

# Teachers' file

CONTRIBUTED BY USHA MUKUNDA

**T**his is a new feature we are introducing from this issue of the Journal. It is intended to provide a space for teachers to share a clear, concise presentation of a wide variety of interesting teaching ideas and resources. The kind of items worth sharing with fellow teachers could include:

- Innovative lesson plans in any subject area
- The steps involved in carrying out any unusual project, along with snippets from children's work
- Any stimulating set of problems, posers or exercises that really make students think
- A write-up on any highly enriching educational source material—books, video films, resource packs etc.

Contributions would be selected based on originality and clarity of presentation. They should preferably be such that they would fit into a single page of the Journal, or at most a two-page spread (where samples of students' work is included).

This issue presents:

## Three runaway hits !!! (for your library)

Every library has two kinds of books. Those that everyone wants to read—and those that no one wants to read! This is what I heard from a young girl when I asked her what kinds of books she thought a library had. I would add that there are also books which find only a few selective readers, sometimes even just one. Then there are books which have a big reputation but never quite take off. But nothing had prepared me for the response from our students to three books in our library. These volumes entered the library quietly, with hardly any fanfare, and were expected to find only a few readers. A good enough reason to have them, I felt. But what actually happened was that they became runaway hits and continued to be strong runners year after year with each new group of readers. So, with no further ado, here they are.





## Where the Red Fern grows

WILSON RAWLS

Bantam Books, N.Y. 1961

ISBN 0-553-20474-2

The author was born and lived in the Cherokee region in the U.S.A. He spent his childhood in the hills and valleys around his home with a dog for company. His first stories were told to his dog and his first writing was done with his fingers on dusty roads and sandy stretches. With gentle affection, Rawls takes us along on his memory trip. One of the many students who have read this book more than once is Ashish, age 14.



I liked this book a lot because of Billy's determination. I also liked reading about the dogs' love for Billy and his for them. It was wonderful to see how they understood each other and became the best team in all of Cherokee country. But then something happened which changed Billy's whole life. You can read the book to see what happened and find out where the red fern grows. I think everyone will like this book."

"This book is about a ten year old boy named Billy. He lived with his sister, mother and father on Cherokee land in Oklahoma... Billy caught a disease common to most children—to have a dog. But Billy's disease was worse. He wanted only one kind of dog—a coon hound, and he wanted two of them! His father and mother could not afford to buy them because these dogs were very expensive. Then one day, in the advertisement section, he read that someone was selling redbone coon hound pups for \$25 each. He was full of happiness. He remembered that the Bible said that God helps those who help themselves. So he began to work hard to earn money in any way he could, until at last he had enough to buy the pups.

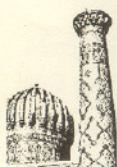




## Sunlight on a Broken Column

ATTIA HOSAIN

PENGUIN INDIA, 1963



Attia Hosain was born in 1913 and was educated in Lucknow at Christian institutions as well as at home in the traditional Muslim practices. She was the first woman from her highly traditional family to graduate. She went on to become a journalist and broadcaster and then began to write short stories. When we acquired this book, I never imagined it would have such an impact on our young readers. Here, Lakshmi, age 16, shares her very personal response to the book.

Teachers' File

"A young orphan, Laila, is brought up by a very orthodox Muslim family. As she is growing up, the elders keep telling her, 'You must never forget the traditions of your family—never forget the family you were born into.' This novel tells how she overcomes all the barriers in her life to do what she wants and becomes a strong and confident young woman... When Laila is young she feels confused and helpless but as she grows older she meets difficult situations with a clearer perspective... she is a character I felt very close to. I think that is the reason for my intense personal response to this book. The writing is very simple and yet it has great depth. This book is partly autobiographical. The author seems to have drawn courage and strength from her mother which helped her face the orthodoxy and rigidity of the Muslim community."

"This story is about a little boy...after losing his parents at a young age, he was taken to the countryside by his grandparents. There they owned a farm which was close to the woods and this is where he was educated. He learnt to live a happy life, to relate to nature and take only the minimum from it. One day when he and his grandfather were walking down a road, a car stopped by them to ask for directions. When his grandfather did not understand what they wanted, they became angry and behaved very rudely. Little Tree realised then how human beings treated poor people. On another occasion, grandfather took Little Tree with him when he went hunting for fowl. They had a good catch and got many birds. Then Grandfather told the boy that they should take only what they needed so they took only two birds and set the rest free. In this way, Little Tree learnt a lot from his grandfather. This is one of my favourite books...the language is simple and one gets absorbed in the story very fast...the story sounds very real. I have always wanted to live in a forest and learn from it. I would ask all the people who don't like sitting in front of a book, to read this one."

## The Education of Little Tree

FORREST CARTER

UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO PRESS, 1986  
ISBN 0-8263-0879-1

Just as some books go into a second print, (which this one has) in our library this book has already run into the second book borrowing card! This is the author's own story of his childhood spent with his American Indian grandparents. Vinod, age 15, shares his strong bond with the book.

