

# BLESS THE BEASTS AND CHILDREN

Answer these questions in the necessary detail in your workbooks.

## Chapter 1

1. What is the tone of the opening paragraph? Quote words that suggest this tone.
2. How does the opening paragraph relate to Cotton's dream?
3. What do you learn in the italicized passage?

Why does the author use these italicized passages?

4. Which of the boys is missing, and who makes the discovery?
5. Name the seven characters who appear in this chapter.

## Chapter 2

6. What or who are "Ooms"?
7. What is the motto of Box Canyons Boys Camp? What is the meaning of this motto?
8. What was the major way the camp attempted to achieve its goal?

## Chapter 3

9. What is Lally 1's reaction to unhappiness or frustration?
10. List the six groups by competitive place, name, and trophy.

How are these names and trophies assigned?

11. Explain the symbolism of the unusual headgear Cotton and the boys wear.

## Application

Think of a slogan or motto for a group to which you belong (school, sports team, social or religious club). Write a paragraph. Identify and describe the slogan/motto. Also, tell why the slogan/motto is appropriate.

# • TEACHER'S GUIDE

## Bless the Beasts and Children

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### BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Glendon Swarthout was born in Pinckney, Michigan, in 1918. He received both a bachelor's and a master's degree in English from the University of Michigan. During World War II, he served as a sergeant in the army, receiving two battle stars. Later he returned to school, taking his doctorate at Michigan State University. Swarthout has combined two careers throughout his professional life. On the one hand, he has taught English at several universities, including the University of Maryland, and most recently Arizona State. But he has also written eighteen novels (four with his wife Kathryn), most of them westerns. The Swarthouts live in Scottsdale, Arizona, near the location of *Bless the Beasts and Children*.

### MAJOR WORKS

Among Swarthout's many books are several which became successful films. These include *They Came to Cordura* (1958) and *The Shootist* (1975), both of which are westerns, as well as *Where the Boys Are* (1960). He has also published many stories in such popular magazines as *Cosmopolitan*, *Esquire*, and *The Saturday Evening Post*.

### CHIEF CHARACTERISTICS

Glendon Swarthout's novels feature vigorous, straightforward plots, exciting action, and vivid description. Although *Bless the Beasts and Children* shares many qualities with Swarthout's other books, it is distinctive in its focus on young people as characters and in its use of flashbacks to interrupt the flow of the narrative and reveal the psychological problems of the Bedwetters. *Bless the Beasts and Children* is also notable for the diversity of its characters. Though each of the six boys comes from a similar affluent but emotionally deprived background, each is also an individual in his own right. The violent, the larcenous, the homesick, and the awkward all share a common humanity.

Like all Swarthout's fiction, *Bless the Beasts and Children* maintains an optimistic view of life despite its recognition of danger and defeat. Though its characters do not wholly succeed, they prove to themselves that their lives can be meaningful and that they can take control of their own fates instead of accepting passively what life has done to them.

### RELATED READING

- *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, by Ken Kesey (1962). A group of inmates in a mental hospital fight for their dignity against an oppressive head nurse.
- *Lord of the Flies*, by William Golding (1954). Marooned on a desert island, a group of schoolboys discover the sources of good and evil in their own natures.
- *Catcher in the Rye*, by J.D. Salinger (1951). Expelled from his exclusive prep school, Holden Caulfield sets out on an odyssey of self-discovery in New York City.
- *Deathwatch*, by Robb White (1972). A young man finds himself the object of a grim hunt in the desert.

### POSTREADING WRITING ASSIGNMENT

The Bedwetters are described as "dings" by Wheaties. In a well developed essay, define a "ding" as this term applies to this crowd, give your opinion regarding whether or not the Bedwetters are indeed "dings," and judge whether or not they deserve what happens to them.