

Teacher Guide Format: Heart of a Shepherd by Rosanne Parry

- Discussion Questions
- When Brother's dad leaves for Iraq, Brother makes a promise he can't keep. What are some good reasons not to keep a promise? What kind of promises should never be broken?
- At the beginning of the story Brother says, "I never get to be the hero." Does he do things later that seem heroic to you? Do you think Brother would think of himself as a hero? Who else in the story seems heroic to you?
- Toward the end of the story grandpa sets a backfire to protect the sheep from a wildfire. How does a backfire work? What three things does a fire need in order to burn? Which of those three things does a backfire take away?
- When the Alderman's celebrate Christmas, what traditions do they keep the same from year to year? How is the holiday different with the dad in Iraq? Which of your family's holiday traditions do you want to keep forever? Which ones do you think will change over time?
- In the first chapter, Brother does not play by the traditional rules of chess. What does the way they play the game together tell you about Brother's character? What does it tell you about his relationship with his grandpa? Does your family have a favorite game? Do you ever change the rules?
- Why do you think Brother's dad and older brothers chose to become soldiers? What leads Brother to choose a different job? Why did your parents choose the work they have? How will you know what kind of job to choose for yourself?

- Cross-Curriculum Tie ins

Social Studies-Current Events-the war in Iraq

Science-Wild Fire ecology-the function of backfires

Music- Irish American and Basque American folk music and dance

English-journal keeping-letter writing

- Recipe

Brother's Killer Hot Chocolate

To make hot cocoa for one you need a mug, a jelly jar and a microwave. Put 3tbsps cocoa, 3tbsps sugar and ¼ tsp cinnamon in the jar and add 1/3 of a cup of milk. Shake this up in the jar until the lumps of cocoa are gone. Pour the mixture in the mug and add 2/3 of a cup of milk. Heat on high for 1 minute, stir and enjoy.

To make hot cocoa for five brothers you need mugs and a pot that holds 6 cups of milk. Put 1 cup of milk in the jar and shake it up with ½ cup of cocoa, ½ cup of sugar and 1 tsp of cinnamon, plus 1tsp of vanilla. Pour this mixture into the pot with 5 cups of milk on the stove. Turn the heat to medium and stir until the cocoa is warm. Usually about five minutes.

For very fancy cocoa use almond extract instead of vanilla. Try melting some chocolate chips in the cocoa for an extra rich flavor.

- Project or Craft Ideas –

Design your own brand

There is information about branding at the library and on the web. One site you might look at is www.cowboyshowcase.com or *The Cowboy's Own Brand Book* by Duncan Emrich. This can be as simple as having students choose one or two symbols or letters to combine that will represent something about themselves, their home or family. Usually a few examples of real brands is all they need to get started. Brands do best when they are simple so try to keep designs to as few lines as possible.

Cattle and horses are branded to protect them from theft and to ensure that lost animals will be returned to their owners. Students who take an interest in livestock branding may enjoy looking up their state brand registry or researching branding methods and cattle rustling.

Once the brands are drawn full sized, try posting them all on the board. Have students stand at least 15 feet away and see if they can tell the brands apart. They might also make a game of seeing if they can guess which student created each brand.

- Related reads-

Bull Rider by Suzanne Morgan Williams, The Phantom Stallion Series by Terri Farley, Hank the Cowdog by John R Erickson and Gerald L Holms (for younger readers), and Sunrise Over Fallujah by Walter Dean Myers (for mature readers).

- State standards

From the Oregon State Standards for English

8.CCG (K-12): *Listen to text and read text to make connections and respond to a wide variety of literature of varying complexity.*

9. CCG (K-12): *Demonstrate general understanding of grade-level literary text (similar to 1996 “Demonstrate literal comprehension”).*

10. CCG (K-12): *Develop an interpretation of grade-level literary text (similar to 1996 “Analyze the author’s ideas...and make supported interpretations of the selection”).*

11. CCG (K-12): *Examine content and structure of grade-level literary text (similar to 1996 “Evaluate how the form of a literary work and the use of literary devices contribute to the work’s message and impact”).*

From the California State Standards for History and Social Studies

11.3 Students analyze the role religion played in the founding of America, its lasting moral, social, and political impacts, and issues regarding religious liberty.

- Author Bio-

All it took was one day of helping out on her best friend’s ranch in eastern Oregon to convince Rosanne Parry that being a cowboy was not her true calling—and stock horses everywhere are grateful. The lessons in calf roping didn’t stick but the stark beauty of eastern Oregon and the kindness and generosity of the ranching community made a lasting impression. Rosanne found a similar rapport among the military families she knew when her husband, an army officer, was deployed to the First Gulf War. Writing HEART OF A SHEPHERD allowed her to combine her experiences with both communities. Rosanne now lives in an old farmhouse in Portland, Oregon with bunnies and chickens and her husband and four kids. She wrote this story in her tree house.