



Blue Moon

Marilyn Halvorson

Reading level: 3.4

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AR Quiz # 78312

Book Summary

When Bobbie Jo buys her first horse, she has no idea what she is getting. The blue roan mare looks rough and seems to be mean, but once Bobbie Jo begins to train the mare to barrel race, she realizes the mare has previously been trained. Every day after working with her father and Cole, the farm hand, Bobbie Jo runs Blue Moon through the barrels, and daily they improve their time. Finally, Bobbie Jo can enter her into a rodeo and show the world what she is made of. They win first place in the barrel-racing event, but on the way home, Cole shows Bobbie Jo a poster of a missing horse that fits the description of Blue Moon. Devastated, she calls the owner to come pick up the horse, but instead, two wise horsemen strike an unexpected bargain.

Prereading Idea

The setting of this story is a working dairy ranch and farm. Ask students to research the type of cattle on a dairy farm and the different chores that must be done during the summer. Have students share the information they find, writing the pertinent facts on a poster board entitled "Instructions and Advice for Working on a Dairy Farm" to display in the room. Encourage creativity and humor.

Connecting to the World—Writing and Research Ideas

- Bobbie Jo is concerned that the bony blue roan mare is going to be bought for the meat packers. Global debate exists over the use of horse meat for human consumption. Ask students to research the use of horse meat throughout the world and determine with which side of the debate they agree. Divide the class into two sections, one for human consumption, one against, and allow them to debate the issue. The following websites will be helpful.

www.csmonitor.com/2003/0428/p03s01-usgn.html

www.igha.org/USDA.html

- After the debate, have students use their research to write an editorial to a newspaper about the use of horse meat for human consumption. Ask students to send their editorial to the appropriate sources.
- Barrel racing is a rodeo event that draws a lot of competitors and fans who enjoy the sport. Ask students in small groups to research the event and draw a diagram of the barrel-racing course. Also, have students research cutting horses to learn why Blue Moon was so adept at barrel racing without much training. Have students search the Internet for photos and media clips to prepare a media slide presentation on working horses, barrel-racing horses or cutting horses.

Connecting to the Text—Elements of the Novel

Conflict

Every story must have conflict, and most conflict can fall into one of the following categories: man against man, man against nature, or man against self. *Blue Moon* has all three types of conflict. As a class, ask students to list events and situations from the book that represent these three types of conflict. Then ask students to choose one specific conflict from the book and prepare a book jacket with a drawing of the conflict and a short paragraph describing the conflict.

Characterization

Even though Blue Moon is a horse, she is also a major character in the story. Ask students to justify her importance based on her role in the life of B.J. and Cole. As a class, discuss ways the author reveals the mare's character. Have students write a letter of thanks to Mr. Conway from B.J. thanking him for the opportunity to keep Blue Moon. In the letter have B.J. discuss the specific character traits of Blue Moon and her experiences with the mare. The letter should detail the mare's character as revealed by the author.

Connecting to the Students—Discussion Questions

1. Why is B.J. so irritated by Cole? What happens that eventually changes her mind about him?
2. The relationship between B.J. and her father appears to be one of mutual respect. What could explain the lack of conflict between them?
3. At sixteen years old, neither B.J. nor Cole has many friends. What could the reasons for this be?
4. When B.J. reads the poster describing the lost blue roan, she has several options to consider. Does she make the right choice? What are her other options?
5. How could you relate the idiom “Honesty is the best policy” to the results of B.J.’s decision to call the owner?
6. How do B.J. and Cole change through the course of the story? What lessons do they learn and apply to their lives?

Writer’s Craft

Vocabulary Enrichment

After looking up the words in the dictionary, use the following words in a complete sentence using context clues so that the reader will be able to determine the meaning of the word.

Gloomily
Quivering
Disposition

Taunting
Smoldering

Ask students to read their sentences orally and then write some of the best sentences on sentence strips to post around the room.

Author Biography

Marilyn Halvorson is a schoolteacher who also runs a ranch near Sundre, Alberta. Her interest in ranching and storytelling developed while she tagged along after her father as he worked their ranch, and she ran her own toy ranch under the piano stool. Today, Marilyn is not only a writer, but she is also a fine horsewoman, raising several horses and more than fifty Simmental/Hereford cows. When she is not on the ranch, Marilyn tours schools and talks to students about her books. When she was asked, “When you were a little girl, what did you want to be when you grow up?” her answer was, “A cowgirl!”