

# Jim Ugly

by Sid Fleischman  
Classroom Favorites

Teacher's Guide by Kathy Sammis

A Perma-Bound Production

## SYNOPSIS

In this rollicking picaresque novel of the Old West, we follow the adventures of twelve-year-old Jake Bannock as he uses the tracking skills of his father's wolf-dog, Jim Ugly, to discover whether or not his father is really dead. As the novel opens, a week has passed since Sam Bannock's burial. Sam, an actor, left San Francisco when someone put a bounty on his head over some missing diamonds; when a yellowleg—an ex-cavalry sergeant—bounty hunter shot Sam, father and son and Jim Ugly disappeared to Blowfly, Nevada, to hide out on the chicken ranch of Jake's cousin Aurora and her gambling man husband Axie. When Sam and Axie rode to Smoketree Junction so a doctor could dig the lead ball out of Sam's shoulder, Axie returned with a coffin and the news that Sam had been killed when his horse threw him.

Now Jake is an orphan, and the yellow-eyed, subtly menacing Jim Ugly belongs to him. No love is lost between the two, but when Jim Ugly reacts strongly to the scent of Sam Bannock's shirt, Jake decides to let the mongrel try to find his father's track. When Jim Ugly ignores the graveyard, Jake suddenly is certain that Axie buried an empty coffin. Jake returns to the ranch to gather his few possessions and his money cache. Hidden, Jake observes a scene in the parlor: Wilhelmina Marlybone-Jenkins, an actress who claims to be Sam's fiancée, and C. W. Cornelius, a theater manager and producer, are telling Aurora (who is also quite interested in the jewels' whereabouts) that Sam stole the diamonds from them and that perhaps Jake knows where the gems are.

Uneasy allies, Jake and Jim Ugly slip away and follow Sam's track to Smoketree Junction. There, the doctor tells Jake that just as he was digging out the bullet, Sam left abruptly—perhaps because he saw the yellowleg bounty hunter, D. D. Skeats, whom the doctor later treated for a bullet wound in the foot. Skeats was at Sam's burial, the doctor says. When

Jim Ugly smells the bullet from Sam's shoulder, he leads Jake straight to the train depot. After a tense struggle in which Jim Ugly refuses to be muzzled, Jake ties a rope around the wolf-dog's neck and boards the westbound train, riding in the baggage car; Wilhelmina and Cornelius also board the train.

Jim Ugly finds no trace of the scent he is following at the first two stops, but at Truckee the mongrel heads straight for a shack—occupied by Skeats! The doctor had mistakenly given Jake the bullet from the bounty hunter's foot, not the slug from Sam's shoulder; Jim Ugly has been tracking Skeats, not Sam. Skeats doesn't recognize either Jake or Jim Ugly; he is looking for Wilhelmina. Jake finds her at the Magnolia Theater, where he is pressed into service to play the role of William Tell's son, safely standing behind glass (invisible to the audience) while the sharpshooter Miss Jenny as Mrs. William Tell shoots the arrow off his head. Meanwhile, Skeats recognizes Jim Ugly as Sam Bannock's dog, but when the bounty hunter tries to beat Jake, the wolf-dog attacks him; Jake is amazed to find the animal cares about him.

Jake joins the theater company and travels west with them. Wilhelmina follows and attends every show. In Sacramento, Aurora brings Jake a letter from his father, written after the burial: Sam is alive, and he didn't know about the fake burial! In Oakland, the yellowleg reappears. Jim Ugly picks up Sam's scent; he and Jake take the ferry to San Francisco, where Jake glimpses his dad but holds back so Skeats, who has followed them, won't see Sam.

The "Mrs. William Tell" show moves to San Francisco; one night, Sam appears on the stage and announces after the show that he will lead Cornelius to the diamonds. The next day, the group—Sam, Jake, Cornelius, Wilhelmina, and Skeats, plus Axie and Jim Ugly—goes to Smoketree Junction and then heads for Blowfly. Sam reveals the secret of the diamonds: Cornelius had misappropriated Wilhelmina's

savings and put up his own interest in the theater to buy trash diamonds, which he—helped by Skeats—used to “salt” a mine, planning to swindle investors. Sam and Axie discovered the scheme and removed the diamonds, sending them to Smoketree Junction in a coffin. Cornelius floated a rumor about a price on Sam’s head, and Skeats started tracking and shooting. Sam took off from Smoketree Junction when he saw Skeats arrive on the train; Axie removed the diamonds from the coffin and fed them to his hens, so the gems are in the chickens’ craws and gizzards!

At this moment, Aurora drives up and announces she has had enough of homesteading and is moving to the city. She is so fed up with the chickens that she chased the lot of them out of the barn yesterday morning. The Great Tumbleweed Diamond Mine has dispersed over hundreds of square miles of desert, easy pickings for chicken hawks and coyotes. Cornelius, a ruined man, heads back to the train depot, followed by Skeats clamoring for the phantom bounty. Wilhelmina and Sam revive plans for their wedding, an idea Jake likes. And Jim Ugly has switched his allegiance from Sam to Jake, who has renamed the animal Amigo—except when the wolf in him comes out; then his name is still Jim Ugly.

### BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Born on March 16, 1920, in Brooklyn, New York, Sid (Albert Sidney) Fleischman grew up in San Diego and taught himself magic tricks while he was a teenager. After graduating from high school, he performed as a traveling magician, specializing in sleight-of-hand, in vaudeville and night clubs. After serving in World War II and marrying in 1942 (the couple eventually had three children), Fleischman got his B.A. degree from San Diego State College and worked for several years as a newspaper reporter and editor. He has been a full-time writer since 1951, at first producing adult novels and screenplays but then moving into juvenile fiction in 1962. His writing draws on his love of folklore, the history of the American West, tall tales, adventure, mystery/suspense, humor, and colorful language. Fleischman doesn’t plot his stories in advance; they take shape as he sits at his typewriter. As he describes in the *Third Book of Junior Authors*, “I suspect my magician’s mind reveals itself in the way I plot my scenes and write my characters. I cannot resist mystery, surprise and heroes capable of a kind of sleight-of-mind in outwitting the villains.”

### CRITIC’S CORNER

Fleischman is praised for spinning fast-paced, suspenseful, funny tales spiced with rich visual imagery that are also carefully crafted and based on meticulous historical research, with finely drawn and wonderfully individualistic characters. Of *Jim Ugly, Horn Book* wrote, “Fleischman wields his magic pen once again in a fast-moving, picaresque adventure with memorable characters, a well-honed descriptive style—perfectly suited to tone, time, and place—and a sure sense of story. Applause, applause for a great performance.” *Publisher’s Weekly* called the story a “comic, suspense-laden Western adventure,” adding that the “light, tautly constructed genre piece is like the hair-raising melodramas in which Jake appears: certain to entertain, with all plot lines neatly tied together at the end.” *Booklist* added, “The plot twists like a cyclone through the Old West....Fleischman weaves his old magic through this tale, immediately drawing readers into the story through his convincing setting, characters, and dialogue.”

### GENERAL OBJECTIVES

1. To become familiar with various aspects of life in the U.S. West during frontier times
2. To consider the nature of the bonds between people and dogs
3. To identify the uses and effects of suspense, humor, and adventure in novels
4. To explore the nature of wolves
5. To develop an understanding of the picaresque novel genre
6. To analyze the ways in which multiple story lines can be interwoven to enrich a novel
7. To discuss the ways in which imagery adds to a novel’s impact
8. To gain a better understanding of the geography of the U.S. West

### SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To understand exactly where the diamonds came from, why they disappeared, and what ultimately happens to them
2. To trace Jake’s travels, beginning and ending in Blowfly
3. To analyze the way in which Jake and Jim Ugly’s relationship changes during the course of the novel

4. To explore the nature of the relationships between Jake and the novel's various adult characters
5. To note the ways in which Jim Ugly has the character of a wolf rather than a dog
6. To identify the various mysteries Jake solves as the novel progresses
7. To recognize the various story lines interwoven in the novel
8. To analyze the author's use of suspense
9. To discuss the ways in which the novel fits into the picaresque genre
10. To identify examples of the author's rich use of imagery and to gain skill in the use of simile and metaphor

### MEANING STUDY

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

1. homesteading (p. 3)

*(Homesteading was the way in which the U.S. frontier was filled up with pioneer families. Under homestead laws, people could acquire a tract of land from the U.S. public lands by filing a claim to it and living on and cultivating the land for a certain length of time. Jake's cousin Aurora and her husband Axie are homesteading in Nevada, raising chickens; Jake and his father come to stay there for a while, hiding from the bounty hunter.)*

2. cavalry sergeant...brown bowler hat (p. 3)

*(The bounty hunter who is after Sam Bannock used to be a sergeant in the U.S. cavalry, the part of the army that is mounted on horseback; their uniforms in the late 1800s included blue pants with a yellow stripe running down each leg. Skeats, the bounty hunter, still wears the pants from his uniform, which is why he is called a yellowleg. He also wears a bowler hat, a derby—a felt hat with a dome-shaped crown and narrow brim.)*

3. bounty...bounty hunter (p. 4)

*A bounty is a reward offered for the capture of someone who has broken the law; rumor has it that there is a \$2,500 bounty for the capture, dead or alive, of Sam Bannock. A bounty hunter*

*is a person who tracks down and captures people for whom a bounty is offered; Skeats is the bounty hunter who is tracking Sam Bannock—he is the reason Sam disappears abruptly.)*

4. Godey's Lady's Book (p. 7)

*(This was a very successful periodical, published from 1830 to 1898. It featured fiction, poetry, and light essays by well-known writers, plus the colored fashion plates Aurora enjoys so much.)*

5. Sears, Roebuck catalog (p. 8)

*(In the days when the United States was a largely rural nation, farm families not close to major shopping areas ordered many household and farming goods from the Sears, Roebuck catalog. As an example of the varied goods available from the catalog, Aurora is planning to order a gravestone from the catalog for Sam.)*

6. buggy...hitching post (p. 14)

*(The novel is set in pre-automobile days. People travel by horse-drawn vehicles. In this case, Cornelius and Wilhelmina arrive at Aurora and Axie's farm in a buggy, a light one-horse carriage with four wheels. So the horse will not wander off while the driver is away from the buggy, the animal's reins are attached, or hitched, to a post placed in front of a building for that purpose.)*

7. ...with eyebrows like weeping willows. (p. 17)

*(This is a colorful piece of imagery. Cornelius's eyebrows droop out and over like the branches of a weeping willow tree.)*

8. The stationmaster was polishing the brass telegraph key. (p. 33)

*(In the days before the telephone, instant communication was by telegraph—coded signals were sent over wires to convey important or urgent messages. The wires were commonly strung along railroad lines, and so the person in charge of the train station was also the person who sent and received telegraphs.)*

9. ...suddenly declaimed as if the footlights were ablaze (p. 59)

*(Wilhelmina suddenly begins speaking as if she is on stage in the middle of a performance, like the actress she is, as though she is making a formal speech and delivering it to a watching and listening audience.)*

10. "Those hens are running around with gems in their craws!" (p. 125)

"Your gems, Cornelius, are in the gizzards of the dispossessed poultry." (p. 128)

*(The craw is the crop of a bird, a pouched enlargement of the gullet where food goes through preliminary softening. The gizzard immediately follows the crop and has thick walls and a horny lining for grinding food. Axie has fed the diamonds to the chickens in their mash, and the gems are now in the chickens' crops and gizzards helping to grind up their food.)*

11. chicken hawks and coyotes (p. 128)

*(These are some of the desert predators—a bird and a wolflike mammal—that will prey on the chickens that Aurora has released from the barn.)*

### 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.

#### Literal Level

1. How did Jim Ugly get his name? What is his other name; how did he get it, and what does it mean?

*(Sam Bannock never got around to naming his wolf-dog; he had just called the dog Amigo, Spanish for "friend." Sometimes Sam would call the animal Jim Amigo. But Jake never liked the mongrel, so he wouldn't call the animal Amigo, and the animal never liked Jake, so the boy gave him the name Jim Ugly out of spite. Later, after Jake and the wolf-dog become friends, Jake does use the name Amigo instead of Jim Ugly.)*

2. In what ways is Jim Ugly like a wolf, and in what ways are dogs and wolves different, according to the novel?

*(Wolves don't bark the way dogs do; they yip or bay or wolf-howl. The wolf part of Jim Ugly is quiet, keep-to-himself, and his wolf eyes are yellow and glaring like heat lightning. Jim Ugly follows Jake "at a wolf trot." Like a wolf, the animal resists being muzzled or tied up. When Jake ties Jim Ugly to a fencepost, the wolf-dog gnaws through the rope; a dog would have waited patiently. Wolves are chummier than dogs, so when Jim Ugly snubs the town dog at Smoke-tree Junction, that is the dog coming out in him.)*

*When it rains, the wolf in Jim Ugly ignores the downpour; a dog would shelter itself. It is Jim Ugly the wolf who attacks Miss Jenny's little dog Pieface, but it is the dog Amigo who releases Pieface when Jake puts his hands between the wolf-dog's teeth. The vein of wildness in Amigo/Jim Ugly that comes out at times is wolf.)*

3. How did Sam Bannock and Axie end up with the diamonds? To whom did the diamonds belong? How did that person get them, and why?

*(The diamonds belonged to Cornelius. He bought them with money he raised by putting up his share of the theater and with Wilhelmina's savings, which he misappropriated. He bought these trash diamonds to plant in a mine so he could sell shares in what would look like a genuine diamond mine to unsuspecting investors. Sam was showing off Jim Ugly's tracking skills to Axie; the wolf-dog followed the yellowleg's scent, and Sam and Axie arrived in time to see Cornelius and Skeats salting the mine. After Cornelius and Skeats left, Sam and Axie gathered up the diamonds, packed them into a cheap coffin, and shipped the package to Smoketree Junction.)*

4. Trace Jake's travels, from the time he leaves Blowfly to when he returns there at the end of the novel.

*(First Jake follows Jim Ugly's tracking to Smoke-tree Junction, where he gets the bullet from the doctor. Then Jake and Jim Ugly take the train west and up into the mountains to Truckee, where Jake joins Miss Jenny's traveling theater company. With the troupe, Jake continues to travel west, across the flatlands to Roseville. From there, he goes to Sacramento for five days of performances and then moves on to Oakland. Finally, the show goes to Mr. Cornelius's Mazeppa Theater in San Francisco. Then Jake goes with his father and the other principal characters as they travel back to Smoketree Junction and then Blowfly to find the diamonds.)*

#### Interpretive Level

5. Describe how the relationship between Jake and Jim Ugly develops and changes in the course of the novel.

*(At first, Jake and Jim Ugly don't much like each other; Jake names the animal Jim Ugly out of spite. They tolerate each other after Sam Bannock's "death," and they become arms-length*

## Critical Level

allies when they start tracking Sam's scent. Jake begins to admire the wolf-dog for his tracking ability, seemingly Jake's only hope of finding his father, but the dog doesn't respond to Jake's friendly pats. Jim Ugly refuses to let himself be muzzled, and even lunges at Jake's face, but he does put up with a rope leash after a standoff. The turning point comes when Jim Ugly attacks Skeats when the bounty hunter roughs up Jake, who is amazed at this sign that the wolf-dog cares about him. When the wolf in Jim Ugly attacks little Pieface, the dog in him who has become attached to Jake releases the small dog; Jim Ugly has become Jake's dog and friend, and so Jake calls him Amigo from now on.)

6. Describe Jake's relationships with the major adult characters in the novel.

*(Jake loves and admires his father who, in turn, is fiercely protective of his son and regrets having had to disappear without a word. Jake likes the easy-going Axie, who treats the boy kindly. Jake's relationship with Aurora is strained because of Aurora's frequent questions about the diamonds and her plans to shoot Jim Ugly, Jake's father's dog. Jake likes both Wilhelmina and Miss Jenny because they are open and friendly with him, and he approves of his father and Wilhelmina's marriage plans. Jake dislikes Mr. Cornelius for insisting that Sam Bannock took his diamonds, and for following him to try to get to Sam. The bounty hunter Skeats is a constant threat to Jake and Jim Ugly; he has assaulted Jake, and the boy is afraid of him and can't seem to get away from him.)*

7. What mysteries does Jake solve as the novel progresses?

*(First, he figures out that Axie buried an empty coffin, because Jim Ugly ignores the graveyard when following Sam's scent. Then he realizes his father left town when he saw the bounty hunter Skeats arrive, and that Jim Ugly has been following the wrong scent from Smoketree Junction. He learns that Cornelius took Wilhelmina's money to buy the diamonds, and that everyone is using his name on the theater posters to flush his father out of hiding. The date on Sam's letter proves to Jake that his father is in fact alive and didn't know about the fake burial, and Jake solves the mystery of his father's whereabouts when—with Jim Ugly's help—he spots Sam on the streets of San Francisco.)*

8. The novel has several different story lines, all interwoven. Describe them.

*(First, there is the mystery of the diamonds: Did Sam Bannock really steal some diamonds? Where are they now? To whom do they rightfully belong? Folded into this is the plot line of Sam Bannock's disappearance or death: Is Sam really dead? Where did he go? Why? Will Jake and Jim Ugly find him? Jake's travels in search of his father provide more adventures, plus the subplot of Jake's growing involvement in the theater world. Sam's real relationship with Wilhelmina and Cornelius is another element, as is the ongoing pursuit of Sam and Jake by the bounty hunter Skeats. Axie and Aurora's homesteading efforts provide an important story line, as Aurora's disgust with chicken farming creates the novel's climax. Running through all this is the growth and change in the relationship between Jake and Jim Ugly.)*

9. How does the author create the flavor of the Old West in the novel?

*(Answers will vary somewhat. Fleischman packs the novel with rich historical detail—buggies, steam-whiskered trains, doctors who dig bullets out of shoulders, traveling acting troupes, parasols, bounty hunters, and so on—and gives the characters dialogue with an authentic Old-Western flavor ["Don't let Aurora get in a lather of sweat" and "He's got a disposition about like barbed wire"]. His descriptions of the settings, too, make us visualize the Old West—the desert chicken ranch, the dusty scattering of buildings that is Smoketree Junction, the sagebrush, the wide and rutted street and covered boardwalk of Truckee, the vast desert full of diamond-filled chickens.)*

10. How does the author create and maintain suspense? What is the purpose of this?

*(The author creates lots of questions at the beginning of the novel that are not fully answered until the end. Is Sam Bannock alive or dead? Will Jake and Jim Ugly find him? Where are the diamonds? Did Sam take them? Do they really belong to Cornelius and Wilhelmina? Is Wilhelmina really Sam's fiancée? Will Jake and Jim Ugly be able to get along well enough to make their search? Can Jake control Jim Ugly? Then once Jake is off on his search for Sam, the yellowleg is always right behind him, in hot pursuit. Will Skeats get to Sam Bannock before Jake does? Will Jake somehow*

lead Skeats to his father? All of these questions and adventures keep the readers interested and the plot moving along swiftly.)

### Creative Level

11. Retell one of the novel's incidents from Jim Ugly's point of view.  
(Answers will vary.)
12. Tell what happens between Cornelius and D. D. Skeats after the novel ends, or to Aurora and Axie.  
(Answers will vary.)
13. Write the message Wilhelmina had Jake deliver to the yellowleg, Skeats.  
(Answers will vary.)

### ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

#### Science

1. Report orally or in writing on the mining, grading, and cutting of diamonds. What kind of diamonds did Sam and Axie recover from the mine?
2. Illustrate in poster or pamphlet form how to care for a flock of chickens or for hens raised commercially. Explain what a chicken's craw or gizzard is. (Also **Art**.)
3. Report on wolf-dogs and how they need to be treated differently, if at all, from dogs. Are there any restrictions on the breeding, sale, and possession of wolf-dogs in your state or neighboring states?
4. On a poster, illustrate a number of the breeds of chickens. (Also **Art**.)

#### Music

Listen to the *William Tell Overture* by Rossini and choose passages from it for the different scenes in the "Mrs. William Tell" show.

#### Geography

1. On a map of the U.S. West, trace Jake's travels from the fictional Blowfly all the way to the real San Francisco and back to Blowfly.
2. Using an atlas of the United States, make a collection of colorful or interesting names of towns (like Blowfly), noting in which state each is located. Compare with classmates' lists.

#### Social Studies

1. Prepare an illustrated report on the traveling theater companies of the Old West. (Also **Art**.)

2. Create a poster showing the different kinds of U.S. currency in use in the 1890s. (Also **Art**.)
3. Explain what you have learned about some particular aspect of the history of the U.S. West from the novel. Research to learn more.

#### Mathematics

1. Referring to a map of California and Nevada, estimate how many miles Jake travels in search of his father and then back to Blowfly.
2. Figure out how much Jake's cache of \$3.28 in silver and copper plus the \$5 gold piece would be worth in today's terms. How much would his wage of 75¢ be in today's terms?

#### Language Arts

1. What is the meaning of Aurora's name? To what figure from classical mythology does this refer?
2. Copy at least ten of the most vivid similes and the most interesting metaphors (in your opinion) from the novel. Then write at least ten of your own.
3. Write some dialogue between two (or more) of the novel's characters, giving their language a feel of the Old West.
4. Define the term "picaresque novel," and tell how *Jim Ugly* fits this genre.
5. Narrate orally or in writing the story of William Tell.

#### Art

1. Design costumes for a play about the story of William Tell.
2. Draw illustrations—portrait, caricatures, etc.—of the novel's principal characters.
3. Create an illustration or model of the town of Smoketree Junction.

#### Health

Jake's mother died in a cholera epidemic. Research and report on this disease, noting whether epidemics of it have been stopped.

### STUDENT INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

1. With classmates, stage a melodrama like the ones Jake and the theater company would perform. Be sure to create posters like the ones for Miss Jenny's troupe advertising your show.

2. Read some other Sid Fleischman books set in the Old West. With classmates, discuss similarities and differences among the books.
3. The author, Sid Fleischman, started out as a magician before he became a writer, specializing in sleight-of-hand. Learn some magic tricks of this type and perform them for the class.
4. Describe a relationship you have had with an animal or another person.
5. The author has said he doesn't plot his novels in advance; they take shape as he sits at his typewriter. Do the same. Pick up the novel at the end of a chapter and compose the following chapter spontaneously, not sticking to the plot in the novel.
6. Read about the real-life performing female sharpshooter, Annie Oakley.

#### ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT

1. Describe the novel's events from the point of view of Jim Ugly.
2. Tell the story of the diamonds from start to finish, tracing them from the Netherlands to their final resting place.
3. Describe each person trying to track down Sam Bannock. Tell who the person is, what he or she looks like, why he or she is looking for Sam, and how that person's efforts to find Sam turn out.
4. A reviewer described one of Fleischman's novels as "full of adventure, suspense, humor and lively characters." Explain how each of those characteristics fits *Jim Ugly*. (*New York Times Book Review*, February 22, 1987)

#### OTHER BOOKS BY SID FLEISCHMAN

(Selected list; all for young people.)

*Mr. Mysterious and Company* (1962)  
*By the Great Horn Spoon!* (1963)  
*The Ghost in the Noonday Sun* (1965)  
*Chancy and the Grand Rascal* (1966)  
*Longbeard the Wizard* (1970)  
*Jingo Django* (1971)  
*The Wooden Cat Man* (1972)  
*The Ghost on Saturday Night* (1974)  
*Mr. Mysterious's Secrets of Magic* (1975)  
*Kate's Secret Riddle Book* (1977)  
*Me and the Man on the Moon-Eyed Horse* (1977)  
*Humbug Mountain* (1978)  
*Jim Bridger's Alarm Clock and Other Tall Tales* (1978)  
*The Hey Hey Man* (1979)  
*The Whipping Boy* (1986)  
*The Scarebird* (1988)  
*The Midnight Horse* (1990)  
*Jim Ugly* (1992)  
*The McBroom Series*  
*The Bloodhound Gang Series*

#### RELATED READING

Beatty, Patricia. *The Coach That Never Came*.  
 Dolan, Edward F., Jr. *Famous Builders of California*.  
 George, Jean. *Julie of the Wolves*.  
 Haas, Jessie. *The Sixth Sense: And Other Stories*.  
 Hall, Lynn. *Danger Dog*.  
 Peters, Roger. *Dance of the Wolves*.  
 Pringle, Laurence. *Wolfman: Exploring the World of Wolves*.  
 Rylant, Cynthia. *Every Living Thing*.  
 Twain, Mark. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.  
 Walker, David E. *Big Ben*.  
 Wallace, Bill. *Red Dog*.

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Detroit: Gale, 1992.

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-----."Magic of Story." *Five Owls*, July 1988.

-----."Newbery Medal Acceptance." *The Horn Book Magazine*, July/August 1987, pp. 423-428.

*The Horn Book Magazine*, May/June 1992,  
pp. 340-341.

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*Meet the Newbery Author: Sid Fleischman*.  
Videocassette. Pied Piper, 1989.

*Publishers' Weekly*, January 27, 1992, p. 97.

*School Library Journal*, April 1992, pp. 113-114.

*Something About the Author*, Vol. 59.  
Detroit: Gale, 1990.



## VOCABULARY TEST

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

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. I wondered if birds of prey grieved.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Aurora's voice had a lot of natural screech in it.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Jim Ugly didn't run. He didn't even flinch.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Swallowing hard, I ambled out behind the barn.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. I sat down on the dirt, hunkering with my arms across my knees.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. And then I warned myself not to get all feverish about it, like Aurora and those perishing diamonds.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Jim Ugly held his ground. He wasn't about to sashay out of there.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. "You're a trifle late if you're trying to find my uncle. He's deceased, and I've only just stopped crying."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. "Sir, would it be impertinent to ask if the departed left a will?"
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. You couldn't count on an uppity wolf.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Jim Ugly had gnawed through the rope.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. My eyes tightened on the orange depot, standing bright as sunset at the end of the street.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. The train was already in sight when Cornelius and Wilhelmina came sauntering toward the depot.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. The baggagemaster calculated it would be a mite over two hours to Sunflower Creek.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. "You can save me a stroll on this game leg."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. I began meandering along the boardwalk, my hands jammed in my pockets.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. "An auspicious beginning," Frederick said.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. "Maybe if those two meet, they can settle their misunderstanding. And someone will call off that yellowleg assassin!"
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. "He might have killed you, Sam! And to think I was trying to help that contemptible Cornelius!"
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. "That pestiferous yellowleg is such a poor shot he'd more likely have hit Wilhelmina."

- |                  |                    |                           |             |
|------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|-------------|
| a. in bad taste  | f. favorable       | k. felt sorrow            | p. strut    |
| b. very annoying | g. draw back       | l. wandering aimlessly    | q. arrogant |
| c. walked easily | h. strolling       | m. causing great hardship | r. lame     |
| d. murderer      | i. high shrill cry | n. very little            | s. station  |
| e. chewed        | j. deserving scorn | o. squatting              | t. dead     |

## COMPREHENSION TEST A

### Part I: Matching (20 points)

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

- |             |              |                |                 |               |
|-------------|--------------|----------------|-----------------|---------------|
| a. Jake     | c. Cornelius | e. Axie        | g. Wilhelmina   | i. Miss Jenny |
| b. Jim Ugly | d. Pieface   | f. Sam Bannock | h. D. D. Skeats | j. Aurora     |

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. ...had a thunderhead of copper-colored hair, and...a handkerchief as thin and lacy as a handful of air.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. If he was hiding something, you couldn't tell any more from his face than a stopped clock.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. She had shoulders as wide as a mule skinner's, and her face was almighty plain, for an actress. Her eyes were friendly as sunshine, though.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. This actor was taller, with longer arms and thinner fingers around my arm. He appeared high, mighty, and big as all creation!
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. He had a big, red, beefy face with eyebrows like weeping willows.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. His hair was matted down as if he used a lot of bear grease on it.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. The wig sat like an overturned soup bowl on his head, pale as broomstraw and almost as stiff.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. ...a small pug-faced dog, limp as a rag.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. She had about a dozen copies of *Godey's Lady's Book* and was always gazing moon-eyed at the latest styles.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10....a big sandy mongrel, part elkhound, part something else, and a large helping of short-eared timber wolf.

### Part II: True/False (20 points)

In the spaces provided, write **T** if the statement is completely true, or write **F** if any part of the statement is false.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Aurora has no interest in the diamonds.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Cornelius stole the diamonds.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Sam Bannock didn't show up for his own wedding.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Aurora and Axie are homesteading sheepherders.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Sam and Axie found the diamonds in a fake diamond mine.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Jake suffers from stage fright.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Jim Ugly attacks Skeats when Skeats tries to beat Jake.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. All along, Jake has believed his father really is dead.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Cornelius digs up the empty coffin.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. When Sam Bannock returns, Jim Ugly goes back to being Sam's dog.

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

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

1. When asked about his family, Jake says he is a(n) \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Jake travels on a \_\_\_\_\_ while he is searching for his father.
3. The diamonds end up inside \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Sam and Axie ship the diamonds in a(n) \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Sam Bannock has a bullet removed from his \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Miss Jenny is known as a famous \_\_\_\_\_ and actress.
7. Young Ellis retired from acting after he encountered a hollow tree full of \_\_\_\_\_.
8. Jake's father visited a doctor in the town of \_\_\_\_\_.
9. At the climax of the novel, all the main characters return to the city/town of \_\_\_\_\_, where the story started.
10. At the beginning of the novel, Jake is living in the U.S. state of \_\_\_\_\_.
11. \_\_\_\_\_ is a name that means "friend" in Spanish.
12. Miss Jenny plays the part of \_\_\_\_\_ in the traveling show.
13. The last name of \_\_\_\_\_ is Marlybone-Jenkins.
14. \_\_\_\_\_ is also known as the Arizona Girl.
15. D. D. Skeats wears the pants of a \_\_\_\_\_ soldier.

### Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose any **three** to answer. Write a paragraph for each.

1. Why does Axie fake Sam's burial? Who knows or suspects it's a fake?
2. Why is the bounty hunter called a yellowleg?
3. Describe the relationship between Jake and Jim Ugly.
4. Write a character sketch of Jim Ugly.

## COMPREHENSION TEST B

### Part I: Matching (20 points)

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

- |             |              |                |                 |               |
|-------------|--------------|----------------|-----------------|---------------|
| a. Jake     | c. Cornelius | e. Axie        | g. Wilhelmina   | i. Miss Jenny |
| b. Jim Ugly | d. Pieface   | f. Sam Bannock | h. D. D. Skeats | j. Aurora     |

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Follows Sam Bannock's scent onto a ferry boat and across a bay.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Plays the part of Mrs. William Tell.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Travels with Cornelius in search of Sam Bannock.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Ends up in Jim Ugly's jaws.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Plans to give up homesteading.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Tries unsuccessfully to put a muzzle on Jim Ugly.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Buries a coffin he knows has no body in it.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Was once a cavalry soldier.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Was once a newspaperman, is now an actor.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Manages a theater and bought the diamonds.

### Part II: True/False (20 points)

In the spaces provided, write **T** if the statement is completely true, or write **F** if any part of the statement is false.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Aurora is Jake's cousin.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Wilhelmina willingly used her life savings to buy the diamonds.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Wilhelmina and Sam plan to marry, and Jake likes the idea.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Axie is a gambling man.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Jake's mother ran off with another man.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Miss Jenny is a noted sharpshooter.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. By mistake, Jim Ugly tracks Skeats instead of Sam Bannock.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Jake hates acting and being on stage.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Jim Ugly knows Sam isn't buried in the graveyard.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Aurora is very fond of Jim Ugly.

**Part III: Short Answer (30 points)**

Write a one, two or three-word answer for each of the following questions.

1. What does Jim Ugly sniff to pick up a scent each time the train stops? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What is Skeats called because of the stripe running down his pants? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Jim Ugly is part dog and part what else? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What does Axie feed to the chickens along with their mash? \_\_\_\_\_
5. In what city or town is Jake living at the beginning of the novel? \_\_\_\_\_
6. What is D. D. Skeats's profession? \_\_\_\_\_
7. What color are Jim Ugly's eyes? \_\_\_\_\_
8. What part does Jake play in the traveling show? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Who lets Jake keep riding on the train for no extra cost? \_\_\_\_\_
10. From what part of Skeats's body is a bullet removed? \_\_\_\_\_
11. What state did Jake and his father live in before the problem with the diamonds came up?  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. Who gives Jake the bullet? \_\_\_\_\_
13. What town does Jake start his acting career in? \_\_\_\_\_
14. In what city are Jake and his father finally reunited? \_\_\_\_\_
15. What name does Jake usually call Jim Ugly by the end of the novel? \_\_\_\_\_

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

Choose any **three** to answer. Write a paragraph for each.

1. Why is Wilhelmina looking for Sam Bannock? How does she react when he finally reappears?
2. What is the relationship between Cornelius and Skeats?
3. Write a character sketch of Jake.
4. Describe Jake's relationships with the three main women in the novel.

## ANSWER KEY

### VOCABULARY TEST

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

### COMPREHENSION TEST A

#### Part I: Matching (20 points)

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

#### Part II: True/False (20 points)

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

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

- |                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. orphan             | 9. Blowfly            |
| 2. train              | 10. Nevada            |
| 3. chickens           | 11. Amigo             |
| 4. coffin             | 12. Mrs. William Tell |
| 5. shoulder           | 13. Wilhelmina        |
| 6. sharpshooter       | 14. Miss Jenny        |
| 7. skunks             | 15. cavalry           |
| 8. Smoketree Junction |                       |

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

Answers will vary somewhat. Samples follow.

1. Sam leaves town when the bounty hunter arrives; thinking quickly, Axie decides to take advantage of having a coffin on hand to fake Sam's burial to throw the bounty hunter off the trail. Jim Ugly ignores the grave because there's no scent of Sam on it; from this, Jake figures out the coffin was empty. Cornelius, Skeats, and Wilhelmina all suspect the burial was a fake. Only Aurora continues to believe in it.
2. He used to be a cavalry soldier, and he still wears the pants of his cavalry uniform: blue, with wide yellow stripes down the sides. This gives him the description of being a yellow-leg.
3. It starts out as mutual dislike and mistrust, moves to toleration as they search for Sam together, and finally ends as friendship, with Jim Ugly attacking Skeats when the bounty hunter threatens to beat Jake and later allowing Jake to remove Pieface from his jaws.
4. He is a keep-to-himself, aloof animal, with the wildness of a wolf in him. He reserves his affection for one person only, and is extremely loyal to that person while being rather menacing to others. He is an outstanding tracker.

### COMPREHENSION TEST B

#### Part I: Matching (20 points)

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

#### Part II: True/False (20 points)

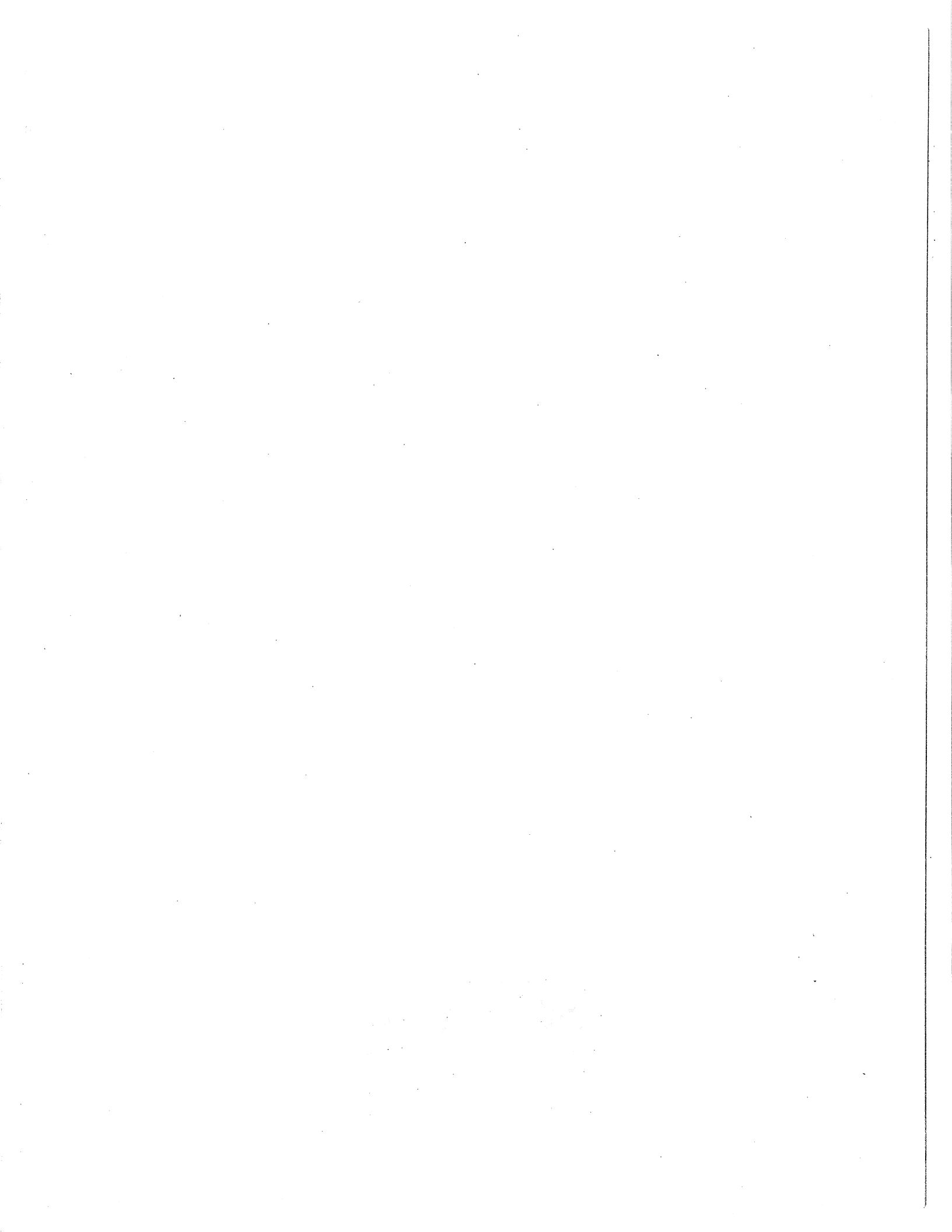
- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. T | 6. T  |
| 2. F | 7. T  |
| 3. T | 8. F  |
| 4. T | 9. T  |
| 5. F | 10. F |

#### Part III: Short Answer (30 points)

- |                       |                           |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. bullet             | 9. baggagemaster          |
| 2. yellowleg          | 10. foot                  |
| 3. wolf               | 11. California            |
| 4. diamonds           | 12. Dr. Fossum/the doctor |
| 5. Blowfly            | 13. Truckee               |
| 6. bounty hunter      | 14. San Francisco         |
| 7. yellow             | 15. Amigo                 |
| 8. William Tell's son |                           |

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

1. Wilhelmina loves Sam, and she is terribly upset and angry that Sam failed to show up for their wedding. She has joined forces with Cornelius, hoping that together they can find Sam. When Sam reappears, she insists she wants him horsewhipped, she is so angry with him, but she ultimately softens and starts planning a new wedding.
2. Cornelius had Skeats work with him to "salt" the mine with the trash diamonds. Then Cornelius floated rumors about a bounty on Sam's head, either knowing that Skeats would try to track Sam down or ordering Skeats to do so, knowing Skeats would be motivated by the supposed bounty. By the novel's end, Skeats is trailing Cornelius, hounding him about the phantom bounty.
3. Jake is spunky enough to run off on his own with a somewhat menacing wolf-dog, quick-witted, adaptable, ready to try a new challenge like acting. He bonds readily with likable people like Miss Jenny, and he reacts appropriately with grieving for his dead father and with fear of the threatening bounty hunter.
4. Jake has an edgy relationship with Aurora, because he doesn't think he needs her to bring him up once his father is supposedly dead, and because she seems to believe that his father took the diamonds and she wants to shoot his father's dog. Jake gets along well with Wilhelmina and Miss Jenny because they are nice people and treat him kindly and without condescension; he approves of his father's and Wilhelmina's plans to marry.





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