

# Stone Fox

by John Reynolds Gardiner

## Teacher's Guide

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## Synopsis

### Chapter 1

Ten-year-old Willy lives in rural Wyoming with his grandfather. Together they farm potatoes. One day, Grandfather will not get out of bed. Willy and his dog Searchlight get help from Doc Smith, who diagnoses Grandfather as having given up on life. Willy vows to make his grandfather want to live again.

### Chapter 2

Doc Smith wants Willy to go live with Mrs. Peacock, but he insists on keeping the family together. Within three weeks, Willy has worked out a way to communicate with Grandfather, using a simple system of hand signals. Willy must find the money to rent a horse to bring in the crop; for Grandfather is broke. Searchlight solves the problem by pulling the plow. They complete the harvest in ten days and sell the potatoes to Mr. Leeks for a good price. Willy is baffled when Grandfather communicates that this was not the problem that has sent him into a depression.

### Chapter 3

Willy stocks the house with food and wood for the winter. Every day he and Searchlight travel the five miles each way to school, Searchlight pulling Willy over the snow through town on a sled.

### Chapter 4

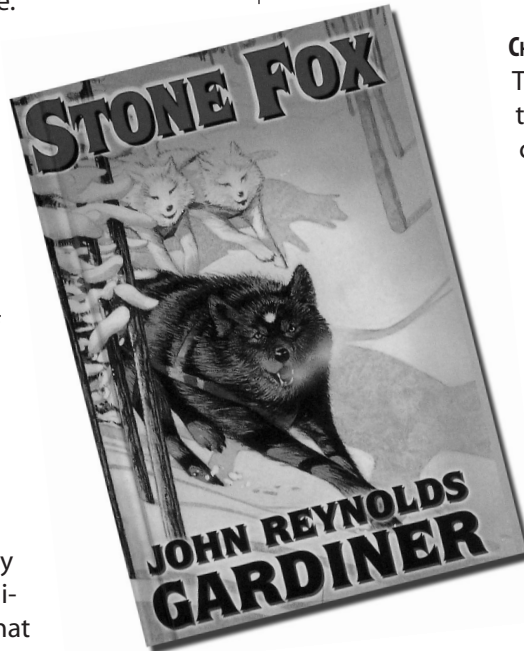
Willy finds out why his grandfather is depressed when Clifford Snyder comes to collect the \$500 that Grandfather owes in back taxes. Grandfather has not paid his tax bill in a decade.

### Chapter 5

The bank refuses to lend Willy the money for the taxes. Willy sees a poster for the National Dogsled Races in Jackson, Wyoming. The prize is \$500, and Willy decides to enter.

### Chapter 6

To pay the \$50 entrance fee, Willy withdraws the money from the bank that his grandfather has been saving for his college education. Leaving the bank, Willy sees the Native American Stone Fox and his five beautiful Samoyed dogs. Stone Fox refuses to speak to white people because of the way they treated his people, the Shoshone, forcing them off their lands and onto reservations. Stone Fox has always wins his race; and uses his money to buy back his people's land.



### CHAPTER 7

The night before the race, Willy goes to get his grandfather more medicine. On the way back, he stops to pet Stone Fox's dogs. The Native American strikes Willy hard across one eye. Willy apologizes and explains that he is racing to win enough money to pay the tax bill and save his grandfather's farm, their home.

### Chapter 8

The day of the race, Willy's eye is swollen shut from the blow. Willy is shocked that so many people have come out to see the race. Everyone bets on Stone Fox; no one on Willy.

### Chapter 9

Willy gets an early lead. He is gratified to see Grandfather sitting up in bed, looking out the window. But soon, Stone Fox gains on all the racers.

### Chapter 10

A hundred feet from the finish line, Searchlight dies when her heart bursts. Willy asks Stone Fox if Searchlight is dead, and Willy can tell from the Native American's expression that the dog is indeed dead. Willy thanks Searchlight in an emotional speech. Stone Fox fires his rifle in the air and speaks, saying: "Anyone crosses this line—I shoot." Little Willy carries Searchlight across the finish line.

## Timeline of Wyoming History

<b>1742-43</b>	Francois Louis Verendrye enters area of Wyoming.	<b>1853</b>	Mormons establish Ft. Supply, first agricultural settlement.
<b>1807</b>	John Colter becomes the first White American known to enter present-day Wyoming.	<b>1857</b>	Army establishes temporary Camp Scott.
<b>1811</b>	Wilson Price Hunt party, the first organized expedition through Wyoming, crosses the state on the way to Astoria, in present day Oregon.	<b>1860</b>	Pony Express started. Second school established in Wyoming.
<b>1812</b>	Robert Stuart and returning Astorians cross the Continental Divide in the vicinity of South Pass and built the first known cabin in Wyoming, on North Platte River near Bessemer Bend.	<b>1863</b>	First newspaper in Wyoming, <i>The Daily Telegraph</i> .
<b>1824</b>	William H. Ashley's men rediscover South Pass.	<b>1867</b>	Ft. D. A. Russell and Camp Carlin established. Union Pacific Railroad enters Wyoming.
<b>1825</b>	Beginning of fur trade rendezvous period.	<b>1868</b>	Wyoming Territory created July 25. Wind River Reservation established for Shoshone Indians.
<b>1827</b>	Ashley's party takes the first wheeled vehicle, a four-pounder cannon, through South Pass.	<b>1869</b>	John A. Campbell, first territorial governor, signs the "Female Suffrage" bill giving Wyoming women the right to vote.
<b>1832</b>	Capt. B. L. E. Bonneville builds Ft. Bonneville.	<b>1877</b>	Agreement made with Shoshone Indians to allow Arapahoes to move onto Wind River Reservation.
<b>1834</b>	William Sublette and Robert Campbell establish Ft. Laramie, the first permanent trading post in Wyoming.	<b>1883</b>	Electric lights introduced in Cheyenne.
<b>1835</b>	Rev. Samuel Parker holds first Protestant service in Wyoming.	<b>1885</b>	Chinese Massacre at Rock Springs.
<b>1836</b>	First white women, wives of missionaries, pass over the Oregon Trail to the far West.	<b>1886</b>	First county library established in Cheyenne. First county fair in state, held in Johnson County.
<b>1840</b>	First Catholic Mass celebrated in Wyoming.	<b>1887</b>	University of Wyoming opens.
<b>1842</b>	Capt. John C. Fremont's first expedition to Wyoming.	<b>1888</b>	Capitol building completed.
<b>1843</b>	Ft. Bridger, second permanent settlement, established.	<b>1889</b>	Wyoming Constitutional Convention.
<b>1849</b>	U.S. government purchases Ft. Laramie.	<b>1890</b>	Wyoming Territory admitted into Union as 44th state, July 10.
<b>1852</b>	First school opens in Wyoming.	<b>1918</b>	Uranium discovered in Wyoming, near Lusk.
		<b>1922</b>	Salt Creek Oil Field opens.
		<b>1925</b>	Nellie Tayloe Ross (1876-1977), first woman governor in U.S.; first woman director of the U.S. Mint (1933-1954).
		<b>1935</b>	State sales tax adopted.

- 1954 Wyoming's first TV station opens in Cheyenne.
- 1978 Largest radio telescope in the world built on Jelm Mountain, it is operated by University of Wyoming.
- 1979-1980 Cheyenne received record snowfall amount: 121 1/2"
- 1985 Freak rainstorm hits Cheyenne; 12 people killed.
- 1987 Cutthroat Trout adopted as Wyoming State Fish; Knightia adopted as Wyoming State Fossil.
- 1988 More than one million acres burn during Yellowstone Park fires.
- 1989 Richard Cheney appointed Secretary of Defense.
- 1995 Wolves reintroduced in Yellowstone.
- 2001 Cheney inaugurated as Vice President of the U.S.

## Biographical Sketch

John Reynolds Gardiner was born in 1944 in Los Angeles, California. Both his parents were teachers. Gardiner earned his undergraduate degree from the University of California, Los Angeles, in 1966 and his master's degree from the same university two years later. A decade after completing his education, Gardiner married; he and his wife Gloria had three daughters.

Although he had a vivid imagination as a child, Gardiner never imagined that he would ever become a writer. He said, "In high school I was told I'd never make it in college English because my grammar and spelling were so poor. I was a non-reader. I read my first novel, *Exodus*, at age nineteen." Gardiner trained as a scientist and worked as a thermal analyst for aerospace engineering firms in Los Angeles. He also worked as an inventor for the Num Num Novelty Company.

Nonetheless, Gardiner decided to try his hand at writing. In an interview, Gardiner said, "My brother enrolled me in a writing class when I was twenty-eight. I sold my

first book six years later." That book was the novel *Stone Fox*. Gardiner lived in West Germany, Central America, and Idaho. It was in Idaho where he first heard the legend that he used as the basis for *Stone Fox*. Gardiner died in 2006 in Anaheim, California, from pancreatitis.

## Critic's Corner

In 1980, the *New York Times* named *Stone Fox* an outstanding book. Two years later, the Southern California Council on Literature for Children and Young People designated *Stone Fox* a notable work of fiction. In 1986, International P.E.N. gave *Stone Fox* its Older Children's Literature Award.

Teresa Wittmann, writing in *School Library Journal*, praised the novel's timeless message "of loyalty and determination." In another review in *School Library Journal*, the critic said: "Gardiner's description of the race and sudden climax (based on legend) is fast-paced and enveloping."

## Other Books by John Reynolds Gardiner

- Top Secret* (1985)
- General Butterfingers* (1986)

## Bibliography

### Periodicals

- New York Times Book Review*, April 27, 1980.
- "*Stone Fox* author dead at 61." *UPI NewsTrack*. March 16, 2006.
- Stone Fox*. *Plays*. March 1999, v58 i5 p64.
- Teresa Wittmann. *Stone Fox & Top Secret*. *School Library Journal* Oct. 2003, v49 i10 p90.

### Online

- Contemporary Authors Online*, Thomson Gale, 2006.

## General Objectives

1. To identify the setting and understand its importance in the novel
2. To analyze Grandfather's illness
3. To understand why Grandfather is in danger of losing the farm
4. To trace why Willy goes to the bank
5. To probe the meaning of the novel's title
6. To analyze the symbolism in the novel
7. To recognize the novel's theme
8. To describe the novel's plot

9. To identify key characters
10. To understand the novel's emotional ending

## Specific Objectives

1. To recognize that Grandfather and Willy live a hand-to-mouth existence on a small potato farm in Wyoming
2. To understand that Grandfather is depressed and paralyzed by fear that he and Willy will lose the farm
3. To recognize that Grandfather has not paid his taxes in ten years
4. To explore why the bank will not give Willy a loan
5. To understand why Willy enters the dog sled race
6. To appreciate the odds stacked against Willy
7. To compare and contrast Willy and Stone Fox and understand that they are quite similar
8. To appreciate Stone Fox's dignity and pain
9. To explore why Stone Fox lets Willy win the race
10. To analyze how the story is based on a legend

## Literary Terms and Applications

For a better understanding of John Reynolds Gardiner's style, present the following terms and applications to the novel:

**Legend:** a story handed down through time that explains how or why something in nature originated. Legends are sometimes based on historical facts, but they often contain exaggerated details and characters. As the author explains in a note at the end of the novel, *Stone Fox* is based on a Rocky Mountain legend that he heard in 1974 while sitting in a café in Idaho. Although Gardiner created the characters of Stone Fox and little Willy, the ending is true to the legend.

**Suspense:** the feeling of tension or anticipation an author creates in a work. Authors create suspense by unexpected plot twists. This keeps readers interested in the story and makes them want to read on to find out what will happen. *Stone Fox* is highly suspenseful, especially during the race sequence in Chapters 8-10. Gardiner builds suspense by having the spectators place all their bets on Stone Fox to win: the odds are as high as a hundred to one that he will win. Not one cent is bet on little Willy and Searchlight. Gardiner uses our impulse to root for the underdog to build even more suspense.

**Style:** an author's distinctive way of writing. Style is made up of elements such as word choice, sentence length and structure, figures of speech, and tone. An author may change his or her style for different kinds of writing and to suit different audiences. In poetry, for example, an author might use more imagery than he or she would use in prose. In *Stone Fox*, Gardiner uses simple words, simple sentences, and short paragraphs to make the story similar to a legend and thus create a timeless, almost mythic aura.

## Cross-Curricular Sources

### Nonfiction

Bruce Grant, *Concise Encyclopedia of the American Indian*  
Jayne C. Jones, *The American Indians in America*  
Jay Miller, *American Indian Families*  
Jay Miller, *American Indian Festivals*  
Jay Miller, *American Indian Foods*  
Jay Miller, *American Indian Games*  
Elsie Clews Parsons (ed.), *American Indian Life*  
Ray Spangenburg, *The American Indian Experience*

### Fiction

Carol Brink, *Caddie Woodlawn*  
Eve Bunting, *Dandelions*  
Paul Erickson, *Daily Life in a Covered Wagon*  
Fred Gipson, *Old Yeller*  
Barbara Greenwood, *A Pioneer Sampler*  
Will Hobbs, *Beardream and Bearstone*  
Dorothy Leland, *Sallie Fox: The Story of a Pioneer Girl*  
Reeve Lindbergh, *Johnny Appleseed*  
Honore Morrow, *On to Oregon!*  
Gary Paulsen, *Dogsong*  
Elizabeth George Speare, *The Sign of the Beaver*  
Laura Ingalls Wilder, *Little House on the Prairie*  
Laura Ingalls Wilder, *Little Town on the Prairie*  
Laura Ingalls Wilder, *By the Shores of Silver Lake*  
Laura Ingalls Wilder, *The Long Winter*

### Audio

*Into The Wilderness*  
*The Light in the Forest* (1992)  
*The Light in the Forest* (2000) and (2001)  
*Sarah, Plain and Tall*  
*Stone Fox*  
*The Summoning God*  
*Talking God*

### DVDs and Videos

*Blazing Saddles* (1974)

*Broken Arrow* (1950)  
*High Noon* (1952)  
*Hondo* (1953)  
*Little House on the Prairie: The Collection* (1974)  
*Pioneers!* (1992)  
*Return to Snowy River* (1988)  
*Zandy's Bride* (1974)

**DVDs/Videos**

*Buffalo Bill and the Indians, or Sitting Bull's History Lesson*  
*Lakota Medicine Walk*  
*Native American Indians*  
*Narragansett: Indians of North America*  
*Paths of Life: American Indians of the Southwest*  
*The Real American Cowboys, Indians*  
*Rediscovering America - Indians Among Us*  
*War Against the Indians: Hunter Becomes The Hunted*  
*War Against the Indians: The Dispossessed*

**Internet**

John Reynolds Gardiner  
[library.thinkquest.org/CR0211900/fox/gardiner.htm](http://library.thinkquest.org/CR0211900/fox/gardiner.htm)  
 John Reynolds Gardiner  
[filebox.vt.edu/users/dsalvi/edweb/project/intro.htm](http://filebox.vt.edu/users/dsalvi/edweb/project/intro.htm)  
 John Reynolds Gardiner  
[www.webenglishteacher.com/gardiner.html](http://www.webenglishteacher.com/gardiner.html)  
*Stone Fox*  
[kids-learn.org/a/winter2nd/heights.htm](http://kids-learn.org/a/winter2nd/heights.htm)  
 Literature: "Stone Fox" by John Reynolds Gardiner  
[www.emints.org/ethemes/resources/S00000424.shtml](http://www.emints.org/ethemes/resources/S00000424.shtml)  
 Author Study of John Reynolds Gardiner  
[www.midgefrazel.net/kidlit3a.html](http://www.midgefrazel.net/kidlit3a.html)  
 John Reynolds Gardiner  
[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_Reynolds\\_Gardiner](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Reynolds_Gardiner)

**The Importance of Setting**

*Stone Fox* is set in Wyoming, close to the town of Jackson. The time is not specified. The setting is important because it is rural, isolated, and poor. The cold weather and heavy snows are also important because they make the annual dog sled race possible.

The town of Jackson is located in the Jackson Hole valley of Teton County, Wyoming. As of the 2000 census, the town had a total population of 8,647. It is the county seat of Teton County.

Today, Jackson is a major gateway for millions of tourists visiting nearby Grand Teton National Park, Yellowstone National Park, and the National Elk Refuge.

**Themes and Motifs**

A study of the central issues and situations in John Reynolds Gardiner's *Stone Fox* should include these aspects:

**Themes**

- courage
- death
- determination
- education
- farms
- legends
- Native Americans
- races
- sled dogs
- survival

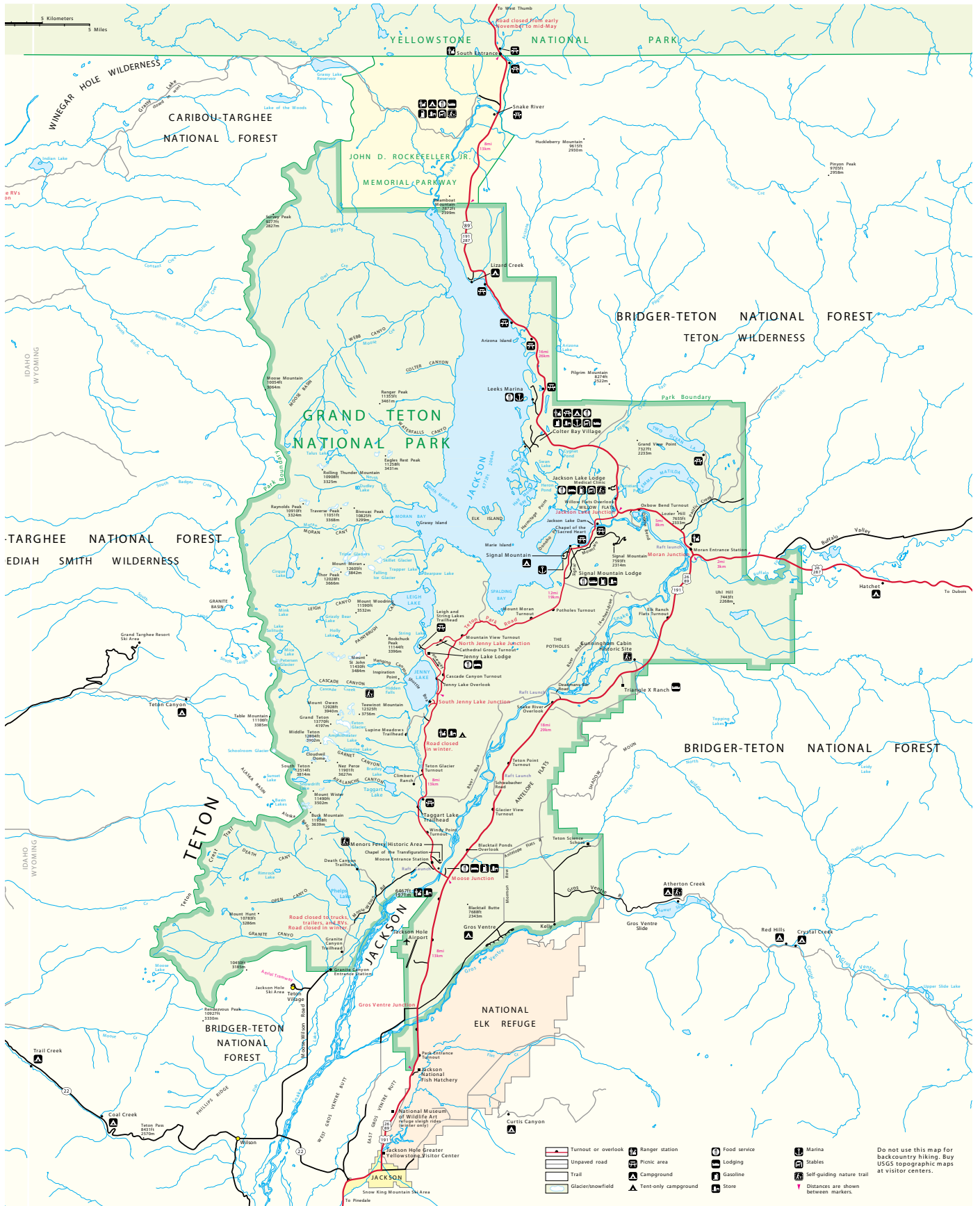
**Motifs**

- showing great courage and creativity in the face of desperation
- enduring the death of your dog, your closest friend
- being determined to save the family's farm and home
- appreciating the importance of education, including a college education
- living and working on an isolated farm
- reading a story based on a legend
- learning about Native Americans in Wyoming
- entering a sled dog race
- raising sled dogs
- surviving under difficult circumstances

**Meaning Study**

Below are words, phrases, sentences, or thought units 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. Little Willy lived with his grandfather on a small potato farm in Wyoming. (Chapter 1, p. 3)  
*(From the novel's very first page, readers can see that Willy and his grandfather live a marginal life, close to the edge. It's apparent that they don't have much money or room for error. This passage also shows the novel's style: simple, straightforward, and direct.)*
2. "I'll find out what's wrong and make it better. You'll see. I'll make Grandfather want to live again." (Chapter 1, p.10)



*(When Grandfather takes to his bed, having lost his will to live, Doc Smith doesn't hold out much hope for his survival. Although Willy is only ten years old, he vows to revive Grandfather's will to live. It seems highly unlikely, but Willy does indeed save the day.)*

3. No wonder Grandfather was so concerned. No wonder he had gotten sick. (Chapter 2, p. 18)  
*(Willy decides that Grandfather has lost his will to live because they are broke. He is only partly correct: they are indeed broke, but the situation is far worse than Willy imagines at this point because Grandfather also owes \$500 in back taxes, having not paid his taxes for a decade.)*
4. And then Searchlight solved the problem. (Chapter 2, p. 19)  
*(Searchlight the dog walks over and stands in front of the plow, indicating that she wants to pull it. This is the first time that Searchlight saves the day—foreshadowing the dog's heroism at the novel's climax.)*
5. Grandfather put his hand down on the bed. Palm down meant "no." It was not the crop he'd been worried about. It was something else. Little Willy had been wrong all along. (Chapter 2, p. 21)  
*(Willy is partly correct, but the situation is far more dire than he suspects because Grandfather is in very real danger of losing the house and farm.)*
6. "Taxes, son. Taxes on this farm. Your grandfather there hasn't been paying them." (Chapter 4, p. 34)  
*(Willy didn't know that his grandfather had been ignoring their tax bill for a decade. The tax man is drawn as a caricature, but despite this overplaying, the government does have the power to evict people for non-payment of taxes. Indeed, it is one of the most effective ways to stop criminals who otherwise can't be apprehended. Al Capone is likely the most famous example.)*
7. He was at Lester's General Store when it happened. When he saw the poster. (Chapter 5, p. 44)  
*(Little Willy sees the poster advertising the National Dogsled Races in Jackson, Wyoming. People come from all over to enter the race and some of the finest dog teams in the country were represented. The prize is \$500—the exact amount that Willy needs to save his family's farm and house. He decides on the spot to compete. . . and win.)*
8. The Indian looked at little Willy. His face was solid granite, but his eyes were alive and cunning. (Chapter 6, p.52 )  
*(This is Stone Fox, little Willy's chief competitor. The man's huge size and fierce determination make him a formidable opponent.)*

9. Searchlight gave it everything she had. She was a hundred feet from the finish line when her heart burst. She died instantly. (Chapter 10, p. 79)  
*(The race is nearly over when Willy's dog dies. This scene helps build the novel to its climax. What will Willy do? What will Stone Fox do?)*
10. "Anyone crosses this line—I shoot."(Chapter 10, p. 83 )  
*(In an act of selfless heroism, Stone Fox allows Willy to carry his beloved dog Searchlight over the finish line and win the race. Stone Fox sees in Willy the same selfless heroism and determination that motivates him. He pays homage to the boy's strength of character.)*

## Comprehension Test

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 15 (Literal Level)

1. When and where does the story take place?  
*(The story takes place in a small town in Wyoming, close to the city of Jackson. The time is not specified, but it appears to be at least fifty years ago when dog races were more common.)*
2. Why has Grandfather become ill and taken to his bed?  
*(He is depressed because he owes ten years of back taxes, \$500, which he cannot pay. He believes that he will lose his farm and his grandson. These are very real possibilities.)*
3. How much money does Grandfather owe in back taxes?  
*(He owes \$500.)*
4. What does Stone Fox do with the money that he wins in the races?  
*(He buys back his people's lands so they can move back to their homelands from the reservations.)*
5. What happens to Searchlight right before the end of the race?  
*(She dies of a burst heart, brought on by too much exertion.)*

### Questions 6-8 (Interpretative Level)

6. Why does Doc Smith think that Grandfather will die?  
*(Grandfather has lost the will to live. These cases are notoriously*

*difficult to cure, even today. We see this when two long time companions often die close together, the second having given up the will to live after the first dies.)*

7. How are Willy and Stone Fox similar?  
*(They both have the same goal: to save their homes for themselves and their families. They are both disciplined, athletic, and honorable.)*
8. Why does Stone Fox let Willy win the race?  
*(Stone Fox admires Willy's courage, determination, and love for his dog Searchlight. He lets Willy win to salute all the boy's fine qualities.)*

### Questions 9 and 10 (Critical Level)

9. Did you find this novel realistic? Why or why not?  
*(Students are likely to say that a ten year old boy could not accomplish all that Willy did: care for his grandfather, bring in the large potato crop, attend school, and prepare for the race. The story has the flavor of a tall tale.)*
10. In what ways is the novel like a legend?  
*(The novel has a simple and easy-to-remember story, admirable characters, and a strong moral lesson.)*

### Questions 11-12 (Creative Level)

11. Explain what Willy's life might be like ten years in the future, when he is twenty years old. Has he gone to college as his grandfather wanted? Is he still living on the farm? Answer these questions and any other ones that you have about Willy as an adult.
12. Working with a partner, role-play a dialogue between Willy and Stone Fox, in which they discuss their feelings about the race.

## Across the Curriculum

### Art/Music

1. Draw a new cover for the novel. Be sure that it describes the characters, action, and entices people to read the book.
2. Choose background music for an especially dramatic scene. Read the scene to a group of classmates as you play the music in the background.
3. Construct a three-dimensional model of the race course as it is described in the novel.

4. Draw a picture of Searchlight the dog. Use the descriptions in the novel to spark your creativity.
5. Write a song about the events in this novel. Your song can be any form you wish, such as a ballad or rap song.

### Language Arts

1. The author claims the idea for this story came from a legend he heard. Write another version of the same legend. Your version should be about 300 words long.
2. In an essay, analyze how Stone Fox's name does or does not fit his character.
3. Recast the novel as a ballad. Tell the story of Willy in rhymed verse. Celebrate his courage, determination, and achievements.
4. Write the novel's back story: what happened to Willy's parents? How did he come to live with Grandfather?
5. Imagine that you are Willy. Write three journal entries: one before Grandfather becomes ill, one when you decide to enter the race, and one after the race ends. Explain your feelings about your life and experiences.

### History/Social Studies

1. Report on the Iditarod, likely the best-known sled dog race. Find out when it is being held this year and the requirements for entry. Also map the course.
2. Make a map showing the native American tribes in your state.
3. Research the history of the Shoshone Indians in Wyoming. Show your results in a chart or other display.
4. Find out more about the sled dogs described in the novel. How are these Samoyeds bred, raised, and trained? How are they used today?
5. Make a FAQ page for Wyoming. Include at least ten commonly asked questions and answers about the state.



**Speech/Drama**

1. In a group, debate whether or not the novel's ending is realistic. Provide specific examples to make your point.
2. Working with some friends, retell this story as a legend. Make your retelling dramatic and suspenseful.
3. Willy takes good care of his dog Searchlight. Choose a pet that you already have or would like to have. Then demonstrate how to take care of the pet.
4. Willy is determined to win the dog sled race to save his grandfather's farm. In a roundtable discussion, brainstorm some other ways that Willy could have raised the tax money that he needed.
5. Working with a partner, act out a scene between Willy and his grandfather in which they discuss the events in the novel.

**Science/Math**

1. Willy and his grandfather have to pay their taxes. Find out how your taxes are spent. What services do you get for your tax money?
2. Grow some potatoes. Chart the rate of growth for each plant.
3. It appears that Grandfather is suffering from depression. Find out the causes and treatments for this disease.
4. It snows a great deal in Wyoming, according to Willy. Chart the average precipitation for one month in your neighborhood.
5. Grandfather wants Willy to go to college and has set aside money for that purpose. On a chart, show how much it costs for a four year education at a state college and at a private college. Calculate the percentage difference.

**Alternate Assessment**

1. Working with some friends, recast the novel as a brief play and perform it for the class.
2. Theorize how the novel would have changed if it took place in the present.
3. Read *No More Dead Dogs* by Gordon Korman and compare and contrast it to *Stone Fox*.
4. Draw or paint a mural showing the main events in the plot.
5. Write a critical review of the novel for publication in the school newspaper.

## Vocabulary

Match each of the following vocabulary words from *Stone Fox* with its antonym, which is its opposite.

- |                     |                             |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|
| ___ 1. impatiently  | A. validated                |
| ___ 2. massive      | B. gradual                  |
| ___ 3. amateurs     | C. calmly                   |
| ___ 4. unison       | D. gullibility              |
| ___ 5. cunning      | E. tiny                     |
| ___ 6. abrupt       | F. withdraw                 |
| ___ 7. treacherous  | G. safe                     |
| ___ 8. disqualified | H. individually, separately |
| ___ 9. irrigate     | I. professionals            |
| ___ 10. deposit     | J. dry out                  |

## 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. Mr. Leeks     | F. Clifford Snyder |
| B. Searchlight   | G. Mr. Foster      |
| C. Willy         | H. Lester          |
| D. Stone Fox     | I. Grandfather     |
| E. Miss Williams | J. Doc Smith       |

- \_\_\_ 1. Willy's teacher
- \_\_\_ 2. town pharmacist
- \_\_\_ 3. tax collector
- \_\_\_ 4. man who buys Willy's potato crop
- \_\_\_ 5. man who owns and races his five beautiful sled dogs
- \_\_\_ 6. Willy's loyal and hardworking sled dog
- \_\_\_ 7. bank president
- \_\_\_ 8. Willy's legal guardian
- \_\_\_ 9. character who wins the race
- \_\_\_ 10. person who thinks Grandfather is going to die

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

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

- \_\_\_ 1. The novel is set in rural Arizona, on a small farm.
- \_\_\_ 2. Willy is ten years old when the action takes place.
- \_\_\_ 3. One day, Grandfather will not get out of bed. The doctor says that Grandfather has given up on life. Willy vows to make his grandfather want to live again.
- \_\_\_ 4. Willy rents a horse to plow the fields and he is able to save the entire cabbage, onion, and corn crop.
- \_\_\_ 5. Grandfather is depressed because his wife has died recently and now he is all alone.
- \_\_\_ 6. The prize for the National Dogsled Races is \$500.
- \_\_\_ 7. Stone Fox refuses to speak to white people because of the way they treated his people, the Shoshone, forcing them to reservations. Stone Fox always win his races and uses his money to buy back his people's land.
- \_\_\_ 8. Stone Fox strikes Willy for stealing \$50 from him.
- \_\_\_ 9. A hundred feet from the finish line, Searchlight dies when her heart bursts.
- \_\_\_ 10. In a shocking upset, Rex wins the race and Willy comes in second.

## Comprehension Test A (Page 2)

### Part III: Quote Identification (30 points)

Briefly explain why each quote is important in the novel.

1. A ten-year-old boy cannot run a farm. But you can't tell a ten-year-old boy that. Especially a boy like little Willy.
2. And then Searchlight solved the problem.
3. "If you don't pay...we have our ways. And it's all legal. All fair and legal. You're no better than other folks."
4. Stone Fox was using the money he won from racing to simply buy the land back. He had already purchased four farms and over two hundred acres.
5. "Anyone crosses this line—I shoot."

### Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Who is the main character in this novel? Support your conclusion with specific details from the novel.
2. Provide three details from the novel that make *Stone Fox* seem to be nonfiction, even though it is really fiction.
3. Compare and contrast Stone Fox and Willy. Show how they are the same and different.
4. What function do Clifford Snyder and Doc Smith serve in the novel?

## Comprehension Test B

### Part I: Sentence Completion (20 points)

Choose the word or phrase that best completes each of the following statements.

1. The novel is set in rural (**Wyoming, Arizona**), on a small farm.
2. Willy is (**ten, fifteen**) years old when the action takes place.
3. One day, Grandfather will not get out of bed. The doctor says that Grandfather has (**contracted polio, given up on life**).
4. Within three weeks, Willy has worked out a way to communicate with Grandfather, using a simple system of (**written signs, hand signals**).
5. (**Rex, Searchlight**) pulls the plow and Willy completes the harvest in ten days.
6. Every day, Willy travels (**five, ten**) miles to the school.
7. Grandfather is depressed because (**his wife died, he may lose his farm**).
8. The prize for the National Dogsled Races is (**\$50, \$500**).
9. Stone Fox always win his races and uses his money to (**send his people to college, buy back his people's land**).
10. A hundred feet from the finish line, (**Stone Fox, Searchlight**) dies of a burst heart.

### Part II: Matching (30 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. Mrs. Peacock    | A. Willy's legal guardian                               |
| ___ 2. Mr. Leeks       | B. man who owns the drug store                          |
| ___ 3. Stone Fox       | C. man who buys Willy's potato crop                     |
| ___ 4. Grandfather     | D. Willy's loyal dog                                    |
| ___ 5. Searchlight     | E. character who saves his family's farm and home       |
| ___ 6. Lester          | F. Shoshone Indian                                      |
| ___ 7. Mr. Foster      | G. bank president                                       |
| ___ 8. Miss Williams   | H. tax collector, a "city slicker"                      |
| ___ 9. Clifford Snyder | I. Willy's teacher                                      |
| ___ 10. Willy          | J. the woman whom Doc Smith wants Willy to go live with |

## Comprehension Test B (Page 2)

### Part III: Identification (20 points)

Explain why each is important in the story.

1. potatoes
2. Native Americans
3. snow
4. sled dogs
5. money

### Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. What makes Willy such an admirable character? Isolate and analyze at least three of his best traits.
2. Trace the novel's plot. Include the rising action, climax, and conclusion.
3. Explain how the novel shows the importance of loyalty and determination.
4. What role does the novel's setting play in the story? Why is the setting so important in this novel?

## Answer Key

### VOCABULARY

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

### COMPREHENSION TEST A

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

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

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

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

#### Part III: Quote Identification (30 points)

- When Grandfather takes to his bed, having lost his will to live, Doc Smith doesn't hold out much hope for his survival. Although Willy is only ten years old, he vows to revive Grandfather's will to live. Although it seems highly unlikely, Willy does indeed save the day. This shows his determination and courage.
- Searchlight the dog walks over and stands in front of the plow, indicating that she wants to pull it. This is the first time that Searchlight saves the day—foreshadowing the dog's heroism at the novel's climax.
- Willy didn't know that his grandfather had been ignoring their tax bill for a decade. The tax man is drawn as a caricature, but despite this overplaying, the government does have the power to evict people for non-payment of taxes.
- Stone Fox, little Willy's chief competitor, has the same motive for winning the race as Willy does, but perhaps his is more noble and deserving because he is trying to save his entire tribe, not just himself and one other person. Stone Fox's motives for winning make his action at the end of the novel more heroic and selfless.
- In an act of selfless heroism, Stone Fox allows Willy to carry his beloved dog Searchlight over the finish line and win the race. Stone Fox sees in Willy the same selfless heroism and determination that motivate him. He pays homage to the boy's strength of character.

### PART IV: ESSAY (40 POINTS)

Answers will vary.

### COMPREHENSION TEST B

#### Part I: Sentence Completion (20 points)

- |                     |                               |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Wyoming          | 6. five                       |
| 2. ten              | 7. He may lose his farm.      |
| 3. given up on life | 8. \$500                      |
| 4. hand signals     | 9. buy back his people's land |
| 5. Searchlight      | 10. Searchlight               |

#### Part II: Matching (30 points)

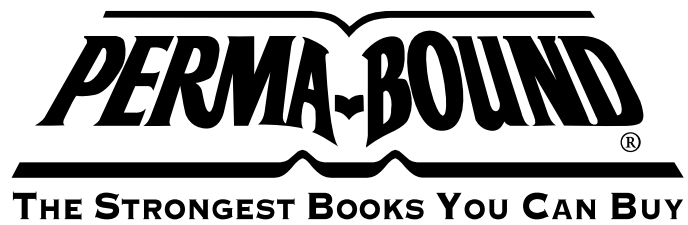
- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. J | 6. B  |
| 2. C | 7. G  |
| 3. F | 8. I  |
| 4. A | 9. H  |
| 5. D | 10. E |

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

- Willy and his grandfather grow potatoes on their small farm. The potatoes are their only source of income. Unfortunately, they do not make enough money to support themselves and pay their taxes as well.
- Stone Fox is a Native American. In this novel, Native Americans are portrayed as heroic, stoic, and mistreated. Stone Fox allows Willy to win the race because he admires the child's courage and determination. Stone Fox and his people have been badly mistreated by the whites, however, which is why Stone Fox refuses to speak to white people. He devotes his life to buying back his people's lands and resettling them on the land.
- The dog races are possible because the ground is covered in snow. The snow is beautiful, but also makes life difficult in the remote Wyoming town.
- Willy is devoted to Searchlight, his sled dog. Stone Fox admires his Samoyeds as well, taking fine care of them. In a larger sense, however, the dogs are invaluable partners to the humans. Willy could not have plowed the fields or entered the race (much less have won it) without Searchlight.
- Willy and his grandfather are poor. They do not have sufficient money to pay their taxes; as a result, they face the very real danger of losing their home and farm. Lack of money sends Grandfather into a depression and motivates Willy to run the race.

### Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Answers will vary.



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