



Teacher's Guide for Bull Rider

by Suzanne Morgan Williams

Discussion Questions:

- At the beginning of *Bull Rider*, Cam wants to be a skateboarder. His brother is a bull rider. Why do you think Cam is not interested in bull riding? What changes his mind? Would you rather be a bull rider or a skateboarder if you were Cam?
- Why doesn't Mom want Cam to bull ride? How would you feel if you were in her position? How does Ben's injury affect her decision? Should it?
- Why do you think Grandpa Roy and Grandma Jean support Cam's decision to ride Ugly at the end of the book? They know he is underage. Is that ok? Should they have stopped him?
- How do you think Cam feels about war at the beginning of the book? At the end? How does Ben feel about it? Are their views different? Why or why not? Do you think Ben's sacrifice was worth it? Why or why not?
- What do you know about injured and disabled veterans? Do you hear about it on TV? On the radio? What do you think the United States does or does not owe to the families of men and women who were injured in war? Why would veterans not get the medical and community support that might help them?

Activities and Projects:

- *Bull Rider* takes place on the O'Mara Ranch and they brand calves with the circle M brand. In Nevada, all brands are registered with the state. Have each student create a brand that represents him or her and create a class registry.
- Cam goes to the Grange to talk to the "old geezers" and hear their stories. Ask students to meet with a senior citizen to learn an interesting story. It may help to brainstorm with the students first about what kinds of stories they may learn and what kinds of questions they could ask to elicit them. Students can write up the stories or record them for a class CD or podcast.
- Veterans returning from Afghanistan and Iraq will have unique needs. Have students work in groups to research those needs and to discuss and present how they would advise meeting them. They can interview veterans' advocates, returned military, read articles etc. What are their recommendations for providing for, or not providing for, veterans.

Grandma Jean's Quesadillas and Tomatillo Salsa

Equipment: Large cast iron frying pan or electric skillet; knife, cutting board, grater, large spoon, spatula, blender.

Ingredients:

Quesadillas:

two large corn or flour tortillas per quesadilla.

Cheese.

A little oil.

Tomatillo Salsa (green salsa, salsa verde):

six to eight tomatillos,

½ medium onion,

three to four garlic cloves, peeled

1/3 cup chopped fresh cilantro,

one or two fresh jalapeno peppers (seeded for a milder salsa)

juice of ½ lime

For Quesadillas:

Put a little oil in the bottom of the frying pan or electric skillet. Heat on medium high.

When oil is hot, place two tortillas in the pan to warm.

After about one minute, flip one tortilla and top its heated side with thinly sliced or grated cheese (about a ¼ to a 1/3 cup depending on size of tortillas).

Place the second tortilla, warm side **DOWN** on top of the cheese.

Wait about another minute and flip the quesadilla. Cook until cheese is melted.

For Tomatillo Salsa:

Remove the papery skins from the tomatillos and rinse well.

Place tomatillos, garlic, and pepper in a **HOT** frying pan and stir until outsides are toasted. Remove from heat.

Chop garlic, tomatillos and onions into medium small chunks.

Open peppers and remove seeds and stem. Chop into chunks. Be sure to wash your hands thoroughly after handling peppers.

Place tomatillos, garlic, peppers, cilantro, onions and lime juice in the blender. Pulse until all ingredients are chopped. Do not blend into a liquid. Salsa should have a chunky texture – like pickle relish or a little smaller.

Serve with quesadillas. Salsa should be stored in the refrigerator.

Short Bio for Suzanne Morgan Williams

Suzanne Morgan Williams is the author of the middle grade novel *Bull Rider* (Margaret K. McElderry, 2009) and the nonfiction book *China's Daughter's* (Pacific View Press 2010) as well as ten nonfiction books for children. These include the award winning *Pinatas and Smiling Skeletons* (Harris and Williams, Pacific View Press), *The Inuit* (Franklin Watts), and *Made in China* (Pacific View Press.) Her work regularly takes her into the classrooms, museums, and communities from her home in Nevada across the US and Canada, from Mexico to the Arctic. She is past regional adviser for Nevada SCBWI.

Website Links:

- Disabled American Veterans: <http://www.dav.org/>
- Fischer House Helping Military Families: <http://www.fisherhouse.org/>
- Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America: <http://www.optruth.org/>
- National High School Rodeo Association: <http://www.nhsra.com/>
- Professional Bull Riders: <http://www.pbrnow.com/>
- Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association: <http://www.prorodeo.com/>
- State of Nevada Livestock Brand book (17.8 MG download!): <http://agri.nv.gov/OFFICIAL%20LIVESTOCK%20BRAND%20BOOK/COMBINED.pdf>
- Nevada tourism board: <http://travelnevada.com/>
- Tony Hawk Foundation - builds skateboard parks across North America: <http://www.tonyhawkfoundation.org/>

Cross Curriculum Tie-ins:

- Art design cattle brands, (see below), try creating skate board style art that reflects Cam's interest, create a mural of Salt Lick, sculpt bucking bulls from clay or paper mache.
- Music – students create a play list of songs Grandma Jean, Lalli, Cam, and Ben would each like.
- Science/ethics/economics – Amy Jones runs an AI – artificial insemination business for cattle. How does this help ranchers? How has technology allowed this to be a viable business? How does this differ from cloning and what research allowed that? How will genetic manipulation affect AI businesses? What ethical questions does this pose when the same technologies are used for humans?

- History/Research – how were soldiers' wounds treated in the Civil War? World War I? World War II? Vietnam War? What types of injuries and diseases killed the most soldiers in each of those wars? What medical advances came from each war? When were veterans' benefits started? What benefits were provided and when? What do we owe today's veterans? What services do wounded veterans receive now? Is this enough? Who will pay for the benefits? What bills are before Congress about veterans' benefits and support?

Some Nevada State Standards that apply to *Bull Rider* by Suzanne Morgan Williams

History 5th grade - **1.5.1**: Identify current events from multiple sources.

Civics – 5th grade: **4.5.4**: Identify sources of information people use to form an opinion.

History 8th Grade –**1.8.1**: Describe how a current event is presented by multiple sources.

Civics 8th grade **4.8.4**: Identify the influence of the media in forming public opinion.

Geography 8th grade **2.8.2**: Relate how places and regions are important to the expression of cultural identity.
6.8.2: Select a current event and relate it to the physical and human characteristics of place.

English Language Arts – this standard will cover all the grades as the teacher sees fit to evaluate the book.
Content Standard 3.0 Students read literary text to comprehend, interpret, and evaluate authors, cultures, and times.

Visual Arts – specific for the *Draw Your Own Brand* project – Fifth grade. **1.5.3**: Create artworks using various media, techniques, and processes to communicate ideas.

Science – specific to science ethics questions about artificial insemination of cattle.

5th Grade **n.5B2**: Students know technologies impact society, both positively and negatively. E/S

Grades 9-12 **n12B3**: Students know the influence of ethics on scientific enterprise. E/S

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