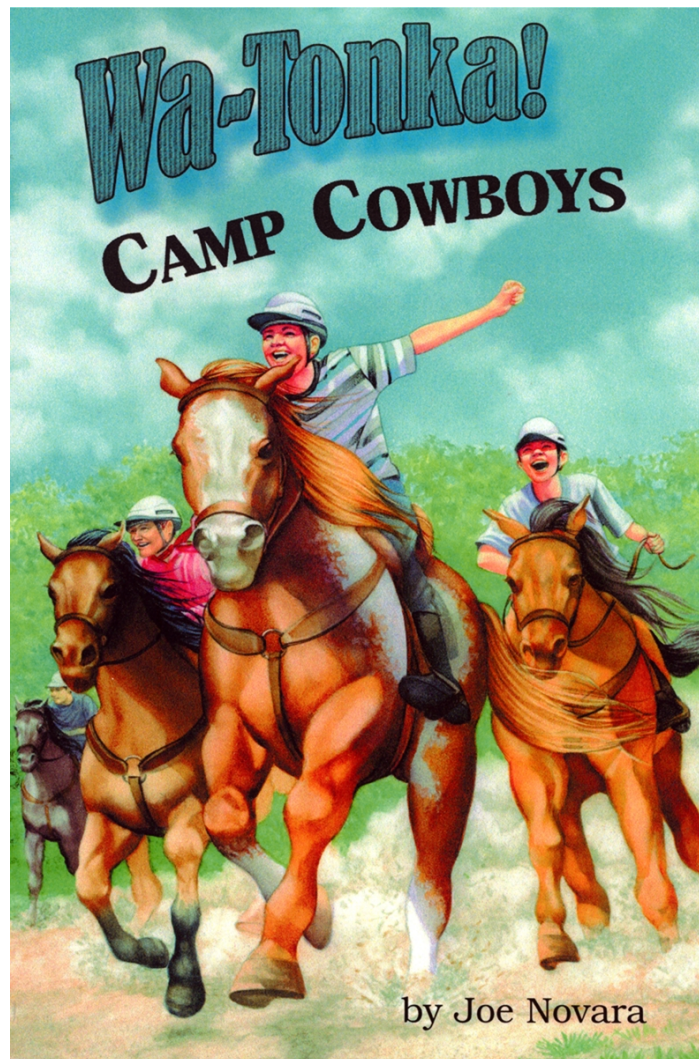


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Wa-Tonka!...Camp Cowboys

Study Guide



Guide created by
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Teacher Notes:

This chapter, and the book in general, deals with some basic questions suitable for class discussion and essay assignments:

Birth order

Sibling responsibility for family members, especially for a first-born child

The tension and excitement a child feels around leaving home to experience new environments and self-discovery.

Learning how to fit into a new, already existing group.

Developing new skills and aptitudes.

Coping with loss and guilt as the result of engaging in risky behavior.

TEACHER'S SUMMARY

Chapter 1 Getting There Is Half The Fun

Nick Finazzo lives in a crowded house in Detroit with four younger brothers and sisters. He can't wait to get away; to work as a junior counselor at a horse camp with other guys from his high school. This is his chance leave 'big brother' responsibilities behind, to sleep alone in his own bed and to let older and wiser people be in charge for a change. The ride up north to Gaylord seems interminable but worth it as Nick surveys the log cabins nestled around a high sandy hill. Later he snuggles into his own bed to listen to stories told by the returning counselors. The next morning at breakfast his cabin-mates disturb him with vague warnings that 'tonight's the night'.

Student Worksheet

WaTonka Chapter 1

New vocabulary/spelling words:

Junior Counselor	enthusiastically	predict
righteous	indignant	relented
marooned	reunion	overhauled
random	mound	amber
mess hall	unidentified	banter
scanning	confirmation	

Right there Questions...

1. Why is Nick looking forward to leaving his home? _____
2. Find where Nick is upset with his father. Tell us why Nick is angry. Does he say these feelings out loud? _____
3. Find where Nick feels left out from the other counselors. How does the author tell us this? _____
4. When does Nick first begin to feel comfortable with the other counselors? How do you know this? _____

On My Own Questions...

All the other Junior Counselors are older than Nick. Why does he like that? _____

Describe some time when it felt good to be the youngest in a group. _____

What were Rob and the other JC's trying to do when they told Nick 'tonight's the night'? _____

Where are you in the family birthing order? _____

Do you feel responsible for your brothers and sisters? _____

Is there an older brother or sister who looks after you? _____

How does this make you feel? _____

Mapping and visualizing...

Draw a map of what the camp looked like to Nick.

Draw how Otis held the pole when he pushed the horses into the trailer.

What happened when...

Tell the order of what happened in the chapter...1,2,3,4,5

___ Nick is introduced to all the counselors

___ The van breaks down 2 miles from camp

___ Nick shoves his brother out of bed

___ Rob tells the story about Otis

___ Nick rides on top of the luggage

How did the chapter speak to you...

Nick felt responsible for taking care of his younger brothers and sisters. Do you have some responsibilities in your family?_____

Is it fair for older brothers or sisters to have more responsibility? _____

Give reasons_____

Have you ever had the chance to go away from home and be in a group of people you had never met before? Describe this experience _____

If you have never left home before, would you want to try it?_____

Nick wishes he was like Rob in some ways. Write about someone you wish you were like._____

Name the chapter...

Think of all the things that happened to Nick. How would you name chapter 1?

Chapter 2 Meeting the Horses**Teacher's notes:**

This chapter is about the thrill of discovering a previously unknown part of the world. In Nick's case, it's the world of horses. He discovers differences in color, gender and personality when the horses first come to camp. He also has his first experience of riding and wants to learn all he can in the coming weeks.

Topics to discuss with students:

Horse anatomy

Personality in animals in general

What it feels like to try something new that is familiar to everyone else but you

What it feels like to rise to a challenge and be given responsibility

TEACHER'S SUMMARY**Chapter 2 Meeting The Horses**

During work week, Nick is paired up with Rob, an upperclassman at his high school. Rob describes how the counselors ride the horses every evening to be sure they are mellow before the campers arrive. Nick is full of questions since he has never ridden before. When the horses are delivered, Rob offers a profile of each one. Nick is taken with Prince, a pinto gelding, and vows to learn to ride him well that summer. Nick's first ride on an old mare is exciting. He makes sure he learns all he can in that first week so Mack, the head wrangler, will allow him on trail rides with campers.

Student Worksheet

WaTonka Chapter 2

Vocabulary/Spelling words:

patrol
assignment
assurance
gallop
trotting
posting
pinto
buckskin

mane
mares
geldings
castrated
stallion
single-foot
bay
nickered

crescent
whinny
stampede
anticipation
throat latch
cinch
canter
appraising

Right there Questions...

1. Who was carrying the cedar post across his shoulders? _____
2. How many horses came in the first truck load? _____
3. What were the names of the two pinto horses? _____ and _____
4. How many horses did the camp have? _____
5. What was the name of the horse that Nick tried to bridle? _____
6. What was the name of the first horse Nick rode? _____

On your own questions...

How did you know Nick was excited about his first time riding? _____

Do you think Nick was frightened by the idea of riding - how can you tell? _____

Was Nick afraid to seem stupid by asking questions and trying new things? ____ How do you know? _____

What's the latest new thing you tried? _____

Mapping and visualizing...

Nick galloped by the white stones on the side of the hill. Show what the white stones spelled.

Draw what the stable would look like if you could see it from the top without the roof.

Chapter 3**Teacher's Notes:****Themes:**

- Continuing harassment and intimidation by older boys against younger
- Sizing up other boys
- Meeting new people and learning to get along

Teacher's Summary:**Chapter 3 Meeting The Campers**

Rob continues the 'tonight's the night' initiation threats and Nick realizes he has to put up with it. While waiting for the busload of campers to arrive, Rob and Nick discuss the awkwardness of working for campers who will be their own age. When the busses arrive, Rob provides a running commentary on returning campers: the Vogel brothers, Lenny and Bruce who resent being left at the camp all summer, every summer; Frank O'Donnell a veteran camper and fine rider and Bobby Petzer, described as a general stumble-bum, but excellent horseman. Nick follows Bobby to the stables and tries to introduce himself. Bobby is aloof. Nick's big brother instincts kick in and he realizes that he might be of help to the older camper.

Student Worksheet

WaTonka Chapter 3

Vocabulary/spelling words

realizing
tradition
hype
expressions
predictable
sneer

fire hydrants
escorted
caravan
commentary
stoop-shouldered
Australian bush-hat

forefinger
roused
withers
prominent
saddle sore
embarrassed

Right There Questions...

Who tells Nick, 'tonight's the night'?_____

Where are the junior counselors standing In order to watch the busses come into camp?

What kind of car do Bruce and Lenny Vogel come in?_____

What kind of hat does Bobby Petzer wear?_____

Which horse is Bobby Petzer's favorite?_____

On My Own Questions...

Tell whether you think Bobby Petzer is shy or just rude?_____

Does Nick think of Bobby Petzer as another brother that he needs to watch over?_____

Why do you think that?_____

What might you expect of a boy who would wear a button down shirt to summer camp?

What would it feel like to be the Vogel brothers?_____

Mapping and visualizing...

Draw a picture of Nick and Rob waiting to see the busses arrive

Draw a picture of what Nick saw when he heard Bob Petzer's voice in the stable

Chapters 4-6

Themes:

- Responsibilities and the consequences for not carrying them out
- Facing challenges to your beliefs and hopes
- The dangers of using other's things without permission or guidance

Teacher's Summary:

Chapter 4 Riding Shotgun

Nick gets his chance to go on a trail ride as the rear patrol. He forgets to double check the cinch strap on Bruce Vogel's horse. When the saddle slips and the camper falls, Mack scolds him.

Chapter 5 Are We Having Fun Yet?

That evening an upset Nick goes fishing. A young African American girl, Tanya, talks to him from a dock neighboring the camp beach. The next day Nick goes on his first day off with a mix of older counselors. On the Lake Michigan beach at Charlevoix, Nick falls asleep and sunburns the backs of his legs. That evening, in town for a movie, Rob notices an ad for a horse show at the upcoming county fair. When discussion moves toward entering some of the camp horses, Mack dismisses the idea calling camp horses too slow and untrained. Nick is surprised to hear that.

Chapter 6 Heimlich Manuever On A Snake

While on a trail ride through the woods, Nick meets Tanya leaning on her grandfather's fence. She's impressed with his riding ability. Later, Rob invites Nick to go to the nature cabin to watch him feed a frog to a snake. While in the cabin, Bobby Petzer somehow gets a motorcycle rolling downhill and runs into the cabin. Bobby is hurt. Nick helps him. Bruce Vogel announces that the impact has forced the snake to spit out the partially swallowed frog.

Student Worksheet**WaTonka Chapters 4,5,6****Vocabulary:**

Match the vocabulary with the correct definition.

- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| 1. riding shotgun | a. to speak haltingly |
| 2. canter | b. to make fun of something |
| 3. cinch strap | c. to swallow up |
| 4. cavalry | d. a gentle gallop |
| 5. stammer | e. to ride as a passenger or escort |
| 6. girth | f. the rear part of a boat or ship |
| 7. stern | g. to keep thinking about |
| 8. brood | h. the strap or a band that keeps a saddle in place |
| 9. smirk | i. to twist and turn |
| 10. contradict | j. a strong girth for fastening a saddle on a horse |
| 11. scoff | k. soldiers who fight on horseback |
| 12. engulf | l. to smile in a silly, or self-satisfied way |
| 13. writhe | m. to say that a statement isn't true |

Right There Questions:

1. What happened to Bruce Vogel when he was riding Apache on the trail? What had Nick forgotten do? _____
2. What does Mack think about entering the Wa-Tonka horses in the horse show in Gaylord? How does Nick feel? _____
3. What do Nick and Tanya find they have in common? _____

Prediction:

Think about what you know about Nick so far. What kind of a person is he? Is he someone who enjoys a challenge? What do you think he will do if Camp Wa-Tonka decides to hold a horse show?

Chapters 7,8,9**Themes:**

- Finding models for ourselves
- Thinking creatively in emergency situations
- Initiation/hazing as bullying or group inclusion?
- Persistence in learning a new skill
- Being open to suggestions (coachable)

Teacher's Summary:**Chapter 7 The Mackinac Island Cowboy**

Nick joins the campers for a trip to Mackinac Island where there are no cars, only horses and bicycles. Nick is impressed by a cowboy riding down Main Street. The man's poise and control become a model and goal for his riding. Once the campers are paired up and sent off to shop and explore, the counselors lounge on the huge porch of the Grand Hotel. Nick joins for a while but soon is off exploring on his own and enjoying a vacation that he realizes would not be the same if he were there with his large family. When it is time to return on the ferry, Bobby Petzer is missing. Nick follows a hunch and finds him in a stable.

Chapter 8 Tonight's The Night – Finally

That night, right after he has fallen asleep, Nick is rousted out of cabin and made the center of an initiation rite that includes being covered with lard, syrup and feathers and then made to ride on a wheel barrow filled with manure. He gets some revenge on Rob and finally feels like he belongs.

Chapter 9 Learning To Ride Western

Mack allows Nick to work on his riding skills. He continues to have trouble sitting the trot until Bobby Petzer happens by and gives Nick the final tip that allows him to ride Western comfortably and well.

Student Worksheet**WaTonka Chapters 7,8&9****Vocabulary:**

Connect each vocabulary word to its definition:

- | | |
|----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. trot | a. to proceed on (one's way) |
| 2. lariat | b. the rear part of a saddle that sticks up |
| 3. carriage | c. to move along briskly |
| 4. slouch | d. to reduce to a lower position in one's own eyes or someone else's eyes |
| 5. carriage | e. to transport in a wheeled vehicle |
| 6. trundle | f. manner of bearing the body; posture |
| 7. humiliation | g. stooping of the head and shoulders |
| 8. cantle | h. a long light rope (as of hemp or leather) used with a running noose to catch livestock |
| 9. wend | i. a wheeled vehicle |
-

Use these 5 vocabulary words to form your own sentences:

Lariat

Carriage

Carriage

Slouch

Humiliation

Reading Questions:

1. Why was Nick so much more excited about going on the ferryboat to Mackinac Island than the other counselors?
2. How did Nick show Mack that he was serious about learning to ride Prince? What were the rules that Mack laid down for Nick?
3. What was Nick not doing when riding a fast trot that made him bounce uncomfortably in the saddle? Who gave him the advice?

On Your Own Question:

1. When Nick went to write a postcard to his family from Mackinac Island, he started to write "Wish you were here." He then realized he didn't really feel that way. Have you ever felt like this? When? Where were you? What were you doing?
2. Have you ever been bullied or teased before being accepted in a group? What did it feel like? How did you handle it?

Chapters 10,11,12**Themes:**

- Using imagination to solve a problem
- Facing opposition to your beliefs and vision
- The danger of taking chances/the fun of taking chances
- The burden of being in charge/responsible

Teacher's Summary:**Chapter 10 The Frog That Got Away**

Frank O'Donnell and Bobby Petzer put on a riding exhibition for the campers one evening. Bruce Vogel is reported missing. When the counselors fan out through the woods, Nick asks Bruce's brother for clues. Nick cuts through the darkening woods to Mud lake. Bruce's ankle is caught in a tree limb at the edge of the lake. Nick drags him out and with Bobby Petzer's help, binds the ankle and rides the camper out. Mack praises Nick and Bobby.

Chapter 11 Trotting Up To The Drive-In

As a reward for finding Bruce, Nick asks if he and Bobby and Frank can be allowed to horseback ride into town and get a burger at a drive-in. On the way in, Nick mentions that Mack thinks the camp horses couldn't stand up to serious competition in speed and action events. Both campers are insulted and upset. The boys have fun when the waitress tries to take their orders from horseback.

Chapter 12 Staying Alive At Deadman's Hill

Nick gets to go along on an overnight campout to Jordan Valley. At Deadman's Hill, a lookout over the valley, Frank and Bobby override Nick's protests and head down the steep slope. Nick decides to follow them rather chase after Mack and the other riders. On the valley floor, the riders find themselves hemmed in by thick brush and soggy ground. Bobby rides Cutter bareback to the camp site for tools. The boys get to the campsite down stream just before Mack and the others. For their punishment they have to set up camp.

Student Worksheet**WaTonka Chapters 10,11,12****Vocabulary:**

Connect each vocabulary word to its definition:

enthusiasm	a. a high, steep bank
beckon	b. to talk fast about nothing very important
shudder	c. strong excitement
ravine	d. to shiver strongly
latrine	e. very steep
chatter	f. to summon or signal with a wave or nod
bluff	g. a steep-sided valley
dense brush	h. a pit in the earth for use as a toilet
sheer	i. scrub vegetation that is compact and crowded
nags	j. horses in old or poor condition

Fill in each sentence with the correct vocabulary word:

“He tried to picture the path to Mud Lake-down a _____ from the high trail.”

“ ‘Off there on the left, where the _____ meets the valley floor, is where our camp will be,’” Mack informed the campers.

“When Jerry proposed a horse show for campfire night, the JCs responded with _____.”

“Mack thinks our horses are _____.”

“Remember that time, Mack,” Frank asked, “when you told Bobby to dig the _____ at our campsite?”

Reading Questions:

1. How did Nick feel at first when Lenny Vogel first talked to him about finding Bruce? Why did his feelings change after a minute?
2. Find the place where Nick says that Mack thinks the camp horses are nags on the horseback ride into town. Give two reasons why Nick said what he did.
3. Why was Nick trying to convince Frank and Bobby to not ride down Deadman’s Hill? If you were Nick, what would you have done? Why?

Literary Device:

Foreshadowing occurs when the author lets you know that something is going to happen before it happens. She usually gives you some type of hint that action is around the corner.

See if you can find an example of foreshadowing in Chapter 11. What is said or what happens that gives you the feeling of foreshadowing? What do you predict will happen?

Writing Activity:

Imagine you are Frank or Nick huddled in the brush waiting for Bobby to come back with the ax and the saw. Describe everything your senses notice. What do you see, smell, feel and hear? Start the first sentence with, “I am Nick,” or “I am Frank.” Write the description in first person as Nick or Frank would have done.

Chapters 13,14,15**Teacher's summary:**

- The consequences of bad choices
- Being responsible for the loss of a pet
- Trying to make-up for bad choices
- Giving others a chance

Chapter 13 One Last Something

Frank, Bobby and Nick trail behind the other campers. Realizing that this will be their last ride as campers, Frank challenges to a final race. The horses race next to the highway. Cutter swerves to avoid a ditch and is hit by a semi. Bobby shoots her with the truck driver's gun. Later, after the horse is buried, Nick goes for a swim and talks to Tanya about losing pets and accidents. Later yet, he meets Bobby and they discuss responsibility and accidents.

Chapter 14 Making It Up To The Campers

In an effort to raise morale, Nick suggests entering Prince in the county fair horse show. Mack reluctantly agrees to coach him. On show day, Nick has second thoughts when brought face to face with well-groomed, well-trained horses and their expert riders. Tanya shows up and gives him the needed boost in confidence to perform reasonably well. When they notice Bobby Petzer talking to Prince, Nick offers to let him ride in a second event. Bobby redeems himself. Mack admits he was wrong.

Chapter 15 Wrapping Up The Summer

There is a work week at the end of the summer as well and once the cabins are shuttered for the winter, Nick looks forward to the next year and his chance to ride again.

Vocabulary:

mosquito
drenched
cinnamon
accelerated
outstretched

veering
semi
rhythms
relishing

convulsive
responsible
competition
magnificent
challenge

Fit the words into sentences from the story:

A _____ shudder ran through her body.

Nick forced himself to swim slow, deliberate laps, trying to sort his jumbled feelings in the soothing _____ of breast stroke, side stroke, back stroke and crawl.

Nick turned to see Cutter thrown in the air by a _____.

Then Prince started _____ to the left, toward the highway.

Mack was serving scrambled eggs and Otis _____ rolls.

Then all of his _____ bites began to itch at once.

He was _____ for this funeral.

And I think we should enter some of our horses in the _____.

When the horse hung his _____, well groomed head over the half-door, Nick had to admit, maybe Mack was right.

Raised his head and whinnied a loud _____.

A chunky black gelding _____ past the timing light.

Prince lowered his weight behind his _____ legs, slid.

Nick and Tanya continued to lean on the rail, _____ the moment.

Reading Questions:

1. Why did Bobby feel responsible for Cutter's death? Why did Nick feel responsible?
2. Tanya spoke about her cat getting run over. What did she say to Nick about replacing a lost pet?
3. What did Nick suggest to help the campers get over the loss of Cutter?
4. What did Nick suggest to help Bobby get over the loss of Cutter?

On your own Questions:

1. Have you ever felt responsible for something bad that happened? What was it and what did you do to feel better about it?
2. Nick was frightened by the other riders at the Fair. Have you ever felt frightened before trying something new? Who helped you be strong and try your best the way Tanya did for Nick?
3. Would Nick and Bobby be good together as brothers? What do they have in common? How could they help each other out?
4. Should Nick try to continue the 'tonight's the night' tradition? Is it a good thing?

Wa-Tonka! Camp Cowboys

By Joe Novara

Fourteen-year-old Nick Finazzo lives in a tiny house in Detroit's lower east side, where he sleeps wedged between one restless brother and another thumb-sucking one. When he is hired as a junior camp counselor at Wa-Tonka, a horseback-riding camp, he jumps at the chance to have his own bunk, ride horses, and make new friends.

Once there, Nick encounters even more new experiences than he expected. He finds himself not only appreciating the space he finds in northern Michigan but the space inside himself. For years he complained of the responsibilities he had taking care of his younger siblings, but now he finds that taking charge is something that comes naturally and that he does well!

Young readers in urban areas who crave a summertime getaway and boys and girls who enjoy horses and horseback-riding tales will find this coming-of-age story realistically appealing. Anyone who has ever attended summer camp and come back home a new person will appreciate Nick's story.

A Study Guide is included containing new vocabulary and spelling words, topics for essay and discussion and exercises for mapping and visualization.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Author Joe Novara was inspired to write this story based on his own boyhood experiences working as a counselor at a horse camp in northern Michigan. A frequent contributor of articles to *Mother Earth News* and *Horse and Rider* magazine, Mr. Novara lives with his wife in Kalamazoo, Michigan, where he works in corporate communications training. In addition to writing young-adult novels, Mr. Novara enjoys sailing, racquetball, and sharing his stories and poems with students in classroom settings.

WA-TONKA!

Camp Cowboys

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