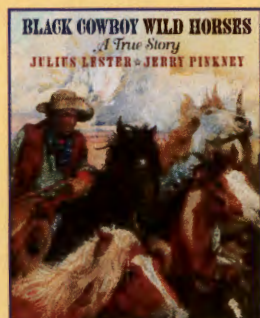


**Black
Cowboy,
Wild Horses**



Galloping Free

Horses were once native to North America. Long ago they disappeared from the landscape, only to return in the 1500s with explorers from Spain. Many of these horses escaped, ran free out into the plains, and lost their tame ways. They became wild horses, or **mustangs**. Before long, **herds** of mustangs were roaming the **bluffs** and **ravines** of the Great Plains and the Southwest, much like the herd in *Black Cowboy, Wild Horses*.

California
Standards

**Standards to
Achieve**

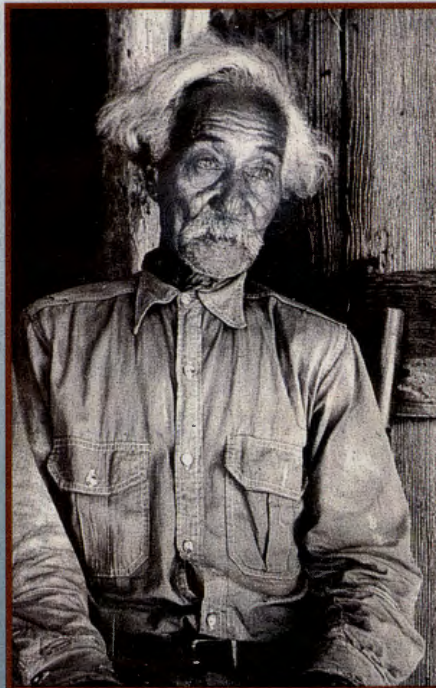
Reading

- Analyze literary forms (R3.1)
- Evaluate author's techniques (R3.7)



Wild horses are smaller than domestic horses, with harder hooves, to help them survive outdoors. Each herd contains one male, a **stallion**, who leads several females, or **mares**, and their youngsters, or foals. Another stallion may challenge the leader to a fight. If the challenger wins, he becomes the new leader.

Horses were especially valuable to the cattlemen of the plains in the 1870s. Without horses, cowboys could not move their cattle to market. Many cowboys had a talent for rounding up and taming mustangs.



One of the most famous horsemen was Bob Lemmons. In Lemmons's time — especially the 1870s and 1880s — one out of three cowboys was African American or Mexican.



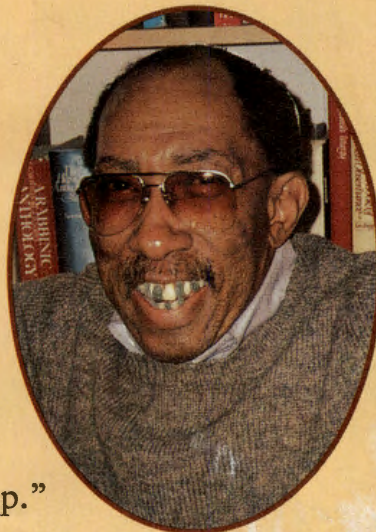
Meet the Author

Julius Lester

Birthplace: St. Louis, Missouri

Writing for children: Lester's own children had a big influence on his writing. He says, "I want them to have books that I would have liked to have had when I was growing up."

Odd jobs: Lester was once a professional musician and singer and the host of a radio show in New York.



Meet the Illustrator

Jerry Pinkney

Birthplace: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Odd job: Pinkney once worked as a designer and illustrator for a greeting card company.

Family ties: Pinkney's wife, Gloria Jean, and his daughter-in-law, Angela Davis Pinkney, are both writers. His son, Brian, is a children's book writer and illustrator, and his son Myles is a photographer whose work also appears in children's books.

Collaborators: Lester and Pinkney have worked together on *John Henry* and five books of *The Tales of Uncle Remus*.



Internet



To learn more about Julius Lester and Jerry Pinkney, visit Education Place. www.eduplace.com/kids

BLACK COWBOY WILD HORSES

A True Story

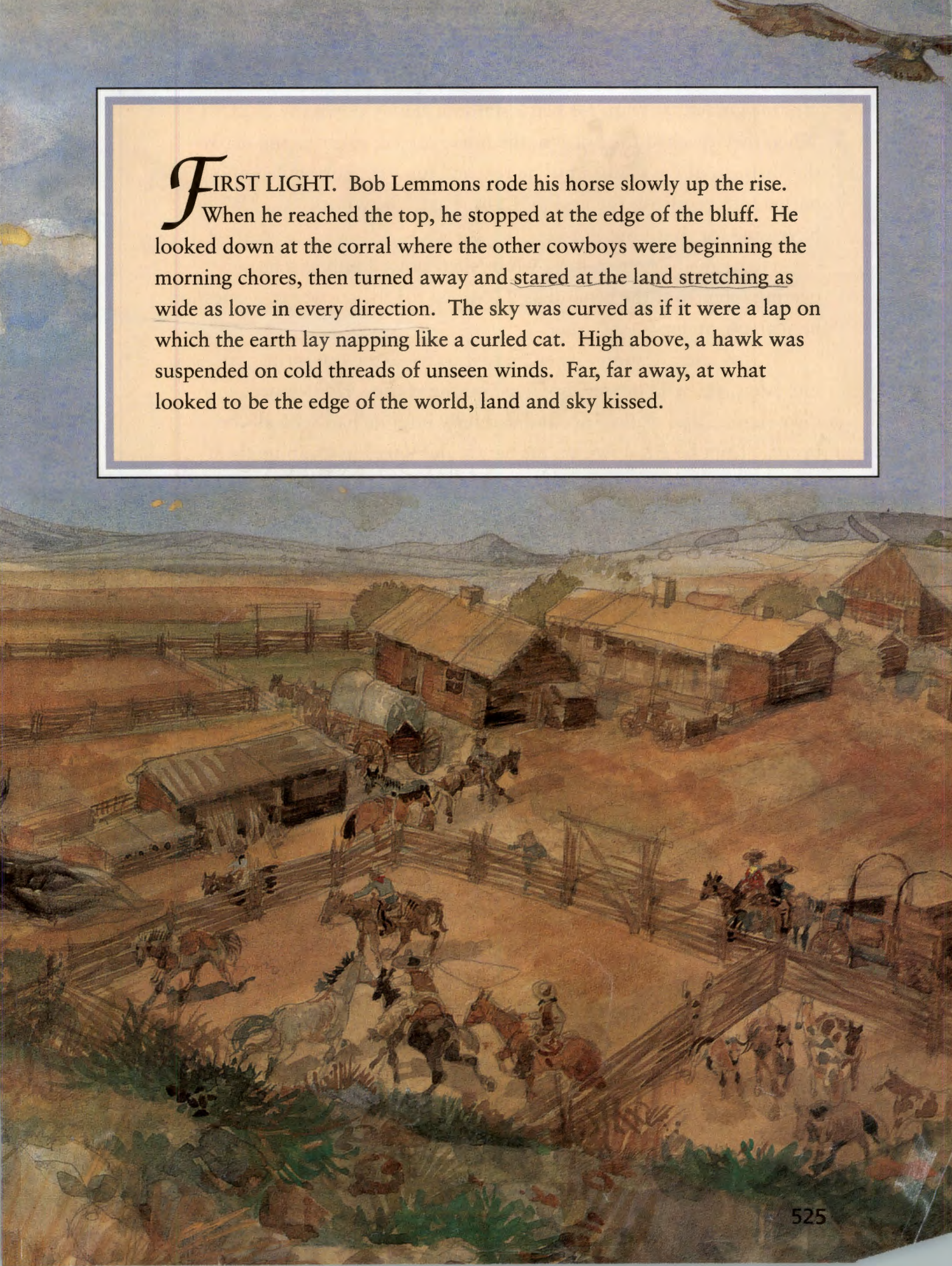
JULIUS LESTER ☆ JERRY PINKNEY



Strategy Focus

The author tells a true story using words to create pictures in a poetic way. As you read, **evaluate** how well those word pictures help to tell that story.





FIRST LIGHT. Bob Lemmons rode his horse slowly up the rise. When he reached the top, he stopped at the edge of the bluff. He looked down at the corral where the other cowboys were beginning the morning chores, then turned away and stared at the land stretching as wide as love in every direction. The sky was curved as if it were a lap on which the earth lay napping like a curled cat. High above, a hawk was suspended on cold threads of unseen winds. Far, far away, at what looked to be the edge of the world, land and sky kissed.

He guided Warrior, his black stallion, slowly down the bluff. When they reached the bottom, the horse reared, eager to run across the vastness of the plains until he reached forever. Bob smiled and patted him gently on the neck. "Easy. Easy," he whispered. "We'll have time for that. But not yet."

He let the horse trot for a while, then slowed him and began peering intently at the ground as if looking for the answer to a question he scarcely understood.

It was late afternoon when he saw them — the hoofprints of mustangs, the wild horses that lived on the plains. He stopped, dismounted, and walked around carefully until he had seen all the prints. Then he got down on his hands and knees to examine them more closely.

Some people learned from books. Bob had been a slave and never learned to read words. But he could look at the ground and read what animals had walked on it, their size and weight, when they had passed by, and where they were going. No one he knew could bring in mustangs by themselves, but Bob could make horses think he was one of them — because he was.

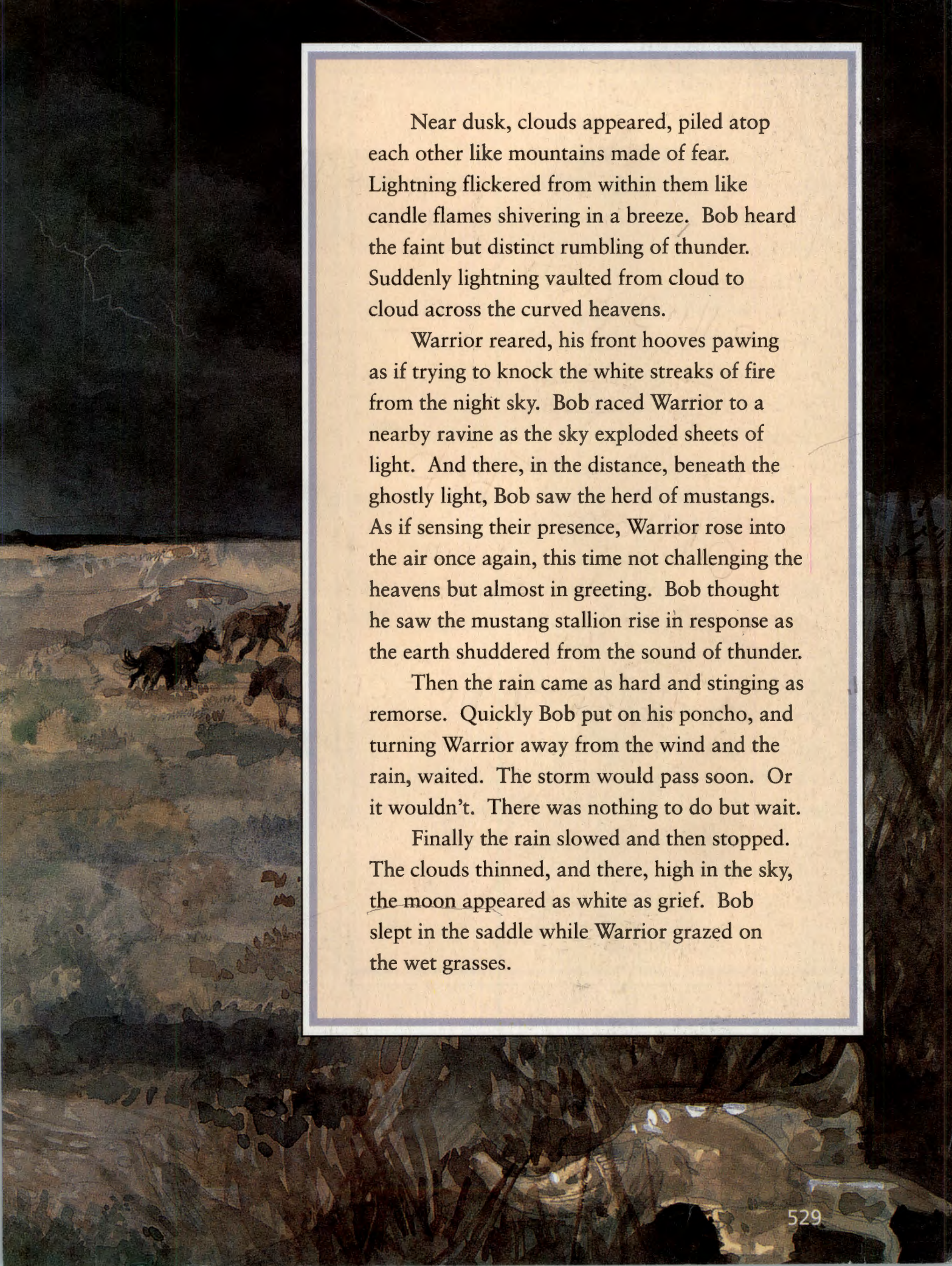
He stood, reached into his saddlebag, took out an apple, and gave it to Warrior, who chewed with noisy enthusiasm. It was a herd of eight mares, a colt, and a stallion. They had passed there two days ago. He would see them soon. But he needed to smell of sun, moon, stars, and wind before the mustangs would accept him.

The sun went down and the chilly night air came quickly. Bob took the saddle, saddlebag, and blanket off Warrior. He was cold, but could not make a fire. The mustangs would smell the smoke in his clothes from miles away. He draped a thick blanket around himself, then took the cotton sack of dried fruit, beef jerky, and nuts from his saddlebag and ate. When he was done, he lay his head on his saddle and was quickly asleep. Warrior grazed in the tall, sweet grasses.

As soon as the sun's round shoulders came over the horizon, Bob awoke. He ate, filled his canteen, and saddling Warrior, rode away. All day he followed the tracks without hurrying.





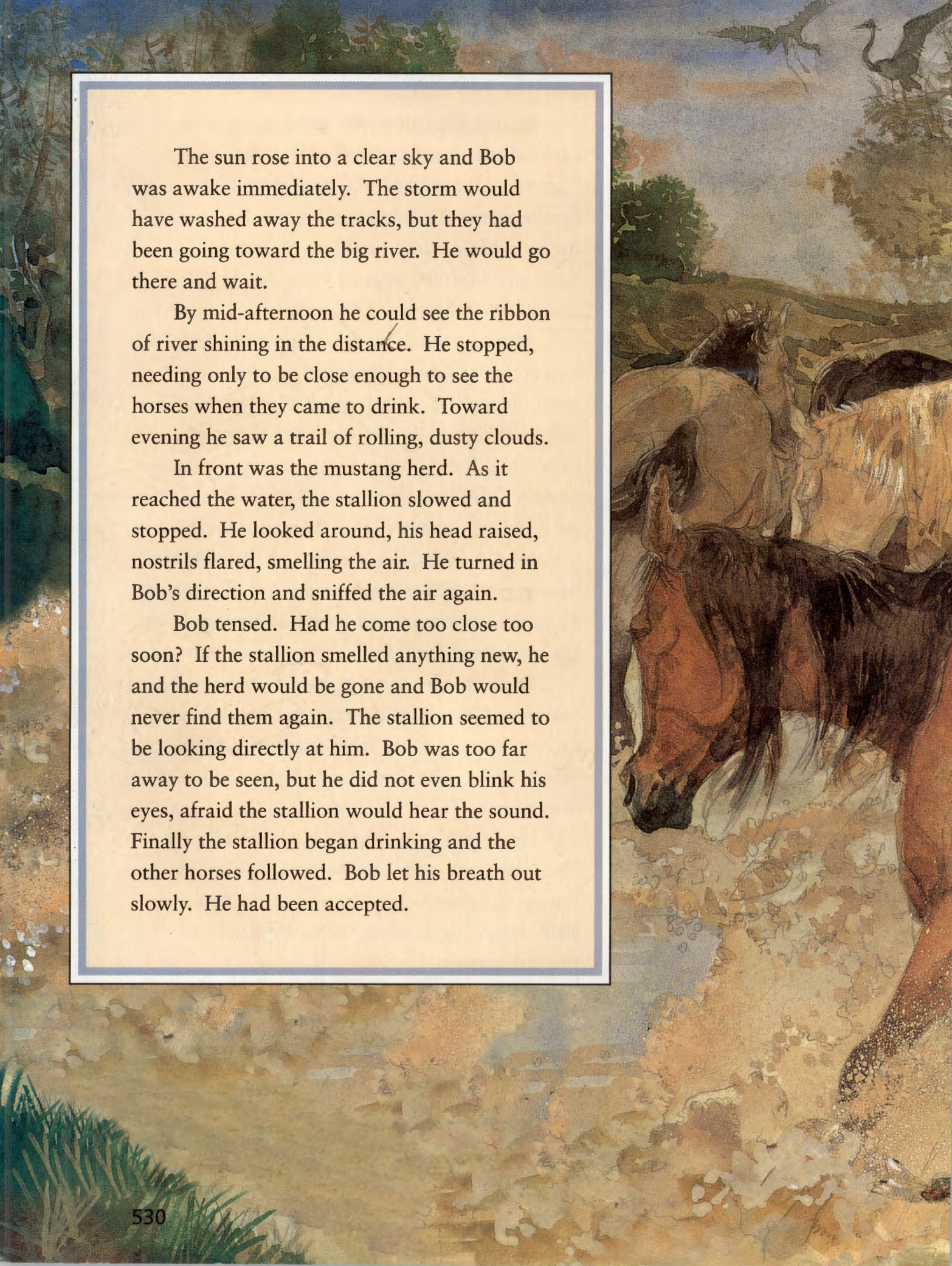


Near dusk, clouds appeared, piled atop each other like mountains made of fear. Lightning flickered from within them like candle flames shivering in a breeze. Bob heard the faint but distinct rumbling of thunder. Suddenly lightning vaulted from cloud to cloud across the curved heavens.

Warrior reared, his front hooves pawing as if trying to knock the white streaks of fire from the night sky. Bob raced Warrior to a nearby ravine as the sky exploded sheets of light. And there, in the distance, beneath the ghostly light, Bob saw the herd of mustangs. As if sensing their presence, Warrior rose into the air once again, this time not challenging the heavens but almost in greeting. Bob thought he saw the mustang stallion rise in response as the earth shuddered from the sound of thunder.

Then the rain came as hard and stinging as remorse. Quickly Bob put on his poncho, and turning Warrior away from the wind and the rain, waited. The storm would pass soon. Or it wouldn't. There was nothing to do but wait.

Finally the rain slowed and then stopped. The clouds thinned, and there, high in the sky, the moon appeared as white as grief. Bob slept in the saddle while Warrior grazed on the wet grasses.

The background of the page is a painting. It depicts a natural scene with a river or stream winding through a landscape. There are green trees on the left and right sides. In the upper right, several birds are flying in a clear sky. The overall style is soft and painterly, with visible brushstrokes and a warm color palette.

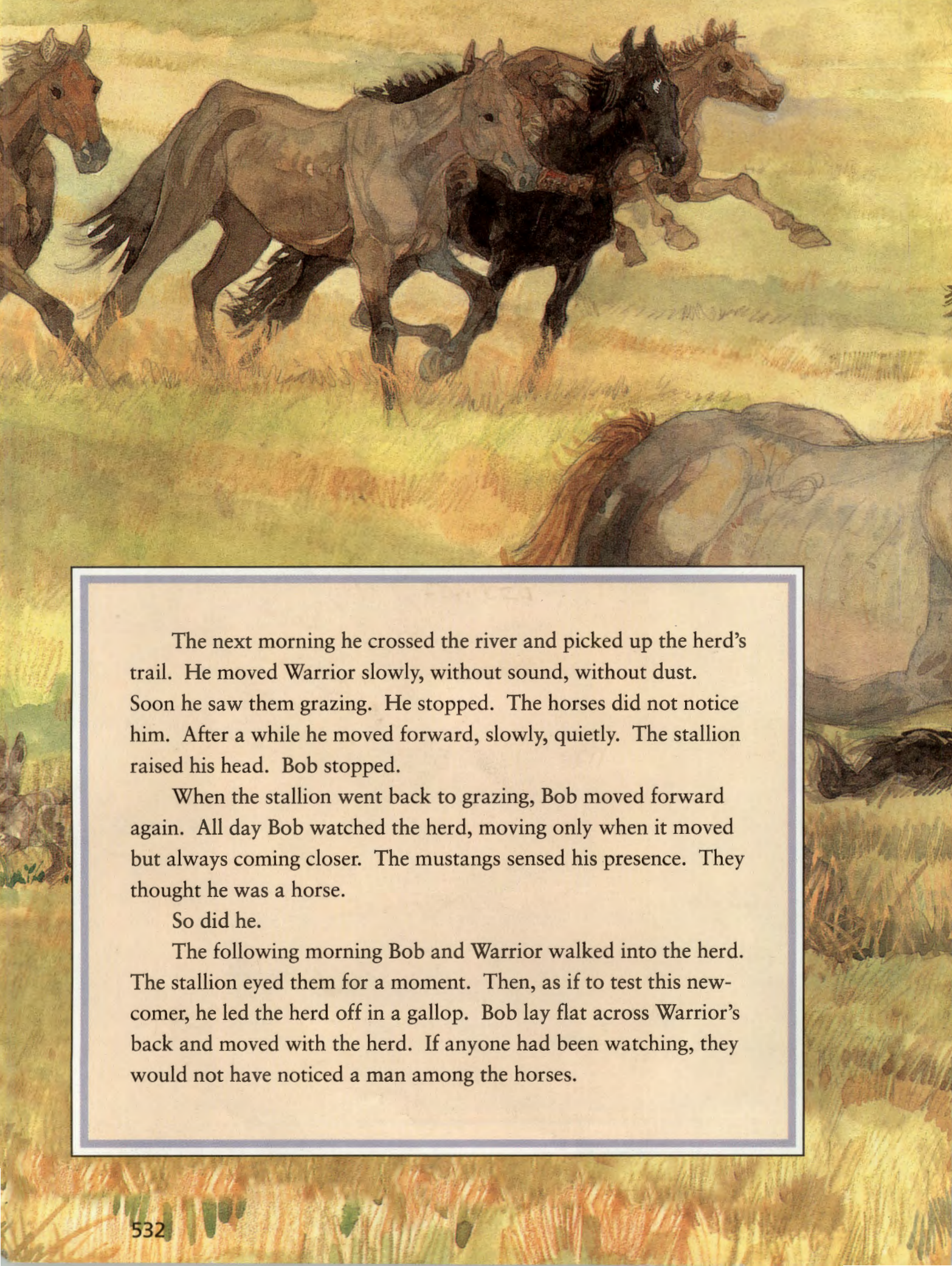
The sun rose into a clear sky and Bob was awake immediately. The storm would have washed away the tracks, but they had been going toward the big river. He would go there and wait.

By mid-afternoon he could see the ribbon of river shining in the distance. He stopped, needing only to be close enough to see the horses when they came to drink. Toward evening he saw a trail of rolling, dusty clouds.

In front was the mustang herd. As it reached the water, the stallion slowed and stopped. He looked around, his head raised, nostrils flared, smelling the air. He turned in Bob's direction and sniffed the air again.

Bob tensed. Had he come too close too soon? If the stallion smelled anything new, he and the herd would be gone and Bob would never find them again. The stallion seemed to be looking directly at him. Bob was too far away to be seen, but he did not even blink his eyes, afraid the stallion would hear the sound. Finally the stallion began drinking and the other horses followed. Bob let his breath out slowly. He had been accepted.





The next morning he crossed the river and picked up the herd's trail. He moved Warrior slowly, without sound, without dust. Soon he saw them grazing. He stopped. The horses did not notice him. After a while he moved forward, slowly, quietly. The stallion raised his head. Bob stopped.


When the stallion went back to grazing, Bob moved forward again. All day Bob watched the herd, moving only when it moved but always coming closer. The mustangs sensed his presence. They thought he was a horse.

So did he.

The following morning Bob and Warrior walked into the herd. The stallion eyed them for a moment. Then, as if to test this newcomer, he led the herd off in a gallop. Bob lay flat across Warrior's back and moved with the herd. If anyone had been watching, they would not have noticed a man among the horses.







When the herd set out early the next day, it was moving slowly. If the horses had been going faster, it would not have happened.

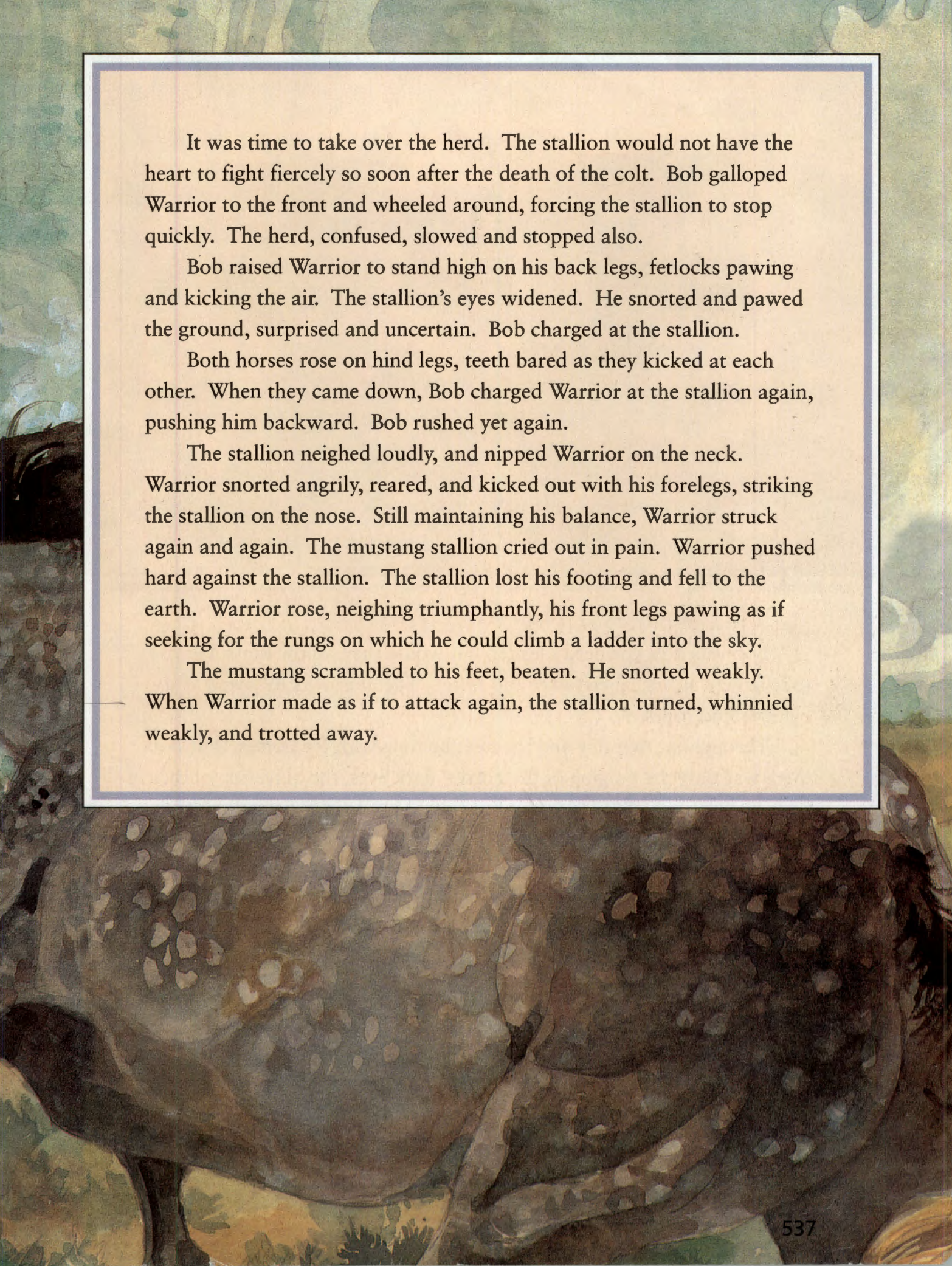
The colt fell to the ground as if she had stepped into a hole and broken her leg. Bob and the horses heard the chilling sound of the rattles. Rattlesnakes didn't always give a warning before they struck. Sometimes, when someone or something came too close, they bit with the fury of fear.

The horses whinnied and pranced nervously, smelling the snake and death among them. Bob saw the rattler, as beautiful as a necklace, sliding silently through the tall grasses. He made no move to kill it. Everything in nature had the right to protect itself, especially when it was afraid.

The stallion galloped to the colt. He pushed at her. The colt struggled to get up, but fell to her side, shivering and kicking feebly with her thin legs. Quickly she was dead.

Already vultures circled high in the sky. The mustangs milled aimlessly. The colt's mother whinnied, refusing to leave the side of her colt. The stallion wanted to move the herd from there, and pushed the mare with his head. She refused to budge, and he nipped her on the rump. She skittered away. Before she could return to the colt, the stallion bit her again, this time harder. She ran toward the herd. He bit her a third time, and the herd was off. As they galloped away, Bob looked back. The vultures were descending from the sky as gracefully as dusk.





It was time to take over the herd. The stallion would not have the heart to fight fiercely so soon after the death of the colt. Bob galloped Warrior to the front and wheeled around, forcing the stallion to stop quickly. The herd, confused, slowed and stopped also.

Bob raised Warrior to stand high on his back legs, fetlocks pawing and kicking the air. The stallion's eyes widened. He snorted and pawed the ground, surprised and uncertain. Bob charged at the stallion.

Both horses rose on hind legs, teeth bared as they kicked at each other. When they came down, Bob charged Warrior at the stallion again, pushing him backward. Bob rushed yet again.

The stallion neighed loudly, and nipped Warrior on the neck. Warrior snorted angrily, reared, and kicked out with his forelegs, striking the stallion on the nose. Still maintaining his balance, Warrior struck again and again. The mustang stallion cried out in pain. Warrior pushed hard against the stallion. The stallion lost his footing and fell to the earth. Warrior rose, neighing triumphantly, his front legs pawing as if seeking for the rungs on which he could climb a ladder into the sky.

The mustang scrambled to his feet, beaten. He snorted weakly. When Warrior made as if to attack again, the stallion turned, whinnied weakly, and trotted away.



Bob was now the herd's leader, but would they follow him? He rode slowly at first, then faster and faster. The mustangs followed as if being led on ropes.

Throughout that day and the next he rode with the horses. For Bob there was only the bulging of the horses' dark eyes, the quivering of their flesh, the rippling of muscles and bending of bones in their bodies. He was now sky and plains and grass and river and horse.

When his food was almost gone, Bob led the horses on one last ride, a dark surge of flesh flashing across the plains like black lightning. Toward evening he led the herd up the steep hillside, onto the bluff, and down the slope toward the big corral. The cowboys heard him coming and opened the corral gate. Bob led the herd, but at the last moment he swerved Warrior aside, and the mustangs flowed into the fenced enclosure. The cowboys leaped and shouted as they quickly closed the gate.

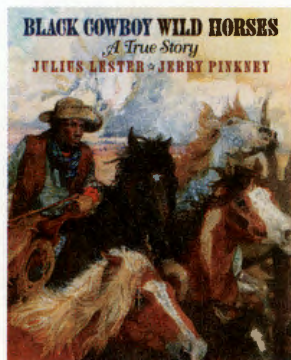




Bob rode away from them and back up to the bluff. He stopped and stared out onto the plains. Warrior reared and whinnied loudly. "I know," Bob whispered. "I know. Maybe someday." Maybe someday they would ride with the mustangs, ride to that forever place where land and sky kissed, and then ride on. Maybe someday.



Think About the Selection



1. Choose one of the author's descriptions of nature that you like best. Explain what this description helps you imagine.
2. How do you think Bob might have "read" the mustang hoofprints? How did they provide him with clues about the herd?
3. Do you agree with Bob's reason for letting the rattlesnake go after it killed the colt? Why or why not?
4. Do you think people should be allowed to round up wild horses or should we not interfere with them? Explain your answer.
5. What would you find most difficult about what Bob does for a living? Most rewarding?
6. What do you think the author means when he says, "Bob could make horses think he was one of them — because he was."
7. **Connecting/Comparing** How are Bob Lemmons and Returns Again alike in their understanding of animals? Compare and contrast their experiences with animals.



Describing

Write a Description

The author uses similes and metaphors to create vivid descriptions. Write a colorful description of a scene or detail from the selection. Use similes and metaphors to enliven your description.

Tips

- Remember that a simile uses *like* or *as* to compare two things. A metaphor compares two things by stating that one thing is the other.
- Use vivid, exact words.

Science

Explain How an Ecosystem Works

Living things, together with the environment they live in, form ecosystems. Use the illustrations and text to write an explanation of the ecosystem in *Black Cowboy, Wild Horses*. What animals, plants, and features of the environment are part of it? How do the horses depend on it?

Bonus Draw a diagram to illustrate your explanation.

Ecosystem of Wild Horses

Animals

Plants

Environmental Features

Viewing

Review Illustrations

With a partner, present an oral review of the illustrations in *Black Cowboy, Wild Horses*. Choose ones you especially like and tell what you like about them. How do they help tell Bob Lemmons's story?



Internet

Take an Online Poll

Think about the following statement: *It is wrong for people to herd and tame wild horses.* Do you agree or disagree? Find out what other students your age think. Visit Education Place and add your opinion to a poll.

www.eduplace.com/kids

Career Link

Skill: How to Use the SQP3R Strategy

The SQP3R Strategy can help you organize and remember facts in many nonfiction articles.

As you read . . .

- S** **Survey** the article. Read the title. Look at the pictures. Note key words.
- Q** Read the first heading. Turn it into a **question**.
- P** **Predict** what the answer will be.
- R** **Read** the section after the heading for the answer.
- R** **Recite** the answer from memory.
- R** **Review** each heading and recall the answers.

California
Standards

Standards to Achieve

Reading

- **Discern main ideas (R2.3)**

Home on

Technology has changed life on this giant 145-year-old Texas ranch. But not much.



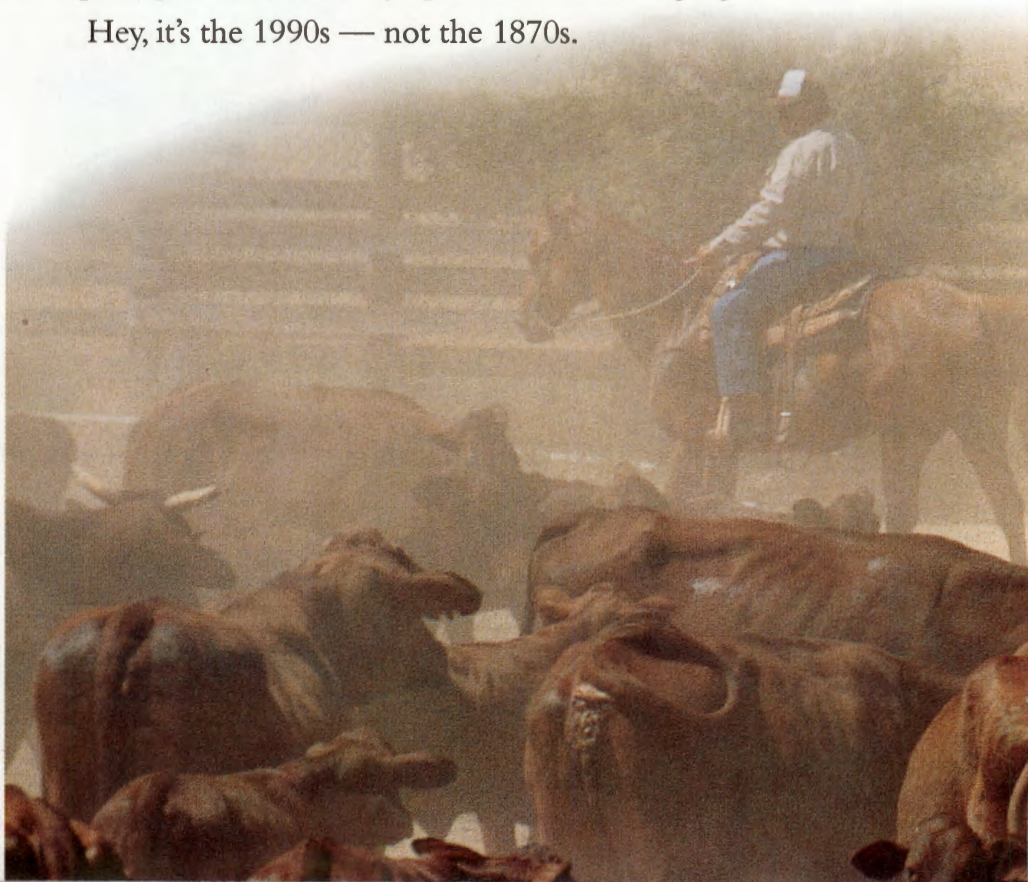
by Johnny D. Boggs

Calves bawl as a handful of cowboys send the scared animals through narrow, wooden chutes to separate them for tomorrow's branding.

The dust is thick and suffocating, and the afternoon sun bakes man and beast. Saddle leather creaks, spurs jingle, horses snort and sweat-soaked cowboys yell in Spanish and English to keep the cattle moving.

Out of nowhere, high-pitched beeps suddenly sound. In a pickup truck, a cowboy's phone-radio is ringing.

Hey, it's the 1990s — not the 1870s.



the Range



A Short History of a BIG Place

Welcome to the King Ranch in south Texas. At 825,000 acres, it's the largest privately owned ranch in the world. How big? At almost 1,300 square miles, it's larger than Rhode Island. Wire fences along the ranch's boundaries could stretch from Denver, Colo., to Boston, Mass.

Riverboat pilot Richard King founded the ranch in 1853. The captain bought cattle in Mexico and convinced an entire village to move to Texas to work for him. These workers became known as *Kiñenos*, Spanish for King's Men.

Today, the King Ranch is run by the heirs of Captain King, and *Kiñenos* still work here. Fourth-generation *Kiñeno* Faustino Montalvo was born on the ranch. "No hospital, no doctor," the 55-year-old says.

Times have changed, though. A public school district falls within the ranch's boundaries, and the town of Kingsville, founded in 1904 and built partly on land donated by Mrs. King, includes a state university and modern facilities. The ranch itself is diverse, with oil exploration, wildlife management and farming.

But cattle remain the ranch's centerpiece. And it still takes real cowboys to look after some 60,000 cattle.



**The "Running W" brand
marks the Santa Cruz
cattle of the King Ranch.**

Photographs © 1998 by David Nance



The Cowboy Way

Today, nearly 50 cowboys work on the King Ranch, and some things haven't changed since the 1800s. Many hands still live on the ranch. They answer to nicknames like "Chito," "Gallo" and "Leon."

Cowboys still wear leather chaps over their jeans, spurs on their boots and well-worn straw cowboy hats. Some opt for baseball caps and, occasionally, athletic shoes.

Calves get branded with the same "Running W" mark Captain King first used in 1869, using the old, heavy irons. Sometimes the cattle are vaccinated and branded in the chutes.

Often, though, it's done the old-fashioned way. Calves are roped and held down — it's where the calf-roping contest in rodeos comes from — while a cowboy slaps a hot iron above the animal's rear leg. Smoke and dust burn the nostrils. It's a dirty job, just as it was in the 1800s.

"It's not a job you get into for the money," cowboy Steve Shermer says. Indeed. Cowboys don't get paid overtime, and their workday can begin before sunrise and end after dark. "You just work until the job's done," Shermer says.

And there's usually a lot to be done, whether it's checking stock, mending fences or working with horses.

High-Tech Cowboys

Technology has changed the ways of the ranch. While cowboys continue to drive cattle to the corral on horseback, a pickup truck — air-conditioned, of course — also helps. And though they don't plug branding irons into electrical

Cowboy Jonathan Hawkins, 19, helps round up the cattle.

Photographs © 1998 by David Nance





Although technology can help with some tasks, cowboys still rely on the help of dogs to herd cattle (far left). Cowboys (left) lead calves into wooden chutes in order to give them medicine.

outlets, propane tanks make lighting fires and heating branding irons easier.

“It used to take seven to ten days to work the cattle,” says Alfredo “Chito” Mendieta. “Now we can work them in two days.”

Computers log inventory and keep track of wildlife. Hal Hawkins, King Ranch’s animal physiologist, monitors herd research and development with a laptop computer.

Technology’s Drawbacks

Shermer compares the job of today’s cowboy to that of a factory worker. “The land’s the factory and the cattle are your product,” he says. “In a factory, you try to get the most out of your product. And that’s what we try to do as land managers.”

Technology goes only so far. Computers can’t make it rain. Droughts were rough on cowboys and cattle in the 1800s, and they’re just as hard today.

“It’s tough,” unit manager Robert Silguero says. “It can make you think of doing something else.”

But not really. The weather can be tough, but cowboys are tougher.

City Slickers Are Welcome

So you want to be a cowboy? Silguero, Mendieta and Montalvo have been at the King Ranch all of their lives. Others, like Hawkins, Shermer and Knudsen, come from rural areas.

“We’ve had quite a few hands come out of the city, though,” Shermer says. “The trick is you’ve just got to be willing to learn. I pretty much learn something new every day.”

You also have to be willing to spend long days in the sun, working livestock. And it’s not all fun and games.

Mendieta certainly didn’t think so when a horse landed on his leg and left him in a hospital for ten days.

“This,” Shermer says, “is really a job that you have to love.”

