

**Ned Hall** - a miner who came from Newfoundland and was a friend to Willie.

**Charley** - a farmer who looked out for Willie and his family.

**Simon** - a boy who worked in the mines and was mean to Willie.

**Setting:** **Place:** Glace Bay, Nova Scotia.

**Time:** Early 1900's.

### **Story Synopsis:**

William MacLean (Wee Willie) lived in the coal mining town of Green Bay, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. His father and brother worked in the coal mines. His mother was dead and his older sister, Nellie, did all the chores around the house. His younger sisters, Maggie and Sara, were still in school. His grandmother also lived with them in a house, which they rented from the coal mining company.

Willie loved horses and hated the thought of them working in the mines. He vowed that he would never work there, himself. He wanted to work with horses. He spent a lot of his time hanging around the stables where the horses that were captures on Sable Island were kept and trained for work underground. He was often late for supper because he stayed so late at the yards.

He kept going to the yard in spite of his father's warning to stay away from there. He made friends with a horse, named Gem. She used to belong to the lighthouse keeper and was very gentle. After several days he decided to let Gem loose. When he did she ran away and he had to chase her because he was worried about what might happen to her. He didn't find her, and had to spend the night in a barn.

The next morning the farmer, whose name was Charley, found him there. He gave him something to eat and hired Willie to work for him for the day. While he was working, he saw Gem watching him through the trees. He was delighted to see her.

Charley told Willie that he had to return the horse. He reluctantly agreed and set off on his way. As he got close to the yard where the horses were kept,

## **SUGGESTIONS FOR USING THE UNIT**

### **A . Organization**

1. With the assistance of the school resource teacher, select all the available material related to coal mining, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, and other works by Joyce Barkhouse.
2. Display a map of Nova Scotia in the classroom.
3. Review the activities carefully, then select those which meet the needs and interests of your students. Students are not expected to complete every activity in this unit. The work can be modified or extended by selecting the activities for each student.
4. Copy the activity cards, then paste them on construction paper or cardboard. These should then be laminated. It is helpful to use a different colored card for each category of activity. These cards can then be used in activity centers.
5. Make copies of the tracking sheets and the comprehension question sheets.
6. Make a copy of the portfolio cover, the reading journal sheet and ten copies of the chapter summary sheet for each student.
7. All work related to this unit should be kept together in a folder or binder.

### **B. Introducing the Unit**

1. Explain the format of the unit, tracking sheets and activity cards.
2. Display pictures of coal miners and coal mining towns.
3. Let the students listen to coal mining songs. Rita MacNeil sings “The Working Man” and Men of the Deeps are singing coal miners.
4. A specified number of activities may be assigned. These can be indicated on the tracking sheets.

### **C. Using the Novel Study**

1. The novel can be read together in class. This method lets the teacher know that everyone has read the book and is ready to begin the assignments. It also gives the teacher the opportunity to assess individual oral reading skills and discuss vocabulary.
2. If the novel is being used in group work, the group can read the novel aloud. Older students could read in pairs. This can be done by pairing students of similar reading skills or by having a good reader read with

## Novel Study – Self Evaluation

Name - \_\_\_\_\_

The part of the novel study that I liked best was \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

The part of the novel study I liked least was \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

The activities I think I did best were \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

Next time I will try to \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

Other comments: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

---

Comments of Parents / Guardians: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

Teacher's Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

## Comprehension Questions

### **Chapter 1**

1. Why was the wild horse screaming?
2. Where were the horses captured?
3. Why were they brought to Nova Scotia?
4. Why was Willie crying?
5. Why did so many Cape Breton miners have nicknames?
6. Where could Willie usually be found?
7. Why were horses so important at the turn of the century?
8. What usually happened to Willie when he was late for supper?
9. Where did Willie's father work?
10. Why was his street called Sunny Row?
11. Why were there wooden washtubs on the steps?
12. What was Willie's favorite food? What was it made of?
13. What puzzled Willie about everyone sitting at the table?
14. Why was Willie late for supper?
15. Why did he think it was a sad sight?
16. Why were wild horses being used in the mines?
17. Why did Willie's father want him to grow up big and strong?
18. What happened when Willie told his father he didn't want to be a miner?
19. Why couldn't Willie sleep well that night?
20. What did he dream about?

### **Chapter 2**

1. Why did Willie go to an old abandoned farm just outside the town every evening?
2. What did he bring to the horses?
3. Why didn't the men pay much attention to him?
4. How did he make friends with a horse?
5. Why was it so easy for him to do this?
6. What happened when Willie landed on Gem's back when the fence broke?
7. Why didn't he try to get home before his father?
8. Why did his mom say he could be whatever he wanted?
9. Where was his mother?
10. Why did Willie decide to sleep in the barn all night?