



The Great Turkey Walk

by Kathleen Karr

Teacher's Guide

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Synopsis

One

Fifteen-year-old Simon Green loves birds, poultry in particular, but he's simple. Everyone knows that. Simon lives with his Aunt Maybelle, Uncle Lucas, and cousins. Even his golden-haired schoolmarm, Miss Rogers, knows that Simon is simple. But only Miss Rogers knows that while Simon is simple, he's not at all stupid. When Miss Rogers decides to "graduate" Simon from the third-grade (after his fourth year there), Simon decides to escort a 1,000 turkeys a 1,000 miles from Missouri to Denver and make his fortune. Miss Rogers invests her life savings in Simon's turkey venture.

Two

Mr. Buffey, the owner of the turkeys, tries to cheat Simon, but the boy is clever at bargaining and gets the promised price. Simon hires Bidwell Peece, a drunk, to be his muleskinner. Simon dries Peece out and discovers that his judgment was sharp: Peece is knowledgeable, decent, and hard-working.

Three

Helped by his terrier Emmet, Peece sets a brisk pace. The first obstacle, the Gasconade River, is easily conquered when the turkeys simply fly right over it. A runaway teenage slave, Jabeth Ballou, is lured to the campsite by the smell of Peece's cooking. Simon and Peece invite him to join the trek.

Four Jabeth has skill with a knife and helps provide the travelers with food. He can also whittle wonderful musical instruments.

Five

At Jefferson City, Simon can't resist the circus, where he is cheated out of four bits (50 cents) at the coconut con-game. He is rescued by his father Samson, who had deserted the family a decade earlier. Samson is the circus strong man.

Six

Samson returns Simon's money and explains how the con works. Samson wants to come along with Simon to sell the turkeys, but Simon realizes that his father is interested only in his money. Peece is far more fatherly toward Simon.

Seven

Peece explains that he took to drink when his entire family died 16 years earlier in a cholera epidemic. Samson and the con man Cleaver turn up soon after, armed and riding two fine horses they stole from the circus. They overpower Simon and Peece, tie them up, and leave them on the side of the road. They steal all the turkeys. Jabeth, who had been hiding, unties them.

Eight

As they stalk Samson and Cleaver, Simon and his friends find turkeys scattered along the side of the road. Clearly, Samson and Cleaver don't know a thing about poultry. At Russellville, the dishonest people justify their theft of six of the turkeys because Samson and Cleaver were waving around their weapons. Soon after, Simon, Peece, and Jabeth overpower Samson and Cleaver. They take the money due them for the lost birds and turn the con men over to the corrupt citizens of Russellville.

Nine

Simon buys clothes and boots for Jabeth and a new hat for Peece. The boys get haircuts, too. Peece works out a bet concerning how much water a turkey can drink. Simon wins the bet, making enough on his wager to



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pay for the big copper wash tub they bought.

Ten

Jabeth is delighted when they pass out of the slave states and he gains his freedom. The travelers meet a group of learned and cordial Pottawattamie Indians. They feed the Indians a big meal in exchange for having trespassed on their land.

Eleven

Samson and Cleaver appear, riding on camels. Samson starts firing on Simon and his friends, but the Indians (in full but unfamiliar war paint!) overpower them and save the day. To thank his Indian friends, Simon gives them the camels and some turkeys.

Twelve

As the band pass through an Army camp, the soldiers take potshots at them and the turkeys. The commander, Captain Masters, offers to make restitution, but they all realize that the money will remain trapped in Washington bureaucracy.

Thirteen

Simon rescues 17-year-old Elizabeth Hardwick from her soddy on the prairie. She has been driven mad by the death of her family, but soon recovers. The group is beset by a plague of grasshoppers, which the turkeys eagerly gobble up.

Fourteen

Simon has a crush on the lovely and gracious Elizabeth, who reminds him of his teacher Miss Rogers. However, he is afraid that she could never return his love because she is a full year older. Peece takes the Hardwicks' farming tools and Elizabeth is pleased they will be put to good use.

Fifteen

Elizabeth tells Simon that she likes him too, which pleases him very much.

Sixteen

The group arrives in Denver and carefully cases the town so they don't get cheated. Elizabeth has handbills printed to advertise the turkey sale.

Seventeen

Peece runs the auction, and the turkeys are sold for \$6

apiece, a dollar more than Simon thought he could get. Just as the sale is being closed, Samson and Cleaver jump out of the stagecoach and claim they own the turkeys. The matter is resolved in Simon's favor when he produces the original bill of sale for the turkeys from Uriah Buffey in Missouri. Samson and Cleaver are taken to jail. Simon keeps 30 hens and a few toms. He gives Elizabeth the wedding picture of her parents that he had rescued from the soddy. Peece, Jabeth, and Elizabeth return their share of the profits to Simon, because they want to come with him on his next venture, a ranch.

Eighteen

Simon sends the money he owes to Miss Rogers with a note about his success and new plans.

Author's Note

In an "Afterward," the author explains that the novel is based on true stories of turkey treks in the 1860s.

Timeline

Summer, ca. 1860

Teen-age orphan Simon Green completes the third grade for the fourth time in his country school in Missouri. Miss Rogers, his teacher and his only friend, tells Simon it's time to graduate.

Later that day

Though not "book-smart," Simon has great business sense and common sense. He comes up with a plan to escape his mean-spirited town and make his fortune as well: walk a flock of turkeys 1,000 miles to Denver, where they'll bring top dollar.

About a week later

With Miss Rogers as his business partner and aided by Bidwell Peece, a mule skinner Simon has hired and "dried out," Simon begins his trek. Not long after, they acquire another traveler:

In subsequent weeks

Simon and Peece acquire another companion, Jabeth, a runaway teenage slave. Simon encounters his father, who abandoned him ten years ago and, with a partner,

attempts to steal the turkeys. Simon and his friends eventually retrieve them. Simon and his friends encounter many people, including kindly Pottawattamie Indians. They also rescue Elizabeth Hardwick, a year older than Simon, from her sod home on the prairie, where she had been living alone, driven mad by grief, since her family died of illness. She soon recovers.

Finally

After many more adventure and rescues, Simon and his friends arrive in Denver and sell the turkeys for \$6 a head, a huge profit, in the process thwarting the father's attempts to steal the proceeds. Finally, the friends all pool their shares into Simon's next venture, a ranch.

Author Sketch

Kathleen Karr was born in 1946, in Allentown, Pennsylvania. She earned a B.A. in 1968 from the Catholic University of America. That year, she married Lawrence F. Karr, a physicist and computer consultant, and three years later received her M.A. from Providence College.



In 1968, Karr took a position with Barrington High School, Barrington, Rhode Island, as an English and speech teacher, which she held for one year. Then she worked as a curator for the Rhode Island Historical Society Film Archives for a year, the American Film Institute Archives for a year, and as general manager of the Washington Circle Theatre Corporation, Washington, DC (1973-78). Karr served as the advertising director of the Circle/Showcase Theatres in Washington, DC (1979-83) and as director of public relations (1984-88). She was an assistant professor at George Washington University (1979-81). She has lectured widely in film and communications at various institutions, including Providence College (1969-70); University of Rhode Island (1971); University of Maryland (1972); Catholic University of America (1973-77); New Line Presentations

Lecture Bureau (1974-76); American Film Institute (1979-80); and Trinity College (1985-86). Ms. Karr currently lives in Washington, DC.

Karr's historical novels for young teens are noted for their humorous and suspenseful plots and boldly-drawn characters. Besides their settings of New York City and the American West in the late 1800s, Karr's works also feature sympathetic portrayals of the pains of growing up. Karr said, "I began writing fiction on a dare from my husband. Tired of hearing me complain about not being able to find a 'good read,' he suggested I write a book myself. I sold my third attempt, entering the world of women's fiction. My children were responsible for finding my true calling, however. They asked me to write a book for them. I did (*It Am 't Always Easy*) and discovered I loved writing children's novels."

"As for my penchant for historical settings, well, I've discovered that I feel quite comfortable in the 19th century. It's a challenge to try to recreate a specific time and place, with its specific language patterns. Short of inventing a time machine, this is my way of reentering the past and attempting to show my readers that while events may change, the nature of human beings is fairly constant. Courage and common decency against difficult odds have always existed."

Critic's Corner

The Great Turkey Walk was greeted with enthusiastic reviews. *Kirkus Reviews*, for example, gave the novel two thumbs up: "Karr embellishes her reputation for spirited, comic adventures with this tale of a young entrepreneur who drives a thousand head of turkeys from Missouri to Denver in 1860. . . . Karr draws characters with a very broad brush, contrasting a blood-thirsty troop of U.S. cavalry with a helpful band of Pottawattamie." *School Library Journal* called the novel "A wide-open western epic, inspired by actual drives and featuring a cast of capable young people." *Ingram* said it is "Full of good humor and page-turning quest-style events. . . This novel begs to be read aloud."

Selected Other Works by Kathleen Karr

For Children

The Cave (1994)
Oh, Those Harper Girls!; or Young and Dangerous (1992)
Gideon and the Mummy Professor (1993)
Go West, Young Woman! (1996)

Gold-Rush Phoebe (1998)
In the Kaiser's Clutch (1995)
It Ain't Always Easy (1990)
The Lighthouse Mermaid (1998)
Oregon, Sweet Oregon (1998)
Phoebe :c Folly (1996)
Skullduggery (2000)
Spy in the Sky (1997)
The White House Book (1999)

For Adults

The Boxer (2000)
Chessie's King (1986)
Destiny's Dreamers Book I: Gone West (1993)
Destiny's Dreamers Book II: The Promised Land (1993)
From This Day Forward (1985)
Light of My Heart (1984)
Man of the Family (1999)
Playing with Fire (2001)

Bibliography

Booklist, April 15, 1992, p. 1523; Sept. 15, 1994. *Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*, February 1991, p. 143; July-August 1992, p.297; September 1993, pp. 12-13. *Horn Book*, March, 1991, pp. 199-200; May-June 1992, p. 341; September-October 1993, p. 599. "Kathleen Karr," <www.children'sbookguild.com/kathleenkarr.html>. *Kirkus Reviews*, April 15, 1992, p. 539; May 15, 1993, p. 663; July 15, 1994. *Publishers Weekly*, Sept. 28, 1990, p. 103; March 23, 1992, p. 73. *School Library Journal*, December 1990, p. 104; May 1992, p. 133; June 1993, p. 107; September 1994. *Voice of Youth Advocates*, April 1985, p. 44; February 1991 p. 352; June 1992, p. 96; December 1994, pp. 275-76.

General Objectives

1. To decide what makes someone "intelligent"
2. To trace the novel's plot
3. To recognize the themes of friendship and justice
4. To analyze the characters, especially Simon, Peece, and Jabeth
5. To understand the author's interweaving of fiction and historical fact
6. To explore the setting
7. To understand the dialect
8. To appreciate the novel's use of humor and wit
9. To describe the novel's mood or atmosphere
10. To predict Simon and Elizabeth's future

Specific Objectives

1. To explore the difference between book knowledge and practical skills
2. To see why Simon isn't so "simple" after all
3. To probe the relationship between Simon and his father Samson
4. To understand how Peece and Jabeth function as Simon's "real" family
5. To see how different people deal with con men
6. To trace how the author creates humor
7. To understand the story's subtle interweaving of historical fact and fiction
8. To probe myths of Native Americans
9. To appreciate the novel's clever plot
10. To identify the novel's structure, especially its climax

Literary Terms and Applications

For a better understanding of Kathleen Karr's style, present the following terms and applications to the novel:

Historical fiction is writing that tells about made-up events and characters. Novels and short stories are examples of fiction. Fiction that contains imaginary situations and characters that are based on historical events is called *historical fiction*. *The Great Turkey Walk* is based on the real livestock drives of the 1860s. As Karr explains in the "Author's Note," most of these treks involved cattle; however, in 1853 an especially enterprising man actually walked a herd of 500 turkeys from Missouri to Denver. This was the germ of the story told in *The Great Turkey Walk*. Around this real historical event, the author wove her fictional story of Simon, Peece, Jabeth, and Elizabeth.

Humor is the parts of a story that are funny. Humor can be created through sarcasm, word play, irony, and exaggeration. In this novel, Karr enjoys using irony to create humor. On page 132, for example, the leader of the Indians muses as he rubs off his war paint: "Curious stuff, this. I'm not even certain we got the old patterns right. No one seems to remember, exactly. But bold colors did seem to be called for." Readers expect the Indians to be crude and war-like; ironically, they are cultivated, elegant, and peace-loving.

Dialect is the way people speak in a certain region or area. In a dialect, certain words are spelled and pronounced differently. Writers use dialects to describe their characters and setting more fully. In *The Great Turkey Walk*, Karr uses elements of the Missouri dialect

of the mid-19th century to re-create the flavor of the times. This is evident from the very first page, when Simon says, "Peacocks are some gorgeous birds, ain't they?" She also uses phrases such as "two bits" for "a quarter" to help readers feel as though they have been transported to the South and Midwest in the 1860s.

Cross-Curricular Sources

Fiction

Thornton W. Burgess, *Old Mother West Wind*
 Sid Fleischman, *Bo and Mzzz Mad*, *Jim Ugly*, and *Mr. Mysterious and Company*
 Mary Downing Hahn, *The Gentleman Outlaw and Me—Eli: A Story of the Old West*
 O. Henry, *Heart of the West*
 Charles Portis, *True Grit*
 Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

Nonfiction

Judy Alter, *Great Women of the Old West*
 Jane Boulton, *Only Opal: The Diary of a Young Girl*
 Bobbie Kalman, *Bandannas, Chaps, and Ten-Gallon Hats; Life on the Ranch; Life on the Trail; The Railroad; The Wagon Train; and Women of the West*
 William Loren Katz, *Black Women of the Old West*
 Tom McGowen, *African-Americans in the Old West*
 Brandon Marie Miller, *Buffalo Gals: Women of the Old West*
 Candace Savage, *Born to Be a Cowgirl: A Spirited Ride Through the Old West*
 Armstrong Sperry, *Wagons Westward: The Old Trail to Santa Fe*
 Delno C. West, *Uncle Sam & Old Glory: Symbols of America*

Internet

"Raising Turkeys Today" <www.umass.edu/usmext/mac/newsletters/autumn2000.html>.
 "Turkeys" <www.hffinc.com/Turkeys.html>.

CD-ROM

American Journey: Westward Expansion (Primary Source Media)

Videos/Films

Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid (1969)
Destry Rides Again (1939)
Maverick (1994)

Red River (1948)
Sarah, Plain and Tall (1990)
The Searchers (1956)
Shane (1953)
Stagecoach (1939)
Support Your Local Sheriff (1969)
True Grit (1969)

Themes and Motifs

A study of the central issues and situations in Kathleen Karr's *The Great Turkey Walk* should include these aspects:

Themes

- . appearance vs. reality
- . being an entrepreneur
- . courage
- . education
- . friendship
- . loneliness
- . humor
- . hair-breadth rescue
- . revenge
- . suspense

Motifs

- . dealing with betrayal, especially from people you think should be trustworthy
- . creating your own family
- . showing true courage
- . overcoming adversity
- . dealing with dishonesty
- . slavery
- . the powerful effect of friendship
- . falling in love
- . being clever and resourceful
- . appreciating humor and compassion

Meaning Study

Below are words, phrases, and sentences that have particular meaning in the novel. Explain the meaning of each. Chapter and page numbers indicate the context from which the item is taken.

1. "You're really growing up, Simon." (Two, p. 27)
(Since he has repeated the third grade four times, everyone assumes that Simon is not intelligent—everyone but his teacher, Miss Rogers. She alone recognizes that he has a great deal of talent when it

comes to dealing with practical matters. Here, she offers him the confidence he needs to undertake his audacious turkey trek.)

2. "Son of a gun." I remembered to shut my mouth. "I guess Miss Rogers was correct, as usual!" (Four, p. 46) *(Miss Rogers had always told Simon that everyone has a special talent. In this scene, Simon discovers that Jabeth is very skilled with a knife. Jabeth can catch fish and whittle beautiful musical instruments. This is one of the main themes in the book: We are all special and talented, each in our own ways.)*
3. "Not—I couldn't be mistaken—my own son!" (Five, p. 55) *(Simon meets his father, Samson. Samson vanished a decade ago when Simon's mother, Samantha, died. Simon never knew what happened to his father. As students can infer, he simply took off to avoid the responsibility of taking care of his son. Later, readers see that he is a villainous con-man, concerned only with his own welfare.)*
4. "Ain't sure I'm your true son, Pa. Ain't sure a man can call a boy that unless they's striven and sweated some together." (Six, p. 65) *(Although Samson is Simon's birth father, Simon realizes that it takes more than biology for someone to be considered a "parent"; it is an honor that must be earned rather than conferred. Simon also realizes that Peece is far more of a father than Samson can ever be, because the muleskinner has Simon's best interests at heart. Unlike Samson, Peece is honest and kind.)*
5. "Ain't rescued you for no reward, Simon. Rescued you 'cause you're my friend. Ain't never had a friend before." (Seven, p. 76) *(In this poignant scene, Jabeth rescues and unties Simon, who has been bound and gagged by his father and Cleaver. At first, Simon assumes that Jabeth was motivated by greed—a desire for a share of the profits—but Jabeth assures him that he was motivated by love. The white boy and the black boy are now on equal footing as friends rather than master and slave.)*
6. "Man don't need a drink anymore when he's got friends as good as you, Simon." (Nine, p. 98) *(At first, it appears that Peece acts as a father-figure and gives Simon far more than Simon can give him. However, Simon's generosity and affection help Peece recover from the loss of his family to cholera and his subsequent despair and alcoholism.)*
7. "The Lord took away, but He was giving back at the same time." (Ten, p. 111) *(Here, Simon realizes that Peece lost his family about the same time that Simon was born. Simon sees this*

as more than a coincidence. Rather, he sees himself and Jabeth as substitute children. This scene shows how these characters have created their own family: a recovering alcoholic muleskinner, an elementary school drop-out, and an escaped slave are drawn together by need, respect, and affection.)

8. "How about a dozen hens, then? And two toms." (Eleven, p. 132) *(To thank the Indians for saving them from Samson and Cleaver, Simon offers them whatever they want. The Indians covet the two fine horses, but since they realize that Peece loves the animals, they settle from some turkeys. This scene shows not only the Indians' gracious gesture, but also Simon's fine manners. He realizes that he is deeply beholden to the Indians and rewards them generously.)*
9. "Sold to Simon Green, this Fifteenth Day of June, 1860." (Seventeen, p. 191) *(Samson tries to steal the turkeys, just as Simon is about to sell them and realize his profit. Miss Rogers had the foresight to insist that Simon get a bill of sale from the turkeys' original owner, which saves the day. This is the only way that Simon can prove that he really does own the turkeys and so has a right to sell them.)*
10. "I stopped in at the land office this afternoon. ..." (Seventeen, p. 194) *(Simon decides to invest his profits in a new venture, a ranch. All his friends—Peece, Jabeth, and Elizabeth—toss back their profits because they want to be part of his new plan. This reveals that they really have become a family and have great trust in*

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 1-5 (Literal Level)

1. When and where does the story take place? *(The story opens in Missouri and concludes in Denver, Colorado. The time is the mid-1860s.)*
2. What happened to Simon's parents? *(Simon knows that his mother, Samantha, died a decade ago, after which his father abandoned him. As a result, Simon considers himself an orphan. His father works as a circus performer and a con-man.)*
3. Where does Simon take the turkeys? Why? *(Simon takes the turkeys from Missouri to Denver to make money. He buys the turkeys for 25 cents each*

and sells them for \$6. Even accounting for some turkeys that he gave away, some that he kept, and the percentage of the profit that he gave to Peece, Jabeth, Elizabeth, and Miss Rogers, Simon makes a significant profit.)

4. Why was Elizabeth all alone on the prairie? What has happened to her?
(Her family settled on the prairie and all died from illness. Elizabeth is going mad from loneliness, grief, and misfortune when Simon and his friends come upon her in her sod house.)
5. What does Simon decide to do at the end of the book, after he sells the turkeys?
(He decides to invest his profits in a ranch, which he names "The Great Turkey Five Ranch." There, he plans to graze cattle and raise turkeys.)

Questions 6-8 (Interpretive Level)

1. Who is Simon's family?
(In the beginning of the book, Simon's family is made up of his Aunt Maybelle, his Uncle Lucas, and his cousins Ned, Homer, Pete, and Marcus. The family is not close. Rather, his kin bitterly resent him. As the novel progresses, Simon builds a new family with the muleskinner Bidwell Peece, the runaway slave Jabeth Ballou, and the orphaned settler Elizabeth Hardwick. He is far closer to these people than to his actual relatives.)
2. How are Indians portrayed in this novel?
(The Indians emerge as cultured, kind, and considerate. They speak with upper-class vocabulary and act as traditional gentlemen. For example, when Simon offers them the pick of his possessions—"Something to your liking"—they pass on the horses they covet to take some turkeys because they know that Peece wants the horses.)
3. Miss Rogers says that everyone has a special talent. What is Simon's special talent? Peece's special talent? Jabeth's?
(Simon has great common sense. He knows how to bargain and deal with different people who come his way, from his con-man father to the prairie-mad Elizabeth. Peece is a brilliant muleskinner and a fine father-figure; Jabeth can work wonders with a knife, whether it be fishing or whittling.)

Questions 9 and 10 (Critical Level)

4. What is the novel's theme or main idea?
(Possible response: The author suggests that practical knowledge of the world may be far more important than strict book-knowledge. She also suggests that we all have special talents that set us off from

everyone else.)

5. Do you think the use of dialect adds to this book or makes it more difficult to read?
(Answers will vary, depending on each reader's individual reading ability. Since the dialect is light and is added as a gentle sprinkling, most readers should agree that it adds to the book's effectiveness.)

Questions 11 and 12 (Creative Level)

11. Working with a small group of classmates, discuss which characters in the book you admired most and why.
12. Argue whether Simon is smart or stupid.

Across the Curriculum

Art and Music

1. Make a poster for the circus in which Samson Green is the strong man.
2. Draw a picture of the Rocky Mountains as they appeared to Simon as he entered Denver.
3. Draw the wedding picture of Elizabeth's parents that Simon rescued from the sod house.
4. Create a new cover for the novel. Include a picture that will grab the reader's attention.
5. Choose a scene from the novel that you especially liked. Find some background music to play as you read the scene to a small group of classmates.
6. Using scenes from the novel, create a mural that shows its main themes.

History and Geography

1. Make a map tracing Simon's route from Missouri to Denver.
2. Jabeth is a slave. Draw a map of the United States in 1860, showing which states were slave and which were free..
3. Simon is thrilled to see Jefferson City, Missouri. Select a city that you have always wanted to see. Write a report on the city, explaining why you want to see the city and what it has to offer to visitors.
4. Learn more about the Native Americans who currently live in your region or who lived there in the past. Share your findings in a booklet, poster, or web page.
5. Report on Johnny Appleseed, mentioned in Chapter Twelve. What was his real name? When did he live? Why is he famous?
6. Imagine you were a pioneer heading west. List the items you would pack with you. Remember to include everything you need, but only what you can carry in your covered wagon.

Language Arts

1. Select a portion of the book and rewrite it in the omniscient (all-knowing) point of view. Compare and contrast the two versions. Decide which one you like better and why.
2. Writing as Elizabeth, compose a diary entry explaining what happened to your family. Use clues in the book to help you reconstruct the events that left Elizabeth an orphan.
3. Write a sequel to the book, telling what has happened to the characters in ten years.
4. Jabeth rescues Simon because they are friends. What is a friend? List ten qualifications of a true friend.
5. Writing as Simon, compose a letter to the federal government asking to get the money back for the turkey the soldiers killed.
6. Imagine that you are Simon. Write a series of journal entries describing all the events that happened to you since you left Missouri.

Math

1. Simon travels 1,000 miles. Figure how long it will take him to complete the journey if he covers 10 miles a day, 15 miles a day, or 20 miles a day.
2. Peece, Jabeth, Elizabeth, and Miss Rogers take a percentage of Simon's profits rather than a flat fee. Figure out how much money each person received, based on the information in the novel.
3. Peece bets the turkeys can drink a certain amount of water. Create a chart showing the relationship among teaspoons, tablespoons, cups, pints, quarts, gallons, and liters.

Science and Health

1. Find out more about turkeys. Would they act as they were described in the novel?
2. Peece's family died of cholera. What is cholera? Report on this horrible illness.
3. Samson and Cleaver have no survival skills at all. For example, they can't light a cooking fire and end up eating raw bacon. Create a brief manual for camping survival skills. You may wish to look in a Scouting guide for suggestions.
4. Learn more about mules. What qualities make them useful farm animals? Why can't they reproduce? Present your findings in a display or web page for everyone to share.
5. Find out more about camels, the "ships of the desert."
6. Simon, Jabeth, Peece, and Elizabeth create their own family. With some friends, define "family" and debate what makes a group of people into a "family."

7. Learn more about the grasshoppers that attacked the travelers. Were such infestations common in the 1800s? If so, how did pioneers defend themselves against the damage the grasshoppers caused to crops?

Speech and Drama

1. Working with your classmates, stage a trial in which you decide what should happen to Samson and Cleaver. Select a jury, judge, lawyers, Samson, Cleaver, and Simon. Have the "lawyers" draw evidence from the book to use as they argue the prosecution and the defense.
2. Simon leaves school when he is fifteen, with only a third-grade education. In a speech, explain what information a person needs in order to be considered "educated."
3. Replay the scene in which Simon bargains with Uriah Buffey for the 1,000 turkeys.
4. Demonstrate how Cleaver's "shell game" works.
5. As he ties Simon up, Samson gives him advice. He says, "Steer away from confidence games, and don't take no wooden nickels." Put on a skit in which you give advice to a friend about dealing with life's problems and challenges.
6. Stage a news conference in which the police explain how Samson and Cleaver were captured.

Alternate Assessment

1. Read a story about pioneers, such as one of Laura Ingalls Wilder's "Little House" books. Compare and contrast it to The Great Turkey Walk.
2. Explain why it is important to set challenging goals and work toward achieving them.
3. Imagine that you are Simon. Write an honest assessment of your character, including both your strengths and your flaws.
4. Write a critical review of the novel for publication in the school newspaper.

Vocabulary Test

Complete the following chart by matching each word with its definition. Write the letter of the definition in the space by the word.

Vocabulary Word

- _____ 1. critter
- _____ 2. lean
- _____ 3. elegance
- _____ 4. cogitated
- _____ 5. civil
- _____ 6. crockery
- _____ 7. sparse
- _____ 8. commenced
- _____ 9. expertise
- _____ 10. famished
- _____ 11. dire
- _____ 12. trepidation
- _____ 13. malign
- _____ 14. haggle
- _____ 15. ruckus
- _____ 16. culinary
- _____ 17. solitary
- _____ 18. devious
- _____ 19. gape
- _____ 20. guffaw

Meaning

- A. big laugh
- B. big fuss
- C. desperate
- D. grace and dignity
- E. skill, aptitude
- F. creature
- G. stare
- H. fear
- I. china and other dinnerware
- J. slender
- K. starving
- L. sneaky
- M. began
- N. bargain
- O. having to do with cooking
- P. bad-mouth
- Q. scanty
- R. thought
- S. all alone
- T. polite

Comprehension Test A

Part I: Matching (20 points)

Complete each of the following descriptions with a name from the list that follows. Place the letter of your answer in the blanks provided.

- | | | | |
|-------------|--------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| A. Samantha | E. Captain Masters | G. Miss Rogers | I. Jabeth Ballou |
| B. Samson | D. Uriah Buffey | H. Bidwell Peece | J. Elizabeth Hardwick |
| C. Cleaver | F. Simon Green | | |

- _____ 1. the man who originally sold the 1,000 turkeys to Simon
- _____ 2. Simon's muleskinner
- _____ 3. the girl whom Simon loves
- _____ 4. the army man who controls his trigger-happy soldiers
- _____ 5. a circus con-man and friend of Samson's
- _____ 6. Simon's father, a circus strong man
- _____ 7. a sixteen-year-old with a bold plan to take turkeys from Missouri to Denver
- _____ 8. the former slave who comes with Simon to Denver
- _____ 9. Simon's teacher who gives him the money to buy the turkeys
- _____ 10. Simon's mother, deceased

Part II: True/False (20 points)

Mark the following statements either T for true or F if any part is false.

- _____ 1. Simon spends four years in the third-grade.
- _____ 2. Simon decides to escort a thousand turkeys from Denver to Missouri.
- _____ 3. Emmet is Peece's beautiful white cat.
- _____ 4. The turkeys fly right over the Gasconade River.
- _____ 5. Simon's father deserted the family when Simon's mother died.
- _____ 6. Peece cannot stop drinking, no matter how hard he tries.
- _____ 7. At Russellville, the dishonest residents steal a few turkeys.
- _____ 8. The Pottawattamie Indians are fierce, violent warriors.
- _____ 9. Samson and Cleaver steal some camels.
- _____ 10. The turkeys are sold for \$6 each.

Part III: Sentence Completion (20 points)

Circle the term that best completes each sentence.

- 1. Jabeth can make wonderful (musical instruments, culinary delights).
- 2. At Jefferson City, Simon is cheated out of money at a (card game, coconut con game).
- 3. Samson and Cleaver steal (two fine horses, a pair of new boots).
- 4. Simon buys (clothes, books) for Jabeth and Peece.
- 5. On the prairie, Simon, Peece, Jabeth, and Elizabeth are attacked by (grasshoppers, Indians).
- 6. Elizabeth lived in a (tent, sod house) on the prairie.
- 7. Just as the sale is being closed, (the army captain, Samson and Cleaver) jump out of the stagecoach and claim they own the turkeys.
- 8. Simon proves he owns the turkeys by showing (a photograph of them, his bill of sale).
- 9. Simon sells the turkeys to Amos Quinn for (\$6.00, \$60.00) each.
- 10. At the end of the story, Samson is taken to (jail, Simon's new home).

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Describe the plan Simon has for making his fortune.
2. Compare and contrast Samson and Peece. How are they the same and different?
3. Tell why Jabeth joined Simon and Peece.
4. Explain what the townspeople think of Simon and why.

Comprehension Test B

Part I: Matching (20 points)

Complete each of the following descriptions with a name from the list that follows. Place the letter of your answer in the blanks provided.

- | | |
|--|-----------------------|
| _____ 1. the man who sold the turkeys to Simon | A. Aunt Maybelle |
| _____ 2. the man who bought the turkeys from Simon | B. Emmet |
| _____ 3. the girl left alone on the prairie when her family died | C. Samson |
| _____ 4. Peece's terrier dog | D. Simon Green |
| _____ 5. the muleskinner | E. Uriah Buffey |
| _____ 6. Simon's father | F. Bidwell Peece |
| _____ 7. Simon's aunt | G. Amos Quinn |
| _____ 8. Simon's beloved teacher | H. Miss Rogers |
| _____ 9. the former black slave | I. Elizabeth Hardwick |
| _____ 10. the teenager who plans the turkey drive | J. Jabeth Ballou |

Part II: Sentence Completion (20 points)

Circle the term that best completes each sentence.

1. Helped by his (gun, dog), Peece keeps the turkeys moving.
2. Peece became a drunkard when his (business failed, entire family died).
3. Samson and Cleaver don't know a thing about (poultry, gambling).
4. Samson and Cleaver also steal (food, camels) from the circus.
5. Peece took the Hardwicks' (farming tools, books) and Elizabeth is pleased that they will be put to good use.
6. Peece runs the auction, and the turkeys are sold for (\$60, \$6) apiece.
7. Simon gives Elizabeth the wedding (dress, picture) that he had rescued from the soddy.
8. At the end of the novel, Simon decides to start a (ranch, stagecoach business).
9. Simon sends the money he owes to (his mother, Miss Rogers) with a note about his success and new plans.
10. The story takes place in (1860, 1960).

Part III: Identification (20 points)

Explain why each is important in the story.

1. the turkeys
2. Simon's bowie knife
3. the Indians
4. the bill of sale for the turkeys
5. the Arabian horses

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Describe how Simon is smart.
2. Explain why Peece became an alcoholic.
3. Compare and contrast how Peece and Samson treat Simon.
4. Tell what Simon plans to do with the money he earns.

Answer Key

VOCABULARY TEST

- | | | | |
|------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. F | 6. I | 11. C | 16. O |
| 2. J | 7. Q | 12. H | 17. S |
| 3. D | 8. M | 13. P | 18. L |
| 4. R | 9. E | 14. N | 19. G |
| 5. T | 10. K | 15. B | 20. A |

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Matching (20 points)

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

Part II: True/False (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. T | 6. F |
| 2. F | 7. T |
| 3. F | 8. F |
| 4. T | 9. T |
| 5. T | 10. T |

Part III: Sentence Completion (20 points)

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. musical instruments | 6. sod house |
| 2. coconut con game | 7. Samson and Cleaver |
| 3. two fine horses | 8. his bill of sale |
| 4. clothes | 9. \$6 |
| 5. grasshoppers | 10. jail |

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Matching (20 points)

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

Part II: Sentence Completion (20 points)

- | | |
|-----------------------|----------------|
| 1. dog | 6. \$6 |
| 2. entire family died | 7. picture |
| 3. poultry | 8. ranch |
| 4. camels | 9. Miss Rogers |
| 5. farming tools | 10. 1860 |

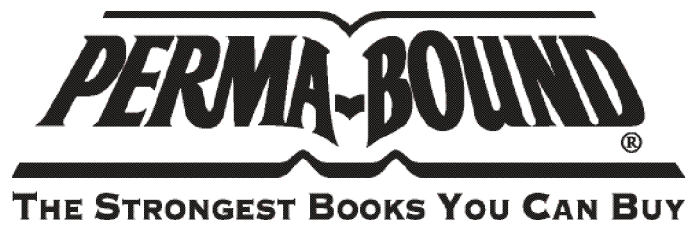
Part III: Identification (20 points)

- The turkeys are the central plot device, as Simon and his friends drive 1,000 of them about 1,000 miles

- across the country.
- Simon gives his bowie knife to Jabeth. The knife helps Jabeth reveal his talent. He can use the knife to fish and whittle, for example.
 - The Indians are well-spoken, gracious, and brave. They stand in sharp contrast to Samson, Cleaver, and Simon's relatives in Missouri, who are con-artists and self-absorbed, without any love or feeling for others.
 - The bill of sale for the turkeys proves that Simon does own the turkeys and thus has the right to sell them.
 - The Arabian horses are stolen by Samson and Cleaver. They pass into Peece's hands, and he wants to keep them. So do the Indians, but they graciously pass up the chance to claim them as their reward for saving Simon and his friends from Samson and Cleaver.

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Answers will vary.



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