

Read this selection to find out how Jeff tries to make friends with a wild horse. Then answer the questions that follow.

The Runaway Stallion

by Walt Morey

“This is where they found him,” Jeff insisted. He pointed to a maze of hoof prints. “There, see.”

“Sure,” Hank said. “From the gang that chased him. They probably run him clean outa the country. Up that far end where it narrows down, it cuts through the high ridge and goes into another big valley on the other side. I’ll bet that’s where your old horse is. I ain’t goin’ no farther. I gotta get home or I’ll catch it.”

Jeff looked around. He guessed his idea had been pretty foolish. “All right, we’ll go back.” He was turning to leave when he caught a flash of movement in the brush bordering the creek. The horse came up the bank and stood looking at them no more than fifty yards away. It was the first daylight look Jeff had of him and his breath caught in his throat. “Hank, there!” he whispered. “There!”

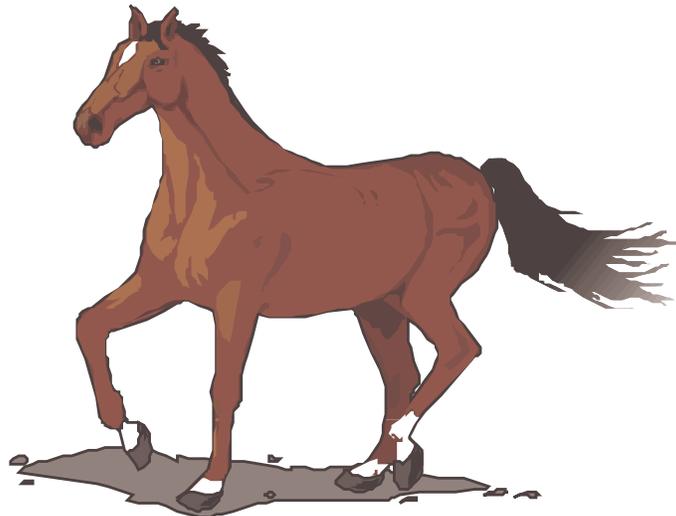
④ The horse stood head up, sharp ears pricked forward, nostrils flared as if he searched the slight breeze for some scent of them. Even at this distance Jeff could feel that every muscle was tuned to whirl and spring away. To Jeff he was like a leaping flame. He was thundering hooves shattering the silence of a moonlight night. He was a breath-catching glimpse of speed and plunging power in a blinding flash of rain-streaked lightning.

Then Hank said, “Well, there’s your old horse. Let’s see you walk up to ’im.”

Jeff started to walk forward slowly, his heart hammering. He held out the bucket of oats and began to talk to the horse. “Come on,” he tipped the bucket so the horse could see inside. “You know what this is. Come and get it. I’m not going to hurt you. Come on, boy. Come on.”

The horse’s ears jumped nervously back and forth as he listened. He pawed the ground and tossed his head impatiently. Jeff thought he was going to whirl and dash away. He stopped. He shook the bucket of oats and kept talking, softly, coaxingly, “You know what these are. Oats, boy. Oats.”

The horse nickered and to Jeff’s utter amazement began coming slowly toward him a step at a time. It seemed to Jeff he got bigger and bigger. The boy’s throat was suddenly dry. He couldn’t talk. He just stood there and held out the bucket of oats invitingly, and waited. Step by slow, careful step the animal drew near. Jeff heard the breath rushing through his nostrils. He smelled the warm steam of his rain-wet coat. His eyes were big and clear. He looked wary. He stopped in front of Jeff and stretched his neck. Eager lips reached for the bucket. Jeff started to put out his hand to touch him when with startling suddenness he whirled and was off. He leaped down the creek bank, raced through the water, and lunged up the opposite bank. He dashed across the open and disappeared into the heavy timber. Jeff looked after him feeling a little sick.



Hank came up beside him and said, "Well, he's gone. No use of us hanging around here. Come on, let's go home. I'm gettin' wet."

"What scared him?"

"Who knows what scares a horse. He got scared, that's all. That horse is half wild. Maybe he came up to you because you looked and acted different and he was curious. Then when he smelled you he knew it was man smell and took off."

"I almost had him," Jeff said. "I could almost touch him."

"Well, you ain't got him now," Hank said. "And the way he took off he ain't comin' back. Come on, let's go home."

Jeff put the bucket of oats on the ground in a clear spot where it could be seen.

"Maybe he'll come back for it." He turned reluctantly and followed Hank back out of the canyon. He said finally, "He sure can run, can't he?"

"Sure," Hank said, "all horses can run."

"But not like him. You said yourself that Blackie was the fastest horse in the valley. Well, Benny Wallace said this one ran him right off his legs." Jeff was determined Hank should be impressed with the big red horse.

"All right, he can run," Hank agreed. "What difference does it make if he runs fast or slow? He's just another horse."

Jeff didn't answer. Hank would never understand how he felt.

"The Runaway Stallion," one of three titles available at E. P. Dutton. The remaining nine titles available from Ooligan Press. E-mail: stovall@pdx.edu. Reprinted by permission of the Walt Morey Estate.

1. What was **most likely** the situation at the beginning of the selection?
- A The horse had gone looking for food and gotten lost.
 - B Some people had chased the horse away.
 - C The horse was safe on its owner's ranch.
 - D Jeff had chased the horse away.

2. Which **best** describes Hank's feelings about catching the horse?
- A He was eager to find the horse.
 - B He knew he could not find the horse.
 - C He did not care about finding the horse.
 - D He was ready to spend a lot of time looking for the horse.

3. In paragraph 4, why is the horse compared to a “leaping flame”?
- A to point out that the horse is in the woods
 - B to show that Jeff knew what flames looked like
 - C to help describe the movement of the horse
 - D to tell that the horse was very hot from exercise
4. How was Jeff able to get the horse to come close to him?
- A He threw a rope around its neck.
 - B He sang a soft song to it.
 - C He called to the horse loudly.
 - D He offered to feed the horse a bucket of oats.
5. Why did the horse **most likely** run through the water to the opposite bank?
- A He was afraid that Jeff was trying to capture him.
 - B He wanted the oats in the bucket.
 - C He needed to cool down in the water before eating.
 - D He was frightened by a noise Hank made.
6. Why did Jeff feel that Hank would never understand how he felt?
- A Hank did not need horses, but Jeff needed them for his farm.
 - B Hank was afraid of the big horse, but Jeff was used to him.
 - C Jeff liked being outdoors looking for animals, but Hank just wanted to go home.
 - D This horse was special to Jeff, but Hank thought that he was “just another horse.”
7. What will **most likely** happen next?
- A The horse will run away and never return.
 - B Jeff will go back and look for the horse again.
 - C Hank will return alone and try to find the horse.
 - D There will be a race between Blackie and the horse.

8. Why was Jeff's heart "hammering" as he walked up to the horse?
- A Jeff was afraid that the horse would hurt him.
 - B Jeff was nervous that the horse would run away.
 - C Jeff had just run a long distance and was tired.
 - D Jeff did not want to be embarrassed in front of Hank.

End of Set

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Answers to
Grade 4 Reading Comprehension Sample Items

Selection Title	Question Number	Correct Answer	Category	Thinking Skill	Objective Number
The Runaway Stallion	1	B	Interpretation	Analyzing	2.04
The Runaway Stallion	2	C	Interpretation	Analyzing	3.01
The Runaway Stallion	3	C	Critical Stance	Integrating	3.03
The Runaway Stallion	4	D	Cognition	Knowledge	2.02
The Runaway Stallion	5	A	Interpretation	Analyzing	2.04
The Runaway Stallion	6	D	Interpretation	Generating	3.01
The Runaway Stallion	7	B	Interpretation	Generating	2.02
The Runaway Stallion	8	B	Interpretation	Analyzing	3.01