Billy Buck says he will teach Jody how to care for the horse and past and live for now. Grandfather accepts sadly that his stories are and the colt is his. But things do not go well and the mare cannot nowhere new to go. Jody likes to listen to the stories and tries to becomes clear that the pony is seriously ill. In spite of Billy's efforts, not interesting to people any more, that what was important was not quickly and Jody trains him to wear a saddle. One day, Billy Buck begins to feel like a grown-up with his new responsibility. Jody's father promises him another horse, but he has to take their mare, Gitano (Spanish for gypsy) and that he has come home. But his original house has been destroyed and Jody's father offers to let him stay for one night. He cannot afford to let him stay longer. Gitano tells Jody that he once went to the high mountains. In the morning they discover Gitano has taken the oldest horse, the one no longer any good to the family, and rides off back to the mountains.

In The Great Mountains, Jody is fascinated by the high mountains to the west. His parents tell him that nothing lives there. One day an old man, Mexican, comes to the ranch. He says that his name is Gitano (Spanish for gypsy) and that he has come home. But his original house has been destroyed and Jody's father offers to let him stay for one night. He cannot afford to let him stay longer. Gitano tells Jody that he once went to the high mountains. In the morning they discover Gitano has taken the oldest horse, the one no longer any good to the family, and rides off back to the mountains.

In The Promise, Jody is visited by his grandfather, who many years before led a wagon train across the mountains to the Pacific Ocean. Every time grandfather visits he tells the story of his journey over and over again. Jody's father cannot stand this any more. His father wishes that grandfather would forget about the past and live for now. Grandfather accepts sadly that his stories are not interesting to people any more, that what was important was not the adventure or fighting Indians, but moving west and discovering new lands. Now that the continent has been discovered, there is nowhere new to go. Jody likes to listen to the stories and tries to make his Grandfather less sad.

The four stories in The Red Pony tell the story of a young boy, Jody Tiflin, growing up on a small ranch in California early in the twentieth century. He lives there with his mother, father, Carl, and the ranchhand, Billy Buck. Jody is a thoughtful but lonely boy. He doesn't have any brothers or sisters and he is often alone. Jody listens to peoples' conversations and begins to grow up, but he doesn't always understand the things they do. He thinks about what is right and wrong and learns some lessons about life and death and growing old.

In The Gift, Jody's father, Carl, buys him a young horse, the red pony of the book's title, and makes Jody promise to look after him. Billy Buck says he will teach Jody how to care for the horse and Jody learns to groom him and then train him. The pony grows up quickly and Jody trains him to wear a saddle. One day, Billy Buck tells Jody to leave the pony in the field because it is a sunny day. He tells Jody that it won't rain. But it does rain and the pony becomes ill. Billy tells Jody that it is nothing to worry about but it becomes clear that the pony is seriously ill. In spite of Billy's efforts, the pony dies, and the story ends in the field, buzzards beginning to feast off the dead horse and Jody trying to fight them off.

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there when the country was being founded. Gitano comes home to die but is rejected by the family and heads off into the mountains. Grandfather lives for his past but eventually realizes the world has changed and he has to move on.

**Communicative activities**

The following teacher-led activities cover the same sections of text as the exercises at the back of the reader, and supplement those exercises. For supplementary exercises covering shorter sections of the book, see the photocopyable Student's Activities pages of the Factsheet. These are primarily for use with class readers but, with the exception of discussion and pair/group work questions, can also be used by students working alone in a self-access center.

**ACTIVITIES BEFORE READING THE BOOK**

Ask students to work in pairs. They ask each other about other books by John Steinbeck and movies. Have they read any of them or seen any of them? Did they like them? Then ask some of the students to report back to the class about their partner's experiences of Steinbeck and discuss any of the issues raised.

**'The Gift'**

Put the class into small groups. Ask them to discuss what feelings they had when they read the story and to write them down. Ask the groups for their words and write them all on the board. Have a class discussion and put the words into order of depth of feeling. Then ask the class to discuss how Steinbeck creates these feelings in his readers.

**'The Great Mountains'**

1. Put students into small groups to discuss these questions:
   (a) Why does Gitano come back to the farm?
   Explain your answers.
   (b) What is Carl's reaction to Gitano? Why do you think that he reacts this way?
   (c) How did Jody feel when Gitano left? Why do you think he felt this way? Explain your answers.

2. Put students into pairs. Students describe Gitano from the point of view of (a) Carl, (b) Jody.

**'The Promise'**

Put students into pairs to discuss these questions.
(a) How do you think Jody feels when the colt is born?
(b) How does Billy Buck feel?
   Students should give reasons for their answers.
   Then they discuss the various answers as a whole class activity.

**ACTIVITIES AFTER READING THE BOOK**

In small groups, students discuss which of the stories they enjoyed most and which least. Students should give reasons for their answers.

**Glossary**

It will be useful for your students to know these new words. They are practiced in the Before You Read sections at the back of the book. (Definitions are based on those in the Longman Active Study Dictionary.)

**The Gift**

barn (n) a large farm building for keeping animals in and sometimes for storing crops.
brush (n) small bushes and trees covering an area of open land.
bunkhouse (n) a building where workers sleep.
buzzard (n) a type of large bird that eats dead animals.
claw (n) a sharp curved nail on the toe of an animal or bird.
colt (n) a young male horse.
cypress (n) a tree with dark green leaves and hard wood.
doom (n) the end of something especially by destruction or death
   that cannot be avoided.
hawk (n) a large bird that hunts and kills small birds and animals.
hay (n) long grass that has been cut and dried, used as food for animals.
jump (n) something small that sticks out from your body or grows in your body.

pony (n) a small horse.
porch (n) an entrance to a building covered by a roof.
quartz (n) a hard mineral substance.
saddle (n) a seat made of leather that is put on a horse’s back so that someone can ride it.
spring (n) a place where water comes up naturally from the ground.
stall (n) an enclosed area in a building for an animal.
stench (adj) a bad smell.
tub (n) a large round container without a lid.

**The Great Mountains**

bear (n) a large strong animal with thick fur.
ridge (n) a long area of high land, especially at the top of a mountain.
slingshot (n) a small stick in the shape of a Y with a thin band of rubber, used by children to throw stones.
trap (n) a piece of equipment for catching animals.
thruth (n) the true facts about something.

**The Promise**

hammer (n) a tool with a heavy metal part on a long handle used for hitting nails into wood.
mare (n) a female horse.
stallion (n) a male horse.
toad (n) a small animal that looks like a large frog.

**The Leader of the People**

1. Put students into small groups to discuss these questions.
   (a) How does Carl react to grandfather's arrival?
   (b) How does Jody react?

2. Put students into pairs to discuss these questions.
   (a) How does Carl change during the visit?
   (b) How does grandfather change?

The Leader of the People
Activities before reading the book

1 Read the Introduction to the book and answer these questions.
   (a) Where do the stories take place?
   (b) Who is the main character in the stories?
   (c) What kind of boy is Jody?
   (d) What name does Jody give to the red pony?

2 Read the notes about John Steinbeck in the Introduction and answer these questions.
   (a) Where was Steinbeck born? When?
   (b) Where did he go to university?
   (c) What was the title of his first book?
   (d) What was his first successful novel?
   (e) How many of his books have been made into movies?
   (f) How old was Steinbeck when he died?

Activities while reading the book

‘The Gift’

1 Match the beginnings and endings of these sentences.
   (a) Mr Tiflin gave the orders
   (b) The two dogs came around the corner
   (c) Jody went into the dining room
   (d) The boys were thinking of ways to be better friends with Jody.
   (e) Each day Jody put the saddle on Gabilan’s back,
   (f) A little after noon, the clouds pushed over the hills,
   (g) We’ll go down
   (h) We’ll put some oil on his legs
   (i) Billy had failed again
   (j) Jody ran out into a terrible storm
   (i) and cover him up after we eat.
   (ii) and the rain began to pour down.
   (iii) and was obeyed without question of any kind.
   (iv) and looked at Jody with pleasure.
   (v) They wanted a ride on the red pony one day.
   (vi) and each day the pony fought against it.
   (vii) and he felt bad about it.
   (viii) and saw Gabilan walking weakly toward the field.
   (ix) and sat at the long white table.
   (x) and we’ll cover his back and chest with some dry blankets.

2 Are these sentences true or false? Correct the false ones.
   (a) Jody wanted to go with his father and Billy Buck.
   (b) Carl told Jody about the pony as soon as he got home.
   (c) Billy promised to show Jody how to look after the pony.
   (d) The pony was old enough to ride.
   (e) Every day Jody took the pony into the field.
   (f) Carl showed Jody how to train the pony.
   (g) Billy Buck knew that the pony would be safe in the field.
   (h) Billy didn’t think that rain would hurt the pony.
   (i) Cutting the lump on the pony’s neck cures the illness.

‘The Great Mountains’

1 Who said these things? Who were they talking to?
   (a) What’s on the other side of the mountains?
(b) There’s nobody there. People can’t eat rocks.
(c) I have come back.
(d) I was born here, and my father too.
(e) Don’t ask me for help. We don’t know you.
(f) Too old to work. Just eats and soon dies.
(g) You go now. I want to go to bed.
(h) I wonder what he wants in those mountains.

2 Put these events in the correct order.
(a) An old man walked towards the farm.
(b) The horses came down from the hills for a drink of water.
(c) Jody killed a small bird.
(d) Easter came down for a drink.
(e) Carl thinks that one of his guns is missing.
(f) Jody asked his father what was in the mountains.
(g) Carl tells the old man that he cannot stay on the farm.
(h) Jody found that Gitano had gone.
(i) Gitano put a knife in his sack.
(j) Carl told the old man that he could stay for one night.

‘The Promise’
1 Who said these things? Who were they talking to?
(a) If you could have another horse, would you work for it?
(b) She’s ready for that stallion and she’s a little crazy.
(c) She’s mine, and the colt’s going to be mine.
(d) Let’s go have a look at Nellie.
(e) Nothing will go wrong, will it?
(f) You can’t tell exactly. Sometimes it’s two weeks early, or a month late, without hurting anything.
(g) Listen. There’s not a man in this country that knows more about colts than Billy.
(h) Oh no. It’s wrong.
(i) Turn your face away, Jody. Now!
(j) There’s your colt. I promised.

2 Answer these questions.
(a) Why did Carl Tiflin say that Jody could have another horse?
(b) Why did Nellie jump away from Jody?
(c) How did Jody pay back the five dollars to his father?
(d) How did Jody protect Nellie in the winter?
(e) What did Carl say to Jody that made Jody feel very proud?
(f) What did Billy have to do to allow the colt to be born?

‘The Leader of the People’
Put these sentences into the correct order.
(a) Grandfather explained to Jody that what was important was reaching the west.
(b) Mrs Tiflin asked Carl to be patient with her father.
(c) Carl interrupted grandfather’s story.
(d) A letter arrived at the farm.
(e) Grandfather accepted that he should stop telling the same stories.
(f) Mrs Tiflin told Carl that crossing the country was the biggest thing in her father’s life.
(g) Carl got angry about hearing the stories again and again.
(h) Grandfather told the story of the metal plates.
(i) Jody went to meet his grandfather.
(j) Jody wanted to hunt mice.

Activities after reading the book
1 Which story do you think is the best? Give reasons for your answers.
2 Which story do you think is the saddest? Give reasons for your answers.