

THE BEEF PRINCESS OF PRACTICAL COUNTY

a yearling book

by Michelle Houts

Student's guide from:



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INTRODUCTION

The Beef Princess of Practical County tackles some unique issues facing agriculture today...from the perspective of a 7th grade girl her first time showing cattle at the county fair.

In this companion guide you will find "POWER WORDS" and "VO-COW-BULARY". These are words from each chapter that may be unfamiliar to students. Students can define each; use them in sentences or work to use them in writing. "POWER WORDS" are more traditional vocabulary words, where as "VO-COW-BULARY" are words associated with agriculture. Not all chapters have unusual vocabulary words, so in some cases there is not a vocabulary section included.

There are "QUESTIONS" to use as discussion starters or as reading checks and writing prompts called "WRITE AWAY" to encourage students to write more about a specific topic.

"ART-WISE" encourages students to use the art portion of Language Arts to research and integrate art into reading time.

"LESSON EXTENDERS" have also been added with links to other Agriculture in the Classroom activities. Some questions, writing prompts and art activities build on previous examples. Teacher might consider having students using special notebooks or folders to store all materials for this book for easy reference.

PROLOGUE

POWER WORDS

prologue
arena
comprehend
inevitable

YO-COW-BULARY

steer
lead rope
straw
Shorthorn (breed of cattle)

QUESTIONS

1. What purpose does the prologue serve?
2. After reading the prologue, name the main characters.
3. Skim ahead and notice the chapter names. What name would you give the prologue/chapter?

WRITE AWAY

- A. After reading the prologue, skimming the chapter titles and examining the front cover--write your version of the story. What do you think will happen through the novel?

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

- A. Visit the Indiana Beef Council website: www.indianabeef.org

CHAPTER 1: “Granddad’s Pasture”

POWER WORDS

teetering
county seat
doubt
sweltering
exhibitors
skittish

YO-COW-BULARY

pasture
acres
herdmates
grange
hay
Angus (breed of cattle)

QUESTIONS

1. Define foreshadowing.
2. After reading the Prologue, what could be the outcome of the Practical County Fair Beef Contest?
3. Why is there so little pasture ground in northern Indiana?
4. Practical County is a fictitious location. Given the description of its location, what area would you think it could be located near?

WRITE AWAY

1. Describe the difference between Libby and Frannie.
2. Page 7 describes fair food. Have you ever had fair food? How would you describe it?
3. Hay can be baled in round or square bales. Discuss why it might be baled in different forms.
4. Why do you think farmers keep such accurate measurement of rainfall? It frustrates Libby. Why do you think it is important?

ART-WISE

1. Libby describes the old home place like a folk art painting. Research folk art painting and style and draw your interpretation of this location.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

1. Contact your local county Farm Bureau, Extension office, or your high school's FFA chapter for a guest speaker about what farmers grow in Indiana.
2. Locate Marshall County, a real Indiana county that served as the author's inspiration for the fictitious Practical County, on an Indiana map; then do a web search and identify 5 facts about this part of Indiana.

CHAPTER 2: Fair Calves Don't Need Names

POWER WORDS

bellowing
scowl
panache
gusto
vehemence

YO-COW-BULARY

calf
corncrib
granary
chicken house
pipe gate
bucket babies
crop rotation
bovine

QUESTIONS

1. Carol Ann's dog has a unique name---Phydeaux. How would you pronounce this? How would you typically spell this?
2. Carol Ann and Libby are very different---describe how they are different and how they are alike and how they make their friendship work.
3. When deciding names, what Presidents do you think Carol Ann was describing?
4. According to this chapter, why don't calves need names?

WRITE AWAY

- A. Frannie has an active imagination and powerful vocabulary. Give examples of each and describe why you think this is the case.
- B. Mom and dad have different physical characteristics. Describe these characteristics and who each child resembles.

ART-WISE

- A. Libby didn't know what panache was, do you? Draw a picture of Libby and Carol Ann in the barn during that discussion. Be sure to include the eye-roll!

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

- A. Check out the Corn and Soybean Ag Mags available through the American Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture.
- B. Research which U.S. Presidents were farmers.
 - a. You can start with: www.bonappetit.com/entertaining-style/trends-news/slideshow/president-farmers/?slide=1

CHAPTER 3: Meet the Darlings

POWER WORDS

precious
indestructible
scrawny
manicured
perennial

YO-COW-BULARY

dualies
pitchfork

QUESTIONS

1. Why did Mr. and Mrs. Jim Darling choose the names they did for their daughters?
2. How does the Ryan's farm differ from the Darlings' farm?
3. What would it be like to live in a small town where everyone knows each other so well?
4. What vocabulary makes it obvious that the Darling girls don't spend much time in the barn?
5. Define alliteration.
6. The author uses several examples of alliteration. Describe some of these.

WRITE AWAY

- A. "Ohma was definitely a different Darling." Describe Ohma and how Libby knows her so well.

ART-WISE

- A. Make sure you have included a description of your porch on your folk-art style painting from chapter 1.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

- A. Visit the Indiana 4-H website and research the requirements for the Beef cattle project that 4-Hers can participate in.
 - a. www.four-h.purdue.edu/livestock/Beef.cfm

CHAPTER 4: Stubborn As A Mule

POWER WORDS

startle
stubborn

YO-COW-BULARY

mow
halter
feed bunk

QUESTIONS

1. Describe what mom does for a living and what she does around the farm.
2. What does it mean when Libby says this calf thing would be a 'Dad thing' and not a 'Mom thing'?
3. Libby seems to help out a lot on the farm. What are some of her responsibilities?

WRITE AWAY

- A. Piggy and Mule are developing distinct personalities. Describe each.

ART-WISE

- A. The author paints pictures with words. She describes Mule's eyes as having the color of a dark blue summer night. How would that look on a black calf?

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

- A. Cattle are large animals that require a lot of care each day. Visit www.factsaboutbeef.com/category/animal-care/ to learn more about how farmers care for their animals.
 - a. You can also check out *Basic Show Steer Feeding and Care* handbook created by Utah State University Extension.
http://extension.usu.edu/files/publications/publication/AG_4HLivestock_2005-05.pdf

CHAPTER 5: Autumn Surprise

POWER WORDS

technology
vocational
ambled
self-absorbed

YO-COW-BULARY

harvest
corn
soybeans
barn clothes

QUESTIONS

1. What is comfort food? What is comfort food for you?
2. What does it mean to 'bring in' the corn?
3. How many chores are there associated with keeping an animal on the farm? How is this different than a house pet?
4. Libby says 'technology that made farming more efficient had also changed the face of the family farm.' What does she mean?

WRITE AWAY

- A. Chapter 5 is called 'Autumn Surprise', what was the 'Autumn Surprise'? Be sure to include all the details about that surprise!
- B. Some say that our current school calendars were set-up to help support agriculture, because children could be home to help on the farm during planting and harvest. Would you support moving to a full-year school calendar since you are likely not involved in planting and harvest? What changes would need to be made to your school to allow this to happen?

ART-WISE

- A. Create a cookbook of your favorite comfort foods or make it a class project and have each of your classmates bring a recipe for one of their favorites.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

- A. Ronnie makes a surprise visit home from college because another student in his dorm was making a trip to Wabash, Indiana. Using an Indiana roadmap, calculate the number of miles from West Lafayette, where Purdue University is located to Wabash, Indiana. What route might they have taken? (p. 40)

CHAPTER 6: Soup for Thanksgiving

POWER WORDS

voracious
bustling
enormous
emphasizing
frail
sarcasm

intensely
teetered
inevitable
screeching
deceit
ornery

QUESTIONS

1. What is a 'hopper' that Mom makes Frannie?
2. Why is everyone shocked to see the Darlings in a soup kitchen?
3. Why are the Darlings serving at Thanksgiving?

WRITE AWAY

- A. The Ryan's have several traditions: sitting in a specific pew at church; how they open their Christmas presents; and working in a soup kitchen on Thanksgiving. Write about traditions you have as a family.
- B. The Darling sisters could be described as bullies. Agree or disagree with this statement. Give examples to back up your position.

ART-WISE

- A. Create a poster advertising help wanted for the soup kitchen Libby and her family volunteer at each Thanksgiving.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- A. The Ryan family travels to Indianapolis to serve Thanksgiving lunch to those in need. Calculate how many miles and how long it would take for you to travel to Indianapolis from your hometown. What major interstates and highways would you take for your trip?
- B. Wheeler Mission, www.wmm.org, is a well-known location for people in need, including the homeless to visit for help. Research this mission and others like it in your own community to discover what resources are available for people who need a helping hand. Here are some questions to ask to get you started: How did they get started? Who do they serve? How are they funded? Who can volunteer to help?

CHAPTER 7: Christmas at Ryansmeade

POWER WORDS

emphatic
precocious
Boilermaker
resentment

YO-COW-BULARY

bellow

QUESTIONS

1. In a discussion with Frannie, Libby tells herself to “pick your battles.” What does that mean?
2. Why does Ronnie worry about Libby naming her calves?

WRITE AWAY

- A. Why do you think Libby's dad asks her brother Ronnie for his opinion on Libby's calves' feed rations and not Libby?

ART-WISE

- A. Create a picture of the Ryan family's Christmas Dinner table, complete with extra place settings for Franny's imaginary children.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- A. Create a recipe booklet of traditional holiday foods.
- B. Purdue University's mascot is a “Boilermaker”, which Libby's Granddad and Dad are both alumni of. Visit <http://www.purduesports.com/trads/what-is-boilermaker.html> to find out how Purdue might have come to have Boilermaker as their mascot.

CHAPTER 8: Learning to Walk

POWER WORDS

insidious
cantankerous
contaminated
reluctant
obstinate

YO-COW-BULARY

BSE

QUESTIONS

1. Carol Ann is familiar with the farm, but where does she get most of her information about BSE?
2. What does Libby know about BSE?
3. Describe the barn clothes of both Carol Ann and Libby.
4. How does dad get Mule to move when Carol Ann can't?
5. Dad has a list of qualities it takes to be a champion. How is his list different than Libby's?

WRITE AWAY

- A. Libby considers Mule as champion material for a brief moment. Describe why she is confident that Piggy is the best show animal.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- A. Learn more about the beef industry.
 - a. Check out: www.explorebeef.org and www.beefusa.org
- B. Learn more about different cattle breeds.
 - a. Check out: www.thebeefsite.com/breeds/

CHAPTER 9: Jung Chows and a Really Bad Idea

CHAPTER 10: The Day That Never Should Happened.

POWER WORDS

unpredictable
pathetic

YO-COW-BULARY

premium
vet
flank
rice brush

QUESTIONS

1. Why are farm prices unpredictable? (Chapter 9)
2. Why does Mom want Libby to enter the Beef Princess contest? (Chapter 9)
3. Describe the spring weather in Indiana. (Chapter 10)
4. What does it mean that Susan Hansen is one of the three vets at the local practice? (Chapter 10)

WRITE AWAY

- A. What do you think Libby really thinks of the idea of entering the Beef Princess contest? (Chapter 9)
- B. Chapter 10 is filled with activity. Libby has a harsh reaction to her mother when she suggests shopping. Describe why you think she is so strong in her words. Be sure to include with whom she shares her true feelings.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

- A. Invite a local farmer to come to class to speak about grain and livestock markets. Why does the price change? Who changes it? How often? What can farmers do to help plan for changes (fluctuations) in the grain and livestock market. You can find a local farmer by contacting your County Farm Bureau office of Indiana Farm Bureau.

CHAPTER 11: Thinking Practically

POWER WORDS

antics
disposition
insensitive
forte
travesty
atrocious
logical
mockery
vicious

YO-COW-BULARY

freezer beef

QUESTIONS

1. Why does Susan think Piggy won't gain much more weight?
2. How does Carol Ann reach her decision that Piggy should be sold?
3. How does Carol Ann react to the suggestion of entering the Beef Princess contest?

WRITE AWAY

- A. In this chapter, Libby refers to Piggy as her "pet" but her dad talks about how the farm raises good quality beef. How do you distinguish between pets and livestock?
- B. Carol Ann doesn't react to Libby about Piggy or the Princess contests the way Libby thinks she will. Describe how she reacts and why you think she reacts the way she does.

CHAPTER 12: This Little Piggy Went to Market

CHAPTER 13: Feathers and Fluffy Stuff

POWER WORDS

boutique
robust
cooed
tulle
coaxed
exasperated
technique

YO-COW-BULARY

slaughter
show stick

QUESTIONS

1. Libby thinks Mom gives a 'typical mother answer.' What does this mean?
2. Describe how Libby says goodbye to Piggy.
3. At the end of Chapter 12, Mule acts like Piggy. Why is this surprising to Libby?
4. Why does Libby wish the storeowner wouldn't refer to her as "darling" and "precious"?
5. What is wrong with the way Libby is showing Mule?

WRITE AWAY

- A. Libby replays a conversation with Dad about why cows don't need names. Describe how this conversation comes to Libby and what she is thinking about now.
- B. Ronnie discusses how it is important to remain calm and in control. Why do you think it is important to remain calm and in control when showing an animal?

CHAPTER 12: This Little Piggy Went to Market

CHAPTER 13: Feathers and Fluffy Stuff

CONTINUED. . .

ART WISE

- A. Page 107 describes the pile on the floor of the dressing room looking like a clown had melted on the floor. Take a minute and draw the scene of Libby and her dresses.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

- A. At the beginning of chapter 13, Libby plans to go shopping with her mom and Carol Ann. Locate Fort Wayne, Indianapolis, and Warsaw on an Indiana map. How long would it take for you to travel from your hometown to these three Indiana cities? What counties are these cities in?

CHAPTER 14: The Clock Started Ticking

CHAPTER 15: A Girl Thing

POWER WORDS

anticipation
contender
sustain

YO-COW-BULARY

show soap

QUESTIONS

1. How does the way Libby views the Princess contest differ from the Lil Darling's view?
2. Describe how Mule has developed a personality.
3. What does Dad tell Libby when she asks to keep Mule after the fair and the reason for raising cattle?

WRITE AWAY

- A. What do you think: Can Libby part with Mule?

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

- A. What does it take to get a cow in show condition? Check out www.sullivanupply.com for cattle grooming supplies.
- B. On page 120, Libby talks about how hot Indiana summers can be. Using the IClimate website through Purdue University research what influences Indiana's climate. <http://iclimate.org/narrative.asp>

CHAPTER 16: Independence Day

CHAPTER 17: Avocado and Alfalfa Sprouts

POWER WORDS

YO-COW-BULARY

vegetarian
vegan
lacto-vegetarian
lacto-ovo vegetarian

QUESTIONS

1. Why does Carol Ann say Libby becomes a vegetarian?
2. What is Libby talking about when she says there isn't a spider in the barn weaving messages over Mule's head?
3. Why did Libby set Mule free?

WRITE AWAY

- A. Describe how Independence Day is "America's Hamburger Holiday".
- B. List and describe all the ways you use animal products and by-products in your daily life.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

- A. Create a taste test of new and unusual food products. Write about your experience.

CHAPTER 18: Granddad's Secret

CHAPTER 19: Another Man's Treasure

POWER WORDS

self-sufficiency
legacy
intentions
confrontation
pathetic

YO-COW-BULARY

QUESTIONS

1. How does Libby adapt to her new eating lifestyle?
2. How does Libby get water from the pump?
3. Another Man's Treasure is a second-hand store. What is the beginning of that saying and how does it fit to describe this store?
4. Describe how Libby feels about finding a dress.
5. What does Libby mean when she says her enthusiasm has been 'zapped'?

WRITE AWAY

- A. On page 141 Granddad talks to Libby about his heritage. Describe what is talking about. What is your heritage?
- B. These two chapters might be the most important in the book—Libby finds out things about her family and herself. Does Granddad's reaction surprise you? Describe what you think in detail.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

- A. Create your own family tree and research your heritage with help from www.grandparents-day.com/html/family_tree-nv.html.

CHAPTER 20: Off to the Fair

CHAPTER 21: A Very Long Day

POWER WORDS

bloated
gondola
multitude
cohabiting
scenarios
commotion

YO-COW-BULARY

show box
bovine

QUESTIONS

1. Describe how the Darlings participate in the fair.
2. What do you think Ohma's problem really is? Why is she so cross all the time?
3. What does Libby notice about the Darling steer?
4. How does Carol Ann defend Libby and help her mother?
5. Why does Libby feel sorry for Ohma and her steer?

WRITE AWAY

- A. Dad asks Libby if she has any doubts. Of course she has doubts. Describe her doubts and think back to the beginning of the book for other examples. You might refer to chapter 8 (page 72) for Libby's thoughts of Mule at the fair.
- B. The author completely describes the bumper car ride. Write about your favorite amusement park, fair or festival ride. Try to use as many adjectives as possible.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- A. Indiana has a proud heritage of county fairs. Research your county's fair or other festivals held in local communities.
- B. Indiana has one of the largest state fairs in the country. Research the Indiana State Fair and create a list and description of 10 attractions the fair hosts each year.

CHAPTER 22: A Strange Encounter

CHAPTER 23: Chaos in the Ring

POWER WORDS

allegedly
chaos
unsympathetic

YO-COW-BULARY

underbelly
prod
class winner
Hereford

QUESTIONS

1. What really happened to Ohma's steer?
2. Why does Ohma feel she can't live up to her sisters?
3. How did Ohma and Libby become friendly?
4. Lil Darling doesn't have much control in the ring. Describe the reaction of her mom, dad and sisters to her predicament in the ring.
5. How does Libby handle winning her class with Mule?

WRITE AWAY

- A. The fair was unnaturally silent at night. Write about an experience you have had in a situation similar to Libby's fair encounter.
- B. In chapter 19 (page 150), Precious accuses Libby of poisoning Piggy by giving him the wrong feed. Describe the irony in this twist of the plot.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

- A. Bloat is a real problem with cattle and other livestock with multiple chamber stomachs like horses, sheep and goats. Check out more information on bloat. www.thecattlesite.com/diseaseinfo/199/bloat-in-cattle.

CHAPTER 24: A Fair Fight

CHAPTER 25: The Final Drive

POWER WORDS

massive
counterfeit
triumphant
fidget

YO-COW-BULARY

grand champion
reserve champion
rosette

QUESTIONS

1. Libby catches Precious and her family cheating. How does Precious threaten Libby if she tells the truth?
2. Why do you think Ohma turned her sister in?
3. Although Josh wins Grand Champion, how does Libby feel about being Reserve?
4. What does Dad mean when he says showing cattle can indeed be a girl thing?
5. What is going to happen on Saturday to all the cattle shown in the fair?

WRITE AWAY

- A. Write about how much things have changed between Mule and Libby. In chapter 25 she calls them “a team, a super duo”. How different is that from the beginning of the book?

CHAPTER 26: The End of an Era

POWER WORDS

poise

YO-COW-BULARY

QUESTIONS

1. Why is Libby so nervous with the pageant but not in the show ring?
2. How does Lil Darling answer her question about the beef industry?
3. How does Lil Darling accept not winning the pageant contest?
4. Mom says "Libby, we are family. Win or lose, we support you." Who else has shown that support for Libby?
5. How does Libby decide to honor Mule and Piggy?
6. Chapter 26 ends with the hardest part yet to come. What is the hardest part?

WRITE AWAY

- A. Libby is nervous with her answer about corn and beef. Take some time and write your answer to the question listed below. Use reliable sources from the Internet to support your argument.

Question: More and more corn being raised by American farmers is going to manufacturing rather than to feed livestock. What are these new uses for corn and what can farmers do to keep their feed costs at an acceptable level?

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

- A. www.explorebeef.org offers more information about the Beef Industry. Also check out the Indiana Corn Marketing Council www.incorn.org for information about Indiana corn and its uses!

CHAPTER 27: Going, Going.....

POWER WORDS

inevitable
instinctively

YO-COW-BULARY

QUESTIONS

1. Describe a "chatterly buzz".
2. What does an auctioneer's voice sound like?
3. What is a 'seller's song'?
4. Why is Libby so impatient with the auctioneer?
5. Why was Lil Darling trying to cry?
6. What surprise did Libby learn about her mom?

WRITE AWAY

- A. When Piggy went away, Libby couldn't bring herself to take him to the trailer. She is able to with Mule. Describe the change in Libby.
- B. Mom describes what Libby learned from the steers and what the steers learned from Libby. Write about something that has taught you a lesson and where you might have taught a lesson to someone else.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

Watch a video of a livestock auction on YouTube or other video streaming site.

CHAPTER 28: The Future of Ryansmeade

POWER WORDS

YO-COW-BULARY

QUESTIONS

1. Explain what Libby meant when she said "Ohma Darling was proof positive that a little kindness could go a long way."
2. How did Mule make a contribution to Libby's education funds?

WRITE AWAY

- A. At the end of the story, as Libby picks out two new calves, she tells her mother that show cattle don't need names. Describe how this is different from the beginning. What has changed in Libby?