**Where the Red Fern Grows**
By Wilson Rawls
Yearling, New York, 1996

**QAR: Question Answer Response Strategy**

**Statement of Purpose:** This strategy will help students think beyond what is specifically written in the text. It will challenge them to look for deeper meaning. They will have practice going from the concrete (Right There) through looking for implied meaning (Think and Search), adding their own experience to the implied meaning (On Your Own), to hypothesizing based on their experience and their understanding of the text (Author and You) as they answer the four different types of questions.

**Context:** This strategy is best used after the class has read chapters 8 and 9, pages 67-90. This event, cutting down the “big tree” in the bottoms, will help students look deeper into what the author is trying to say about such things as determination, will power and keeping one’s word. These are the same themes students saw as they filled out the graphic organizer when Billy set out to earn enough money to buy his dogs. They will see them again and again as events unfold through the rest of the story.

**Directions:**
Have a handout for each student.
Have an overhead of the model questions.

STEP 1 (10 minutes)
Pass out the **Where are Answers to Questions Found** handout. Go through the handout and walk the students through the relationship of each question and answer.

**FOUND IN THE TEXT**

**Right There** - The answer is in the text. The words used in the question and the words used for the answer can usually be found in the same sentences.

**Think and Search** – The answer is in the text, but the words used in the question and those used for the answer are not in the same sentence. You need to think about different parts of the text and how ideas can be put together before you can answer the question.
FOUND IN YOUR HEAD

On Your Own – The text got you thinking, but the answer is inside your head. The author can’t help you much. So think about I, and use what you know already about the question.

Author and You – The answer is not in the text. You need to think about what you know, what the author says, and how they fit together.

STEP 2 (10 minutes)
Model how to find the answer for each of the four (4) types of questions using the following questions. (There is a copy ready to made into an overhead at the end.)

Right There
Passage (page 76)
“Why are you so determined to get his coon?” Papa asked. “Couldn’t you go somewhere else and tree one? Maybe the tree would be a smaller one.”
“I thought about that, Papa,” I said, “but I made a bargain with my dogs. I told them that if they would put one [a coon] in a tree, I’d do the rest. Well, they fulfilled their part of the bargain. Now it’s up to me to do my part, and I’m going to, Papa. I’m going to cut it down. I don’t care if it takes me a year.”

Question
What bargain did Billy make with his dogs?

(Answer)
(He told them that if they put a coon in a tree he would do the rest which meant cutting down the tree so his dogs could get to the coon.)

Think and Search
Passage (page 76)
Papa was riding our red mule. After he rode up, he just sat there and looked me over. He glanced at my dogs and at the big sycamore. I saw the worry leave his face. He straightened his shoulder, pursed his lips, and blew out a little air. He reminded me of someone who had just dropped a heavy load.
In a slow, calm voice, he asked, “Are you all right, Billy?”

Dunn, BYU, 2009
“Yes, Papa,” I said. “Oh, I’m a little tired and sleepy, otherwise I’m fine.”

He slid from the mule’s back and came over. “Your mother’s worried,” he said. “When you didn’t come in, we didn’t know what had happened. You should’ve come home.”

I didn’t know what to say. I bowed my head and looked at the ground. I was trying hard to choke back the tears when I felt his hand on my shoulder.

“I’m not scolding,” he said, “We just thought maybe you had an accident or something.”

**Question**

What was the heavy load that Billy’s father dropped when he found Billy?

**Answer**

(His worry. When Billy didn’t go home he thought that Billy had had an accident.)

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**On Your Own**

**Passage** (pages 76-77)

Papa laughed and said, “Oh, I don’t think it’ll take that long, but it will take a while. I tell you what I’ll do. You take the mule and go get some breakfast. I’ll chop on it until you get back.”

“No Papa,” I said. “I don’t want any help. I want to cut it down all by myself. You see, if someone helps me, I wouldn’t feel like I kept my part of the agreement.”

An astonished look came over my father’s face. “Why Billy,” he said, “you can’t stay down here without anything to eat and no sleep. Besides, it’ll take at least two days to cut that tree down and that’s hard work.”

“Please, Papa,” I begged, “don’t make me quit. I just have to get that coon. If I don’t, my dogs won’t ever believe in me again.”

**Question**

Why wouldn’t Billy’s dogs ever believe in him again?

**Answer**

(If you rely strictly on the information from earlier portions of the text you could answer something like the following: because he felt that he had made a bargain with his dogs and that bargain was between him and his dogs not his dad and his dogs. If he left the dogs would see him leave and know he wasn’t fulfilling his bargain, he was not keeping his word.)

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**Author and You**

**Passage** (page 77)

With tears in my eyes, I said, “Tell Mama I’m sorry for not coming home last night.”
“Don’t worry about your mother,” he said, as he climbed on the mule’s back. “I’ll take care of her. Another thing, I have to make a trip to the store today and I’ll talk this over with your grandfather. He may be able to help some way.”

**Question**

How was Billy’s Papa going to take care of his mother?

**(Answer)**

(He would help her understand that Billy needed to fulfill his bargain with his dogs, to stay out there and chop that tree down by himself, that it was important to Billy.)

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**STEP 3 (15 minutes)**

Hand out the **QAR: Question Answer Response Strategy** worksheet. Have students work with a partner to find the answers to each question.

**STEP 4 (15 minutes)**

Pull the students together and go over their answers. Ask students what clues they found in the text to answer the **Think and Search** question. Ask how they came up with their answers for the **On Your Own** and **Author and You** questions. Discuss with the students how their own knowledge was combined with the text to come up with their answers.

**Assessment**

Observe students and collect their answer sheets at the end of the exercise for participation points. Students will see the connection between their background knowledge and what the author is trying to say as they combine the two to come up with their answers. They will see that some answers can be just lifted out of a text with no effort (and probably no learning), but that other answers they have to think about. As they call on their own experience it will help them make a personal connection to what is going on in the story.

**Summary and Segue:**

When the students make the connection between the text and their own experiences it will be the model for them to follow as they read the rest of the story. Wilson Rawls includes many instances in this story where the students can make a personal connection and see the deep set of values as an underlying foundation to every decision that is made. The next number of chapters deal with Billy and his dogs in many different hunting situations where the students can call on their experience and the things they’ve learned from the book so far to figure out why the characters responded the way they did and what Rawls is saying when the meaning is implied.
# Where are Answers to Questions Found?

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Where the Red Fern Grows
QAR Model Questions

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Question

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(Answer)

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“I’m not scolding,” he said, “We just thought maybe you had an accident or something.”

Question

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(Answer)

(His worry. When Billy didn’t go home he thought that Billy had had an accident.)

Dunn, BYU, 2009
On Your Own

Passage (pages 76-77)

Papa laughed and said, “Oh, I don’t think it’ll take that long, but it will take a while. I tell you what I’ll do. You take the mule and go get some breakfast. I’ll chop on it until you get back.”

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“Please, Papa,” I begged, “don’t make me quit. I just have to get that coon. If I don’t, my dogs won’t ever believe in me again.”

Question

Why wouldn’t Billy’s dogs ever believe in him again?

(Answer)

(These answers will vary depending on the experiences of the students. If they rely strictly on the information from earlier portions of the text they could answer something like the following: because he felt that he had made a bargain with his dogs and that bargain was between him and his dogs not his dad and his dogs. If he left the dogs would see him leave and know he wasn’t fulfilling his bargain, he was not keeping his word.)

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Question

How was Billy’s Papa going to take care of his mother?

(Answer)

(He would help her understand that Billy needed to fulfill his bargain with his dogs, to stay out there and chop that tree down by himself, that it was important to Billy.)
Answer the following questions. If you have any questions refer to the handout from class.

Right There

Passage (page 89)

I was a proud boy as I walked along in the twilight of the evening. I felt so good even my sore hands had stopped hurting. What boy wouldn’t have been proud? Hadn’t my little hounds treed and killed their first coon? Along about then I decided I was a full-fledged coon hunter.

Question

Why was Billy proud?

Answer

Think and Search

Passage (page 80)

He walked around the big sycamore, looking up. He whistled and said, “Boy, this is a big one all right.”

“Yes, it is, Grandpa,” I said. “It’s the biggest on in the river bottoms.”

Grandpa started chuckling. “That’s all right,” he said. “The bigger they are the harder they fall.”

“How are you going to make the coon stay in the tree, Grandpa?” I asked.

With a proud look on his face, he said, “That’s another one of my coon hunting tricks; learned it when I was a boy.”

Question

Why was Grandpa proud?

Answer
As the buggy wound its way up through the bottoms, Grandpa started talking. “You know, Billy,” he said, “about the tree-chopping of yours, I think it’s all right. In fact, I think it would be a good thing if all young boys had to cut down a big tree like that once in their life. It does something for them. It gives them determination and will power. That’s a good thing for a man to have. It goes a long way in his life. The American people have a lot of it. They have proved that, all down through history, but they could do with a lot more of it.

Question
How have Americans proved that they have determination and will power?

Answer

After Papa left, things were a little different. The tree didn’t look as big, and my ax wasn’t as heavy. I even managed to sing a little as I chopped away.

Question
Why were things a little different for Billy after his papa left?

Answer
Answer the following questions. If you have any questions refer to the handout from class.

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Question
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Answer
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With a proud look on his face, he said, “That’s another one of my coon hunting tricks; learned it when I was a boy.”

Question
Why was Grandpa proud?
Answer
Because Billy had cut down the biggest tree in the river bottoms

Author and You
Passage (page 82)
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Question
How have Americans proved that they have determination and will power?
Answer
This answer could be anything that the students come up with that has to do with Americans accomplishing things with determination and will power.

Author and You
Passage (page 77)
After Papa left, things were a little different. The tree didn’t look as big, and my ax wasn’t as heavy. I even managed to sing a little as I chopped away.

Question
Why were things a little different for Billy after his papa left?

Answer
Billy’s dad had let him stay to cut down the tree when at first he wanted him to come home and get some breakfast. He supported him in his desire to keep his bargain with his dogs.