

The When the Cowboy Rides Away

Study Guide for Students

**Based on
WHEN THE
COWBOY RIDES AWAY**

**A Novel by
Molly Noble Bull**

Elk Lake Publishing

When the Cowboy Rides Away Study Guide for Students

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A Novel by Molly Noble Bull

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Part 1 ABOUT THE STUDY GUIDE

Attention, parochial school teachers, home school teachers, students and others:

Jeanette Pierce's study guide is based on *When the Cowboy Rides Away*, a romantic, western novel with a Christian message, by Molly Noble Bull. Set on a ranch in South Texas in 1880, the novel tells the story of Maggie Gallagher, a twenty-one-year-old single girl and her struggles to run the family ranch alone while raising her younger sister and her orphaned two-year old nephew after the death of both of her parents nearly three years earlier.

After Alex Lancaster, a handsome stranger, is shot and seriously wounded on her property, Maggie, as a Christian, takes him into her home and nurses him back to health despite all her other chores. She struggles to maintain her Christian values as she finds herself falling in love with this handsome stranger. How could she know that he has secrets that could break her heart?

The purpose of the student guide is to provide the student with the necessary tools and information to complete most of the activities based on the novel with very little help from the teacher.

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What this study guide contains

- ◆ Background information about Texas at the time of the setting of the novel
- ◆ Study questions for each chapter to guide the reader through the plot
- ◆ Vocabulary list, designed for vocabulary development, especially words borrowed from the Spanish language
- ◆ Higher level thinking questions re: structure of the novel for oral discussion
- ◆ Writing assignments
 - How to Write a Character Sketch
 - How to Write an Article
- ◆ Long list of character traits for students to consult in writing character sketch
- ◆ Making lye soap, a fun activity that mixes science with literature and comes naturally from the novel

JEANETTE'S BIO

Jeanette Jones Pierce was born on a farm in southwest Arkansas and grew up among hay fields, bovines, and pines. She received her BS degree in education with a major in English from Southern State College (now Southern Arkansas University), Magnolia, Arkansas. She later received her MA in English from Sam Houston State University in Huntsville, Texas.

All of her teaching has been in The Lone Star State. She retired after teaching English in public schools for twenty-seven years. Then she taught English in Christian high schools for three years, two of which were at the Presbyterian boarding school in Kingsville, Texas, established in 1911 by Henrietta King, wife of Richard King, the millionaire King Ranch icon. Finally she taught freshman writing at Texas A & M University at Kingsville, Texas for two years.

Jeanette has been married for more than fifty years to John Pierce, and they have two adult children and five grandchildren.

MOLLY'S HISTORICAL NOTES

When the Cowboy Rides Away by Molly Noble Bull is a western novel with a touch of romance set in the ranching country of South Texas in 1880 near the Gulf coast. The two study guides written by Jeanette Pierce are based on the novel, *When the Cowboy Rides Away*.

The area of South Texas mentioned in the novel was once called the Nueces Strip, named for the Nueces River. It was also called the Wild Horse Desert, and the entire area has a hot and humid semi-tropical climate. Yet some of the largest ranches in the country, if not the world, are located in the area of southern Texas where this story takes place.

The Famous King Ranch is said to be larger than the state of Rhode Island, and today it is headquartered in the town of Kingsville or about forty-five miles southwest of Corpus Christi. Twenty-five or so miles farther south from Kingsville is the headquarters of the huge Kenedy Ranch.

Many of the cowhands on these ranches came from Mexico. Even today, some of them and their families practice a kind of religion that combines Christianity and witchcraft known as the curandero or the curandera.

In 1880 and even later, it was possible to travel on horseback or on

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foot from the area where the King Ranch is located all the way to the Rio Grande River without seeing a town of any kind, simply by journeying from one ranch to the next. The cowboy is fading into American history, along with the frontier spirit that made that time and place so special. However, those that visit South Texas can find it again—if they know where to look.

MOLLY'S BIO AND MORE

Molly Noble Bull's, *When the Cowboy Rides Away*, is pure fiction. Yet it's more than that. The novel is a window into the early life of author, Molly Noble Bull, because like Sarah in the novel, Molly spent part of her growing up years on a sixty-thousand-acre cattle ranch in South Texas. When Molly writes about ranching in Texas, she writes from memory and experience.

Her father and her grandfather were ranch managers, real Texas cowboys, and she married her college sweetheart, Charles Bull. All three of their grown sons are involved in ranching in Texas today, and all six grandchildren are involved in 4-H and/or Future Farmers of America.

Molly has an excellent long-term memory. The scene where Sarah and Maggie sit up on the top plank of the round pen, watching the ranch cowboys break wild horses, partly came from something that actually happened when Molly was about six years old, and there are other such scenes throughout the book.

Seth is a Bible name, and Molly likes to use Bible names when naming her characters. In another of Molly's romantic western romances, *The Rogue's Daughter*, the hero's name is Seth Matthews, and one of Molly's ancestors was also named Seth.

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Molly has a degree in elementary and early childhood education with a minor in art from what today is called Texas A & M University at Kingsville. Unlike most published authors who only write in one genre, Molly writes in several—everything from short stories for young children, to Christian romance novels to scary Christian Gothic novels and mysteries.

Molly has published with Zondervan, Harlequin's Love Inspired, Westbow Press, Creation House, Tsaba House and now Elk Lake Publishing. Tsaba House published **Sanctuary**, Molly's long historical set in France, England and Scotland in the 1700's, and the novel won the 2008 Gayle Wilson Award for Excellence in the inspirational category and also tied for first place in another national contest that year. However, Tsaba House is no longer in business.

When the Cowboy Rides Away has two companions, two study guides written by Jeanette Pierce and based on the novel—one guide for teachers and one for students. Molly is calling the three books together the *When the Cowboy Rides Away* Package.

- ◆ *When the Cowboy Rides Away* by Molly Noble Bull
- ◆ *When the Cowboy Rides Away Study Guide for Teachers* by Jeanette Pierce
- ◆ *When the Cowboy Rides Away Study Guide for Students* by Jeanette Pierce

Gatehaven, Molly's Christian Gothic historical with a strong Christian message, won the 2013 Creation House Fiction Writing Contest as a manuscript out of thirty-five entries and was published in March, 2014. Jeanette Pierce also wrote study guides for teachers and students based on *Gatehaven*.

Zondervan Publishing House first published *The Rogue's Daughter*

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is 1986, and it was reprinted and came out as a Forever Romance from Guideposts in the nineteen nineties.

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Background Information

NOTE TO STUDENT: Find a good map of Texas. Locate the cities of San Antonio, Corpus Christi, and Brownsville, Texas. Also locate the Gulf of Mexico, the Rio Grande River, and the Nueces River. Draw a colored line around the area known as the Wild Horse Desert.

Texas has been described as loud, boastful, rough, proud, and many other descriptive terms; but it has earned those descriptions after fighting numerous battles with Mexico in order to first become a republic and finally a state. The revolution, according to “Texas Timeline,” began in “October 1835, when Texans repulsed a detachment of Mexican Cavalry at the Battle of Gonzales” (1). Between October 9, 1835 and December 11, 1835, four battles had been waged against the Mexicans. As recorded in “Texas Timeline,” on “March 2 1836, the Texas Declaration of Independence was signed by members of the Convention of 1836. An *ad interim* government was formed for the newly created Republic of Texas” (1). The most widely known battle was the Battle of the Alamo where, according to “Texas Timeline,” “Texans under Col. William B. Travis were overwhelmed on March 6, 1836, by the Mexican army after a two-week siege at the Alamo in San Antonio, ... (1) but the most

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important battle for the Texans was the Battle of San Jacinto, on “April 21, 1836, where the Texans under Sam Houston routed the Mexican forces of Santa Anna, winning Texas independence in one of the most decisive battles in history” (“Texas Timeline” 1).

Even though Texas had won its independence, its relationship with Mexico remained rocky. Texas and Mexico had disagreements about whether the Texas boundary should be at the Nueces River or the Rio Grande, but the Mexican American War in 1846, brought about as a result of disputes over claims to Texas boundaries, settled the dispute fixing Texas’ southern boundary at the Rio Grande River (“Texas Timeline” 3).

Texas’ threat to secede from the United States during the Obama administration was not the first time they threatened secession. In fact, according to “Texas Timeline,” on “February 1, 1861, Texas actually seceded from the Federal Union following a 171 to 6 vote by the Secession Convention” (3). “Following the defeat of the Confederate States of America in the American Civil War, Texas was forced to rejoin the United States of America. Union army troops officially occupied the state on June 19, 1865; the date is now commemorated as the holiday Juneteenth, recognizing the official emancipation of slaves in the state” (“History of Texas (1865-99)” 1). According to the same source, on “March 30, 1870, the United States readmitted Texas into the Union, although Texas did not meet all the formal requirements for readmission” (2).

One of the first tasks Texas pursued upon becoming a state was to establish colleges to teach not only “scientific and classical studies including military tactics but also branches of learning related to agriculture and mechanical arts ... (“History of Texas (1865-99)” 2). According to the same source, “The Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas, known as Texas A.M.C. and later Texas A&M University, was

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established by the state legislature on April 17, 1871 as the state's first public institution of higher education. The college officially opened five years later. In 1883, the state legislature established the University of Texas at Austin, Texas" (2)

"The abundance of longhorn cattle in South Texas and the return of Confederate soldiers to a poor reconstruction economy marked the beginning of the era of Texas trail drives to northern markets" ("Texas Timeline" 3). According to the author of "Cattle Drives Started in Earnest After the Civil War," "No single endeavor has marked the image of Texas in the national mind more than the cattle drive. For more than a century, writers have romanticized the work and the life of the cowboy" (1). But one of the most recent novels is the Pulitzer Prize winning *Lonesome Dove*, by Houston author, Larry McMurtry, published in 1985. It was also made into a movie and a TV miniseries.

According to the article, "Cattle Drives Started in Earnest After the Civil War," "Cattle have been raised in Texas from the time the Spanish attempted to establish missions and domesticate the Indians, beginning in the mid-18th century" (1).

The article, "Cattle Drives Started in Earnest After the Civil War," also stated that "Cattle drives to northern and western markets, and later to railroad-loading facilities, started in earnest in 1866, when an estimated 260,000 head of cattle crossed the Red River. The drives were conducted for only about 20 years, becoming unnecessary with the advent of the railroads and refrigeration in the 1880s" (2). But according to the same source, the legendary cattle drive has "left us with a legacy of images that will be with us for generations: of sun-burned cowboys in their distinctive chaps and wide-brimmed hats, clouds of dust kicked up by bawling cattle, of the wheeling and darting of the quarter horses keeping the critters in line, of the crusty chuck wagon cook making biscuits in a Dutch oven over an open fire. The cattle drive, more than

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any other entity, epitomizes the romanticism of the ‘Old West’”(3).

Not only does Texas, especially South Texas, have a love affair with cattle and cattle drives, they also have a strong attachment to their horses, especially wild horses. Givens, in his article, “Chasing Mustangs in the Wild Horse Desert,” identifies “the land between the Nueces and Rio Grande ... as the Wild Horse Desert because of herds of wild horses—mustangs, or *mesteños*—of vast number and great beauty”(1). No one seems sure how they came to South Texas or exactly how long they have been there, but Givens states that “many accounts say they were the offspring of horses lost during Spanish expeditions to Texas in the 17th century. They were left behind because they were lame or too weak to travel, but they recovered and adapted to the open grasslands of South Texas and spread across the coastal plains after generations of breeding” (1). Givens continues with “where that might be right to some extent, there were wild herds in northern Mexico that no doubt drifted across the Rio Grande, extending their range north and east and giving an identity to what maps would show as the Wild Horse Desert” (1). “Blas de la Garza Falcón, the governor of Coahuila, in 1735 saw huge herds of mustangs on his way to the Rio Grande, and he believed they were descended from horses that escaped during stampedes and turned wild” (Givens 1). In addition, Givens reports that “Father Juan Augustin Morfi in 1777 saw mustang north of the Rio Grande ‘so abundant that their trails make the country, utterly uninhabited by people, look as if it were the most populated in the world’” (1). Also in his article, Givens recounts how J.W. Moses described the mustangers’ method of catching herds. They would build a corral with an opening that could be closed quickly. Then they would build an open V with the closed end open and against the opening in the corral. They covered the walls of the open V with brush so that when they chased the mustangs toward the corral, they would naturally go through the open V and into the corral. A

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mustanger team consisted of several men, each man with a specific job. One man would stay behind the herd to keep them moving toward the V. Once they ran into the corral, another man would wave a white blanket to keep them from running back out of the corral while a cutter would cut off the horses' escape by sliding mesquite poles across the opening of the corral (2). "The trapped horses would run, wheeling round and round the corral, looking for a way out, until they could run no more. Then the hard work of breaking them began" (Givens 1).

Molly Bull describes a horse-breaking scene in *When the Cowboy Rides Away* that is almost identical to the description above except she includes the actual breaking of a horse. Although breaking wild horses is difficult and dangerous, with cowboys sustaining bruises and even broken bones, it is also their form of entertainment, and they find humor in a cowboy being thrown and bruised. They admire a cowboy's riding form and ability to stay on the horse. Being able to stay on an unbroken horse was a kind of "rite of passage" for the cowboys.

During the period that J.W. Moses was catching and breaking mustangs, they were in such abundance that no one could have imagined they were vanishing, but the gigantic herds that made the horizon alive with movement and thunderous hoof beats were almost gone by the end of the 1850s (Givens 3). "They were hunted like buffalo to near extinction. They were not natural to the land ... but they were wild and beautiful and lent much to the character and spirit of early Texas" (Givens 3).

"Cattle still reign supreme in Texas, thanks in part to Captain Richard King and his partner Mifflin Kenedy, two of our greatest ranching heritage icons. Both self-made men, King and Kenedy created a ranching dynasty that continues to thrive today. Kingsville and the King Ranch Museum is a good place to begin a tour of the birthplace of American ranching. It is also where the stretch of coastal grasslands once

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known as the Wild Horse Desert begins” (“Kingsville to Raymondville: A Wild Horse Desert Turned Ranching Empire” 1). The King Ranch is a working ranch, and a tourist can tour the ranch and experience a taste of ranch life from a bygone era and see the beautiful herds of Santa Gertrudis and long horns and watch the cowboys put the cutting horses through their paces (“Kingsville to Raymondville ...” 1).

When the Cowboy Rides Away addresses neither the struggle of Texas to become a state nor its establishing two state colleges soon afterward, but those two subjects have been included because they were happening in the real world of Texas, leading to and including the time of the setting for the novel. Since the novel revolves around life on a large South Texas ranch in the 1880s, much of the background covers the history of South Texas and the importance of horses and other cattle in the livelihood of the ranchers.

Living on a ranch in the 1880s might seem like fun, but in reality it was hard work. The invention of electricity was still in its infancy and did not make its way to the large, rural ranches in South Texas until much later. That meant homes were lighted with oil lamps or candles. Without electricity there were no air conditioners, no automatic washing machines, no vacuum cleaners, no indoor toilets, etc. Telephones were still in the future, and automobiles would not show up for another quarter century. The radio was still at least forty years away. Since all these conveniences were unavailable, life moved at a much slower pace, and the maid help that Maggie had was an absolute necessity.

Cowboys on a working ranch got their clothes very dirty. Very likely each family had a large, three-legged, cast iron, fifty to eighty-gallon wash pot. On wash day they would fill the pot with water, build a fire under it, and put some homemade lye soap in the water. When the water got hot, they would put the men’s dirty clothes into the pot and let them boil until the dirt loosened and then transfer them to a tub of water and

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a wash board (a.k.a. rubboard) and scrub them across the ridges to wash the dirt out. Finally they would rinse the soap out, squeeze most of the water out of them, and hang them on a line to dry.

South Texas ranchers had limited options for travel. They could choose horseback, buggy, or wagon for short trips and train for longer trips. The railroad made connections from east to west in 1869 and had passenger trains by 1880. Local travel within their community was slow and messy during rainy weather. Ladies going to a formal affair often had mud splashed on the hem of their pretty dresses, but they usually carried their nice shoes and changed into them upon arrival.

The ranchers prepared meals on a wood stove or over an open fireplace. They prepared stews or other liquid foods in a Dutch oven over the fireplace and biscuits and other breads in a Dutch oven over the fire. They also cooked on a wood stove and baked cakes in the oven of a wood stove. Maintaining the proper temperature was not easy and often ended with burned cakes. Cooking on a wood stove in the summer time created an uncomfortable level of heat throughout the house. For this reason and fear of the stove starting a fire in the house, many ranchers built a separate room not connected to the main house, called the cook room, and put the stove in it. The cook would prepare the food in the cook room and then bring it into the main house dining room to be served.

Since ranches were quite large, ranch houses were usually some distance apart. No one had phones yet, but they needed a method to communicate with their neighbors or their ranch hands when they were on the back side of a large ranch. Maggie, probably like most of her neighbors, had a large bell mounted on a pole in the yard that she would ring to bring the hands to lunch or to alert the neighbors to an emergency. The neighbors would come to the house where the ringing was coming from to see what they needed to do. Since young people today are so far

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removed from the setting of *When the Cowboy Rides Away*, they cannot even imagine life without their cell phones or numerous other electronic devices. This brief discussion of what the rancher's daily life consisted of during the 1880s attempts to present a realistic picture.

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When the Cowboy Rides Away

Study Questions

Directions: Answer the study questions on your own paper. Some questions can be answered with short answers, but others need to be answered in complete sentences.

Chapter One

1. The novel is set in South Texas near the town of Kingsville, in a place that some call The Wild Horse Desert. See if you can find that area on a map.
2. Where does the first scene in chapter one take place? In other words, what is the setting for chapter one?
3. What is the difference between the setting of a scene and the setting of an entire novel? Explain the difference.
4. How are Maggie and Sarah related?
5. What is the name of Sarah's horse?
6. What is the Gulf of Mexico and where can it be found on a map?
7. Why did Alex feel compelled to follow Joe into Mexico instead of letting a lawman do it?

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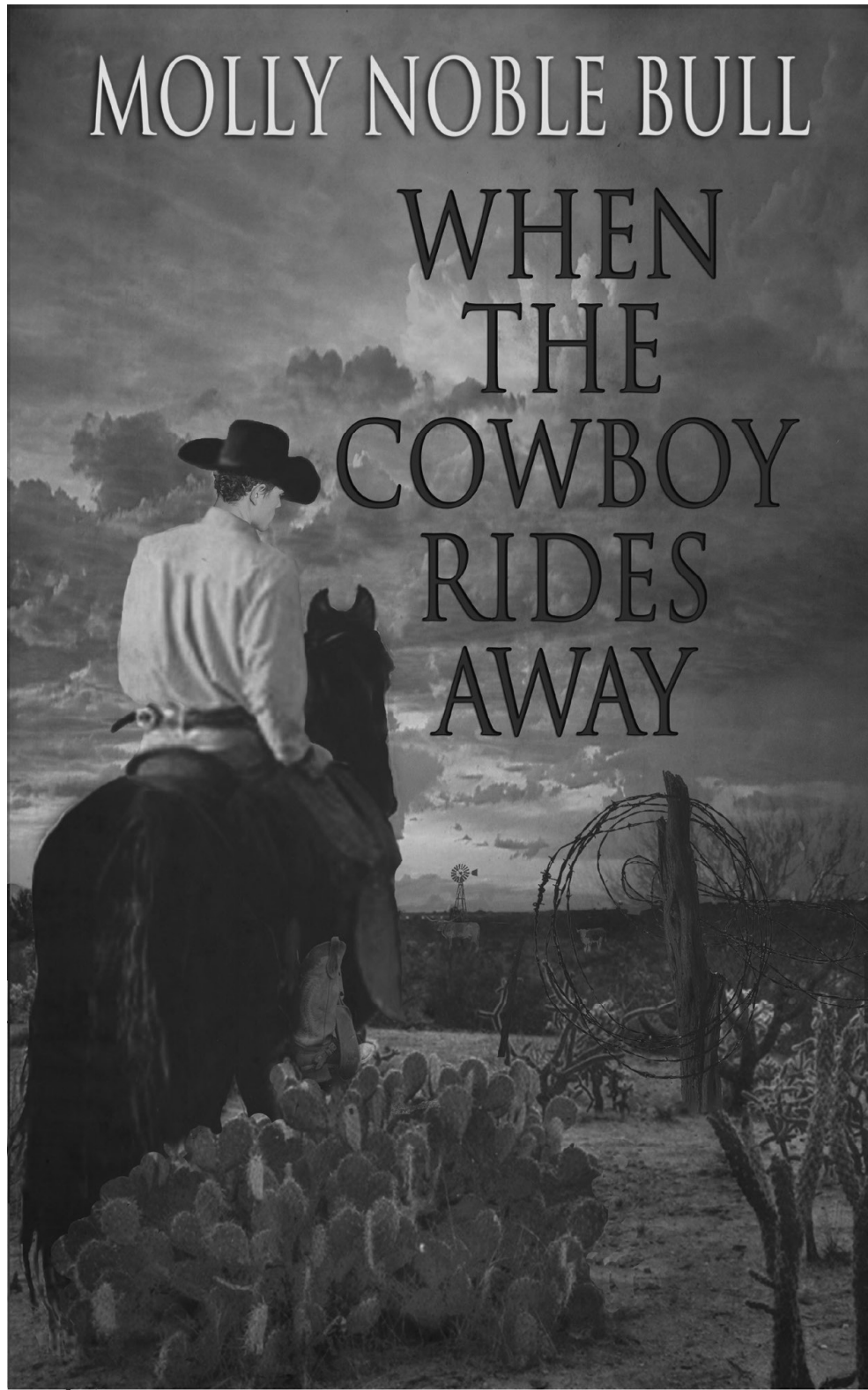
8. Alex arrived at the ranch from Brownsville, Texas. Find that city on a map as well as the Rio Grande River in relation to Mexico.
9. How far from the Gulf of Mexico is the main house on the ranch?
10. What is the weather like on the ranch most of the time?
11. What is the name of the ranch in *When the Cowboy Rides Away*?
12. How could Maggie tell when someone was riding to her ranch?
13. Who is the rider on the black stallion?
14. For whom is Alex searching?
15. How old is Maggie and how old is her sister?
16. What are Maggie and Sarah planning to do with the flowers they have picked?
17. When Maggie is able to see the horse and rider on the horizon, how does she know that he is not her friend and neighbor, Roger?
18. What do we learn about Dee as the author reveals Alex's memories?
19. What incident causes Alex to learn the truth about Joe Garza?
20. What does Alex do when he learns that Joe Garza robbed the bank?

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21. What is a cantina?
22. What happens when Alex finds Joe Garza in front of the cantina?
23. What was Alex not allowed to do the entire time he was incarcerated in the Mexican jail?
24. Why is Alex making this trip on horseback?
25. How long was he in the Mexican jail?
26. As Alex pauses, deciding whether to ride up to the house in the distance to see if it is Dee's home, what feelings does he suddenly have?
27. What reason can Alex think of why someone wanted to follow him?
28. When Maggie hears a gunshot from the area of the rider, what decision does she make for herself and Sarah?
29. What does she find when she approaches the man on the ground?
30. The title of the novel is *When the Cowboy Rides Away*. How does that title mirror what happened to Alex in chapter one before he is shot?

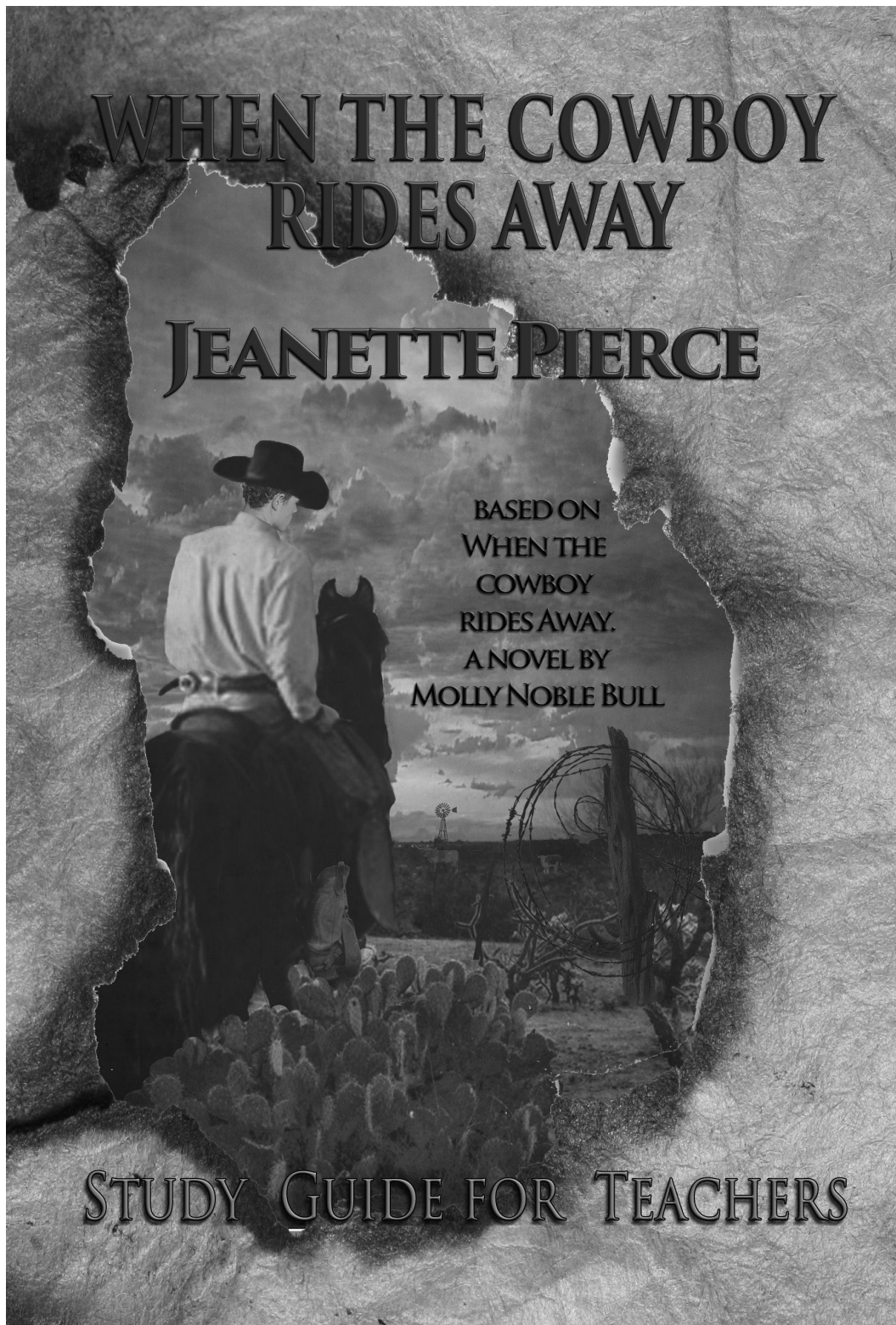
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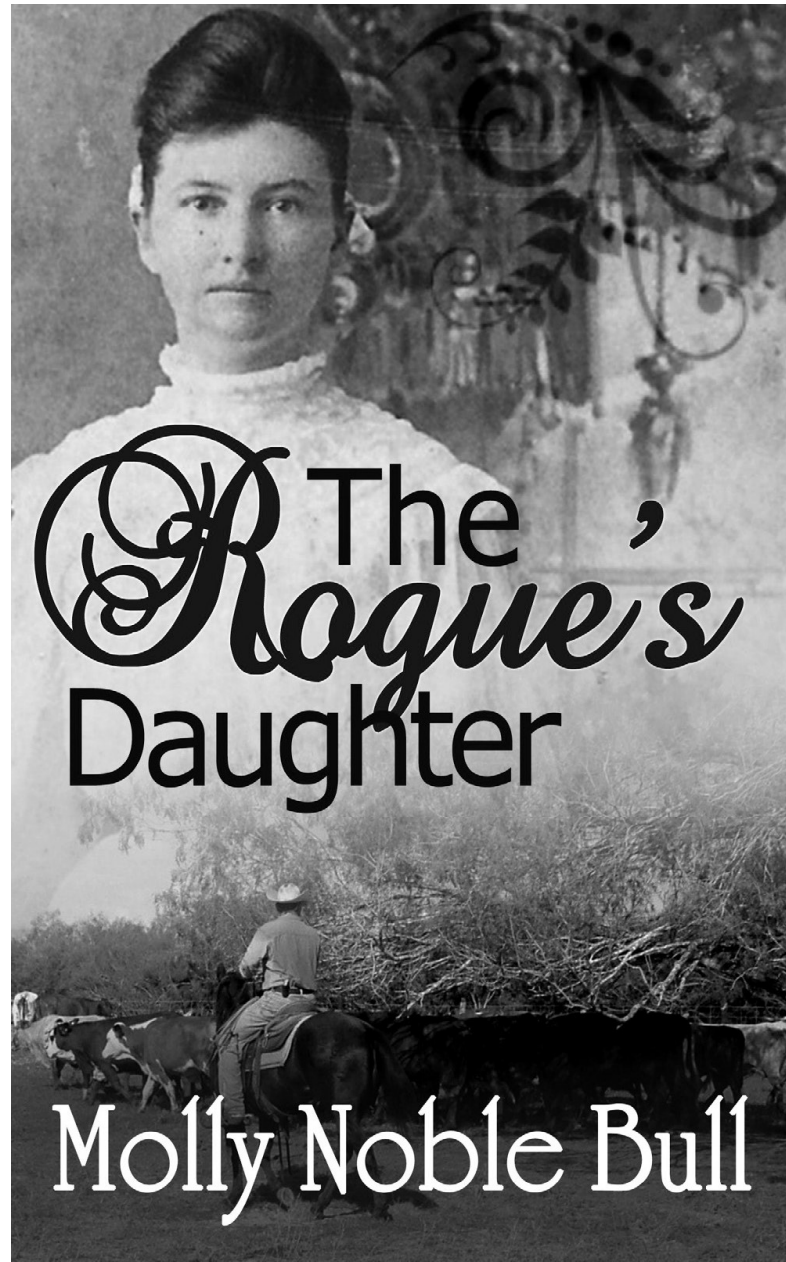
(Cover of novel *When the Cowboy Rides Away* by Molly Noble Bull)



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(Cover of book *When the Cowboy Rides Away* Study Guide for Teachers by Jeanette Pierce)





(Cover of novel *The Rogue's Daughter* by Molly Noble Bull)

The Rogue's Daughter by Molly Noble Bull is a western romance novel set in South Texas in 1890, near the same location as *When the Cowboy Rides Away*. *The Rogue's Daughter* was first published by Zondervan Publishing House in 1986 and was later reprinted and came out as part of the Forever Romance series from Guideposts.