

It's Country for Me

By the end of the unit, the students will be able to:

- analyze passages in the text to identify the theme/ general subject, key idea/ central thought (a statement about the general subject), and supporting details.
- identify and recognize the functions of transitional devices used for coherence and cohesion at discourse level.
- apply critical thinking to interact with text, use intensive reading strategies (while-reading) to:
 - scan to answer short questions.
 - make simple inferences using context of the text and prior knowledge.
 - distinguish between what is clearly stated and what is implied .
- use various reference sources to refine vocabulary for interpersonal academic workplace situation including figurative, idiomatic and technical vocabulary.
- apply rules for the use of *a*, *an*, *the* where applicable in speech and writing.



It's Country for Me

It was 11:15 at night when Joel, reading in bed, heard his mother call up, "Joel, come and feed Lamby, will you?" She usually fed the orphaned lamb, but tonight she had come home late from a meeting and did not want to go to the barn wearing good clothes.

The family dog, Jessica, jumped up from the doorstep as Joel came outside, a pair of overalls pulled over his pyjamas, the laces of his boots dangling loose. "Hey, Jess," he greeted her, ruffling the dog's thick fur with one hand as they loped together to the barn. In his other hand he carried Lamby's meal — milk replacement in a soda-pop bottle capped by a black nipple.

The March air was cold and the yard light caught the mist of Joel and Jessica's breaths. A dim crescent moon hung low over the east hayfield. Otherwise, the night was black.

"Here, Lamby," called Joel, opening the door to the barn where the sheep are kept in the winter. The lamb sprang up from her warm straw bedding and sucked down the bottle in thirty seconds. Her mother had died giving birth to her a week before. This may have been Joel's thirty-three-thousandth trip to the barn, since he goes in and out of barns at least ten times a day. Joel knows these farm buildings better than he knows his own bedroom. He surely spends more waking hours in them. He knows how to care for the animals they shelter as well as he knows how to care for himself. Farming is Joel's world.

Joel Holland has lived on this 245-acre farm since he was born, thirteen years ago. It is the farm of his ancestors. He lives in the house that his great-grandfather built. The land 'he helps his father and brothers' is



the land that his great-great-grandfather James Holland bought in 1860. James was an Irish immigrant. He drove a team of horses to plough the land and make it ready for corn. Now, five generations later, Joel ploughs the same land atop a tractor that has the power of 120 horses. The rich, black soil has been pampered by Hollands for over 120 years. Farming is Joel's heritage.

The Holland farm is near Scales Mound, a tiny town of 400 people snuggled in the north-western corner of Illinois. The land there is hilly, rolling in great waves. In fact, just a few miles away is the highest point in the state.

Joel attends public school in Scales Mound in a split-level brick building with 235 other grade school and high school pupils. About half the students are farmers. This year Joel will graduate from eighth grade and begin ninth, but his class will not get larger. Except for three foster children who came and left, Joel has been with the same nineteen kids since first grade.

"I know every kid in practically the whole school," he says. "Some of those guys in schools on TV don't even know the people in their own class."

Joel is a good student, though reluctant to discuss it. "Yeah, I guess I pull mostly A's, some B's." In national testing Joel scored an overall 99 per cent, meaning that only 1 per cent of students scored higher. His studies are typical of any eighth grader's in the United States. "We're doing per cents in maths. English, forget it. In history we're up to F.D.R. In science we do experiments like taking this chemical HCl and blowing up pieces of chalk."

But when the school bus drops Joel off and he runs up the quarter-mile lane to his farmhouse, slips out of his sneakers, and pulls on his boots — then his life is no longer typical of an average teenager. His footgear is the clue. Joel wears boots every day, no matter what the season. That's because he does chores every night after school and for several hours on weekends. The chores are boot work — hard, heavy, and sometimes dirty.

The daily chores that Joel does help run the farm and help support

the family. Joel is a teenager, but he does the work of an adult. Unlike most families, where the parents alone make the money, farm families work together. Each child's labour is not only important to the family's well-being, it is essential.

The Hollands operate a self-sufficient farm, typical of many in the Corn Belt. They raise livestock — cattle, and a few sheep. In each herd, they keep some females to replenish the stock. The rest of the animals are sold for slaughter and land on America's tables as beef and lamb. The Hollands grow virtually all the food their animals need — corn, oats, and hay. They sell the surplus, though most of their money comes from selling the animals themselves.

To run a farm like this, farmers have to have many skills. They have to be machine operators, driving immense and powerful vehicles; they have to be mechanics, repairing them; husbandmen, raising livestock; veterinarians, tending them when sick; agriculturists, growing food on a large scale; and businesspeople, managing (like Joel's father) a farm operation worth nearly one million dollars. As Joel works on the farm, he is all these workers.

Yet he is a boy still and, like an apprentice, continues to learn new skills. Joel takes his learning seriously because his goal is to become a farmer. He is extremely alert and watchful, like a cat. Even when not actively involved in a chore, Joel can readily answer any question about what is going on. He listens as his dad counsels a seed customer in the kitchen, as his brother Terry consults a vet about recent deaths in his hog herd, as his older brothers discuss soil planning while they mend a fence. Knowledge seems to be constantly seeping, sometimes flowing, into Joel's mind.

Joel is the youngest of Ed and Betty Holland's six children. Only he and his brother, Marty, sixteen, still live at home. Two other brothers, Bill and Terry, come home each day to eat meals with the family. Bill and Terry rent neighbouring farms. Each has his own livestock herd, but they farm their land collectively with their father.

Two other children, Kevin and Kathy, do not live at home. This year

Kevin, twenty-two, will graduate from college in Chicago. He will be the fourth college graduate among the Holland children. "We insist they all go to college and get a taste of what it's like off the farm," says Betty. "Then if they want to come back to farming, that's fine."

Kathy, twenty-four, is the oldest child and the only daughter. She is now a Roman Catholic nun doing graduate study in Dubuque, Iowa. But, like her brothers, she grew up farming, and she still misses it. Kathy called this May during her final exams and said, "I'd give anything to be ploughing instead!"

As the youngest, Joel has at times had more farming "teachers" than he's wanted. One night he sat at the kitchen table listening to his dad and brothers talk about the rewards of farming.

"It's a good, independent life," said Bill. "You're your own boss."

"I wouldn't know," said Joel, grinning. "I've got bosses." "Who?" asked his dad. Joel pointed to each one around the table. They all laughed!

Joel used to be largely at somebody's side, watching and listening, lending a hand, or going on the run for a tractor or forgotten tool. He took the occasional bossing he got in stride. Now, he is so busy with his own work that he is no longer available to be everybody's "go-fer."

"If I had just one word to describe Joel, it would be enthusiasm," says Betty. He uses his youthful energy indiscriminately. On one summer day, he jumped 15 fences, drove farm machinery 25 miles, fed 320 animals, opened and closed 8 gates, walked and ran about 8 miles, jumped on and off the tractor 26 times, lifted 900 pounds of grain, shovelled 4,000 pounds, ate about 2600 calories!

On weekends and during the summer, Joel works outdoors anywhere from eight to fifteen hours a day. The only time he minds it is during early spring. Then the snow melts and rain often pours down daily, turning the farmyard into a swamp. Mud sucks at his boots, making walking itself a tedious chore. More than the bother, though, Joel hates the ugliness. "When it rains, everything seems so awful."

Regardless of how much energy his work consumes, Joel has plenty left over for sports. He hunts deer and traps wildlife in the fall, and snowmobiles in the winter. Spring brings softball and basketball games, and summer provides weather for water-skiing and fishing. Nearly all his favourite sports are played outdoors.

If he had to live in the city for a year, Joel says he would mostly miss "the land. I'd miss seeing things grow. The change of seasons." In fact, if Joel could choose any place in the world to live, he guesses he'd live "right here. It'd have to be country. After living out here, I don't think I'd ever want to be in the city. You just don't have the freedom. Or the responsibilities. I'm not saying a city kid doesn't have responsibilities. But you don't work as a family the way you do on a farm. It'd just have to be country for me."

About the Author

Patricia Demuth and her husband grew up in small towns in Iowa where they had friends who were part of a family farm team. When they decided to write a book about rural America, they found a farm in Wisconsin to serve as a setting for their story. They took their young sons with them and lived in Wisconsin where she wrote the book, *Joel: Growing Up a Farm Man*, which was awarded Best Children Book of 1982 by the Society of Midland Authors.

Glossary

Words	Meanings
a nun (n)	a female member of a religious order in a Christian church
ancestors (n)	forefathers; grandparents
apprentice (n)	someone who works with a skilled or qualified person to learn a trade or profession; a beginner or novice
chore (n)	a small, routine, domestic task
F.D.R.	Franklin Delano Roosevelt (1882-1945), 32 nd president of the United States of America (1933-45)

foster children	children in the care of a person other than their parents
go-fer (n) (slang)	a person who runs a variety of errands, or short trips here and there
hog (adj) chores (n)	chores related to sheep etc. such as shearing them
immense (adj)	huge, big
immigrant (n)	a person who has left his homeland to live in another country
indiscriminately (adv)	randomly, without planning; irregularly
occasional (adj)	taking place from time to time; not frequent or regular
orphaned (adj)	without mother
roman catholic (adj)	of or relating to roman catholic church, the church of rome
self-sufficient (adj)	able to provide for or support oneself without outside help
snowmobiles (n)	a small open motor vehicle for travelling on snow
snuggled (adj)	to nestle together; to live together closely
split-level (adj)	a building having the floor level of one part about half a storey above or below the floor level of an adjoining part
surplus (n)	a quantity or amount in excess of what is required
tedious (adj)	causing fatigue, annoying, dull, laborious
to counsel (v)	to give advice or guidance to someone
to dangle (v)	to hang or cause to hang freely
to lope (v)	to run with a long swinging, bounding movement or stride
to pamper (v)	to treat with affectionate and usually excessive care
to replenish (v)	to make full or complete again by supplying what has been used up
to shear (v)	to remove the fleece or hair (of sheep) by cutting or clipping
to take in stride	to accept or do something without difficulty or effort
virtually (adv)	practically, nearly

Reading Comprehension

Answer the following questions

1. Analyze the text of 'It's Country For Me' and give one example of fact and opinion each.
2. How coherence and cohesion is achieved in the essay 'It's Country For Me'. Illustrate with examples from the text.
3. Explain the significance of the title, 'It's Country For Me' and its connection to the theme of the lesson.
4. Describe Joel's treatment of 'Lamby', the orphaned lamb and Jessica, the small dog; what does this show?
5. Compare and contrast your daily routine with that of Joel's. How would you rate the motivational level of your doing work with that of Joel's?
6. What skills one is required to learn if he wants to be a full-fledged farmer?
7. In what way does Joel play the role of an adult?

Writing Suggestions

Summarize the lesson 'Its Country for Me' in your own words.

Oral Communication

Divide the class into groups of five students. Every student of the group should give oral recount, imaginary or factual, of his/her adventures on a trip to hilly or rural areas.

Vocabulary and Grammar

Vocabulary

Search the following words related to space science and astronomy in authentic source and then write the correct word in front of its meaning below.

orbit

dock

launch

countdown

lift-off

manned

splashdown

gravity

1. the beginning of a space flight _____
2. attach self to another space vehicle _____
3. counting to zero before launch _____
4. going around a planet _____

5. the force that all celestial bodies have _____
6. when the space vehicle leaves the surface _____
7. using astronauts, not computers or animals _____
8. landing in the sea _____

GRAMMAR

A. Fill in the article *a, an* or *the* where necessary. Choose X where no article is used.

1. I like _____ blue T-shirt over there better than _____ red one.
2. Their car does 150 miles _____ hour.
3. Where's _____ USB drive I lent you last week?
4. Do you still live in _____ Bristol?
5. Is your mother working in _____ old office building?
6. Afsha's father works as _____ electrician.
7. The tomatoes are Rs. 30 _____ kilo.
8. What do you usually have for _____ breakfast?
9. Hashir has _____ terrible headache.
10. After this tour you have _____ whole afternoon free to explore the city.

B. Fill in the blanks with the definite article *the* if needed. Put an X if not needed.

1. My grandmother likes _____ flowers very much.
2. I love _____ flowers in your garden.
3. See you on _____ Wednesday.
4. Zohaib goes to work by _____ bus.
5. Don't be late for _____ school.
6. Listen! Kashaf is playing _____ trumpet.
7. We often see our cousins over _____ Eid.
8. She has never been to _____ Nathiagali before.
9. What about going to Karachi in _____ February?

Teacher's Guideline:

Explain and revise with the students the use of articles.