

## Literature Circle Guide to *Beauty* by Bill Wallace

### **Book Summary**

When Luke and his mother move to Oklahoma, Luke must adjust to a strange place and get to know his grumpy grandfather. With help from an old horse named Beauty, he learns to love his new life—until a tragic accident forces him to make a terrible decision. In time, Luke is able to make peace with the past and find happiness in the present.

### **Author Information**

Bill Wallace worked for seven years as a teacher and ten years as a principal before becoming a full-time author. He has written more than a dozen books for children, including the best-selling *A Dog Called Kitty*, published in 1980. His wife, Carol Wallace, also writes books for children. The Wallaces live on a farm west of Chickasha, Oklahoma.

### **Suggested Answers to Literature Circle Questions**

1. How does Luke's mother greet Mike Garrison when they first meet? What is Mike's response? **Luke's mother greets Mike Garrison by punching him in the stomach when he offers her his hand to shake. Mike's response is to grin, put his hand out again, and tip his hat. Luke's mother then punches Mike a second time.**
2. Describe Grampa's method for killing rats in the barn. Why does he do it this way? **Grampa kills rats by shooting them with his shotgun. He does not use poison because he believes his wife's cat died after eating a mouse that had consumed rat poison.**
3. What happens to Beauty when Luke and Joshua play cowboys with Grampa's cattle? How does Grampa react? **Beauty sprains her knee while Luke and Joshua play cowboys. Grampa reacts by telling Luke it isn't his fault. "Boy gets on a horse, he's got to ride," he says (p. 105).**
4. Luke's mother knew moving in with Grampa wouldn't be easy, but she told Luke she didn't know what else to do. Summarize the circumstances that forced Luke and his mom to move to Oklahoma. **When Luke's father moved out, his mother found work at an AT&T plant. After about a year and a half, she was laid off. When she couldn't find another job, she couldn't pay the bills and had to sell her car. She used the last of her money to buy bus tickets to Oklahoma.**
5. Luke finds out quickly that Lady is not at all like Beauty. In your own words, describe how the two horses differ. **Lady is nervous, quick, and energetic while Beauty is calm, slow, and tired. Lady is copper-colored and muscular while Beauty is white and thin.**

6. Promises play an important role in this book. Explain why Luke is surprised when Mike keeps his promise to give him a riding lesson “anytime.” Use what you know about Luke’s past to support your answer. **Luke is surprised that Mike keeps his promise because Luke’s father has a habit of not keeping his promises. He didn’t keep his promises to take Luke to an amusement park or to the Morning Trail.**
7. The characters in the book—human and animal—span three generations. How does the expression “history repeats itself” apply to the oldest and youngest generations in this story? **When Grampa was a boy, he had a horse named Ribbon. Grampa “did a lot of growing up on that old horse’s back” (p. 55) and treated Ribbon like a friend. The relationship between Grampa and Ribbon is similar to the relationship between Luke and Beauty. Grampa was forced to shoot Ribbon when he got caught in the cattle guard, just as Luke is forced to shoot Beauty.**
8. On p. 123, Grampa tells Luke’s mother that “if you’re too scared to trust or to love, you might as well quit living altogether. You can’t go through this world without trusting or loving. That ain’t living.” How could Luke also benefit from this advice? **When Beauty dies, Luke feels empty inside and doesn’t want to be on the football team or ride Lady. Luke must allow himself to love again, which he does by the end of the book when he connects with Dandy.**
9. When Luke first meets his grandfather, he describes him as “mean and cruel and heartless” (p. 36). As they get to know each other, Luke begins to see Grampa’s softer side. List at least three situations in which Luke discovers what’s behind Grampa’s gruff exterior. **Luke sees his Grampa’s softer side when he finds out about what happened to Ribbon. Later, Grampa shows him how to put drops in his ears so he can continue using the swimming hole without getting caught by his mother. When Beauty hurts her knee, Grampa surprises Luke by not getting angry that Luke and Joshua disobeyed him.**
10. At the beginning of the novel, the way Luke remembers his experiences with his father on the Morning Trail is better than they actually were. Even after he learns to ride Beauty, Luke says he thinks he likes “Colorado riding” better than “Oklahoma-type riding” (p. 65). How has Luke’s view of the Morning Trail changed by the story’s end? **At the beginning of the book, Luke’s memories of spending time with his father on the Morning Trail are his happiest. After his summer in Oklahoma, Luke acknowledges his father’s shortcomings and has trusting, positive relationships with Grampa and Mike. By the end of the story, Luke says riding on an October afternoon in Oklahoma is “much, much more” than the Morning Trail (p. 177).**
11. Imagine that Luke has decided to write his father a letter to confront him about his broken promises and to tell him about his new life in Oklahoma. What do you

think he would say? Compose the letter, incorporating Luke's feelings about his parents' divorce and details about how Luke has been spending his time.

**Answers will vary, but look for expressions of anger about how Luke's father hasn't spent time with him. Students may choose to include details about Grampa's accident, Luke's sadness over losing his horse, and his happiness about Dandy. Overall, the letter should emphasize Luke's adaptation to his new life in Oklahoma.**

12. When Luke and Joshua go out riding together, Joshua persuades Luke to disobey his grandfather's orders and run the cows. What is your opinion of Joshua? If you were Luke, would you have been so easily convinced? If not, how would you have handled the situation differently? **Answers will vary. Some students may see Joshua as a negative influence while others may view him as harmless and fun-loving. Some may believe Luke should have resisted the peer pressure to run the cows while others may acknowledge that they would have been susceptible to Joshua's suggestion.**
13. Though Luke's relationship with his father is troubled, Luke is able to develop positive relationships with Grampa and Mike. In your view, what makes an adult a good role model? Evaluate Luke's father, Grampa, and Mike based on your criteria. **Answers will vary, but look for responses that emphasize spending time with children and keeping promises. Students will likely say Luke's father is not a good role model because he has deserted Luke and makes promises he does not keep. They will likely say Grampa and Mike are good role models because they spend time with Luke, teaching him how to shoot a shotgun and ride horses. In addition, Mike shows that he is a good role model when he keeps his promise to Luke to give him a riding lesson "anytime."**
14. Luke is miserable when he arrives in Oklahoma, but by the end of the book, he has become comfortable in his new surroundings. Which character do you think did the most to help Luke adjust to Oklahoma—Grampa, Mike, Joshua, Beauty, or Dandy? Use details from the text to support your answer. **Answers will vary, but students should support their choice with details from the text. Grampa helps Luke adjust by buying him Beauty, by showing him how to shoot a gun, and by confiding in him about Ribbon's death. Mike gives Luke riding lessons and a new horse, Dandy, at the end of the book. Joshua is Luke's first friend who is his own age and introduces him to other kids. Luke opens up to Beauty in a way he couldn't open up to a person, and Dandy brings Luke out of his depression at the end of the book.**

*Note: These questions are keyed to Bloom's Taxonomy as follows: Knowledge: 1–3; Comprehension: 4–6; Application: 7–8; Analysis: 9–10; Synthesis: 11; Evaluation: 12–14.*

## Activities

1. The novel includes many terms used by people who own and ride horses. Create an illustrated glossary of horse-related terms. Include definitions for the words *rodeo, colt, filly, corral, saddle, mare, trot, gallop, stirrup, bridle, and halter*.
2. Horses play central roles in many legends, films, and works of literature, from *Black Beauty* to *The Horse Whisperer*. Choose a myth, book, or movie about another fictional horse to read or watch. Then write a report that compares and contrasts that horse with Beauty.
3. Humans have had close relationships with horses for thousands of years. Use the Internet or other resources at a local library to research the history of horses. Prepare a presentation for your class about what you have learned.
4. Mike Garrison's riding class helps Luke meet new people and become more comfortable handling horses. Create an advertisement for the riding class that might persuade a nervous person to give the lessons a try.

## Other Books by This Author

*A Dog Called Kitty; Trapped in Death Cave; Ferret in the Bedroom, Lizards in the Fridge; Red Dog; Snot Stew; The Christmas Spurs; Totally Disgusting!; The Biggest Klutz in Fifth Grade; Coyote Autumn; Goosed; Skinny-Dipping at Monster Lake; No Dogs Allowed!; Pick of the Litter; The Dog Who Thought He Was Santa*

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