pretty sisters, "prim and proper," and Rob, who is nearly a man of thirteen. He adds that he regrets the deaths of Rob's two brothers and that he hopes to see Rob succeed as a farmer)

### Questions 9 and 10 (Critical Level)

9. Why does the author dwell upon death?  
(Farm life knows no way but birth and death, profit and loss. Throughout the novel, Rob observes the deaths of animals. When he and Haven discuss the slaughtering job that supplements Haven's income, he comments "Some days I get the notion that I can't knife even one more of Clay Sander's pigs. Yet I always do, 'cause it's got to be done. It's my mission.")

Even during idyllic afternoons in which Pinky and Rob roam the fields, death is never far removed from everyday existence. One afternoon, Rob watches a circling hawk that suddenly falls "fast as a stone." The thud of its impact results in the capture of a rabbit, which cries "like a newborn baby." Rob, accepting the food chain that makes one creature the prey of another, watches the hawk snap its wings and, burdened with fresh meat, fly away to feed its young. Rob races along behind, hoping "to see him tear up that fresh rabbit and feed his little ones."

Closer to his loved ones, Rob struggles to apply the grimmer lessons of life to those he loses—first Pinky, then Haven. Without surviving brothers, he accepts Lucy Peck and Aunt Carrie, both well past prime, as burdens after he takes over the man's role on the farm. Still, Rob maintains an equilibrium as he visits the grave site after supper.

As Miss Sarah brushes past on her way to the "meadow to hunt moles," Rob, too, lets himself sink into the natural state of the land. The bugs sing "almost like a



## A DAY NO PIGS WOULD DIE

choir." Once again near his father, Rob feels the rightness of burial in "that Vermont clay . . . he sweated so hard on and longed to own so much. And now it owned him." Cherishing the goodness of life, Rob says good night, grateful for thirteen years as son of Haven Peck.)

10. What are the implied messages of the novel? (The spare prose of *A Day No Pigs Would Die* leaves many words unsaid. There is no overt talk of love, but love is implicit in every aspect of the Peck household—from severe punishment to minor scolding, from daily chores to the heart-wrenching work of slaughtering Rob's pet pig to keep them in meat during a hard winter. In addition to family love, the scenes involving Iris Bascom and Ira Long as well as those showing the Hillman family, indicate that, without a lot of fanfare, love can extend to neighbors in unusual forms and gestures, even the removal of a body from a grave.

Coexistent with love is acceptance, which is the warp and woof of farm life. Rob, willing to follow in his father's footsteps, even if it means he will not finish school, accepts the role of farmer as natural and ennobling. His father, much tested by the hardness of life on their Vermont farm, insists otherwise—that Rob first "get all the teaching you can hold."

And finally, unspoken but implicit in the text is an appreciation for a job well done.

On the morning of Haven's funeral, Rob takes his solace much as Haven had done—by setting himself tasks to perform and finding satisfaction in doing even the simplest chore to the best of his ability. Rob's reward is, again, an understated jewel. Ben acknowledges Rob's manhood by insisting that they "front name one another." Before leaving the grieving family, Ben pays Rob the ultimate compliment, saying that Rob has taken on the mannerisms of his father.)

### Questions 11-12 (Creative Level)

11. List rural Vermont expressions, such as "I don't cotton to," "I had a purchase on," "We're beholding to you," and "sorry him good." Paraphrase each into standard English. For example, "I don't care for," "I have a firm grip on," "We owe you," and "make him sorry."
12. In a short oral presentation, explain what Rob means when he says of his father, "We all would long for a different parcel of him." How is Lucy Peck's grief different from Rob's? How are friends, neighbors, and relatives likely to mourn a good man like Haven Peck?

### ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

#### Art

1. Draw cover sketches which reflect life on a small Vermont farm during the 1920s. Depict different chores, such as smoking an orchard, yoking and driving oxen, feeding livestock, building a pigsty, still hunting, repairing tools, and slaughtering hogs.

#### Drama and Speech

1. Draw stage settings for a dramatization of Haven Peck's funeral or Sebring Hillman's retrieval of the infant's coffin from the graveyard. Include a list of characters, props, music, make-up, costumes, and lighting necessary to the scene, such as the wagons, ox, horses, blanket, coffin, ropes, the Meeting House, the orchard, and mourners.

2. Dramatize in a short skit some ways that Ben and Haven complement each other's beliefs and farming philosophy. Emphasize their insistence on a fair deal and no charity.
3. Record excerpts from *A Day No Pigs Would Die*, such as Rob's description of his father's worn hand tools, Haven's attempts at writing his name, the birthing of Apron's calf, or the look on Haven's face after he slaughters Pinky.
4. Write a scene in which Rob is introduced to the midway of the Rutland Fair. Have students dramatize his curiosity and enjoyment. Mention foods, exhibitions, and entertainments for children and adults.
5. Lead a panel discussion on Peck's unique brand of humor. Read aloud examples and discuss incongruity, wit, and pun in each.
6. Characterize in an oral theme Rob's relationship with neighbors, particularly Ben and Bess Tanner, Ira Long, the Widow Bascom, Mr. Wilcox, and Sebring and May Hillman.

#### Education

1. Describe the activities of 4-H, which teaches children how to raise and show livestock as well as how to take an active role in farming. Explain why agricultural fairs build self-esteem and mold character. Contrast the purpose and philosophy of 4-H with scouting, Big Brothers and Big Sisters, junior police, and other youth organizations.
2. Role-play the situation that causes Haven to scold Rob for failing to smoke the spanner worms out of the orchard. Describe the reason for Haven's hard feelings and the manner in which he imparts his coming death. Show Rob's response to lessons in maturity and responsibility, particularly the inevitable loss of Haven, his teacher.

#### Geography

Draw a map indicating Brattleboro, Rutland, and Learning, Vermont, as well as major historical sites connected with Robert Rogers and Ethan Allen and the Green Mountain Boys, particularly Fort Ticonderoga and Montreal. Insert sites connected with Mother Ann Lee and the Shaker faith and with Abner Doubleday and the founding of baseball in Cooperstown, New York.

#### History and Social Studies

1. Summarize the history of the Shakers in America, the settlement of Vermont, or the contributions of Abner Doubleday to American sports.
2. Make a short oral presentation describing farming methods on the rocky slopes of Vermont. Explain the use of implements and small tools, such as a quern, the purpose of a yoke, and the value of strong, healthy dray animals, like Tanner's oxen. Include an explanation of good breeding practices, such as the sharing of stud animals to strengthen the line of livestock. Comment on the purpose of cats in the barn.
3. Read about the history of Vermont, particularly the roles of Ethan Allen, Major Robert Rogers, and the Green Mountain Boys. Compose a short statement about characteristics these legendary figures have in common. Discuss why Rob takes pride in the Greemobys.

## A DAY NO PIGS WOULD DIE

4. Explain in a paragraph the difficulty of surviving on a small New England farm. Discuss variances of weather, rocky soil, inadequate pasture, and other threats to a stable income.

### Language Arts

1. Write a brief explanation of Haven's wise statement: "Never miss a chance to keep your mouth shut." Describe aloud what embarrassment Rob saves himself by not referring to Ben's love of pairs.
2. Compose an extended definition of parent. Explain why Haven exceeds the role of authority figure by forcing Rob to help slaughter Pinky and to prepare for his father's death.
3. Create a glossary of terms pertaining to agriculture and livestock, such as gelding, gilt, sire, tusks, quern, Hampshire, alfalfa, and sorghum.
4. Make a short oral presentation explaining adages from the novel, such as "One chore done good beats two done ragged" or "You can always look to how a farm is tended and know the farmer." Create a bulletin board illustrating the truths of these adages.
5. Compose an extended definition of realism. Using examples from the story, explain why Haven insists that Rob learn how to move the corn crib, smoke the orchard, understand and follow Shaker law, and slaughter a pig.
6. Analyze the dialect of the Peck family. Discuss in detail the types of grammatical errors common to their speech, such as faulty pronouns and participles, as in "If'n it don't get done, they'll be a nevermind of fuss 'tween I and Papa" and "I should of been in school that April day."
7. Join a discussion group to determine the reasons for Haven's tight-fisted ways and grim view of life. Explain what religion means to him. Analyze his attitude toward illiteracy, his inability to vote, attempts to learn how to write his name, and his hopes for his only living son. Suggest reasons why Lucy Peck seems to play so small a part in Rob's upbringing.
8. Locate examples of similes from the novel, such as "Someday that was how hard I was going to light into Edward Thatcher, and make him bleed like a stuck pig" and "I can use a hand, and you look ready as rain." Compose a paragraph explaining why each simile is effective in creating a graphic mental image. Comment on why Robert Peck selects so many comparatives from nature.
9. Explain in a theme the significance of Sebring's concern for his infant daughter and Haven's loyalty to Letty Phelps. Account for Rob's hazy understanding of these adult issues.
10. Sample some books about the hardships connected with farm and ranch life, such as *The Yearling*, *Old Yeller*, *Little House on the Prairie*, *The Education of Little Tree*, *Giants in the Earth*, or *The Good Earth* or watch some classic movies or videos, especially *The Grapes of Wrath*, *Witness*, *Places in the Heart*, *Gone With the Wind*, or *Comes a Horseman*. Discuss with a group the aspects of agriculture that give strength and a sense of place and commitment to farm families.
11. Write a theme in which you characterize Rob as farmer and head of the household. Predict how he will fare in

emulating Haven's example of proper husbandry.

12. Lead a discussion of Haven's philosophy of the importance of fences and of neighborliness. Draw on Robert Frost's sentiments in the poems "Mending Wall" and "Death of a Hired Man" or Thomas Hardy's in "The Man He Killed."
13. Read John Gunther's *Death Be Not Proud*. Compare his description of watching his son die with Robert Peck's account of Haven's illness and death. Describe the pathos of both situations.
14. Read Richard Wright's "Almos' a Man" or William Faulkner's "Barn Burning." Contrast the author's use of the theme of coming of age with that of Robert Newton Peck.
15. Draw a Peck family tree. Show the kinship between Haven and Letty Phelps, mother of Sebring Hillman's illegitimate daughter.

### Law

1. Conduct a mock hearing to determine whether Sebring Hillman should be charged with the crime of grave robbing. Assign fellow students roles as the other characters, particularly Hillman's wife and Mr. Wilcox, the County Coroner.
2. Make an oral report on home burial. Determine whether the practice is legal in your area and what strictures apply, for example, death by a contagious disease.

### Psychology

1. Explain in a short speech the effect of ridicule and prejudice on a minority group like Shakers. Make reference to Rob Peck's decision to whip Edward Thatcher for making sport of Shaker clothes.
2. Contrast Bess and Ben Tanner, Haven, Lucy, Aunt Carrie, Miss Malcolm, and Aunt Matty as authority figures. Describe how each tries to bring out the best in Rob.

### Religion

1. Suggest ways that fellow Shakers and their Baptist neighbors can help proud people like the Pecks and Hillmans through difficult times. Include ways that neighbors of different religious faiths can lessen the gap between them and emphasize their similarities.
2. Read the account of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac in Genesis 22: 1-14. Compare the account to the death of Pinky in Chapter 14. Analyze the likeness between Pinky and the sacrificial lamb.

### Science and Health

1. Make a model to demonstrate the use of a capstan as a means of moving a heavy object. Explain the role of leverage and the purpose of the capstan. If necessary, draw a simplified view of the process.
2. List home remedies and methods that the Peck family uses to make life more pleasant, such as swallowing warm honey to counteract a chill, rubbing down with a feed sack, shooting a squirrel to provide nuts for a cake, chewing spruce gum, making a whistle out of sumac, and sewing wounds with ordinary needle and thread.

### STUDENT INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

1. Sketch the Peck farm and the adjacent farm of Ben and Bess Tanner. Indicate the location of important parts, such as orchards, grain fields, storage bins, tool sheds,

## A DAY NO PIGS WOULD DIE

milk house, family graveyard, wells, animal pens, public roadways, stands of hickory trees on the ridge, creeks, barns, and farmhouses.

2. Write a paragraph contrasting the boyhood of Rob with that of Edward Thatcher and other boys from town, who can buy readymade coats, ride bicycles, and attend baseball games on Sunday.
3. Make an oral report on the Shaker lifestyle. Stress the ideals that guide Shaker thinking as well as the founding and history of the faith.
4. List characters in the story who suffer the hard lot of rural life, including Sebring Hillman, the Widow Bascom, Ira Long, Lucy Peck, and Letty Phelps. Beside each, explain how loss, deprivation, ignorance, and poverty make their lives even harder.
5. Write a newspaper account of the fair. Describe Rob's part in the 4-H judging and showing of oxen. Name the attractions that draw country people from long distances to the annual event.
6. Explain why Learning's baseball team is named the Greemobys. Give the background of Ethan Allen and his role in the history of New England.
7. Compare Rob's description of Major Robert Rogers with that of Daniel Boone, Davy Crockett, Jim Bridgers, Jim Beckwourth, Manuel Lisa, the Sublette brothers, and other frontiersmen.
8. Contrast how characters deal with death in *A Day No Pigs Would Die* and either E.B. White's *Charlotte's Web* or Katherine Paterson's *The Bridge to Terabithia*.
9. Make a meat market drawing of a pig and point out cuts of pork, such as loin, chops, bacon, and ham. List uses of leftover parts for scrapple, pork rinds, liver mush, souse, and sausage.
10. Write a letter from Rob to one of his married sisters in which you explain about Haven Peck's lung ailment and death. Describe his funeral and burial.

### ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT

1. List examples of cooperation, fun, appreciation of nature, nurturing, compassion, loneliness, labor, training, death, disappointment, and appreciation in Rob Peck's life.
2. List scenes that reflect Haven's wisdom and respect for the Book of Shaker.
3. Compose a scene in which Rob makes the final payment on the farm.
4. Make a character list and explain the relationship of each to Rob. Include Matty, Jacob, Carrie, Ben, Bess, Mr. Wilcox, Miss Malcolm, Letty, Iris Bascom, Sebring, judges, Edward, Lucy, Pinky, Solomon, Samson, Bob and Bib, and the dead infant.

### PECK'S OTHER PUBLISHED WORKS

*The Happy Sadist* (1962)  
*Millie's Boy* (1973)  
*Path of Hunters: Animal Struggle in a Meadow* (1973)  
*Soup* (1974)  
*Soup and Me* (1975)  
*Bee Tree and Other Stuff* (1975)  
*Fawn* (1975)  
*Hamilton* (1976.)  
*Hang for Treason* (1976)

*Hub* (1976)  
*King of Kazoo* (1976)  
*Rabbits and Redcoats* (1976)  
*The King's Iron* (1977)  
*Patoole* (1977)  
*Last Sunday* (1977)  
*Wild Cat* (1977)  
*Mr. Little* (1978)  
*Eagle Fur* (1978)  
*Trig Sees Red* (1978)  
*Soup for President* (1978)  
*Clunie* (1979)  
*Trig* (1979)  
*Basket Case* (1979)  
*Soup's Drum* (1980)  
*Justice Lion* (1981)  
*Kirk's Law* (1981)  
*Soup on Wheels* (1981)  
*Banjo* (1982)  
*Trig or Treat* (1982)  
*The Seminole Seed* (1983)  
*Soup's Goat* (1984)  
*Dukes* (1984)  
*Jo Silver* (1985)  
*Soup on Ice* (1985)  
*Spanish Hoof* (1985)  
*My Vermont* (1985)  
*Soup on Fire* (1987)  
*Soup in the Saddle* (1988)  
*My Vermont II* (1988)  
*Soup's Uncle* (1988)  
*Hallapoosa* (1988)  
*The Horse Hunters* (1988)  
*Arly* (1989)  
*A Part of the Sky* (1994)  
*Soup 1776* (1995)  
*Nine Man Tree* (1998)  
*Cowboy Ghost* (1999)

### RELATED READING

Toni Cade Bambara, "Blues Ain't No Mockin' Bird"  
Hal Borland, *When the Legends Die*  
Joseph Bruchac, *Bowman's Store: A Journey to Myself*  
Pearl S. Buck, *The Good Earth*  
Orson Scott Card, *Ender's Game*  
Forrest Carter, *The Education of Little Tree*  
Willa Cather, *O Pioneers!*  
Robert Heinlein, *Farmer in the Sky* and *Tunnel in the Sky*  
Janice Holt Giles, *The Believers*  
Fred Gipson, *Old Yeller*  
Irene Hunt, *Across Five Aprils* and *No Promises in the Wind*  
Charles Portis, *True Grit*  
Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, *The Yearling*  
Wilson Rawls, *Where the Red Fern Grows*  
Charles Sheffield, *Higher Education*  
Charles Sheffield and Jerry Pournelle, *Higher Education*  
Betty Smith, *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*

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## A DAY NO PIGS WOULD DIE

### VOCABULARY TEST

Complete the sentences below with farm terms from the list that follows. Place your response in the blank provided at left.

abide	gelding	passel	sorghum	trunnel
barren	gilt	paunch	spar	turn
boar	goad	purchase	stewards	twain
capstan	grime	quern	sump	udder
cratch	husbandry	rouse	tackroom	vapors
farrowed	kickweed	scurf	taproot	westerly
flutterwheel	lammis	shim	timothy	window
geegaw	linte	silage	trace	

1. I finally saw a bar of saddle soap in a \_\_\_\_\_ and made for it.
2. Mark how he cuts his hay. Ain't no truer \_\_\_\_\_ in all of Learning.
3. When you kill pork and \_\_\_\_\_ it, head to rump, you always do what no other man does. You even divide the tail, and half it right to the end.
4. We're going to let Solomon use a \_\_\_\_\_—just a great big crank.
5. I kicked her again one last time, so hard in the \_\_\_\_\_ that I thought I heard her grunt.
6. I looked between the cart slats and there he was, the finest \_\_\_\_\_ in the country. Big and mean and all male.
7. All my sows are \_\_\_\_\_, so he'll be more than happy to help.
8. There's no higher calling than animal \_\_\_\_\_, and making things live and grow.
9. It was boiled, scraped free of all hair and \_\_\_\_\_, and sawed in half.
10. I changed into my work clothes, and scraped a wood \_\_\_\_\_ for the door of the milk house.
11. In each hole he used a mallet to pound in a \_\_\_\_\_ peg of white oak that he had soaking in linseed oil.
12. I went to the \_\_\_\_\_ the next day and caught me a bullfrog and spent the better part of a morning trying to learn that old frog to jump backwards, so he'd build up his front legs.
13. One look from that old witch, they said, would mildew \_\_\_\_\_ and peel paint.
14. Mama had a small hand \_\_\_\_\_ in the milk house, which she used to grind up meal.
15. But I couldn't move. Until Mr. Tanner gave me a healthy prod in the backside with his \_\_\_\_\_ and said, "Git!"
16. In the Book of Shaker it says to do a good \_\_\_\_\_ and neighbor well.
17. We got rain to wash up with, to get the \_\_\_\_\_ off us.
18. The man who owned the camera got up under a big black tent. His wife held a funny looking \_\_\_\_\_ up in the air.
19. Between her and us there was a \_\_\_\_\_ of people, and they just seemed to melt out the way for Mrs. Tanner.
20. It's all right. You can sleep this morning. No cause to \_\_\_\_\_ yourself.
21. Other than the fact that one was a mare and the other a \_\_\_\_\_, you couldn't tell 'em part.
22. But where Papa's hands had took a \_\_\_\_\_ on them, they were lighter in color.
23. So as Papa worked on her, I held fast, staring at the old corn \_\_\_\_\_ that had once been Pinky's home.
24. I never let on that I got a touch of the \_\_\_\_\_ and lost all my breakfast on the judge's shoe.
25. And we ask only that his soul enter the Kingdom Hall, there to \_\_\_\_\_ forever.

**A DAY NO PIGS WOULD DIE**

**COMPREHENSION TEST A**

**Part I: Multiple Choice (20 points)**

Select an answer to complete each of the following statements about settings. Place the letter of your response in the blank provided at left.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Promising to pay back Edward Thatcher for ridiculing him, Rob hurls stones at some ferns near  
A. the apple orchard. B. the old spar mine above the farm.  
C. the Rutland depot. D. Iris Bascom's strawberry bed.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Rounding the General Store and Meeting House in Learning on a miserable, rainy night, Haven and Rob hear sounds coming from  
A. the widow's darkened house. B. the corn cratch.  
C. the Peck kitchen. D. the churchyard.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. At the Rutland Fair, Bess Tanner seems in a hurry to get to the  
A. tackroom. B. rest room. C. merry-go-round. D. sawdust arena.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. To supply nuts for a chocolate cake, Rob takes a .22 and heads for  
A. the General Store B. Mr. Wilcox's house. C. a stand of hickory trees. D. the cellar.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. After delivering Apron's calf, Rob is returned home in  
A. Haven's arms. B. a buckboard pulled by Bob and Bib.  
C. an oxcart pulled by old Solomon. D. a wool horse blanket.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. After he develops a severe cough, Haven begins sleeping  
A. in the barn. B. near the parlor fire. C. in the tackroom. D. on the ground floor of the house.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Rob is certain that Ethan Allen crossed the lake at  
A. Fort Ticonderoga. B. Lead Hill. C. Rutland. D. Green Mountain.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. The unpainted wood coffin is a gift from the Circle of Shakers in  
A. Brattleboro. B. Learning. C. Rutland. D. Green Mountain.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Rob locates evidence that Haven Peck tried to write his name on scraps of paper in  
A. the Bible box under the bed. B. Letty Phelps's grave.  
C. a cigar box in the tackroom. D. Miss Malcolm's classroom.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Hussy, Ira Long's terrier, is "weaseled" in  
A. an apple barrel. B. the Bascom cellar.  
C. the show ring at the Rutland Fair. D. a patch of grassless land in the orchard.

**Part II: Matching (20 points)**

Match each quotation with the name of a speaker. Place the letter of your response in the blank provided at left.

- |                |                  |                    |                 |
|----------------|------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| A. Bess Tanner | D. Haven Peck    | G. Ben Tanner      | J. Letty Phelps |
| B. Rob Peck    | E. Aunt Carrie   | H. Sebring Hillman | K. Mr. Wilcox   |
| C. May Hillman | F. Martha Plover | I. Lucy Peck       |                 |

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. In the Book of Shaker it says to do a good turn and neighbor well.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Is this your boy? There's so much blood and dirt and Satan on him, I can't tell for sure.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. All he needs . . . is a tutor.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Never miss a chance . . . to keep your mouth shut.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Don't speak to a soul inside there, you hear? Places like that are full of perverts.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. And we ask only that his soul enter the Kingdom Hall, there to abide forever.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. I heard him take the team and go in the night, and don't think I don't know where. Spade and all, I saw him go.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Don't lose it . . . It's for a ride on the merry-go-round.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. And I reckon I'm more beast than man.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. And if Iris Bascom and her man giggle in the dark, they can have my blessing for whatever it's worth.

## A DAY NO PIGS WOULD DIE

### Part III: Fill-in (30 points)

Supply a word or phrase to complete each of the following statements.

1. Just once I'd like to walk in the General Store with money in my pocket and touch all them \_\_\_\_\_.
2. And that old \_\_\_\_\_ on Pinky's nose was really giving her what for. I pulled it off, and threw it back in the pond.
3. I can't undo what's already been did. But the little \_\_\_\_\_ is mine. You hear me, Haven?
4. I'll buy your \_\_\_\_\_ . . . Here, all I got is ten cents.
5. She's dying . . . And if you got any mercy at all in you, \_\_\_\_\_, you'll do her in.
6. You'd hurt \_\_\_\_\_ if'n you said barren to her face.
7. Your two \_\_\_\_\_ are dead. Born dead and grounded in our orchard.
8. We \_\_\_\_\_ are stewards.
9. It was a strong crushing noise that you only hear when an iron stunner bashes in a pig's \_\_\_\_\_.
10. I told \_\_\_\_\_, who was a good Shaker man and who took care of our dead.
11. Last to come was Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, the man my father slaughtered for.
12. And Robert, I thank you again. Here's a \_\_\_\_\_ for your trouble.
13. And when we pulled up at the \_\_\_\_\_, I was feared to blink for missing some of it.
14. I'd just wound up running away from \_\_\_\_\_ and running away from the schoolhouse. I was feathered if I was going to run away from one darn more thing.
15. "Hear me, God," I said. "It's hell to be \_\_\_\_\_."

### Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Defend Haven Peck's definition of manhood: "It's just doing what's got to be done."
2. Describe how Rob has matured by the end of the novel.
3. Project the kind of relationship Rob will have with neighbors, such as Ira and Iris Long, May and Sebring Hillman, Mr. Wilcox, Clay Sander, Hume Plover, and Ben and Bess Tanner.
4. Summarize how Rob spends the day of his father's funeral.

## A DAY NO PIGS WOULD DIE

### COMPREHENSION TEST B

#### Part I: Multiple Choice (30 points)

Underline the word or phrase that correctly completes each sentence.

1. Lucy Peck thinks "it's a wondrous thing to see" after (Pinky returns with a blue ribbon, Miss Sarah has kittens, Rob brings home his report card, Pinky sniffs a flutterwheel).
2. Haven moves the corn crib by means of Solomon's labor and a (quern, capstan, cotter, yoke.)
3. Before her marriage to Uncle Hume, Aunt Matty (lived on a farm, was Rob's tutor, lived with the Peck family, was an English teacher).
4. As Haven bends down to pull the quilt around Rob, the boy knows that (Haven has been killing pigs, his parents will punish him for skipping school, his mother has sewn up his cuts, he never intends to go to the graveyard at night again).
5. Rob keeps secret the fact that (Jacob Henry has a new jacket, his worst grade is in history, the Widow Bascom swatted him with her broom, Pinky is barren).
6. Rob's birthday falls (the day of his father's funeral, before the Rutland Fair, in February, shortly after mid-April).
7. In addition to Aunt Carrie and his parents, Rob has (an Aunt Letty, no other family, four married sisters, two brothers in Brattleboro).
8. Just before the 4-H judges select the winning pigs, (Mr. Tanner buys a bar of saddle soap, Rob gets sick, Bess removes her corset, Rob needs a prod into the ring).
9. Haven's final comment before the fair is (Greemobys, Git, All I got is ten cents, Manners).
10. While Haven and Rob camped on top of Lead Hill, they were joined by a (bear, deer, cow, weasel).
11. Rob tells the story to Pinky about how he tried to (move plants for Iris Bascom, smoke the orchard, get a frog to jump backwards, remove a goiter from Apron's throat).
12. On the day of Haven's funeral, Rob wears (a special suit for the occasion, his father's necktie, pants and a shirt that does not fit, a jacket bought at the General Store).
13. Ben insists that good friends should (front name each other, build better fences, share the responsibility for smoking the orchard, abide by the Book of Shaker).
14. When Samson mates with Pinky, (he refuses to leave the crate, Rob leaps into the pen, Pinky squeals in pain, Ben predicts that she will have two extra piglets).
15. In order to pay off the farm, (Haven works five years for Clay Sander, Rob offers to quit school, Ben sells Bib and Bob for five hundred dollars, Haven and his son farm the land as partners).

#### Part II: Identification (20 points)

Briefly describe each of the following characters.

1. Clay Sander
2. Aunt Carrie
3. Ben Tanner
4. Letty Phelps
5. Haven Peck
6. Sebring Hillman
7. Aunt Matty
8. Iris Bascom
9. Edward Thatcher
10. Ira Long



## THE DAY NO PIGS WOULD DIE

### Part III: Short Answer (20 points)

Supply a word or phrase in answer to each of the following questions. Place your response in the blank provided at left.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Who develops a cough while deer hunting?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Why does Lucy Peck need a squirrel?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. What happens to the apples after Rob fails to smoke the orchard properly?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Where does Rob find a gold-hued memorial to his father's hard work?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. What do the six mourners, according to Shaker custom, remove from Haven Peck's grave?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. For what quality does Pinky receive a blue ribbon?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Where does Hume Plover hear giggling?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. What does Rob tie to a dogwood tree to help Apron birth her calf?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. On what test does Rob receive a 99?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Who tucks a dime deep into Rob's pocket?

### Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Explain what Haven Peck means when he says, "Need is a weak word. Has nothing to do with what people get."
2. Explain why Haven Peck is neither Democrat nor Republican.
3. Describe how Rob takes charge after Haven's death.
4. Give examples of hard-edged New England moralizing.

**A DAY NO PIGS WOULD DIE**

**ANSWER KEY**

**VOCABULARY TEST**

- |              |             |              |
|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| 1. tackroom  | 10. shim    | 18. geegaw   |
| 2. windrow   | 11. trunnel | 19. passel   |
| 3. twain     | 12. sump    | 20. rouse    |
| 4. capstan   | 13. silage  | 21. gelding  |
| 5. udder     | 14. quern   | 22. purchase |
| 6. boar      | 15. goad    | 23. cratch   |
| 7. farrowed  | 16. turn    | 24. vapors   |
| 8. husbandry | 17. grime   | 25. abide    |
| 9. scurf     |             |              |

**COMPREHENSION TEST A**

**Part I: Multiple Choice (20 points)**

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. B | 6. A  |
| 2. D | 7. A  |
| 3. B | 8. B  |
| 4. C | 9. C  |
| 5. D | 10. A |

**Part II: Matching (20 points)**

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. B | 6. B  |
| 2. G | 7. C  |
| 3. F | 8. E  |
| 4. D | 9. D  |
| 5. A | 10. I |

**Part III: Fill-in (30 points)**

- |             |                     |
|-------------|---------------------|
| 1. coats    | 9. skull            |
| 2. crawdad  | 10. Mr. Wilcox      |
| 3. girl     | 11. Clay Sander     |
| 4. soap     | 12. pig             |
| 5. Ira Long | 13. Fair Grounds    |
| 6. Matty    | 14. Edward Thatcher |
| 7. brothers | 15. poor            |
| 8. farmers  |                     |

**Part IV: Essay (30 points)**

Answers will vary.

**COMPREHENSION TEST B**

**Part I: Multiple Choice (30 points)**

1. Miss Sarah has kittens
2. capstan
3. was an English teacher
4. Haven has been killing pigs
5. the Widow Bascom swatted him with her broom
6. in February
7. four married sisters
8. Rob gets sick
9. Manners
10. cow
11. get a frog to jump backwards
12. pants and a shirt that does not fit
13. call each other by first names
14. Pinky squeals in pain
15. Rob offers to quit school

**Part II: Identification (20 points)**

Answers will vary.

**Part III: Short Answer (20 points)**

- |                          |                             |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Haven Peck            | 6. best-behaved pig         |
| 2. for nuts for her cake | 7. the Widow Bascom's house |
| 3. the apples are wormy  | 8. his pants                |
| 4. tool handles          | 9. history                  |
| 5. two ropes             | 10. Aunt Carrie             |

**Part IV: Essay (30 points)**

Answers will vary.

**A DAY NO PIGS WOULD DIE**

**TEACHER'S NOTES**



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