

SYA Winning Students 2017-2018

Award	Student Name	School	Teacher
Jody Award First Place Grade 7	Lauren Bronfeld	SanBenancio Middle School, Salinas	Lynn Yee
Jody Award First Place Grade 8	Alina Ramirez	Vista Verde Middle School, Greenfield	Kris Carroll
Jody Award Second Place Grade 7	Maddie Gill	SanBenancio Middle School, Salinas	Julie Chiappe
Jody Award Second Place Grade 7	Arianna Covarrubias	Good Shepherd Catholic School, Santa Cruz	Angela Rebol
Jody Award Second Place Grade 8	Rubina Shrestha	San Carlos School, Monterey	Jackey Antonian
Jody Award Third Place Grade 6	Arecely Landa	Vista Verde Middle School, Greenfield	Enrique Villarreal
Jody Award Third Place Grade 7	Maya Avalos	Vista Verde Middle School, Greenfield	Miriam Antunez
Jody Award Third Place Grade 8	Jake Larson	Junipero Serra School, Carmel	Catherine Rowe
Jody Award Third Place Grade 8	Zoe Glenn	Buena Vista Middle School, Salinas	Kristina Jones
Award &	Student Name	School	Teacher
Gabilan Award First Place	Tatum Campion	San Benancio Middle School, Salinas	Sierra Robinson

Grade 7			
Gabilan Award First Place Grade 8	Zunita Linares	Vista Verde Middle School, Greenfield	Jerry Mares
Gabilan Award First Place Grade 8	Jackie Luevanos	Vista Verde Middle School, Greenfield	Jerry Mares
Gabilan Award Second Place Grade 6	Angel Mendoza	Vista Verde Middle School, Greenfield	Maribel Barba
Gabilan Award Second Place Grade 8	Giselle Casteel	Bolsa Knolls Middle School, Salinas	Brandon Swift
Gabilan Award Third Place Grade 6	Jeovanni Nash	Los Arboles Middle School, Marina	Shannon (Jennifer) Lueken
Gabilan Award Third Place Grade 6	Kylee Hostetter	Los Arboles Middle School, Marina	Shannon (Jennifer) Lueken
Gabilan Award Third Place Grade 8	BillyJean Jackson	Vista Verde Middle School, Greenfield	Justin Madden
Gabilan Award Third Place Grade 8	Mateo Magana	Bolsa Knolls Middle School, Salinas	Stanley Wyman

Award &	Student Name	School	Teacher
Billy Buck Award First Place Grade 8	Alexandra Perez	Bolsa Knolls Middle School, Salinas	Kyle Dunning
Billy Buck Award Second Place Grade 8	Savannah Rodriquez	Bolsa Knolls Middle School, Salinas	Stanley Wyman
Billy Buck Award Third Place Grade 6	Jennifer Cruz	Vista Verde Middle School, Greenfield	Diane Castillo
Billy Buck Award Third Place Grade 7	Rene Chavez	Vista Verde Middle School, Greenfield	Eleanor Morrice
Billy Buck Award Third Place Grade 8	Gloria Sario-Perez	Chalone Peaks Middle School, King City	Rose Howard

Award &	Student Name	School	Teacher
Judge's Award Jody Category Grade 6	Christian Flores	Vista Verde Middle School, Greenfield	Maribel Barba
Judge's Award Jody Category Grade 7	Alex Gianola Cook	All Saints Day School, Carmel	Becky Rheim
Judge's Award Jody Category Grade 7	Tristan Pflieger	All Saints Day School, Carmel	Becky Rheim
Judge's Award Jody Category Grade 8	Jennifer Zavala	Vista Verde Middle School, Greenfield	Kris Carroll

Student # 17

Aylieana Abanathie, Los Arboles Middle School

Coach: Cathleen Keenan

How Jody Changes and Learns About Caring for Gabilan

How I believe Jody grows more responsibilities and changes during the process, while learning to care for Gabilan.

I believe caring for Gabilan has change the way he acted. Like his responsibilities, why I think receiving Gabilan has increased his responsibilities for Gabilan. In *The Red Pony* book, it shows him finding ways to get through his chores that showed him not enjoying his chores, so he does things that make it go by quicker. Something that could support my statement from the book called *The Red Pony* tells of him doing his chores quicker by crossing sticks across the drinking water or smashing up dead plants or plant in the gardens like in the story it shows him smooshing a squash pumpkin while covering it up in dirt. It shows him not being very proud about the action and proceeds to walk on.

How Gabilan has also changed his responsibilities and changes is while also losing some. In *The Red Pony* book Jody starts visiting Gabilan while doing all his chores like caring for the pony Gabilan to keep him which Mr. Tiflin, Jody's father, also states in the book to Jody. Soon Jody becomes more forgetful of his chores. And always finds reasons to check on Gabilan.

The way this has changed Jody by showing how much he has cared for Gabilan is all Jody thinks about and had worried about. This shows Jody's care. For example, in the book *The Red Pony* shows. While Jody starts trying to train or break Gabilan. But the way this change or shows Jody it's how he wanted him to want to listen to commands and obey them but not forcefully, but Jody wants him to enjoy it or like doing it instead than out of fear. What makes him enjoy or want to do it because not only just caring for Gabilan and how he feels about being forcefully made to do things they don't enjoy. This and it ruins their freely spirits that give them their personalities.

When Gabilan died although he was not very happy when this event occurred. He shows how much he cared for the red pony Gabilan and how in many ways of how it had changed him. Like the way he had acted. What this had reminded me of was in *The Red Pony* when he has a sense of feeling that in a current point he has a feeling of gaining something but also loosing something in return.

How my life experiences can relate to *The Red Pony*. How I think my life experiences could relate to *The Red Pony* was having something special in life or something or someone important. That something that was very special to me was my mom. My mom was something very special to me and important because she always give me speech like sentences to help me choose in life. She would always show me the up and down of things. How I found this similar to the story was she never made me forcefully do something and help me make my own decisions.

Student # 94

Midori Aiken, Washington Middle School

Coach: Joyce Maskell

Fatherly Figures: Who is Better?

The Red Pony is a wonderfully well written book about a boy and a horse. Although it's such a good book many people wonder who the better father figure is to Jody, Billy Buck or Carl Tiflin? In my own opinion Billy Buck is a better father than Carl. Billy treats Jody like a son, while Carl treats him like a worker.

Throughout the book you notice how hard Mr. Tiflin is to Jody, and how un-caring he treats him, but Billy Buck is constantly teaching him new things, and giving him advice. Majority of the book has Billy Buck and Jody together. On pg. 35 the pony is attacked by a group of buzzards and dies. Billy Buck and Carl come and see Jody beating one of the birds. Carl instantly goes off on Jody for killing the bird, not even thinking of considering how Jody must feel, while Billy, on the other hand, yells at Carl for being inconsiderate and brings Jody home. Another example is on pg. 27 when Billy offers to stay and sleep in the hay so that Jody can sleep. Billy does this multiple times, and Carl doesn't even offer.

On the opposing side though, many people think Carl is a better father. People think this because they think that a father should be tough on his kids, not soft like Billy. They also think that Carl is more protective than Billy. For example, on pg. 42-43 an old man comes and asks to stay there, but Carl has no hesitation to tell him, a stranger, no. They also say that while Carl may be tough he has a soft side. On pg. 68 Carl decides to come into the barn with Jody. He tells Jody that he "has done a great job" and you can tell he is proud of him.

Even though both claims have good viewpoints, I still think Billy Buck is a better father figure. Keep in mind Jody is only ten. Billy Buck is caring, and listens to Jody, he is also willing to give up his comfort for Jody. He is overall a great person and a good father figure.

Student # 77

Andrea Alonzo, Bolsa Knolls Middle School

Coach: Zenaida Madrigal

Responsibilities and Challengers

I think one of the most important qualities to have in life is responsibility. In *The Red Pony*, a novel written by John Steinbeck, a farm boy named Jody is given a gift from Mr. Tiflin, his father. He is given a red pony which was named Gabilan. He is faced with this responsibility of caring for this pony. He now has to learn the importance of responsibility.

Through Jody's journey of caring for Gabilan, he has to learn to do his chores and care for this pony. This is testing how responsible he could be. He had to constantly groom and feed Gabilan. Making sure to keep Gabilan healthy was important too. This was really time consuming as he had many other things to do.

One day Jody's life took an unexpected turn. He woke up and found Gabilan dead. The night before, Gabilan had ran out of his stable and got a cold from the rain. Jody was devastated and angry.

I can relate to Jody's experience because something really similar has happened to me. When I was young, my family dog was slowly dying. It was a horrible time in my life because this dog had been with me since I was born. I felt the same way Jody did when Gabilan died.

In conclusion, Jody was an irresponsible person that learned the importance of responsibility through his relationship with his pony. Like my experience with loss and time management, Jody learned to be a better person through responsibility. *The Red Pony* was an amazing novel that I could really relate to and taught the importance of responsibility.

Student # 19

Samantha Amador, Vista Verde Middle School

Coach: Nancy Russell

Jody and I have similar experiences. He doesn't want to let his father down. Mr. Tiflin is making sure that Jody doesn't know that it is a test. Mr. Tiflin wants to see if Jody is ready for a pony. To make sure Jody is taking care of it for Gabilan doesn't get sick. His dad said "if I ever hear of your not feeding him or leaving his stall dirty, I'll sell him off in a minute.

When I was little I had a dog. I called him Spikey. My mom told me if I don't feed him she will never get me a pet again. At first it was hard because I was only 7 years old. But it took a while to handle it. I showed him how to sit, jump, roll over, and stay still.

My story and Jody's story are almost the same just without a pony and my dog. But we both learned how to take care of our animals. To be responsible it takes time.

Jody's dad and my mom both said that "if I ever hear of you not feeding him or cleaning up his doggy house I'll sell him off in a minute." We both feed them, water them, and shower and clean them.

Student # 108

Pilar Andrade, Chalone Peaks Middle School

Coach: Cary Swensen

In my opinion, Billy Buck is the better father figure because Billy has more sympathy for Jody, and Billy sticks up for Jody more. In the whole book it shows us how Billy does these two things. Billy shows a lot of sympathy in the book because Jody is going through a lot of sad and hard things. He also sticks up for him because there is no one else who would do that for Jody. Billy help Jody a lot threw the story.

In the hole book Billy buck never lets Jody down and had sympathy for Jody when he was going through bad times. An example is when Billy told Jody to go away when he was about to cut a hole in Gabilan neck. One reason why I think Billy buck has sympathy for Jody is because he is always there for Jody. Also, when Jody kills the bird Billy tries to calm Jody down. This is why I think Billy buck has sympathy for Jody.

Throughout the book Billy Buck sticks up for Jody when Carl tries to blame Jody for something he did not do. An example, "Billy turned on him angrily, 'Let him alone, it's his pony, isn't it?'" Another reason Billy Buck sticks up for Jody is because Carl is always strict to Jody. This is why I think Billy Buck sticks up for Jody.

Contrary to Billy Buck, Carl does not give Jody attention and time to do things right. Carl would tell Jody straight, however, Billy Buck would go around what he wanted to tell Jody. One reason why Carl is hard on Jody is because Jody needs to learn the right way if he is going to live on the farm. An example is when Jody got the pony Carl said if you do not take care of him I will seal him in a minute. This is why Carl is always hard to Jody.

In conclusion I think Billy Buck the ranch hand is the better father figure. Jody does not have other people in the ranch to talk nicely like Billy Buck. Billy and Carl both want the best for Jody. Billy supports Jody throughout the whole story. I thought Billy Buck was helpful, supportive, nice, and took it slow with Jody.

Student # 2

Sabrina Aquino, San Benancio Middle School

Coach: Souhad Kahil

Both Jody and I have been through a journey that has changed us. After all, Einstein said it's not about getting there, it's about the journey to get there. Similarly, the story that is unique to us as individuals has brought us to where we are today.

In one but very important stage of his life, Jody is given a pony and ten years old, impacting his life anew. Throughout this phase, he overtakes new responsibilities for the pony. Overtime, he develops a cherished love in his heart for Gabilan. Unfortunately, the pony gets sick. He fell into a state of misery in which he lost hope. Once the pony dies, he unleashes the grief that death bestowed upon him. His learning experience at light was darkened. His days with the pony vanished, and it changed him into a new being that faced the death of a loved one.

As the days that turn into years pass by, I am developing as a person. I have experienced what is similar to Jody's life. As I get older, the weight of responsibility gets heavier. For example, handling school work and maintaining my grades is something that I prioritize, with time and effort. At home, doing chores and setting a good example has always played an important factor in my life. Taking care of pets has been part of my childhood. I learned that no matter how heavy responsibility can weigh you down, there will always be a solution. When it comes to family, I support. Having lost my grandfather has developed me into a stronger person. I support for not only myself, but for the sake of others. This connects me to Jody, for we have developed from our past to our responsibilities now.

Both our lives are consistent with experiences that have impacted us. I believe that we have gone through a road, smooth or rough, but it is the makeup of our lives. Most importantly, we have people by our sides to guide and support us. Billy served as one of his father figures, and my family has helped me grow. I believe that we share a history of figures that have been part of our journey.

In all, Jody and I are connected through our stories. Our lives are made up of learning experiences that serve as our building blocks. We have gone through the good and bad, and it has changed and shaped us to who we are today.

Student # 70

Lawrence Atuailevao, Harden Middle School

Coach: Esmeralda Montenegro Owen

Did you have to take care of something or someone before? Because I had to before. The book *The Red Pony* there was a little boy and he was ten years old and his family plus a friend and name are Jody, Billy Buck, and Mr. and Mrs. Tiflin then Jody and Billy Buck they had to take care of a pony and me and my family is taking care of a dog.

This first reason is from the book Jody and Billy Buck are trying to teach the pony to be to be ridden like a pony/horse. The second reason is about me and my family we had to take care of a dog and we tried to make our dog to be friendly around other people. When he was hungry he will growl or bark and me and my family feed the dog every day and if he is good he gets a treat and I have to give him breakfast and Dinner. My dog he doesn't like to take baths because he is not use to the water or it is because he is scared of the water and me and my family want him to stay clean and so he doesn't get sick. When he wants to go for a walk if the door is open he walks outside and back inside. When he is sad I play with him and he gets happy when we come back from the movies.

There is a new student and I'm the only one to help her and I gave her directions to her classes and to lunch. I think that she felt happy and thankful.

In conclusion the book *The Red Pony* reflects on my life and it might reflect on yours too.

Student # 39

Maya Avalos, Vista Verde Middle School

Coach: Kathy McKenzie

The Red Pony from John Steinbeck is a fascinating story I believe we all can relate to or understand to some degree. In the story, a little boy named Jody is gifted a red pony cult by his strict father Carl Tiflin. Billy Buck, the helper at the ranch, helps Jody take care of the pony Gabilan. He teaches him what to do and even comforts Jody when Gabilan becomes ill and dies. A question many readers may ponder is who the real father figure to Jody is. Many may think otherwise, but I have reason to believe that Billy Buck was actually the father figure in the story.

In my perspective, Billy is more of a father figure than Carl Tiflin. To begin with, Billy is more trustworthy. According to the book, Billy helped Jody when he didn't technically need to. He encouraged him by making him hopeful to ride the pony and he stayed calm when Gabilan was sick. He could have just left Jody to figure it out himself since it's his responsibility but instead he goes out of his way to help save Gabilan in various ways. Jody can count on Billy Buck and he is lucky to have someone like that to grow up with. Think about someone you trust and know you can count on. What if they were never there? Can't think of it, huh? My sister-in-law is very trustworthy, and I know without her I'd be in a much worse place, so Billy is like family to Jody. He can count on him.

Furthermore, you are supposed to care for your parents. And trust them. They are someone you can go to in the worst of times. But how can you trust when there's a block of fear in front of that other person? It's hard and Jody can't really rely on his own father Carl because he fears him too much. In the beginning of the story, Jody is walking through the garden and he paused for a moment to smash a green muskmelon..."

Jody knew this was a bad thing. But enough to get him in trouble? Yes, Carl Tiflin was strict and had a mean stature. Jody quickly covered the squashed fruit in hopes he wouldn't have been caught guilty for just a little thing.

Despite these facts, Carl Tiflin may argue against my position by stating that he was just preparing him for the real world. For all we know, Carl most likely really cares for Jody but since he's a man, he has trouble expressing feeling or he just wants to be in control. I can infer that the story is taking place around the time of the Great Depression, so the family might not have money. Carl is in the harsh realities of the world with responsibility and discipline. Although this may be true, Carl Tiflin is too harsh. Jody is only 10 years old. He needs to be a kid, play around, make mistakes, learn from them, etc. And it's just healthy to have fun and not only be scared. In *The Red Pony*, Jody must get up at a certain time and do chores and school work and do tasks like cleaning, carrying heavy things, or killing a pig. Sure, he needs to be prepared but he doesn't have to get introduced to so much while he's so young. I'm 13 and even though I do lots of home work and projects I still hang out with friends and do things I love. If I only did work and seriousness, I'd just lose my mind.

Another argument against my position is that Billy Buck is a bit too careless and should have been more honest to prepare Jody for Gabilan's death. True, as an adult he should know to be more cautious and he could have saved some pain but how would you tell a 10-year-old the only joyful thing in their life is about to die? And it's going to die in their responsibility. Even then, Jody would be crushed. He'll feel like a disappointment and Billy was probably afraid he'd be the cause for Jody's pain.

To conclude, *The Red Pony* from John Steinbeck is a great story having to do with responsibility and loss. And I'm sure we can relate or empathize to Jody and him having to grow up and deal with things like the loss of a loved one. From my perspective, Billy Buck was more of a father figure than Carl Tiflin for many reasons. He was trustworthy and empathetic. Billy was the only one there for him right after Gabilan died. Jody was lucky to have someone like Billy there to help during harsh times. I know for a fact Jody will never forget that. Even though it's just ink on pages.

Student # 30

Angel Avila, Vista Verde Middle School

Coach: Jim Rice

Jody's True Father

Have you had a huge responsibility that if you didn't obey or follow the rules, you would have gotten in trouble? I have many times, but one of the biggest one was when last year I had to take care of my 1-year old sister for a day. It took a lot of patience, for example: playing with her, feeding her, and putting her to sleep, but I managed to do it. In the short story, "The Gift", by John Steinbeck, Jody also has a huge responsibility, taking care of a pony. Jody didn't take care of Gabilan by himself; he had some help from Billy Buck. In my opinion, Billy modeled fatherhood, even better than his biological father.

To begin with, Billy gives age appropriate advice to Jody on many things. For example, Billy said with regard to the saddle they bought with the pony, "'It's just a show saddle,' Billy Buck said disparagingly. 'It isn't practical for the brush, but it was cheap at the sale.'" This tells us that Billy gave Jody a saddle for the pony, even though it didn't cost a lot, because Jody wants to ride the pony. Billy also gave advice to Jody about what horses like or how to ride them. Even more, Billy is a better model of fatherhood when he defends Jody when his father criticizes him, perhaps unjustly. One example is when Jody kills the buzzard that was scavenging the pony and Carl criticizes him. Billy protects him by reminding Carl that Jody was going through a hard time, so Carl should leave him alone. Also, Billy helps Jody train the pony. An example of this is on page 16 where we read that, "Billy Buck kept his word. In early fall the training began. First there was the halter-breaking..." This is evidence that Billy is reliable and helped him with the training of the pony.

In contrast, others may say that Carl is a better father figure than Billy. For example, he is strict and teaches Jody that life will be tough. For example, Carl tells Jody that if he doesn't take care of Gabilan, he will sell it. This shows that Carl is showing Jody that if he is not responsible, there will be consequences. Also, Carl gives Jody gifts. For example, he gives Jody a gun, and so long as he doesn't aim toward the house, he will give him bullets when he turns twelve. Most importantly, he gives him Gabilan to take care of, which he really appreciates.

In conclusion, I believe that Billy Buck is a better father figure for many reasons. Most importantly, he helps Jody discharge the large responsibility in his young life. When I think back to when I had to babysit my sister, I didn't have help, but I didn't do it only for one day. Jody had it harder since he had Gabilan to take care of for months on end. Thanks to Billy, Jody got valuable lessons growing up during the too brief period. During which he was caring for Gabilan.

Student # 5

Derek Behnke, San Benancio Middle School

Coach: Arun Poblete

The Red Pony Final Draft

A good father is relatable, human, and compassionate. In the case of *The Red Pony*, Billy Buck is a better father figure to Jody than Carl Tiflin. This is evident in the way he speaks, relates, and reacts to Jody.

When Carl and Billy give Jody the pony on pages 9 and 10, Jody thanks both of them. Carl reacts strangely, having to leave because he is “embarrassed.” Billy, however, is more personal and relatable, and he shows Jody the saddle, how to train the pony, and even helps name the horse Gabilan. The book even says that “It was easier to talk to Billy Buck.”

On pages 25-33, Billy is shown as a father when he does everything in his power to save Gabilan after he catches strangles. Gabilan is left out in the rain because of Billy, so he stays with Gabilan for many days, using every trick he knows to save the pony. Carl, however, is not nearly as helpful as Billy, hating the pony’s weakness and ordering Jody to leave the pony. The only reason Jody stayed was because Billy stood up for him.

Billy Buck also seems to be a better father in the way he treats Jody. On pages 36 and 37, when Jody kills the buzzard that killed his pony, Billy Buck offers to help while Carl Tiflin tries to teach. Billy even turns to carry Jody home while Carl does nothing. This shows that Billy Buck is compassionate.

So, in conclusion, Billy Buck is a more kind and loving fatherly figure than Carl Tiflin, Jody’s own father. Billy expresses this in his actions of caring for Gabilan, understanding, and talking to Jody. Therefore, Billy’s actions prove him to be a better father than Carl Tiflin.

Student # 1

Lauren Bronfeld, San Benancio Middle School

Coach: Nancy Russell

In life, every person is given responsibilities to prepare them for the future. Our responsibilities help us grow and to become a better citizen by understanding the world a little more. In John Steinbeck's novel, *The Red Pony*, his main character, Jody, understands the importance of a responsibility when his father gifts him his first ever pony, Gabilan. I, too, have been given responsibilities. For instance, I must take care of my house, pets, and myself. I relate to Jody because we have similar tasks to complete.

Jody lived on a ranch, so he was always given tasks and chores. Prior to the coming of the pony, Jody had frequent rebellious impulses. "School had just opened two weeks before. There was still a spirit of revolt among the pupils," (Steinbeck, 5). Often, when he was ordered to finish a chore or task, Jody would attempt to cheat or half-heartedly complete it. "Jody, tonight see you fill the wood box clear full. Last night you crossed the sticks and it wasn't only about half full. Lay the sticks flat tonight," (Steinbeck, 6). Jody's mother had asked him to lay the sticks in the wood box, but he did not complete it properly because he was careless. He did not put in much thought into his actions, only to finish it early. Another example of his rebellious impulses would be the time when he destroyed a muskmelon. "Back through the vegetable garden he went, and he paused only a moment to smash a green muskmelon with his heel, but he was not happy about it. It was a bad thing to do, he knew perfectly well. He kicked dirt over the ruined melon to conceal it," (Steinbeck, 5). When Jody realized what he had done, he felt ashamed by his actions and tried to cover up the blemish. He understood then, what he did, and that small thought signified a change. He now considered his actions afterwards, instead of discarding them.

When Gabilan came into Jody's life, he reasoned that a live being would be much different than a wood box or a muskmelon. Jody had to closely guard and care for an animal to prevent it from getting hurt. That realization helped Jody grow with knowledge as well. Before Gabilan, Jody relied on the sharp sound of the metal triangle to get him out of bed. "Jody never waited for the triangle to get him out of bed after the coming of the pony. It became his habit to creep out of bed even before his mother was awake, to slip into his clothes and go quietly down to the barn to see Gabilan," (Steinbeck, 13). Jody knew that he needed to be punctual and to be prepared. When Gabilan eventually fell ill, Jody knew that he had to stay by the pony's side, through thick and thin. "Jody couldn't have gone away, even if he had wanted to," (Steinbeck, 32). Jody wanted to remain with the pony. He knew that he could never leave him. That made him understand that in his future, he would have some tasks that he would have to see through.

In similar ways, I am like Jody. I do not live on a ranch, nor do I have a pony, but I do have chores, tasks, and my own animals. I am expected to clean my home, look after myself, and look after my animals. My pets need to be cleaned up after, fed, and loved. Jody and I put in

more effort into looking after our live animals. Also similar to Jody, I have rebellious actions, like abandoning my tasks. I learned that I must persevere and complete them.

In the end, every person has had responsibilities, and they aid them to become more sophisticated individuals. Both Jody and I are like any other person, because we have learned lessons through our faults and mistakes. Even though everyone's responsibilities vary, we all gain the same knowledge and maturity.

Student # 10

Adam Bucholtz, San Carlos School

Coach: Brad Littlefield

The Importance of Responsibility

Growing up there are many changes children experience that can help develop the necessary tools that can be used later in life. One, is accepting new responsibilities and learning key qualities from them. "The Gift" is a chapter from *The Red Pony* written by John Steinbeck. "The Gift" is a story about a young boy named Jody, living on a ranch with his family and the cow-hand, Billy Buck. One day, his life unexpectedly changes when his father, Carl Tiflin, gave him a pony. Taking good care of his pony, Gabilan, has helped Jody learn responsibility in many ways. Adopting new responsibilities as a young adult help develop character, responsibility, and the attributes of a mature adult.

One way Jody has changed and developed responsibility is waking up earlier to take care of Gabilan. Every morning, Jody's mother rings a triangle to wake everyone up. On page 13, it states "Jody never waited for the triangle to get him out of bed after the coming of the pony." Jody is concerned cares for Gabilan and realizes he needs to dedicate more of his time to caring for Gabilan. Like Jody, in my life, it is my responsibility to dedicate time to my school sport teams. Improving my skills and practicing outside of school, help me become a valuable asset on my team. Another way Jody has developed responsibility and maturity is, resisting peer pressure. On page 14, it says "'Whyn't you ride him?' the boys cried!... Jody's courage was up... 'I'm not old enough. Nobody can ride him for a long time.'" Jody was able to stand up to his friends and resist the temptation to ride Gabilan when he knew he wasn't supposed to. I can relate to this in my own life. As a child, I would easily make mistakes and get in trouble, but know I am capable of resisting the temptation like Jody.

Personal responsibilities are important because they teach life lessons and experience. Without responsibilities our lives would fall apart, and we wouldn't learn to develop character and respect. I couldn't imagine life without the importance of responsibility.

Student # 119

Elle Caltabiano, Holy Cross Middle School

Coach: Kelly Quackenbush

In this tense, but yet, short story called *The Red Pony*, by John Steinbeck, is about a young boy named Jody living on a farm in Salinas with his family. Throughout the book, Jody learns the ways of life from having a pony named Gabilan. From the start and to the end of *The Red Pony*, Jody grows up and changes into a new person. Jody learns lessons from caring for Gabilan which leads to responsibility.

At the beginning of the book, Carl Tiflin, Jody's father, gave Jody a pony. Jody named it Gabilan. Jody learns how to take care of Gabilan from learning by the best, Billy Buck, a cow handler (one of Carl's workers), who is an expert on horses. When Jody took care of Gabilan, it reminded me of when I watch and care for my brother. When Jody first got Gabilan, there was a change of character you could see in him. Jody was proud that his father trusted him with a pony and grew more determined in making his father proud of himself. I related to Jody in this situation because I played in a basketball league my dad coached me in. Every year, we don't win the championship. But this year, was my last year, and I felt more determined because of how hard I had worked and most importantly making my dad proud. In the middle of *The Red Pony*, Jody grew fond about Gabilan and made a special connection with him. Jody was looking forward to riding Gabilan for the first time on Thanksgiving. But he was a little worried because there was foreboding signs that it was going to rain and Jody didn't want Gabilan to slip or fall. One day, Jody asked Billy Buck if he could leave Gabilan out while he was at school. Billy Buck said yes. Jody became a little concerned because the forecast was rain. But, Billy Buck said there wouldn't be any rain. Later that afternoon it started to pour. Jody rushed home right after school to find Gabilan miserable and cold and especially soaked. Jody brought him in and Billy Buck apologized. The next day, Gabilan became very ill and came down with strangles. Billy Buck and Jody did everything to try and help Gabilan, but there was just no way. Gabilan later became so sick and died. When reading this part, I put myself in Jody's shoes and knew how sad he felt from past experiences, when one of my relatives died. At these times, I felt so sad and thought I could never be happy again. But like Jody, I became brave and rose up. From Gabilan dying, it made Jody to become more independent, brave, and wise. But most importantly, Jody became more responsible for being there and taking care of Gabilan.

Jody became more independent when he got Gabilan. There was a character change by Jody starting out as a shy, timid boy and grew into becoming a responsible young man. Throughout *The Red Pony*, I could relate to all the experiences Jody went through. I could tell that when Jody went through all these stages he was scared. Every time when I try something new for the first time, I am very nervous. But, I push through and realize I can do anything I tell myself I can do. Throughout all the stages of my life, I grow and become a stronger person, and I feel that Jody shares that too.

Student # 96

Giselle Camacho-Ruiz , Washington Middle School

Coach: Marissa Welch

Jody Changes

The main character, Jody, has been changing throughout chapter one. At the beginning, and the rest of the chapter, Jody was just a normal and responsible kid. He did his chores of feeding the chickens and stocking up on wood and he also went to school. But when you progress more into the story you will see the changes.

Jody's father, Mr. Tiflin, got him a red pony. Jody decided to name this red majestic pony Gabilan. As you read more you'll notice that Jody has been changing. He forgot to do his chores, but his mother reminded him, and he thought about not going to school all because he wanted to stay and take care of Gabilan. Jody was still responsible but only toward caring for his animal friend, Gabilan.

Jody may have changed but many of us, including me, have acted the same. I have experience with animals but mostly with a chicken. When I first got my chicken I slowly began to ignore everything else. I didn't do my homework or do my chores.

Student # 4

Tatum Campion, San Benancio Middle School

Coach: Karen Steadman

When Gabilan, Jody's horse, came to Jody in the book *The Red Pony* had to change his ways of life and had to switch things up to care for Gabilan. He learned many valuable lessons from caring for his new horse. I do 4-H and I raise pigs. When I get my pig, I have to juggle schoolwork and chores to be able to take care of my pig.

The day Gabilan came Jody was beyond excited and willing to do whatever he could for his new red pony. "He's not old enough. Nobody can ride him on the long halter. Billy Buck will teach me how." Jody wants to learn how to train his horse and not have Billy Buck training Gabilan himself.

Jody learned many lessons from having Gabilan. One lesson he learned was even though you might like one responsibility more than another you still have to do both responsibilities. "Jody didn't hear his mother enter the barn. She was angry when she came, but when she looked in at the pony and at Jody working over him she felt a curious pride rise up on her. "Have you forgot the wood box?" Although Jody's mother Mrs. Tiflin was proud to see Jody working with the pony. She was still upset Jody didn't do his original chore the wood box. Jody learns much responsibility while caring for his horse. He himself learned to manage his time between chores homework and Gabilan. Overall Jody learned responsibility and great lessons.

I'm just like Jody I had to face new responsibilities and challenges. I got my first 4-H pig when I was ten years old. Having to add new responsibilities and still have my schoolwork and chores was a struggle for me at first. The hardest part for me was having to go feed my pig and clean his stall every morning and night after a long day of school and sports. I wanted to quit sometimes but I knew I couldn't. The biggest lesson I learned was don't quit. There were days that I wanted to drop everything and leave because my pig wouldn't listen, or he would bolt. But deep down inside I knew quitting wasn't the answer. I worked hard and at the end I knew it will all be okay. When I took my pig to fair I knew I wouldn't see him again and it made me a stronger person. The responsibility I gained was incredible. I've had two more pigs since then and still every day I learn more responsibility and life lessons.

Both Jody and I got animals and had to adjust our life style and adjust how we did things. We both gained responsibility and life lessons through our experiences with our animals. I hope that one day everyone gets the experience Jody an I had to become more responsible and become a better person.

Student # 68

Ivan Campos-Fernandez, Harden Middle School

Coach: Souhad Kahil

Jody's True "Father" Figure

In "The Gift", Jody was given a pony he named Gabilan, and Billy Buck helped Jody learn how to take responsibility for an animal, as he lives on a ranch. However, while Carl is his paternal figure, who truly was the better father figure? I believe that Billy Buck taught Jody more than Carl, his father, therefore making him the better father figure.

The first reason I have to believe Billy is the better father model is that he seems to know how to take care of Gabilan. It is often stated in the novel how Billy is a cowhand (pg.2) and is the "best horse doctor". Cowhands are people who are experienced with cows, yet Billy is also a great horse handler. Later, Gabilan got sick due to a rainstorm, and Billy took care of Gabilan. He tries to clean his nasal passages (pg.27) and performs tracheostomy (cut in windpipe, pg.31 and 32). Billy also teaches Jody a lot of ways to take care of animals.

Furthermore, Billy tries to bring Gabilan back to his peak physical condition. As I have stated in the last paragraph, Gabilan gets really sick and eventually dies. However, before death, Gabilan was helped by Jody and Billy. When Jody came back from school, he immediately ran to the stalls, where he comforted Gabilan in the cold rain. After the pony gets sick, Billy notices Gabilan caught a case of the stranglers, and cut the lump on his throat, yellow fluid (puss) is released, which Billy believes was the "yellow poison" (pg. 27 and 30). While Billy could've injured the pony even more, he at least cleaned the wound with carbolic acid. He then cuts a hole in his windpipe, allowing Gabilan to breathe (pg. 31, tracheostomy). Again, he shouldn't have done it, but he cleaned it. Not only does this prove his knowledge of horses, which also impacts Jody, but it also means he cares about Jody and his pony.

However, it can be said that Carl let Jody learn on his own and gave him the pony in the first place. I respect everyone's right to have and state their own opinions, but I have textual evidence that can prove otherwise. Carl giving Jody the pony was a nice gesture, but a pony is too big a responsibility for one child. Also, when Gabilan is sick and about to die, Carl rambles about how he hates weak things (pg. 23). He only showed a tad bit of remorse when Gabilan actually died. He barely even taught Jody responsibility and cared for him and Gabilan. While Carl is his dad, he is still not as great of a role model as Billy.

Student # 59

Bella Cantu, Buena Vista Middle School

Coach: Beth Roybal

Disciplined or Sensitive?

A father should be disciplined, caring, helpful, and a role model to his child. In John Steinbeck's *The Red Pony*, Billy Buck is a better father figure because of his attitude towards Jody and Gabilan, and because of his youth, making him more relatable to Jody.

The difficult farm life setting of the book helps to give an idea as to what an ideal father type would be for Jody. The first few pages of the book reveal the many responsibilities Jody has while living on a farm, he must wake up on time, then after breakfast, he has to do all his outside chores. Due to all the responsibilities Jody has, a father should be disciplined in order to make sure his child does all his chores he needs to do. A father should also be caring to show that he is not to be disobeyed, but he is also not to be feared or looked upon as "scary" or not sensitive.

On page 37 of *The Red Pony*, Billy Buck shows great courage by standing up to his boss, Carl Tiflin, to defend Jody after his pony dies. Carl makes a comment, "Jody...the buzzard didn't kill the pony. Don't you know that?", which only made things worse. Billy Buck also helped Jody raise and train Gabilan, something Carl should do because he gifted Gabilan to Jody. Another reason Billy Buck is a better father figure is the fact that Billy Buck is younger than Carl, something never clearly stated, but is implied due to his attitude and the way he is described as a character. On page 1, the text states, "...Billy cleared each nostril by holding its mate closed with his forefinger and blowing fiercely," something an older, more mature man would not do. By knowing how to care for horses, he is a role model for Jody, which is better than what Carl Tiflin has done for him.

Although character traits of Billy Buck portray better fathering skills, Carl Tiflin is in fact Jody's blood father. The fact that Carl is a disciplinarian is important because it teaches a childlike Jody to take responsibility and to have discipline later on in life. Carl's hatred for vulnerability and weakness can also be helpful to teach Jody how to be strong, and to be obeyed later on in life.

Although Carl Tiflin shows the characteristics of being a strong leader and is more "manly," Billy Buck, a more sensitive figure and is a better role model for Jody. Billy Buck obviously cares for Jody, and they both share a love for horses, and can be capable of sharing love for each other.

Student # 81

Giselle Casteel, Bolsa Knolls Middle School

Coach: David Spiselman

What characteristics do you believe a good father should have? Should he be disregarding, stern, or even fearful, or should a good father be involved, dedicated, and give their child hope?

I stand for the position that Billy Buck contained important father-like qualities towards Jody that his actual birth father—Carl Tiflin—did not in the story *The Red Pony* by John Steinbeck. Some characteristics that he demonstrated were actions that showed Jody how much he cared, dedication to Jody's needs, and optimism that taught Jody how to stay hopeful.

There were many examples in the story that showed us that Billy Buck cared about Jody. One instance was when Billy did his absolute best to take care of Gabilan while he was sick. The story says, "You go get some breakfast and then go back to school. I'll take care of him." (pg. 25) This quote was when Billy motioned for Jody not to worry about Gabilan because Billy would tend him for Jody. This is important because, since Jody grew anxious for Gabilan, Billy Buck took it upon himself to take care of him. He did this because he cared about Jody while Carl Tiflin was nowhere to be found during this hard time for Jody. Another quote in the book starts with Jody questioning whether Billy Buck would leave Gabilan or not. He responded by claiming, "I won't leave him at all..." This quote shows the dedication Billy Buck has towards the needs of Jody because he cares about him. This is an important father-like quality because it will not only tell Jody he is loved and cared for but will teach him to show care for others as well.

The next important characteristic Billy contains is being optimistic. I believe this is an important quality for a father for a few reasons. This not only implies that Billy and Jody have a strong, trusting bond, but also supports the previously mentioned claim of Billy caring for Jody. A quote from the text says, "Strangles...but don't you worry about that. I'll pull him out of it. I've seen get well when they were worse than Gabilan is..." Billy Buck was staying very optimistic about the well-being of the red pony and assuring Jody that everything will turn out all right. Doing this keeps Jody from worrying which is not what a father should attempt to achieve. It also shows that Billy Buck and Jody have a loving bond since Billy teaches him not to give up.

The opposing claim would stand for the position that Carl Tiflin was a better father figure for Jody. They might argue that Mr. Tiflin's sternness taught Jody how to respect him and stay disciplined. However, a quote in the story demonstrates the contrary. It states, "His father was a disciplinarian. Jody obeyed him in everything without questions of any kind" This quote means that Jody doesn't hesitate to do whatever his father commands because he would get disciplined if not. This does not display respect, this displays fear. This also breaks Jody's moral because Jody might forget what right and wrong is out of the fear of doing exactly what his father wants.

These are the justifications for why Billy Buck is the better father figure because Jody is able to go to him with how he feels while still respecting him and learn from Billy's influence.

Student # 78

Victoria Castillo, Bolsa Knolls Middle School

Coach: Cathleen Keenan

The True Father Figure

A father figure is someone in our lives who we look up to or count on to always be there for us. No matter how old we are, it is important to have that one person in our life. We can't go out into the world on our own. Guidance will be needed as life does have its bumps and bruises. Unfortunately, not all of us have our fathers around as much as they should be. Those who relate to the situation would tell you how they do indeed still have a father-like figure who teaches them, supports them, and loves them no matter what the case. Sometimes our fathers aren't able to give us everything necessary to grow. It is vital to have others in our lives that will be able to provide like no other. Luckily, in *The Red Pony* by John Steinbeck, ten-year-old Jody Tiflin was fortunate enough to have both his father around and even Billy Buck, the hardworking cow-hand who he truly sees as a role model.

Carl Tiflin, Jody's father, was the boss of his farm and was quite demanding when giving orders. He didn't have that strong relationship with Jody that you'd probably expect. Jody made sure that he obeyed his father as he couldn't bare suffering the consequences. Unlike Carl Tiflin, there was Billy Buck. He loved Jody unconditionally and it is not difficult to see that they did have a special bond. Carl Tiflin even decided to give his son his very own pony, but no instructions were included. As giving Jody the pony, Mr. Tiflin only said, "He needs a good currying, and if I ever hear of you not feeding him or leaving his stall dirty, I'll sell him off in a minute." His own father didn't even have to generosity in guiding his son in any way. We can't forget about Billy Buck, though. Billy was able to provide help, unlike Carl. As a "horse whisperer," Billy volunteered to demonstrate the proper care the colt would need. Jody can even have the opportunity to talk comfortably with Billy. Both Jody and Billy were able to create memories taking care of Gabilan, building a father and son bond.

Trust, a firm belief in the honesty, reliability and faith. Building trust isn't the easiest thing to do at times. We only trust very few people who have proven themselves to be trustworthy. Jody did have both faith and reliability on Billy. When he went to school, Billy took care of Gabilan, being the considerate man who treated Jody as his own son. Jody wouldn't dare ask his father for any guidance. Even when Gabilan got sick, Billy made it his job to nourish him back to health. All the time spent on helping Jody with Gabilan truly came from Billy's heart. He could have done anything he wanted, but Billy took charge in being the father figure Jody appreciated.

Some may say that Carl Tiflin only wanted to push his son into being a responsible young man. You can even mention how he rewarded his son by getting him a pony of his own. At the end of the day, no matter who it is, the father figure or figures in our lives will be the ones we will be able to depend on. Can Jody depend on his father? Is he able to receive the support any child should have from their own father? Carl Tiflin isn't a true model, but Billy Buck truly is. As I think of an amazing father figure, I can instantly think of my own dad. Not only does he teach

me, but he teaches so many other girls as a coach. He has been my softball coach for about nine years and he's taught me both the game, and the different ways of life. Through Billy Buck, I see my own father. Both generous, respectful, dependable, and hardworking men that can take major parts in one's life.

As mentioned before, one must have a father figure in our life that will help us with life in general. That one figure doesn't necessarily have to be our own father. If looking for a true role model, Jody won't have to look far because Billy Buck is one he can depend on to always be there for him.

Student # 38

Rene Chavez, Vista Verde Middle School

Coach: Rose Howard

Anyone can be your father if they care about you and love you. *The Red Pony* was written by John Steinbeck. Billy Buck the hired hand and Carl Tiflin "father" were both great father figures. Billy was like a second father, he helped Jody with anything wrong with the pony. Carl Tiflin gave Jody the pony. Carl didn't help Jody with the pony at all. Carl just had the title "Father," but it didn't mean anything to Jody. This is why Bill Buck was more of a father than Carl.

Billy helps with anything Jody needed help on. When Gabilan, the pony, got sick Billy helped cure him, even though the pony didn't survive the fever Billy tried his best. "I think I'll call him Gabilan Mountains...it's a long name just call him Gabilan."

Some people may argue that Carl Tiflin was a better father figure. He gave Jody the pony. Carl was strict, however, "...I'll sell him off in a minute." This teaches Jody to love the pony. Carl loved his son, he gave him a pony and a gun to teach him a lesson of responsibility.

I still believe Billy is a better father figure. When the pony got sick Billy helped Gabilan. Billy help anyone the range. He was also a good doctor. He helps Jody the most like a father.

In conclusion anyone can be your father if they care about you and love you.

Student # 7

Alex Gianola Cook, All Saints Day School

Coach: Ondine Gage

Life Lessons Jody Learns

“The Gift” is the first in a series of short stories in *The Red Pony* depicting the childhood of John Steinbeck’s young protagonist Jody Tiflin. It is a tale of Jody’s transition and induction into adulthood. The story takes place on a ranch in the Salinas Valley during the 1930s. The story unfolds around Jody’s comprehension of lessons by caring for the red pony such as human fallibility, the life death cycle, and most importantly responsibility.

Gabilan and Billy Buck open Jody’s awareness of human fallibility. Billy Buck taught Jody how to halter break, saddle, and bridle Gabilan. So, when Jody is unsure whether to leave Gabilan in the corral or not he depends on Billy Buck for advice. Billy Buck assures him that it won’t rain. “Not likely to rain today. She’s rained herself out.” So, Jody leaves Gabilan in the coral. It commences to rain in the afternoon when Jody is still at school. Gabilan ends up soaked and falls ill. Billy Buck was an expert horse trainer and of value to Jody’s father. Billy represents near perfection and infallibility in Jody’s life. So, when Billy is fallible through Gabilan it exposes Jody to the harsh truth of human fallibility.

In the recent Florida shootings, I learned of human fallibility when multiple people made multiple errors and were fallible. As a result, a certain person was able to obtain a firearm. This led to him claiming the lives of seventeen innocent individuals. This was of similar circumstances to Billy Bucks fallibility with Gabilan except on a more grandiose scale because it involves greater death.

John Steinbeck’s life death motif permeates “The Gift”. Steinbeck frequently foreshadows death through symbols of the buzzards which deal with death so frequently even to the extent of which they benefit from it and devour the carcasses of dead animals. Steinbeck also foreshadows death through the rain which both gives and takes life. In the novel Jody deals with the life death cycle as Gabilan is a victim of the eternal cycle. However, Jody tries to resist the cycle and even tries to kill death when he attacks a buzzard and kills it in a brutal fashion. “The red fearless eyes still looked at him, impersonal and unafraid and detached. He struck again and again, until the buzzard lay dead”. But eventually Jody calms down and accepts the eternal unending cycle.

I experienced death myself when someone close to me went to the hospital and soon died. It truly shocked me and forced me to be aware of the life death cycle. From this experience I also learned of the everlasting life death cycle just as Jody did with Gabilan.

Through the novel Jody gradually apprehends responsibility through caring for Gabilan. Initially in the novel Jody has to be reminded to get up and commence doing his chores and he is only responsible for simple chores of relation to filling the wood box and collecting the chickens’ eggs. But once Jody’s father buys Gabilan for Jody, Jody starts gaining responsibility through

thoroughly caring for Gabilan. "Every morning... Jody had curried and brushed the pony." Near the end of the novel Jody truly gains responsibility.

I myself apprehended responsibility through my passion of piano. Every day I had to push myself to practice and strive to improve. Eventually through the hard work and endurance I allowed myself to perform pieces which I thought were not performable. The journey was difficult just as Jody's was but both of us in the end benefited. Whether it was from taking care of a pony or practicing the piano we both attained responsibility.

Through Jody's experiences with Gabilan Jody apprehends the valuable lessons of human fallibility the life death cycle and most importantly responsibility. Steinbeck's coming of age novella still holds valuable life lessons, which are still pertinent today.

Student # 47

Aylin Correa, Vista Verde Middle School

Coach: Terry Heffington

What is Fatherhood?

What is fatherhood? Is it being loving or is it being strict. In the book *The Red Pony* by John Steinbeck, Jody was given a horse by his father Carl Tiflin who was strict. Throughout the story Jody learns how to be responsible with the help of the ranch hand, Billy Buck. Sadly, in the end Gabilan dies because of a mistake. Overall, I believe Billy Buck is the better father figure to Jody.

First of all, I believe Billy Buck is a better father figure to Jody, because Billy Buck actually taught Jody how to care for the pony. For example, Billy taught Jody how to clean the stall, curry Gabilan, feed Gabilan, and how to put the bite on Gabilan. Unlike Carl Tiflin who gave Gabilan to Jody without advice or help, and still expected everything perfect. I believe this because, in the book it quotes "He needs a good currying' his father said, 'and if I ever hear of you not feeding him or leaving his stall dirty, I'll sell him off in a minute.'" This proves that Carl Tiflin is not a good father figure to Jody because he expected Jody to be able to clean the stall and feed the horse without being taught. Also, what good father would ever give their child a horse and not expect the stall to be dirty once in a while.

On the other hand, some people may argue that Carl Tiflin is the better father figure for Jody because he may just be acting strict and strong around Jody, so he can be brave and strong as well. They might believe this because in the book it quotes, "Carl Tiflin said crossly, 'You come with us after breakfast!'" this prove that Carl Tiflin talks strict with Jody, so he can see how brave a man should be so Jody can become a brave man as well. Also, I believe that he really doesn't want to talk to Jody like that but does so Jody can see what he should be like and Carl Tiflin doesn't want Jody to be a weak person.

Although that may be true, I still believe Billy Buck is the better father figure for Jody because Billy Buck was with Jody at all times, even when Carl Tiflin was embarrassed of Jody. I think this because in the book it says Carl Tiflin walked out of the barn embarrassed because Jody said something funny, while Billy Buck stayed with Jody in the stall. This proves that Billy Buck is the father figure because he stayed with Jody while his father was embarrassed. Also, while would any father ever want to be embarrassed of their son.

In conclusion, I believe Billy Buck is the better father figure to Jody because he was with Jody at all times and taught Jody how to care for the pony. While Carl Tiflin was nowhere to be found. All in all, I believe Billy Buck is the better father figure for Jody.

Student # 61

Arianna Covarrubias, Good Shepherd Catholic School

Coach: Danny Greene

Billy Buck: The Better Father Figure

In "The Gift" written by John Steinbeck Jody has two father figures that role model how to become responsible and mature. Billy Buck was represented as a better father figure to Jody. Billy Buck was the ranch hand and helped the Tiflins with ranch chores. He taught Jody the value of hard work, self-achievement, determination, and most importantly, optimism. To Jody, his father, Carl Tiflin, was too strict and focused mostly on discipline. Carl Tiflin's gifts to Jody always came once he was old enough to receive with purpose. Jody saw Billy Buck as a better father figure to look up to and trust.

Billy Buck, the ranch hand, demonstrated to Jody how to become responsible and mature. It was Billy Buck who taught Jody how to train the pony, Gabilan. "'Mine?'...'Sure, that is if you look out for him and break him. I'll show you how.'" (10) this states how caring Billy is towards Jody. Jody had trusted Billy Buck from the moment he received Gabilan, but then lost trust when Billy did not keep his promise to bring Gabilan inside, nor when he promised Jody that he would cure the pony of his illness. Yet, he owns up to his mistakes and cared for the pony day and night. Billy Buck proved that he could be reliable and own up for his mistakes, showing Jody that life is full of mistakes, but you need to work through them to succeed.

Jody saw Billy Buck as a truthful man that he could trust, but also an optimistic friend he could enjoy. Unlike his father, Carl Tiflin, Billy Buck helped Jody find self-worth and achievement in his chores and accomplishments. Billy Buck did many things with Jody, such as teaching him how to work and how to train Gabilan. These activities strengthened their bond and only made Jody look up to Billy Buck even more. Billy Buck valued optimism too, which made Jody value his work and friendship. He also stood up for Jody more than Mr. Tiflin when Gabilan died. This was evident when Billy argued against Carl Tiflin's lack of compassion, "'Jody,' he explained, 'the buzzard didn't kill the pony. Don't you know that?' 'I know it,' Jody said wearily...'Course he knows it,' Billy said furiously. 'Jesus Christ!' Man, can't you see how he'd feel about it?'" (37). Jody saw Billy Buck as a trustworthy and optimistic friend he could rely on.

Even though Billy Buck was a strong role model to Jody, Carl Tiflin also contributed to Jody's value of hard work and discipline. He was a positive role model in some ways, but not so much in others. Jody's chores were decided mainly by his father which gave him structure but not freedom. His father's serious attitude did not strengthen their connection or love for each other, instead it separated them more. Mr. Tiflin was a good role model to Jody but was too strict in his relationship, which didn't give him and Jody the bond every father and son should have. Even with these struggles and separation, Carl provided a good life for Jody and most importantly, Gabilan, the red pony.

To Jody, Billy Buck was a better father figure than Carl Tiflin. He displayed the value of hard work, determination and optimism. Jody viewed Billy Buck as an optimistic friend that still

valued work as a way of maturing, while he saw his father as a role model to maturity and hard work ethic. Mr. Tiflin was a serious and strict father that separated his bond with Jody, yet still provided all that Jody needed and the red pony. Both father figures helped Jody mature and become a responsible young man. Billy Buck supported Jody with optimism as well as self-worth and achievement that taught Jody how to become successful and reliable.

Student # 105

MacKenzie Crane, Washington Middle School

Coach: Andrea Brown

Imagine that you had just lost someone that was close to you? Now imagine that you yourself could have prevented it, that would make you feel terrible, right? This is what Jody has to go through after the despair when his beloved horse dies.

In chapter one of *The Red Pony*, Jody gets his first ever horse. He named it Gabilan. Then Gabilan after getting a cold when he was left outside in the ice-cold rain. Many could argue that it wasn't Jody's fault because he couldn't control the weather, but it could be argued that Jody could have prevented Gabilan's death when the story states, "He considered holding up one finger for permission to go to the outhouse and, once outside, running home to put the pony in." This shows that he was contemplating on if he should go to Gabilan, but, ultimately, he didn't.

I too have experienced something like this in real life. First off, this wasn't a person or an animal, but it was still something that was important to me. I had gotten a tablet for my birthday and I had let both of my sisters borrow it. Then my sisters started letting the battery die 100%. This ended up frying the battery. I could have let my two sisters stop using my tablet, but I didn't. I keep on letting them use my tablet until it was too late, and I had to buy a new tablet.

So how is my story relevant to Jody's story in any way, shape, or form? Well, our stories both teach us the same thing. Our stories teach us that if we can prevent something or someone from dying, we always should. After his first pony died Jody had gotten a new pony, which he took better care off, because of his past mistakes.

In conclusion we had both learned something about how to take care of something we love. Jody learned that if he can prevent something happening to something he loved he should. I learned not to let my sisters use my expensive stuff.

Student # 20

Jennifer Cruz, Vista Verde Middle School

Coach: Be Astengo

How Jody Changes, Learns Lessons About Caring

In this story Jody faced new responsibilities and learns to care for others. Jody's father told Jody that he had something for him, Jody was so happy that he cannot wait. When Jody and his father went to the barn, Jody saw the red pony. Jody asked his father shyly "Mine?" Jody walk slowly but happy, he touches the pony. Jody said, "I think I'll call him Gabilan Mountains." But Billy Buck told Jody to call him Gabilan. Jody spent more time in the barn. Jody woke up early before going to school, so he can feed Gabilan and take him outside. Billy Buck show Jody how to take care of Gabilan.

Something that I am responsible for is cleaning my room and cleaning after myself. I also have to wash dishes for my family when everybody is eating together. These are some ways I care about my family. I also had a hamster that I took care of for two years. Then he died. Now I got a new hamster to take care of.

Me and Jody express ourselves by caring about something. Jody cared about Gabilan and I cared about my hamster. Jody caring for Gabilan changed the way he acted. My experience taking care of my hamster changed the way I acted too.

Student # 79

Dylan Dacpano, Bolsa Knolls Middle School

Coach: Hank Campora

The Red Pony Father Figures

A father figure is someone who cares for someone else in a fatherly and loving way. Carl Tiflin is Jody's father, but could someone else possibly be more caring and fatherly to Jody than Mr. Tiflin can? Billy Buck is more likely to qualify as the father figure to Jody than Carl could ever be.

Billy Buck is a ranch-hand that works for Mr. Tiflin on his ranch. Billy Buck has his own horse experience, so when Carl surprises Jody with Gabilan the pony, he takes responsibility for helping Jody care for Gabilan. Billy Buck made the mistake of telling Jody he'll take care of the horse while Jody was at school. One day, it rained when Billy Buck said it wasn't, Gabilan stood miserably in the corral when Jody got home. Jody tried his best to warm Gabilan up and when Billy Buck came home he felt remorse for lying to Jody. As Gabilan gets sicker, Billy Buck tries his best to cure the horse, but ultimately fails. Leading up to the horse walking out of the barn and dying somewhere near the ranch. Billy Buck ends up finding Jody eviscerating the buzzard. Billy Buck calms Jody down while Carl points out the buzzard didn't kill Gabilan, which made Billy Buck angry that Carl doesn't remark about how Jody feels at that moment.

Billy Buck isn't that perfect of a father figure. He has made mistakes that have made him feel remorse. Billy Buck caused Gabilan to get the sickness and eventually die, but Billy Buck tried to fix his mistakes and failed. He failed himself and Jody's responsibility. Jody probably entitled Billy Buck unreliable because of the whole situation, but because Billy Buck was more caring and tried his best for Jody, he'd prefer Billy Buck over his dad to rely on. Either for Jody's problems, his questions, or just over to be there for him whenever he needs it.

Carl Tiflin, Jody's father, is not that experienced in interacting with his only child. Carl was embarrassed to give Jody his first pony, and he was relieved when he was done and out of the way of Jody. Leaving Jody to figure out how to take care of Gabilan with Billy Buck's help. Carl tries to be a father to Jody, but gets jealous, angry, and/or hurt if he doesn't get his way. Mr. Tiflin was telling stories, but Jody wasn't listening, so he stopped talking and got grumpy that Jody wasn't interested in his stories. Carl also got jealous that Jody preferred to be with Billy Buck and got hurt when Jody said that. Carl has disciplined Jody, and really only had one good moment with Jody.

In conclusion, Billy Buck, in my opinion, is the option of choice when it comes to father figures. If there was a check list, Billy Buck would have: supportive, helpful, and overall caring person that Jody has ever met.

Student # 45

Raymunda de Jesus Martinez, Vista Verde Middle School

Coach: Joe Truskot

Father Rivalry

I look at the news and see fathers mistreating their children, neglecting them, or just not giving them the attention they need. While others treat children with love and respect. There is a connection between this story and *The Red Pony*. The book called *The Red Pony* is about a kid (Jody) who is taking care for the horse but has two helpers. The first one is his father Carl Tiflin and the other is a worker named Billy Buck. Billy is the father figure in the book.

Billy represents the idea of what a father should be like. Carl T. should understand what Jody is going through. In the book *The Red Pony*, Gabilan got sick and Jody was worrying. Billy Buck tries to calm him down by saying "a little rain won't hurt a horse." It was Carl T. who should've paid attention to Jody, but he's not there in Jody's needs. Carl should pay more attention because Jody is just and still being developing and needs love. Instead of love Jody receives orders each day as if he was prisoner, with a bit of freedom to spend with.

Others believe that Carl Tiflin is the father figure... Carl needs to be strong with everyone including his son. If Carl lets Jody do whatever he wanted without consequences, Jody would grow up to be a hard issue. Jody is limited on what he can do and makes him aware on what the boundary lines are. In the book, *The Red Pony* says, "The triangle bell picked him out of sleep." In addition, Carl tells Jody "He needs a good curry and if I ever hear you not feeding him or leaving his stall dirty I'll sell him off in a minute." Carl T. is setting boundary lines for Jody so he knows that everything has responsibility to be taken care of, and if Jody didn't care Carl would make him lose Jody's privilege.

Billy Buck show more of a father image. When Carl Tiflin came with Billy and the horse to present it to Jody he left. So, Billy Buck had to make sure Jody understood what he needed to know about a horse which Carl Tiflin should have done. Billy took his own time to teach Jody and bond with him. An action Carl T. should have done. When the horse gets sick, Billy tries to comfort the horse and Jody.

However, people view that Carl T. is the ideal father. What if Carl T. had to go run an errand after all he is the chief in the farm. He brings food and money into the house. All those time not being there for Jody could've been for Carl's own responsibility. He tries to comfort Jody by telling a famous story but at the end he got ignored with a fake laugh. This is a rejection to him therefore doesn't comfort Jody. He tells Jody "if Billy can't save the pony it can't be save." Carl wants his son to know you can't blame people for your responsibility.

I feel that Jody looks up to Billy B. as a father because at the end of the story when the pony dies, it is Billy who comforts him. While Carl unaware of Jody's feelings tells Jody that is his

fault. That made Jody even worse. At last Billy Buck can't take enough at card and defends Jody like a father should.

Overall, the real father figure is Billy Buck. Billy understands Jody and comforts him when Jody needs to. Carl Tiflin seems like an uncle rather than the father. A real father should be there by their kid's side especially if the kid is down. Even more if it's an only child.

Student # 56

Sophia DeFonzo, Junipero Serra

Coach: Robyn Riberal

The Red Pony: How Responsibility Can Change Someone

“Jody began his journey” (5). To elaborate, this quote describes one of the main responsibilities that Jody, the main character in *The Red Pony*, was required to actively participate in. Every weekday, he had to journey to school and this was a necessary action. Once he receives his pony, Gabilan, he changes and shows that he is more responsible, caring, and trusting. In this inspiring story by John Steinbeck, we see how there are many instances where responsibility becomes a main priority for Jody. In my own life, I have, also had to become more responsible, particularly by learning how to be a good role model.

When Jody gets Gabilan, he changes from a youthful boy into a maturing young man. First, he grows, not only physically, but mentally, as well. An instance describing this change states, “The place was familiar, but curiously changed. It wasn’t itself anymore, but a frame for things that were happening” (34). To explain, this describes the time when Jody visits his “special place” after Gabilan has become sick. Jody observes how the place has changed since he got the pony and now, because the pony is sick, the place seems especially sad and gloomy. This shows how after Gabilan became a part of Jody’s life, Jody thinks with a deeper frame of mind. Jody, also, cares deeply for Gabilan through his feeling and actions. A quote reads, “Every morning after Jody had curried and brushed the pony, he let down the barrier of the stall, and Gabilan thrust past him and raced down the barn and into the corral” (15). By taking part in these tasks, Jody proves to his father and Billy Buck that he is willing and able to have large responsibilities. Overall, by receiving Gabilan, Jody was able to grow and change by having a major responsibility.

Furthermore, I too, have been presented with many new and hefty responsibilities. A major one being the birth of my nephews and niece. When they were born, I had to learn how to be a good role model. I am many years older than them, so they look up to me. They observe everything that I do and learn from it. Due to their tentativeness, I had to learn how to be able to teach beneficial facts and thoughts. Also, I had to learn how to properly care for them. Learning how to feed them, change diapers, look after them, and satisfy their needs were all new things to me. By partaking in these actions, I was able to show my parents and brothers that I was becoming a responsible young adult and that they could trust me. Clearly, I have been faced with responsibilities that have taught me how to perform as a better version of myself.

After reading this novel, I have observed the similarities between Jody and me. We both have similar experiences with our responsibilities. Although, through them, hardships may have been faced, we both came out knowing more and being more mature versions of ourselves. Both of us learned how to care for something that was our responsibility. Also, we proved to our guardians that we were capable.

All in all, there have, clearly, been multiple situations where Jody was faced with new responsibilities in which he grew and matured from. This has also been proven to happen in a real-life situation, such as mine with my niece and nephews. Responsibilities are essential to life. As one grows, they will be faced with more them. They teach us how to manage ourselves, how to care for others, how to be trusting, and finally, how to be the best possible version of our self.

Student # 3

Antonella Del Toro, San Benancio Middle School

Coach: Brianna Lindsey

Jody lives on a ranch with both Billy Buck and Mr. Tiflin. As a responsible and tough person, Jody needs a good father figure to look up to. Both Billy Buck and Mr. Tiflin act as a father figure to Jody. However, Billy Buck is a better father figure to Jody by teaching Jody new things, not being as tough on him, and being around him more often.

I could see why people would think Mr. Tiflin is a better father figure. For example, he bought Jody his pony, and he was his real father. Despite what Mr. Tiflin did, I still see Billy Buck as a better father figure.

The first reason is that not only did Billy Buck help him take care of Jody's pony, but he also showed him how to do everything around the farm. He told Jody he needed to connect with his pony, before he could ride it. Also, he showed Jody the proper grooming and how to feed him the right amount of food, and how to gain his trust. For example, on page 13, Jody told Mrs. Tiflin "Carrots keep the coat good." This shows that Jody has learned a lot from Billy Buck about caring for his horse. Like any father figure, Billy advises Jody in his responsibilities.

The second reason why I feel that Billy Buck is a better father figure to Jody is because Billy Buck is not so tough on Jody. Throughout the book, Jody is treated kindly by Billy Buck. An example of Billy's kindness to Jody would be on page 9, when the narrator says, "It was easier to talk to Billy Buck." This means that Jody is more comfortable around Billy Buck than he is with Carl Tiflin. Jody also asked Billy Buck for advice with the pony. He asked Billy if he should leave the pony out, or put him in, in case it rained. Billy suggests leaving him out, so he could get some fresh air. This shows that Jody trusts, and looks to Billy Buck to make decisions.

The third reason why Billy Buck is a better father figure to Jody is because he is around Jody more often than Mr. Tiflin. Jody was constantly around Billy Buck especially in the barn. When Jody was going to sleep with Gabilan in the barn, Billy Buck offered to stay in the barn with him. Also, when Jody got mad at the vultures for trying to pick on Gabilan's dead body, Billy Buck told Jody to calm down. He picked up Jody in his arms and got infuriated with Mr. Tiflin for yelling at him. Through these actions, Jody came to see Billy Buck as a role model.

In the end, I think both Billy Buck and Carl Tiflin would not make bad fathers for Jody. However, out of the two, I think Billy Buck would be a better father figure to Jody for various reasons. He shows Jody new things, he does not treat Jody strictly, and he is more kind with Jody. But, most importantly, he is around Jody more often.

Student # 44

Claudia Dominguez Trejo, Vista Verde Middle School

Coach: Haley Quinn

Better Father Figure

Have you ever read the story called *The Red Pony*? In 1933, *The Red Pony* by John Steinbeck was born. *The Red Pony* is a tale about the life of a young boy named Jody Tiflin. Jody lives at a farm with his mother, father, and the cowhand. Billy Buck, the cowhand, and Carl Tiflin, the father, are two very important figures in Jody's life. Even though Billy Buck is not Jody's father, he is still a better father figure to Jody than Carl Tiflin.

To begin with, Billy Buck is a better father figure to Jody than Carl Tiflin. In page 9 of the book Steinbeck states, "It was easier to talk to Billy Buck." That means that for Jody, it was easier for him to talk to Billy Buck than his own father. In that moment in the story Jody had been with Billy Buck and his father to look at the new pony, Gabilan. Instead of staying Carl Tiflin left due to embarrassment. He knew his son could talk more openly to Billy. Billy Buck explained how to take care of the pony rather than Jody's father.

In addition, another reason why Billy Buck is a better father figure to Jody is because in page 23, the text says, "Carl Tiflin hated weakness and sickness, and he held a violent contempt for helplessness." In this part of the story, Jody had been talking to Billy Buck about Gabilan getting soaked in the rain. Jody asked Billy if he thought Gabilan was going to get sick. Billy reassured Jody about the situation. Billy told Jody the rain would not hurt Gabilan. When Carl Tiflin joined the conversation, instead of reassuring Jody about the situation, Carl lectured Jody. He told Jody that the horse was not a lap dog. It also mentions that Carl had "violent contempt for helplessness." That means that if Jody showed helplessness, his father might have a violent action to that. A father should be caring and reassuring towards his kids, just like Billy Buck is towards Jody.

Some people may argue, that Carl Tiflin is a better father figure to Jody. Carl is a role model because he bought Jody the pony, He wants to teach Jody how to be a responsible person. Carl Tiflin wants to see how responsible Jody is because in the text it states, "He needs a good currying and if I ever hear of you not feeding him or leaving his stall dirty, I'll sell him off in a minute." Carl wants Jody to be responsible by first giving him a warning, then noticing if Jody will take good care of the pony. Carl just wants to make his son a responsible young boy.

Even though this may be true, Billy Buck is still a better father figure towards Jody. When the red pony sadly dies, Billy Buck is there to support Jody. When Carl and Billy find Jody, he has already killed the buzzard. Carl, instead of reassuring his son, says, "Jody, the buzzard didn't kill the pony. Don't you know that?" Carl Tiflin should have taken into consideration that Jody is a ten-year-old boy, not an adult. Carl Tiflin treated the situation like it was happening to an adult not a child. Billy Buck defends Jody by saying, "Course he knows it, Jesus Christ! Man, can't you see how he'd feel about it?" Billy knew that Jody understood everything and how he was feeling. He defended Jody instead of letting Carl lecture Jody.

In conclusion, these are some of the reasons why Billy Buck is a better father figure than Carl Tiflin. Billy is more fatherly and empathetic towards Jody. Billy takes Jody's emotions into consideration and tries to understand him more. Carl Tiflin lectures Jody and is stern towards his son. The way Carl treats Jody could have a negative effect on Jody by leading him to treat everyone the same way his father treats him. The way Billy treats Jody can have a positive effect by having the boy treat people with kindness and compassion.

Student # 62

Riley Driscoll, Good Shepherd Catholic School

Coach: Melissa Moe

What Does It Take?

In the book, *The Red Pony*, written by John Steinbeck, it teaches readers that responsibilities, at first, may seem insignificant but as they are done more often, the importance starts to show. Jody, a young boy living in Salinas, has multiple chores and responsibilities that must be done. When Jody receives the gift of a young horse, he must learn the new responsibilities that are crucial in taking care of a living being. As I am growing older, I have realized that there is a lot more responsibilities I have to learn in order to be successful at school and home. Throughout this book, the importance of responsibility shows how much care is needed in order to do a task correctly.

Jody has chores that need to be completed daily, whether it is inside or outside. On top of his chores, Jody attends school when he can. When Jody fails to complete a task correctly, he must do it again. "Jody, tonight see you fill the wood-box clear full. Last night you crossed the sticks and it wasn't only about half full. Lay the sticks flat tonight," said his mother (6). Jody is reminded by his mother to do a chore or responsibility correctly. By being reminded and taught, Jody learns that there may be consequences, like more chores, when a chore is not done.

Jody's responsibility is tested when his father, Carl Tiflin, gives him the gift of a red pony. Jody has never taken care of a pony, so Billy Buck, a ranch hand, teaches him. Jody learns that his pony, Gabilan, will need care and attention for it to grow older. Tasks that Billy Buck taught Jody are that the pony has to be fed, cleaned, and brushed. If Jody can't take care of Gabilan, he will face consequences. "And if I ever hear of you not feeding him or leaving his stall dirty, I'll sell him off in a minute," his father said (9). When Gabilan falls ill, Jody sees just how far he will go to cure his pony. Although Gabilan died, Jody kept the experience and relationship he had with his pony.

For myself, I have had to practice new skills in order to learn more. Some of my responsibilities include: washing the dishes, doing the laundry, taking the trash out and keeping my room organized. From each new task, as it is repeated, I learn that it becomes more significant. The responsibility gives me skills to succeed later on in life and it helps my family. As I have learned, repeating a responsibility helps me notice my mistakes and try again to improve the skill.

In the end, for both Jody and I, responsibilities should be done continuously in order to improve new skills. If Jody doesn't stack the wood box, a fire wouldn't be lit for warmth. If I didn't do the laundry, I wouldn't have any new clothes. The book gets across that if a task is done once, the skill will be lost. But if it is done several times, the skill will improve.

Student # 116

Nayeli Escobar, Harden Middle School

Coach: Judith Butler

Father Figure Argument

Have you ever wondered who was a better father figure to Jody? Billy Buck seems to be a great father figure, while Mr. Tiflin isn't really. Here are 3 reasons why Billy Buck is a better father figure to Jody rather than Mr. Tiflin. 1) He tells Jody not to worry much over things, 2) he comforts Jody in the best way he can, and 3) he helps Jody no matter the cause.

The first reason why Billy Buck is a better father figure to Jody is because he tells Jody not to worry too much over things. In the book it says, "No, I won't. I won't leave him at all. Tomorrow's Saturday. Then you can stay with him all day." This quote is saying that Billy is trying to tell Jody that he will not leave Gabilan. This is important because Billy Buck is mainly telling Jody not to worry about Gabilan and that Billy knows what he needs to do.

The second reason why Billy Buck is a better father figure to Jody is because he comforts Jody the best way he can. On page 37 it says, "He had lifted Jody in his arms, and had turned to carry him home." This means that since Jody had lost his pony, Gabilan, Billy Buck was there to comfort him and carry him home. This quote is important because Billy Buck is showing that he cares about Jody and is willing to comfort him.

The third reason why Billy Buck is a better father figure to Jody is because he helps Jody no matter the cause. In the book it says, "I've seen worse ones get well. If he doesn't get pneumonia, we'll pull him through. You stay with him. If he gets worse, you can come get me." This quote means that if Jody ever needs help when Gabilan gets worse, then Billy will be there to help him. This is important because Billy Buck is showing that he cares and wants to help Jody with his sick pony, Gabilan.

In conclusion, this shows that Billy Buck is a better father figure than Mr. Tiflin is. Billy Buck 1) tells Jody not to worry, 2) comforts Jody, and 3) helps Jody. This shows what a good father figure Billy Buck really is.

Student # 57

Kayla Ferry, Sacred Heart Parish School

Coach: Bruce Welden

Responsibility & Me

The book, *The Red Pony*, is a story about responsibility. We begin the book with a young boy who is careless with his chores. His mother has to constantly tell him to redo them because Jody is always in a rush. One day, his father comes home with a present for Jody. It is a pony! Jody is thunderstruck. He can't wait to ride the pony. At school, Jody is looked at with eyes of admiration and respect. All of his friends are jealous. His mother sees Jody with the horse and feels curious pride. She reminds Jody that his chores come first. He no longer waits for the triangle that once woke him up. He knows that the pony is a new responsibility, and Jody is eager to see his pony. He learns to care for the pony, and their bond grows stronger. Like Jody, I have many responsibilities. I take care of my younger sister like Jody cares for Gabilan. I make sure that she is clean, and her homework is done. She is my main responsibility. The gift of the horse teaches Jody that as he gets older, he will be faced with more challenges and responsibilities. I have also had to learn to accept new responsibilities as I have gotten older.

Student # 25

Cristian Flores, Vista Verde Middle School

Coach: Dale Josephs

In many ways Billy Buck is a better father figure than Carl Tiflin. Billy Buck is in such ways as, Billy helps Gabilan, he as a helping hand, he is nicer to Jody, it is easier for people to socialize with him, and he doesn't threaten Jody like Carl Tiflin. Those are my reason why Billy is a better father than Carl.

To begin, Billy is a better father figure than Carl because Billy helped Gabilan when Gabilan was sick. On page 27, paragraph 2 and 3, it clearly states, "...I'm going to steam him now. You can help." This proves that Billy helped steam Gabilan, the horse. Even though Billy helped Gabilan, Carl didn't. And father figures always help their kids.

Secondly, Billy Buck is a lot nicer than Carl Tiflin. On page 9, paragraph 1, it is written, "...'Come here!' he ordered." That's messed up! He couldn't at least say "Jody can you come here?" In the book Billy doesn't something as mean as what Carl said. Also, if you go to page 8, the book clearly shows "Carl Tiflin said crossly, 'You come with us after breakfast!'" If someone talks to you crossly, then you know it's not good. And a good father figure doesn't talk cross.

After that, it is easier for Jody to socialize with Billy Buck than with Carl Tiflin. On page 9, it shows as, "...Carl Tiflin went out of the barn and walked up a side-hill to be himself for he was embarrassed, but Billy Buck stayed." And a good father figure will always stay with their kids. And as if that wasn't good enough, "It was easier to talk to Billy Buck." A good father figure will make it easy for their kids to talk to.

Lastly, Carl Tiflin threatens Jody in the story, But Billy Buck doesn't. On page 9, paragraph 3, it states "...and if I ever hear of you not feeding him or leaving his stall dirty, I'll sell him off in a minute." Now that is a threat and father figures don't threaten their kids. So, Billy Buck is a better father figure.

To conclude, Billy Buck is a better father figure than Carl Tiflin for many reasons. And these reasons include Billy Buck helped Gabilan when Gabilan was sick, he is the helping hand, he is nicer Jody than Carl Tiflin, is easier for Jody to socialize with Billy than Carl.

Student # 75

Lorreign Garcia, Bolsa Knolls Middle School

Coach: April Nicole Hepfl

In the story, *The Red Pony*, written by John Steinbeck, it introduces a pony, named Gabilan. This particular pony was given to a boy, named Jody by his father, Mr. Tiflin. Although his father just challenged him and left him no further response in training his newly given pony, Billy Buck was there guiding him through it all. SO, between Billy Buck and Mr. Tiflin, who appeared as the better father figure? My opinion on this controversial topic is that Billy Buck was more of a supporting father figure to Jody.

To begin, Billy Buck was the one to actually help guide Jody through training Gabilan. On page 14, it states, "Billy stood with him and looked long at Gabilan and he told Jody a great many things about horses." This quote explains how Billy Buck was physically there to describe the horse. This mattered as Billy Buck was the one that was there, not his actual father Mr. Tiflin. Billy Buck was there to keep his promise and help Jody train his pony. He guided Jody through halter-breaking and training on the long halter, while Mr. Tiflin stayed out of the whole training process and only observed when he finished.

Subsequently, Billy Buck was the one who was capable to take care of Gabilan when he got sick. He also is the kind-hearted one who actually cared. On page 26, it proves, "'No, I won't, I won't leave him at all. Tomorrow's Saturday, then you can stay with him all day.' Billy failed again, and he felt badly about it. He had to cure the pony now." This depicts how Billy Buck cared enough to correct his mistake and prove to Jody he can cure Gabilan. This was important to how Mr. Tiflin could have been helpful in supporting Gabilan but wasn't. Billy Buck was more the father figure in this particular situation in general. He supported the pony in this time being by steaming and medicating him which helps Jody gain assurance.

Others may say Carl Tiflin makes a better father figure to Jody. Several reasons may be that Carl Tiflin is his actual father or he gifted Gabilan to Jody. But that shouldn't be sufficient enough, as Billy was the prominent figure in Jody's life. At the end of the chapter, "The Gift," the text states, "'the buzzard didn't kill the pony. Don't you know that?' ... 'Course he knows it,' Billy said furiously. 'Jesus Christ! Man, can't you see how he'd feel about it.'" This illustrates how Carl Tiflin could have been more developed in being sentimental as his father, but instead of showing sympathy he blames his son. Meanwhile, Billy defends and sticks up for Jody. Which is as good enough as being a real father.

In conclusion, my belief for who appears as the fatherly figure still stands with Billy Buck. Billy was there through all for Jody. He's been there when Jody needed guidance, assistance, and most importantly, support. While Mr. Tiflin is nowhere to be found when Jody is in need of help. All he did was observe the wrong doings of his son and never any of the right. That's why blood related or not, I believe Billy Buck is rightfully the better father figure to Jody. It's up to you to agree or not.

Student # 102

Ernesto Garza, Washington Middle School

Coach: Terry Heffington

Who was a better father figure, Carl Tiflin or Billy Buck? There is no doubt Billy is a better father figure than Carl. Billy taught Jody how to take care of Gabilan, made sacrifices for Jody, and defended Jody.

First Jody had no idea how to train his new colt, Gabilan. Billy taught Jody how to break him, feed him, comb him, and saddle him. Billy was more patient and a teacher, by telling him and showing him.

Some may say Carl is a better father figure, due to him buying Jody a horse. Carl never taught Jody, he only expected for him to break the horse. Billy is willing to sacrifice his time, effort, and taught Jody how to care for Gabilan.

Billy ultimately makes sure Carl does not take Jody's horse away. He also makes sure Jody expresses his feelings through a horse or killing vultures. Carl does not see this and only cares about himself.

In conclusion, Billy Buck is the best father figure for Jody. Billy defends Jody, teaches him how to care for Gabilan and sacrifices his time and effort for Jody. All Carl does is buy Jody a horse and demands selfish needs.

Student # 6

Maddie Gill, San Benancio Middle School

Coach: Miriam Antunez

Growing up, every individual needs parental figures to become successful young adults. In the story "The Gift" from John Steinbeck's *The Red Pony* we learn the story of Jody Tiflin. Jody has been blessed with a kind mother and not one, but two, father figures. Mr. Tiflin, his biological father, loves Jody dearly, but can be quite distant. Billy Buck, a farm hand, wants Jody to be happy, but may not think about what's best for Jody in the big picture. Both men want Jody to succeed and desire nothing but the best for the boy. However, Mr. Tiflin is a better father figure for Jody.

Carl Tiflin was a disciplinarian and, "Jody obeyed him in everything without questions of any kind." When he wanted to question what his father was doing, he knew better and just did as he was told. This means Jody knows how to listen and do as instructed. While the boy may only be ten at time, this can impact him in the future, because he's learning responsibility from a young age. Even when Mr. Tiflin gives Jody Gabilan as a gift, he is stern and authoritative. As soon as he presents the gift, Mr. Tiflin cautions Jody if he doesn't properly care for pony he would, "sell him off in a minute." This quote from the text shows his message of authority. While it definitely makes him seem intimidating, Mr. Tiflin is actually teaching Jody a lesson. He shows his son that life isn't all fun and games, and a young boy should take initiative sooner rather than later. Because we learn to read at a very young age, not only do we get better at it, but also carry a valuable skill. In "The Gift," maturity is a valuable skill.

Billy Buck, in contrast, treats Jody like the young boy he is. Many people may argue this is the right decision. But, I feel Mr. Tiflin's sternness is actually preparing Jody for the real world. Also, as a ten-year-old, Jody may see the appeal in being babied. It even caused him to feel it was, "Easier to talk to Billy Buck." But, the reality was Jody is just being protected and coddled, much like an infant.

Billy Buck can sometimes extend his willingness too far. His forecast mistake causes Gabilan to fall very ill. As a result, Jody begins to lose faith in Billy. Wanting to be a good father figure, though, Billy Buck uses his best efforts to nurse the horse back to health. However, even the exemplary horse doctor couldn't heal Gabilan. This may seem like a positive effort to some. Billy Buck invested his best efforts in the horse's health. He wanted everything to go well for the son he never had.

Actually, however, Billy Buck was making a huge mistake. He gave Jody so much false hope in the horse living, he was let down hard. The higher the hope, the larger the letdown. Carl just told his son he hoped for the best and didn't make Jody believe that Gabilan would live. If he had realistic expectations, Jody might not have lost control with the buzzard.

Carl Tiflin is a better father figure for Jody than Billy Buck. Sometimes it takes time for him to comfortably bond with his son. But that means he's putting extra effort into getting closer to

Jody. Even if Carl isn't presented as the perfect father figure in the beginning, he really cares. The hard exterior used to shape his son's character will make him the best he can be. Just throughout our story, Jody truly matures in regard to responsibility, making him the best young adult he can be.

Student # 58

Zoe Glenn, Buena Vista Middle School

Coach: Sara Jen

The Red Pony Essay—Father Figures

The Red Pony, a novella by John Steinbeck, is a story about a young boy by the name of Jody. His father gives him his own pony to take care of, and Jody names it Gabilan. Jody has two father-like figures, Mr. Tiflin, his real father, and Billy Buck, the ranch hand. I believe that there are multiple reasons to suggest that Billy Buck is the more appropriate father figure for Jody. Billy Buck is the better father figure because helps Jody care for Gabilan and gives him advice, and he gives Jody the support he needs when going through a rough time.

First, Billy Buck makes a good father figure for Jody because he assists him in caring for his new pony, and he does this by offering Jody advice and helping in Gabilan's training. This is something that the story never mentions Mr. Tiflin doing. Giving advice is important, and a bonding experience, and he never seems to do any of it. Billy Buck recognizes that Jody is not an expert at taking care of horses and decides to pass on his knowledge. "Billy stood with him and looked long at Gabilan and he told Jody a great many things about horses. He explained that they were terribly afraid for their feet, so that one must make a practice of lifting the legs and patting the hoofs and ankles to remove their terror. He told Jody how horses love conversation. He must talk to the pony all the time and tell him the reason for everything." (Steinbeck, 14). "Billy Buck kept his word. In the early fall the training began. First there was the halter-breaking...And then came training on the long halter...the long halter work rapidly approached perfection." (Steinbeck, 16-17).

Billy Buck also is a better father figure because he is kinder to Jody. He provides better support to Jody as he is struggling with the possible death of Gabilan. He tries to be positive towards Jody. "'Yes, he's pretty sick,' he said at last. 'I've seen worse ones get well. If he doesn't get pneumonia, we'll pull him through.'" (Steinbeck, 30). Billy Buck also stands up for Jody, letting him make his own decisions. "Jody's father walked into the barn and stood with them in front of the stall. At length he turned to the boy. 'Hadn't you better come with me? I'm going to drive over the hill.' Jody shook his head. 'You better come on, out of this,' his father insisted. Billy turned on him angrily. 'Let him alone. It's his pony, isn't it?'" (Steinbeck, 33). He also tries to be more sensitive towards him and tries to put himself in Jody's shoes. "Carl Tiflin wiped the blood from the boy's face with a red bandana. Jody was limp and quiet now. His father moved the buzzard with his toe. 'Jody,' he explained, 'the buzzard didn't kill the pony, don't you know that?' 'I know it,' Jody said wearily. It was Billy Buck that was angry. He had lifted Jody into his arms and had turned to carry him home. But he turned back on Carl Tiflin. 'Course he knows it,' Billy said furiously. 'Jesus Christ! Man, can't you see how he'd feel about it?'" As a result of this, Mr. Tiflin seems distant at this important time in Jody's life.

However, there are reasons to believe that the more beneficial father figure is Mr. Tiflin. He cares about Jody but has a different way of expressing it. He gave Jody the pony in the first place, which shows he cares about him. Mr. Tiflin also tries to bond with Jody, he notices he is

sad, and tries to tell him stories. "Jody's father didn't speak at all while the family ate supper, but after Billy Buck had taken his blankets and gone to sleep in the barn, Carl Tiflin built a high fire in the fireplace and told stories. He told about the wild men who ran naked through the country and had a tail and ears like a horse, and he told about the rabbit-cats of Moro Cojo that hopped into the tress for birds. He revived the famous Maxwell brothers who found a vein of gold and hid the traces of it so carefully that they could never find it again." (Steinbeck, 28). Mr. Tiflin also tries to comfort Jody after Gabilan is dead, by telling him that it was not the buzzard's fault.

In *The Red Pony*, by John Steinbeck, a ten-year-old boy named Jody receives a pony as a gift. In the story, there are two possible father figures, Mr. Tiflin, and Billy Buck. Billy Buck is the more appropriate father figure because he assists Jody in caring for the pony and helps Jody when he is struggling.

Student # 40

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Coach: Roy McKee

It is proven that Billy Buck is a much better father figure to Jody than Carl. He is much more respectful and nice and loving and caring to Jody. Carl is strict and treats Jody very poorly. The list goes on about Billy and there are so many reasons why he is a great father figure to Jody.

Mr. Tiflin is not a great father figure compared, to Billy Buck. Carl does not understand what Jody feels. Billy Buck is always there for Jody when he needs help. Carl doesn't get that stuff because he has tough love and acts like a big man around his son. He doesn't want Jody to be weak and Carl's dad probably raised him like that. Billy Buck is still a much greater father to Jody because Billy understands him and actually spends time with Jody unlike his father. Billy comforts Jody a lot. When the pony was sick Billy said, "We'll have him out in no time," to calm Jody down.

It's not Carl's fault he is like this. Carl's father raised Carl to be tough and was tough to him as a child. This explains why he is like this to Jody. Jody looks up to Billy Buck for this reason. He can tell Billy secrets and he can trust Billy because Billy Buck is caring to Jody. Carl is loud and strict and probably scares Jody. Billy is a better father figure. He's not only loud and strict but he doesn't understand Jody. He never takes the time to help him or feel what emotions he is feeling. Billy is there for him and helps him. He understands Jody better than his own father.

Mr. Tiflin is not a great father to Jody. Unlike Carl Tiflin, Billy actually takes time to see how Jody's doing what he is feeling and taking time to understand Jody. Although Carl is the worst father figure he did think about Jody when he bought the pony, Gabilan. He thought about him there and the only reason he is being strict is, so he can teach Jody responsibility and how to have manners like everyone should have. Those are some things at least about Carl.

To conclude, Billy is a respectful, caring compassionate person to Jody and that's why he is the better father to Jody.

Student # 65

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The book *The Red Pony* by John Steinbeck shows how the main character, Jody, starts accepting new responsibilities. In the beginning Jody learned to be responsible by taking care of the horse. He did this by feeding, brushing and training him. Second Jody became more mature through challenges. An example of this is him taking care of a living thing. Finally, I can compare to these situations because I too have responsibilities. All in all, the book *The Red Pony* by John Steinbeck shows how the main character Jody accepts new responsibilities.

Jody learned to be responsible by taking care of the horse. When the book starts it talks how Jody got his horse and that he would wake up early to feed the horse. The author tells us that he wouldn't wait for his mother to wake him anymore. After this Jody gets a brush and start to comb the horse's hair. Finally, Jody trained him every day. The author summarizes that Jody would make him follow him. he would make him jump and trained him to obey Jody. In the end Jody learned to be responsible by taking care of a horse.

Jody became more mature through these challenges. When Jody first met the horse, he knew he had to train him. It was hard for him to train the horse because he wouldn't listen to him and the horse did whatever he wanted. Another challenge he faces was to keep the horse healthy. It was hard for him because he didn't know how the climate would be. Finally, Jody had to be strong because the horse would always have injured him. All in all, Jody became more mature through these challenges.

I can compare to this situation because I too have responsibilities. I help my parents by checking if the water pressure is the right one for the water hoses. This has made me responsible because I keep me to be in time. I also don't play video games because if I don't help my parents, who will? All in all, I compare to this situation because I too have responsibilities.

In the book *The Red Pony* from John Steinbeck shows how the main character Jody learns about responsibilities. Jody learns to be responsible by taking care of a horse. Jody became more mature through challenges. All in all, on the book *The Red Pony* from John Steinbeck shows how the character Jody learns about responsibilities.

Student # 46

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Responsibility

Have you ever had a pet and thought it was really easy to take care of? Although did you know it takes way more responsibility and care for your pet. Most people think that you have to feed it and it will be fine, but it's way more than feeding it. In the story *The Red Pony*, Jody gets a pony as a gift and has to learn responsibility with the pony (Gabilan). Jody changes as he takes care of Gabilan, becomes more responsible, gets more chores, and learns skills.

Jody learned many things when he had Gabilan. He had to feed Gabilan every day and brush Gabilan. Jody had to remember to do this every day not forget to do it. Jody learned lessons such as feeding Gabilan and giving him some room to run around and stretch. He learned that the pony didn't like to be bothered when he remembered that Gabilan bit his hand trying to pet Gabilan. Jody had to know everything that the pony needed for it to be well.

Jody changed a lot when he was taking care of Gabilan. He was wiser than before. For example, he would know what to do when Gabilan needed something. His agenda got stricter because he had to get up earlier to go feed Gabilan. He became more alert now that he had a pet to care of every day. For example, when he got out of school he would run home to check on Gabilan and see if he was well. Jody had someone to talk to or be with which was Gabilan instead of being by himself. Jody changed in a major way by maturing. Now it wasn't fun and games, it was more serious, so Jody had to be more mature.

When Jody had Gabilan at first, he obviously needed a hand, but he got the hang of it and didn't need help as much as he did before. He knew how to maintain him and what to do when something occurred.

I had to face new responsibilities when I got my fish. So, at first, like everyone else I thought I just had to feed it, but then I learned I had to clean its bowl. I cleaned the bowl every day when I got home from school. I also learned how much to feed it. But later on, it passed away which is what happened to Jody and I learned a huge lesson to never leave the pet alone for a long time. Then, my cousins, friends, sisters, and I took care of a dog that we found alone. I remembered what happened with my fish and remember to not do the same mistake that I did with the fish with the dog. Which was to not leave the pet alone.

With the dog I learned that dogs are different than taking care of fish. With dogs you need to feed them more often. Also keep a very close eye on them so it won't run away. These two animals helped me become more responsible by learning or what happened.

Although you might not know it having a pet requires you to change and become more responsible. Jody became more responsible by taking care of Gabilan. I became more

responsible by my two animals that I had. With all this people change and gain responsibility with a pet animal.

Student # 82

Juan Haro, Bolsa Knolls Middle School

Coach: Jay Spingam

The Importance of Communication

In the story, *The Red Pony*, by John Steinbeck, I believe that Billy Buck is more of a father figure to Jody. Mr. Tiflin does not communicate with Jody very often. However, Mr. Tiflin buys Jody a pony. That said, Billy Buck ends up taking care of the pony, and comforting Jody when Gabilan gets sick.

Mr. Tiflin seems to have a different view of Gabilan than Jody and Billy Buck do in page twenty-three. He says, "A horse isn't any lap-dog kind of thing." These words are not very encouraging. This means that Mr. Tiflin does not seem to care very much about Gabilan's well-being, even though Jody, his son, loves that horse. This matters because, even though Mr. Tiflin doesn't seem to care very much, Billy Buck cares, and that builds a strong relationship between them because Gabilan gives them something to communicate about. Jody depends on Billy Buck to take care of Gabilan.

Billy Buck communicates a lot with Jody about Gabilan, and assures Jody that Gabilan will be fine, and Jody believes him. Jody is basically always with Gabilan, and Billy Buck takes notice of that, as he listens to Jody. He does everything he can do to help Gabilan. To further assure Jody that Gabilan will be fine, Billy Buck says, "when that gets bigger, I'll open it up and then he'll get better." This means that Billy Buck has his heart set on making Jody happy, and is often communicating with him. This matters because it shows how much Billy Buck has started to care for Jody and Gabilan.

Mr. Tiflin starts telling stories around the fireplace which gives Jody the sort of sense that he is trying to be a better father figure, but that one action doesn't compare to all of the things that Billy Buck has done for Jody. Virtually nothing that Mr. Tiflin does will compare to what Billy Buck has done for Jody as he has worked hard to make him happy and made many efforts to communicate. Billy Buck fights for Jody to stay in the barn and take care of Gabilan. Billy Buck knows how much this means to Jody, because of the communication he has been having with Jody, and even Jody knows that this may be his last time with Gabilan.

In conclusion, I see Billy Buck as a better father figure than Mr. Tiflin. Billy Buck has communicated a lot with Jody. Communication is one of the key parts of being a good father figure. Mr. Tiflin has not communicated much with Jody over the course of the story. Therefore, Billy Buck is a better father figure than Mr. Tiflin.

Student # 101

Yessica Hernandez, Washington Middle School

Coach: Lorena Amador

The Red Pony

The character which is better father figure to Jody is Billy Buck. Billy Buck was always giving Jody advice. For example, Billy Buck gave him instructions, and on the other side his father Carl Tiflin just expected him to get things done. One day it was cold and raining and Gabilan became ill. Jody was concerned and didn't know what to do to help since he knew about horses. Jody didn't want to tell his parents because they knew it was his responsibility. His father Carl Tiflin is very strict, and always wants to get done his way. After finding out his pony died he learned that it was a big responsibility. Jody know nows that in life there is lots of challenge and responsibilities.

Student # 110

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Coach: Alice Ann Glenn

In the story, *The Red Pony* by John Steinbeck there is a young boy who has two father figures, a man named Billy Buck, his father's worker and his father, Carl Tiflin. In the story I think Billy Buck is a better father figure for Jody. There are many reasons why Billy is a better father figure for Jody.

One of the reasons I think Billy Buck is a better father figure is because he communicates more with Jody than Carl. Billy is able to talk to Jody more since Carl never has talked to Jody except when he has something for him to do or when he was drunk. While, Billy would talk kindly with Jody and help him out with Gabilan. Billy isn't as strict as Carl is with Jody. On page 3 it says, "His father was a disciplinarian. Jody obeyed him in everything without questions of any kind." That is one reason why I think Billy is a better father figure for Jody.

Another reason why I think Billy is a better father figure is because he is mostly there for Jody than Carl is. Billy protects Jody when he is hurt, he defends Jody when Mr. Tiflin is being hard on him. He makes promises to Jody just like any parent would. On page 37 it says, "'Jody,' he explained, 'the buzzard didn't kill the pony. Don't you know that?' 'I know it' Jody said wearily. It was Billy Buck who was angry. He had lifted Jody in his arms, and had turned to carry him home. But he turned back on Carl Tiflin. "'Course he knows it,' Billy said furiously. 'Jesus Christ! Man, can't you see how he'd feel about it?' "Billy has always been with Jody has he was growing up. He was there training Gabilan, when Gabilan was sick, when he died, helping Jody out with Nellie through her pregnancy.

Carl is also a good father figure for Jody because he is willing to trust Jody. Even when he is hard on Jody, he still thinks he is responsible. For example, he lets Jody have a gun, even if it doesn't have ammo he still lets him have it. He got Jody Gabilan to test his responsibility on taking care of someone other than himself. He also gave Jody a second chance on being responsibly by paying 5 dollars and getting Nellie pregnant, so he can raise Nellie's colt. Even if he doesn't communicate with Jody like how Billy does he still thinks Jody is responsible enough to trust him. Even if he did all this, Billy is still a greater father figure than Mr. Tiflin.

In conclusion, that is why I think Billy Buck is a better father figure to Jody. Mr. Tiflin is a good father, but Billy acts more like a father to Jody. With just always being there for Jody. I know if I was Jody, I would think Billy Buck is a better father figure because I would know Billy would always be on my side.

Student # 15

Kylee Hostetter, Los Arboles Middle School

Coach: Steve Prodes

Red Pony Essay

I believe Jody learned sometimes things don't always go your way. For example, he hoped and thought that Gabilan would become better after Billy promised to bring him in if it rained but failed to keep his promise to Jody. He learned to be more responsible because when his father gave him the horse he needed to learn to care for him. In a way of responsibility, he was also irresponsible. For example, he continued to forget to do his regular chores. Like filling the wood box for fires and feeding the chickens. So, as he became responsible he also became irresponsible. A lesson I learned in the past is to never leave your room open if you have pets. They get into everything.

A time I became responsible is when I had to watch 4 kids. I had to keep them safe, make sure they ate and drank enough. I had to help them with things. Also, I had to put them to bed and change dippers. Eww! Luckily, I had my 13-year-old sister to help me through.

Sometimes you rely on someone and they let you down. Don't try to do things on your own if it's too hard. Just because one person let you down doesn't mean everyone will. Have faith and trust in people.

Student # 84

Ashley Hunter, Bolsa Knolls Middle School

Coach: Eva Pabilona

The Red Pony –Jody Changes

Sometimes life throws you a curveball and we have to learn a new responsibility. One's life is never planned, and things change. We have to adapt to these new responsibilities just like Jody did. Sometimes, things will never be the same again.

As you may know, Jody receives a gift from his father, which turns out to be a horse. Jody then names the horse Gabilan. Before Jody got Gabilan, Jody was a relatively lazy kid. As on page 6, his mother says, "Jody, tonight see you fill the wood-box clear full. Last night you crossed the sticks and it wasn't only about half full. Lay the sticks flat tonight." This tells me that Jody did things half way before he got Gabilan. Receiving Gabilan increases his sense of responsibility. Another example is on page 13, it says "Jody never waited for the triangle to get him out of bed after the coming of the pony." Since Jody got the pony he went from sleeping in, to waking up extra early just so he can take care of Gabilan. This tells me that Jody has a lot of determination. Since he has a pony, a lot of little responsibilities come with Gabilan. Some of these responsibilities include currying Gabilan, washing him, feeding him, giving him water, and walking him. Gabilan changes Jody from being a shy kid to one of the most respected kids at school. He now gained a reputation to withhold Jody pushes himself to take care of this horse because he loves him, and he know that if he fails then he would be an embarrassment. This is how Jody changes and receives new responsibilities.

My ways of life, however, have also changed, just like Jody. I gained my new responsibility this past summer when my parents surprised me with a puppy. My life changed in many ways. I gained new responsibilities like picking up after my dog, feeding her, and most important, giving her attention. Puppies require a lot of attention. Owning a pet can change your life style in many ways. Some examples are taking them outside to do their business, so they don't do it inside the house. Another example is since we leave her out when we aren't home, we can't be out for a long time because since my dog is still a puppy, she is very mischievous. I think that she raised my sense of responsibility.

Personally, I feel like Jody and I relate to each other in many ways. One way is that getting a pet increased our responsibility. In his case, receiving Gabilan changed him from being lazy to a kid that is very responsible. Well, the same goes for me. We also relate because we take care of our pet in the same way. We both feed, wash, and give them attention. On the contrary, we have some differences. My dad helps me take care of my dog, unlike Carl Tiflin, were Carl doesn't even help. Another difference is that Jody has very little help, taking care of Gabilan, unlike me, were my whole family helps take care of her. Jody and I have many ways we relate, and many ways we are different.

In conclusion, responsibility is a big change, whether it is a curse or a blessing. You can't run away from responsibility, you have to expect change in life. Changing and having new

responsibility is like playing baseball. You may know how to swing a bat, but then you have to adapt when the pitcher throws you a curveball.

Student # 104

Jennifer Islas, Washington Middle School

Coach: David Spiselman

Responsibilities

Everyone has to take responsibilities in some point of time. I believe that when you get something important or you have someone that is important to you, and you need to take responsibilities and take care of it. In the first chapter "The Gift" Jody got a horse as a gift and started to take care of him. For example, he brushed his hair and fed him. Once a wild Jody started to change. For example, he forgot to do some chores, he got earlier than his mother to see Gabilan. Jody starts to learn lesson about how to take care of Gabilan. Billy Buck always gave him advice on how to talk to him and how to grab him. Billy knew a lot about horses.

When I was around 11 to 12 years old my mother bought me 4 little chicks. My mother told me to take care of them because they could die or something bad could happen to them. Then I started to take responsibilities to feed them every day and clean their cage. But then I started to disobey my mom because I was to focus to take care of my chickens. When I had my chickens, I learned a lot of things I did not knew and how to take care of them.

Jody and I have a similar experience because we both need to take care of something important, take responsibilities and learn an important lesson. My conclusion supports my claim because in a point of time you need to take care of something that is important to you and take responsibilities of it.

Student # 36

BillyJean Jackson, Vista Verde Middle School

Coach: Andrea Brown

Billy Buck or Carl Tiflin?

In the novel *The Red Pony* Jody, the main character, has a struggle with his two father figures. This is because they are Carl Tiflin and Billy Buck. Some may argue that one is better than the other. In my opinion I would choose Billy Buck as a better role model and father figure.

Billy Buck is more caring than Carl Tiflin therefore a better father figure. One example of this is when Gabilan dies. As Jody beats the carrion that was now eating his dead horse Billy . . . “pulled him off and held him tightly to calm his shaking.” This shows that Billy cares about Jody. In comparison to what all Mr. Tiflin did was make an uneasy comment and wipe Jody’s blood splattered face.

Another reason I believe Billy Buck is more qualified to be a role model is because he is absolutely inspiring. In *The Red Pony* Billy is teaching Jody how to take care of horses. This is wonderful since Billy Buck is well known through the county as an excellent horse trainer. Without Billy, poor Jody would have known nothing about taking care of a horse. This is why Jody is inspired by Billy Buck.

Although Billy also has empathy for Jody’s feelings some may argue that Carl Tiflin is the better father figure. One reason for this is that Mr. Tiflin is Jody’s real dad. Carl is more of a disciplinarian other than a person you empathize with. One major aspect of Carl’s parenting is how stern he is. This form of raising a child might be a great way to other. On the other hand, this may be seen as damaging to Jody. This may affect the same way Carl Tiflin was affected. As a young child, Mr. Tiflin never had an emotional connection with his father. The environment that Jody is being raised in is unapologetic and professional. That is why Carl does not feel he needs to have any feelings with his son, Jody.

To reiterate, he has two father figures. One is emotional and forgiving, Billy Buck. The other, Carl Tiflin, a disciplinarian and stern man. This is why if I was Jody I would choose Billy Buck as my father figure, because he is caring, inspiring, and over all empathetic.

Student # 49

Diana Jimenez, Vista Verde Middle School

Coach: William Gilly

Who's the Better Father Figure: Billy Buck or Carl Tiflin?

To me a father figure is a father that provides safety, who shows love and care, who teaches important lessons about life and other things, a father who is understanding. In the story *The Red Pony* by John Steinbeck, a ten-year-old boy named Jody gets a pony as a present from his dad, Carl Tiflin. Billy Buck, a man who works on the ranch house with Jody's father, helps Jody take care of his horse. Throughout their path Jody hits a few bumps, meaning that Jody encounters some obstacles trying to take care of the pony and training him. For example, at times the pony would not cooperate. Eventually, Jody's pony died. The one who helped him through, when the pony was sick was Billy Buck. Meanwhile, Jody's father was still strict with Jody, not knowing how to comfort him. I believe the better father figure for Jody is Billy Buck.

To begin with, I believe the better father figure for Jody is Billy Buck. Even though both Carl Tiflin and Billy Buck have father figure qualities, Billy Buck talks to Jody, allowing him to understand instead of just doing what he's told by Carl Tiflin. On page 9 of the book *The Red Pony* it says, "Jody's father moved over toward the one box stall. "Come here!" he ordered." This means Mr. Tiflin orders his son around instead of having a conversation like Jody and Billy Buck. On that same page it stated, "Jody asked again – mine?" Billy became professional in tone, "Sure! That is if you look out for him and break him right. I'll show you how. He's just a colt. You can't ride him for some time." This proves that Billy Buck talks to Jody allowing him to understand instead of being ordered.

However, some people may argue that Carl Tiflin is the better father figure for Jody because he disciplines him. For example, on page two of the book, it states, "The triangle picked him up out of sleep. It didn't occur to him to disobey the harsh note. He never had: no one he knew ever had." This means that because his father disciplined him, Jody does not disobey.

Although, the argument is valid, I still believe Billy Buck is the better father figure. Even though Billy Buck doesn't provide harsh discipline like Carl Tiflin, he still provides guidance which I believe would be a better way to raise Jody. An example of Billy providing guidance to Jody is on page 33. Billy is giving Jody advice to help him with his sick pony. On page 33 Billy Buck says, "if you're going to stay with him tonight, you better take a little nap." This proves Billy Buck provides Jody with advice and guidance instead of discipline.

In conclusion, that is why I believe Billy Buck is the best father figure for Jody. Billy Buck provides understanding and guidance which is something Carl Tiflin lacks.

Student # 60

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Coach: Bob Tasner

Jody's Father Figure

The Red Pony, a novella by John Steinbeck, has a short story within called "The Gift." In this story a young boy, Jody, is given the responsibility of taking care of a pony named Gabilan. Throughout his experience, he receives both care and toughness from Billy Buck and Carl Tiflin. In this essay, the following will be discussed: who is a better father figure to Jody . . . Billy Buck or Carl Tiflin?

I believe that Billy Buck is the better father figure for Jody. Billy Buck is the Tiflin's ranch hand. Throughout the story, he provides Jody with knowledge on how to raise a pony. Along with teaching Jody other life skills, Billy Buck aids Jody at time of need. It seems as though Billy Buck is the main male influence in Jody's life. This is seen most clearly at the end of the story when Billy Buck has carried Jody home and defended him against Carl.

Carl Tiflin is Jody's father. He is a disciplinarian as well as a strict man. As seen on page three, the author states, "Jody obeyed him in everything without questions of any kind," showing that Carl was capable of harsh punishment. The last scene of the story is very important, as we see the key difference in the father figure aspects of both Carl Tiflin and Billy Buck here. Carl asked Jody a very inconsiderate question, "the buzzard didn't kill the pony. Don't you know that?" (37, Steinbeck). Seeing that Jody had just discovered the death of his pony, it is obvious that he was expressing his emotions.

While I believe many will agree that Billy Buck was the better father figure, some will not. Carl Tiflin can be seen as a better father figure. Jody can certainly benefit from being disciplined. He can learn how to behave in certain situations, become more mature, and develop a decent mindset. Having discipline at a young age also helps a child have access to great opportunities. Being in order and having self-control is a gateway to many career paths. Carl Tiflin is known as a disciplinarian, which by definition is: one who enforces order. Establishing order is very important.

I believe that discipline by itself is not healthy. However, discipline with love is needed. I was, and still am disciplined by my parents. I have a great amount of responsibility and will have many opportunities when it comes to career choices. Billy Buck understand Jody and showed him responsibility. To conclude this essay, would like to repeat my statement: Billy Buck is the better father figure for Jody Tiflin.

Student # 91

Sharwan Lal, Washington Middle School

Coach: Hank Campora

The Meaning of Responsibility

Jody is a person who changes because he learns about caring. He also learns the true meaning of responsibility. When Gabilan (Jody's horse) was getting sick, he immediately went to the house to get hot water. If he didn't do that, Gabilan would have died. That was a huge responsibility.

After that event, he learned a valuable lesson. He learned to care for those close to him. Friends, family, and even his animals. Taking care of Gabilan made him learn responsibility.

There was a time when my grandma came from the hospital but still having breathing problems. My responsibility was to make sure my grandma was taking her medicine. If she didn't, I had to give her the medicine. But when it was time for oxygen, I needed assistance from my cousin. My cousin poured the medicine and made sure my grandma was sucking the medicine. I had to make sure the machine was working, and it did work.

During that time, I learned the same way as Jody did for his horse Gabilan. At that time, I took care of my grandma. In *The Red Pony* Jody learned the responsibility of taking care of his horse when Gabilan was sick. My life time responsibility example of caring for my grandma and Jody's responsibility of taking care of Gabilan example are connected. They are connected because in both events, we took care of a person/animal we love. We had to focus on one thing. Then, when the event was over, we moved on. Me and Jody then focus on school.

Student # 52

Aracely Landa, Vista Verde Middle School

Coach: Jorge Jasso

The Better Father Figure

In my opinion, I think that both Billy Buck and Mr. Tiflin are great father figures to Jody. But only one is the best. I think that Mr. Tiflin is a better father figure for Jody.

Mr. Tiflin never really understood Jody until Gabilan got to the ranch and said that "Easter", Mr. Tiflin's first horse would die pretty soon. Since Easter, Mr. Tiflin's first horse and Gabilan is Jody's first pony, I feel like Mr. Tiflin understands Jody's pain, because they are both going through losing their first horse.

Mr. Tiflin is only trying to make Jody stronger as a man, and I think he is always saying that he hates weakness because he is trying to get Jody ready for the world. When he stated that he hates trick ponies, I think he said that because he didn't want Gabilan to become soft either.

Mr. Tiflin is a good father figure to Jody. Mr. Tiflin might be stricter than Billy, but he is a good father figure. Billy Buck might be more understanding but that is also what is making Jody soft. Mr. Tiflin only wants the best for Jody and that is why he is always so strict with him. Mr. Tiflin also has a good job and he has money and owns land, and Billy Buck is Mr. Tiflin's farm hand.

Many people consider Billy Buck as the better father figure because he is understanding. But Mr. Tiflin knows that there are some tough things out in the world and he just wants Jody to be ready for them. One of the tough things of life are betrayal and Mr. Tiflin wants Jody to be ready to face challenges.

Student # 55

Jake Larson, Junipero Serra

Coach: John Mahoney

What Makes a Father?

Billy Buck is a better father figure to Jody than Carl Tiflin could ever dream of being. Jody was given the red pony as a gift from Carl; however, Billy was the one who helped Jody when the horse was sick while Carl, on the other hand, told Jody not to coddle the horse and to toughen up. Finally, when the pony died, Carl refused to acknowledge Jody's grief, while Billy wanted to support Jody.

Billy Buck is a superior father figure because he wants to help Jody learn to care for the pony, while Carl merely wanted to teach Jody responsibility. This is shown when Steinbeck writes, "He needs a good currying," his father said, "and if I ever hear of you not feeding him or leaving his stall dirty, I'll sell him off in a minute" (9). This shows that Carl wants to teach Jody responsibility, not to show his love with a gift. On the other hand, Billy was ready to teach and guide Jody in caring for the pony. "Sure! That is, if you break him right, I'll show you how. He's just a colt. You can't ride him for some time" (10). This demonstrates Billy's willingness to bestow his wisdom of horses on the next generation of riders. This passing of knowledge is something that makes him a good father figure.

Next, when the pony fell ill, Billy Buck offered to help care for him while Carl did nothing. Billy was willing to stay up all night to make sure the pony could breathe. "I'll bring my blankets down and put them on the hay" (28). This shows Billy's willingness to be helpful at the expense of his comfort. Carl slept in the house, in his own bed during all of this. Carl, rather than try to help Jody or offer sympathy, simply stated the following, "A horse," he said, "isn't any lap-dog kind of thing" (23). This expresses that Carl is telling Jody to "man-up" rather than encouraging him or trying to help the horse, like Billy. Through this evidence, Billy Buck is clearly depicted as the better father figure.

Finally, when the horse dies, Billy is the better father because he is understanding of what Jody is going through, while Carl can only be a bystander. Jody begins beating the bird with a rock. Carl tried to tell Jody that the buzzard didn't kill the pony, rather than offer support. "Jody," he explained, "the buzzard didn't kill the pony. Don't you know that?" (37). Carl couldn't comprehend that Jody was emotional about the death of the pony. Billy responded to Carl in a way that a father would to someone who couldn't understand his child. "Course he knows it! Billy said furiously. "Jesus Christ! Man, can't you see how he'd feel about it?" (37). In this scene of the book, the better father figure can be seen clearly as Billy.

Some may say that toughening up Jody would be a good thing. Sometimes that is the case, but Carl isn't very good at "reading the room" (if you will) and finding the right moments to be tough, and the right moments to be compassionate.

Through "The Gift" it can be seen rather easily that Billy is the superior father figure. He always is kind, respectful, and compassionate to Jody. He can read Jody's moods and provide comfort as well as teach him life lessons. It is for these reasons that Billy is the better model father.

Student # 64

Natalie Ledezma, North Monterey County Middle School

Coach: Cary Swensen

Would you have a dad that is strict? Mr. Tiflin is a better father figure because Jody learned a lesson by getting a horse. Jody never waited for the triangle to get him out of bed, after the coming of the pony. He wants him not to be a lazy kid.

Mr. Tiflin also wants him to be more responsible learn more about life on a ranch. "Jody obeyed him in everything without questions of any kind." Why he had to be taught on the ranch.

Mr. Tiflin is better because Billy Buck left the horse outside of the barn when it was raining so much. Jody looked reproachfully at Billy and felt guilty. Why I put this quote because it tells you all about Billy Buck. He not a better father figure.

In conclusion Mr. Tiflin prove to be a better father figure to Jody. And also to become brave ranch kid.

Student # 18

Haley Lightfoot, Los Arboles Middle School

Coach: Bruce Welden

Father Figure Wars: Carl Tiflin vs Billy Buck

From my perspective of the book, Billy would be a better father figure. Some of Billy's qualities are more "father-like". For example, Carl orders Jody around in a mean, harsh way while Billy tells Jody to do things in a respectful manner. Two of Billy's father like qualities are that he offers Jody guidance and structure. Billy can also explain things to Jody in a kind way. Some of Carl's acts are rude, like how he orders/commands Jody in a disrespectful way. He is also a disciplinarian that hates weakness, sickness or any kind of helplessness. Some positive aspects of Carl are that although he is too much of a disciplinarian, his strict self being gives Jody lots of guidance. He is so much of a disciplinarian that Jody obeys him not out of respect but out of fear. In conclusion, the information proves that Billy would be a better father because he offers guidance, structure, protection, discipline and respect.

Student # 37

Zunita Linares, Vista Verde Middle School

Coach: Bob Kramer

Father-Son Relationship

From a child's perspective parenting should be about experience, love, and guidance. My premise is that Jody is more impacted by Carl Tiflin than by Billy Buck because Carl Tiflin is a disciplinarian, caring, and a role model for Jody.

We first have to understand that Carl Tiflin believed in a good disciplinarian. Carl Tiflin expects Jody to comply to his orders because of his own experience growing up. His own role models were strict as well as his parents potentially. This taught Carl Tiflin that being a disciplinarian is the best thing for Jody. Jody looks more to Carl as a father because Mr. Tiflin doesn't show much emotion and Jody desired to win the love and affection by complying to his orders. Jody's act of winning the love and respect of Carl Tiflin is the underlying core value of the father-son relationship.

Jody shows his desire to comply by taking care of his pony. Jody also shows compliance by waking up at five in the morning, feeding the chickens, and laying the sticks on the wooden box. I understand this situation because I also wish to have the respect and love of both my parents by complying to their tasks I am given. Such as getting good grades, taking care of my younger brother, and keeping my pet healthy.

Even though Billy Buck is a warm, approachable, empathetic person, Billy Buck doesn't push Jody to reach his full potential through compliances. For example, since Carl Tiflin is a sterner person, Jody will comply while Billy Buck would forgive Jody for not complying. Also, Billy Buck already shows his emotions to Jody so that means Jody won't have to win his affection over. These are the reasons why Billy Buck wouldn't be as good as a father as Carl Tiflin.

The whole story about the red pony is about two tragedies. The first tragedy of course is the death of the red pony. Despite Jody's intuition for putting the pony back in the stall, Jody accepts life and death and becomes a better more knowledgeable man. The second tragedy is the strained father-son relationship and Jody realizes to accept how his dad is and to reach his full potential. This has helped me understand my relationship with my parents by being the best person I can be.

Student # 34

Jackie Luevanos, Vista Verde Middle School

Coach: Kim Lawson

There is more to a father than just discipline. In John Steinbeck's *The Red Pony*, the eleven-year-old boy, Jody Tiflin, has two father figures. Carl Tiflin is Jody's biological father and Billy Buck is the helping cow-hand that spends his time with Jody. The question is who is a better father figure to the young boy? I believe Billy Buck is a much better father figure, and a great role model for Jody.

Not only does Billy dedicate his time to Jody, they both each other's company. Jody rather spend time with Billy Buck instead of with his own father. For example, when Jody first got his pony, he only asked Billy Buck questions about the pony and never asked for his father's help. Jody did not learn much from Mr. Tiflin. Billy Buck taught him everything he knew about horses. Another example is when Jody had to start halter-breaking and cinching the red pony. Billy was the only one who helped Jody. In the early fall, Billy kept his word about helping with the red pony, while Mr. Tiflin watched and complained.

Billy Buck's knowledge about horses and many other subjects fascinated Jody. The young boy watched and learned from Billy the way a little boy looks up to their father. Jody admires Billy Buck, and gains respect for him as he grows older. Jody now not only sees Billy as a friend and a companion, but as an authority figure. Jody becomes more and more receptive of the idea of Billy as his father figure because of all these father-like traits that Billy Buck has. These traits are not all found in Carl Tiflin.

On the other hand, Mr. Tiflin does teach Jody a lot of life lessons. He teaches Jody to be mature and responsible by gifting him with the red pony. Jody becomes more responsible because he knows the pony now depends on him. However, Billy Buck is the one helping him and guiding Jody on his new experiences and lessons. Jody is also more open to Billy's help. He shuts Carl Tiflin out a little which gives Billy Buck the upper hand.

Over all, I believe Billy Buck is a better father figure to Jody. The boy learns from Billy and gains maturity while watching him. Jody learns lessons from his experience with the pony, and even though the pony is gone, Jody's responsibility, maturity, and understanding of life stays. Even though Carl Tiflin did show his son Jody many valuable life lessons, he falls short when it comes to connecting with his own son. His relationship is not nearly as strong as that of Jody and Billy's unbreakable bond.

Student # 69

Jessica Machado, Harden Middle School

Coach: Robyn Riberal

Billy Buck was a cowhand who worked for the Tiflins. He was also a great father to Jody. Jody is Carl Tiflin's son, a ten-year-old boy with blonde hair and shy gray eyes who always obeyed his parents without question. Carl Tiflin, Jody's father, was not very close with Jody because he always had work. Mr. Tiflin was always a bit harsh with everyone. When he tried to support Jody, he wasn't very empathetic towards him.

Although both Mr. Tiflin and Billy Buck cared for Jody, Billy made choices which led to being a better father figure for Jody. In the book, *The Red Pony*, "The Gift," by John Steinbeck on page 9 the book says, "A red pony colt was looking at him out of the stall. Its tense ears were forward, and a light of disobedience was in its eyes. Its coat was rough and thick as an Airedale's fur and its mane was long and tangled. Jody's throat collapsed in on itself and cut his breath short."

Jody was really excited and felt he had a strong connection when he saw the horse. Mr. Tiflin was also excited, but he did not know how to show his feelings. Mr. Tiflin was a disciplinary, yet sensitive person. He told Jody, "He needs a good currying, and if I hear of you not feeding him or leaving his stall dirty, I'll sell him off in a minute." Mr. Tiflin had just bought the pony from a sheriff's auction. If he found out that Jody was not taking care of the pony, he would sell the pony.

On the other hand, Billy helped Jody gain responsibility and also helped take care of the horse. Jody named his pony Gabilan Mountains but decided to call him Gabilan for short. Jody let Gabilan run around the coral every day. One day, Jody asked Billy if it was going to rain so he could let the pony outside. Billy told Jody that it would not rain. He also said, "If it come on to rain – why a little rain doesn't hurt a horse." Jody was worried that if it rained, Gabilan would get cold and sick. Billy assured him that it was going to be alright and Jody trusted him. However, it did rain and Gabilan was outside in the coral and got sick.

Billy Buck also helped Jody when the horse got sick. Gabilan had caught pneumonia and Billy performed surgery to help him get better. Jody trusted Billy and he cared for him and was there for Jody when Mr. Tiflin was not. After Gabilan died, Billy Buck stood up to Mr. Tiflin because he did not understand how Jody felt. Billy got angry at Mr. Tiflin. I believe he was the better father figure for Jody not only because he understood him, but because he cared about him and he helped him with life decisions. Billy made some mistakes and was not always precise, but he cared for Jody. On page 37, the book says, "It was Billy Buck for was angry. He had lifted Jody in his arms and had turned to carry him home. But he turned back on Carl Tiflin. "Course he knows it," Billy said furiously. "Jesus Christ! man, can't you see how he'd feel about it?"

Therefore, Billy Buck is the better father figure for Jody because he helps Jody gain responsibility, he cares for Jody, and he stands up for him. All of these choices made by Billy Buck let to the understanding that he is the better father figure for Jody Tiflin. I believe that

care and support is better for your children than tough love. Although Billy and Mr. Tiflin had made their mistakes, they have different ways teaching responsibility.

Student # 86

Mateo Magaña, Bolsa Knolls Middle School

Coach: Ondine Gage

Who's the Better Father Figure?

In *The Red Pony*, by John E. Steinbeck, there are two characters who act as a father to Jody. He looks up to both of them, but which one is a better role model?

I think that Billy Buck is a better father figure than Mr. Tiflin, and there are many ways I can prove it. First off, Mr. Tiflin gifts Jody a pony, and Billy Buck mentors him. Without Billy Buck, Jody would have never learned how to take care of the pony. In addition to that Mr. Tiflin had no desire to help Jody. Mr. Tiflin tells Jody "If I ever hear of you not feeding him or leaving his stall dirty, I'll sell him off in a minute." That shows that Mr. Tiflin threatens Jody, while Billy mentors Jody on how to take care of the pony.

Second Billy Buck treats Jody better than Mr. Tiflin. Billy Buck doesn't yell at Jody while his father does. For instance, when Jody was receiving the pony his father yelled "Come here!" Therefore, Billy Buck is calmer. He even finds it easier to talk to Billy than his own father. When Jody asked his dad if the pony was his, Jody asked "Mine?" with his head down. That emphasizes that Jody is afraid of his father, or he thinks of him as a higher power.

The third reason why I think that Billy Buck is a better father figure is because he shows Jody how to deal with mistakes. Billy Buck made a big mistake letting Gabilan stay outside. Since Billy Buck did that, he stayed and slept with Gabilan trying to make him better. He also showed Jody some responsibilities when taking care of Gabilan; like currying, feeding, and how to halter break him. That's how Billy Buck mentored Jody to take care of his mistakes, and Gabilan.

The reason Mr. Tiflin doesn't seem to be a father figure is because he hardly talks or works with Jody. Jody mainly spends time with Billy Buck. His father is a hard worker; therefore, he hardly spends time with Jody. Mr. Tiflin is very strict and rarely talks to Jody. (If that was your father, would you look up to him?)

In conclusion, I think Billy Buck is a better father figure for Jody than his own father. I've talked about how Billy Buck mentors him, about how Billy treats him kindly, and how he teaches him to be responsible for mistakes. Billy Buck definitely has a greater bond with Jody.

Student # 107

Alyssa Maniscalco, Buena Vista Middle School

Coach: Kelly Quackenbush

The Unintentional Father Figure

In the emotional chapter "The Gift" in the short story *The Red Pony* by John Steinbeck, a boy named Jody receives a little red colt that he later names Gabilan. When Jody gets his gift from his father, Carl Tiflin, Carl doesn't help Jody out with the pony as much as his cow-hand Billy Buck does. Billy Buck seemed to be the better father figure in many ways like showing Jody how to care for the rowdy pony, comforting him when times get tough, and finally giving him a stronger father figure to look up to that seems more caring than Mr. Tiflin.

Jody sprints to the stables when Carl tells him about the new red pony awaiting in the barn. Carl leaves it up to Jody to care for the horse and threatens to get rid of it if he forgets to take care of it in any way. Jody doesn't know much about caring for horses and Mr. Tiflin sends him off and counts on Billy Buck to teach him. Now, Billy Buck never fails to show Jody how to care for his new pony. When Billy Buck first starts to teach him about the disobedient colt, he was never strict about it. Billy always believed in Jody and didn't punish him if he did something wrong or didn't understand it the first time around.

For a small boy, this is huge. There's nothing more discouraging than someone telling you, you can't do something and punishing you for doing something wrong or because you're struggling. Billy understood Jody's hardships and gave him comfort when he really needed it. As Jody got more skilled at caring for the horse he named after the magnificent, towering mountains, Billy was always there if he needed help. Billy gave Jody even more reason to get up in the morning. Carl left it up to Billy to teach Jody, and never bothered to look at how good he's gotten at caring for the pony, or show he felt bad when the colt was sick.

Jody began to fall into deep sadness when he found the pony got sick after leaving him in the cold pouring rain. Billy Buck was always there for Jody during this time and continued to try and help the pony even after all hope was lost. Who didn't comfort Jody? Carl Tiflin, his own father. Carl always thought that Jody was being weak and unreasonable for being so sad about the pony. Truly, he wasn't being a strong father figure. Billy Buck tried everything he could to help the pony get better.

When Billy couldn't do anymore, he comforted Jody, and stood up for him when Mr. Tiflin didn't support Jody. Billy Buck over all comforted better and helped as much as he could with everything, way better than Carl Tiflin.

Billy Buck couldn't have been a better father to Jody than Mr. Tiflin. As Jody got sad Billy tried hard to cheer him up. Going back in the months Billy really showed him how to be a better person and become a horseman. Billy showed him with kindness, what a father should be. As Jody was learning, Carl didn't know because he never paid attention to Jody though he may have cared and couldn't show it. Billy acted much like a father to Jody also, and treated him like

his own son. He really was a dad like character as he treated Jody like he would his own son. Even when Billy made a mistake, he knew he did and felt guilty for it. He tried again and again to make it up to Jody for misjudging the weather. Before this happened, he let Jody take responsibility while still helping him.

Some people may argue that Carl was a better father on the inside, but Jody didn't know that. We can assume Carl wasn't a terrible person and that he loved Jody. But Jody wasn't old enough to realize that. To Jody, it didn't look like love, because he was young. Now Billy Buck showed his love to Jody, like a father should to a young boy. Opposing view may argue that Carl did comfort him, but in a different way. I feel he didn't comfort him, not because he had a cold soul but because he was frozen in time, not knowing how to comfort. In a few of my experiences friends have not known how to comfort because they were not raised like that, not because they are bad people. Even though it's not his fault, this still doesn't mean Carl is a better father figure.

In conclusion, Carl may have not been a great father figure, but it is not his fault. Still, he counted on Billy Buck to be a teacher and, unintentionally a father. So, Billy Buck saw Jody's potential and helped him care for the pony, comforted him in a fatherly manner, and overall became a stronger father figure.

Student # 27

Yolanda Martinez, Vista Verde Middle School

Coach: Christy Dawson

Jody received a pony, Gabilan from his father, Carl Tiflin. Jody starts to learn lessons, responsibility and begins to change while caring for Gabilan. Jody would have to train Gabilan and would have to care for him. Jody started changing once he got the red pony. Now he had to take good care of Gabilan and think a bit more on how to make sure Gabilan was safe and fed.

In my experience, I had a cat named Hunter who is no longer here. My brother, Javier, knew I wanted a pet and got me a betta fish. The betta was named Aqua. I kept Aqua in a little tank next to my bed. A pinch of food in the morning and a pinch at night. I cleaned out its water before it got too cloudy. I learned responsibilities like cleaning the water and feeding Aqua.

There are a few similarities between Jody's experience and my experience. We both needed to care for our pet by cleaning them and/or where they live. We both needed to feed our pets and make sure they are in healthy conditions. Aqua is now gone like Gabilan. Although it's not as traumatizing like Gabilan's death, Aqua is hopefully resting at peace somewhere near my house. Since then I have new fish to love, Midnight, Middy, Becky, Becky 2, and Ben. I hope Jody will have another pet to love, as well.

Student # 43

Juan Carlos Martinez, Vista Verde Middle School

Coach: Rose Howard

Who Is a Better Father?

Can another person be a better father than your own father? In the story *The Red Pony* by John Steinbeck it talks about a kid name Jody that gets a pony as a gift by his father Carl Tiflin. Jody takes care of his pony and does everything he needs to do to keep Gabilan (the pony) alive. One day Jody leaves his pony outside the coral and it starts to rain. The pony gets sick and Carl Tiflin really doesn't care while Billy Buck actually cares about the pony and Jody. I believe that Billy Buck is a better father figure to Jody than Carl Tiflin.

To begin with, Billy Buck is a better father figure to Jody because Billy understands how Jody feels and helps him with his sick pony. I know this because in the story it states, "Just a little cold, like I said," Billy insisted, "you go get some breakfast and then go back to school, I'll take care of him." This means that Billy Buck cares about the pony and wants to help Jody make the pony healthy and better again. Billy is also a better father figure because he defends and give him emotional support. I know this because in the story it states, "the buzzard didn't kill the pony. Don't you know that?" This means that Carl Tiflin doesn't know how Jody feels which means that Carl Tiflin is unemotional. After this Billy Buck defends Jody by saying "'Course he knows it," Billy said furiously, "Jesus Christ man, can't you see how he'd feel about it?" (Steinbeck pg. 37) This means that Billy knows how Jody feels and help him feel a little better by defending him.

On the other hand, people believe that Carl Tiflin is a better father. They say this because he gave Jody a pony. In the story it states, "...if I ever hear of you not feeding the pony or leaving his stall dirty, I'll sell him off in a minute." This means that Carl Tiflin wants Jody to know what he will be responsible of and want him to learn what he will face when he is older. I still believe that Billy Buck is a better father because he gave him the emotional support when he was in bad situations. He taught Jody how to ride a pony and be more responsible while Carl was all about respect and responsibilities.

To end with, Billy Buck was a better father figure because he felt what Jody felt, helped Jody try to make the horse better, and gave him emotional support when Jody was in a bad situation. Not everyone has the good fortune to be born with a great father but sometimes people may be lucky enough to have someone like Billy Buck.

Student # 98

Zoe Medallo, Washington Middle School

Coach: Brad Littlefield

The Red Pony and Myself

Jody is a ten-year-old in the story of *The Red Pony* with the characters Mr. Tiflin, Mrs. Tiflin, and Billy Buck. Jody is just a hard-working child living on a ranch. His father, Mr. Tiflin, gives Jody the responsibility of taking care of a horse.

Once Jody received his pony he grown to love it, showing changes in this character. He named the pony Gabilan and Jody cared for Gabilan, feeding him and giving other needs that Gabilan needed. Jody hoped to ride Gabilan but was not able to until he grows older and so Jody trained Gabilan in the hope of riding him in the future. A little later into the story and a tragic event happens to Gabilan. Gabilan had stayed in the rain making him sick. Gabilan was weak and once he stood up he would tremble back to the ground. Jody tried his best on taking care of him 'til Gabilan has given himself to death.

I have gone through a similar situation as Jody. I had received my first pet from my mother. It was a cat, the breed of ragdoll, long white fur with hints of brown along with bright sky-blue eyes. I became fond of her instantly who I called Janvia. I find myself changing from a girl who's always on her computer to a girl constantly downstairs checking her pet. I gave Janvia her needs and affection but two nights later she ran away never coming back but feeling sadness to me.

In the end, Jody received a pony that changed his characteristics and learned to be responsible. I have also learned to be responsible and care through my pet. But in the end, unfortunate things happen and we both lost them.

Student # 72

Gilleha Melendez-Morelos, Bolsa Knolls Middle School

Coach: Zenaida Madrigal

Responsibility Is a Big Part of a Young Adult's Life!

Having to take care of an animal is a great responsibility. Not many kids or even adults are willing to take that responsibility. I know that I wouldn't be capable of taking care of an animal on my own.

In my opinion, Jody's new pony Gabilan has made him become more responsible, caring, and protective. He has become these things because in the book, it tells us that he has to feed and clean up after Gabilan. He also has to keep up with his chores around the house and farm. He has become more protective of Gabilan because it says in the book that he got upset with Billy Buck when he couldn't tell him what and why Gabilan was so sick.

I know what it feels like to have such a great responsibility with an animal. At home, I have three goats and many chickens that my sisters and I have to take care of. I know for a fact that having to take care of an animal or many animals is not the easiest job or responsibility. I have to feed them twice a day sometimes, even three times. I also have to fill up their tubs of water a few times a week. I also have to groom my goats. Not only do you have to do all of that, but also let them out of the pen and walk them or let them run freely.

I can relate to all that pressure that Jody is feeling. Also, all of the time and effort you put into keeping your animal not only healthy, but also clean and productive. Jody is trying to keep his pony healthy and he feels that no one is feeling the same way or understanding him in anyway. Having to do all of this made him better at managing his time. I also felt that way when one of my goats was very sick. I felt as if no one cared if she died or was alive. This was a very hard time in my life.

In conclusion, I think both Jody and I have both dealt with similar responsibilities and having to care for an animal that we care a lot about. It is very hard to see someone or something you love to be very sick or uncared for. I feel that Jody and I have a lot in common with owning an animal and doing the responsibilities that came with that animal. At the beginning of the book, Jody needed to be reminded to do his chores, but since he got his pony he was better at remembering what to do and when to do it. I also think Jody came out to be more responsible and better person in general after having to take care of an animal on his own.

Student # 106
Eli Mena, Buena Vista Middle School
Coach: Bertha Jasso

A Balanced Father Figure

What is the goal of every boy? Is it not to be gloriously successful in all that he does? Is it not to rise above all others when scaling the tall and difficult mountains of life? But when we peel away all these layers of specific details, you can see the true goal; to be loved by their fathers, and to make them proud. Also, it is the job of fathers to raise their sons in a manner that lets them know they are proud. Not to make their offspring constantly work in hope of finding favor in their fathers' eyes. Unfortunately, such is the agenda of Carl Tiflin.

Never is he satisfied with his son. Never does he say, "Well done my son, you have made your father proud." He constantly asks more of his son, in ways that many times requires more than what the young boy, Jody, has to offer. He is like a juicer who when the lemon is flat with no juice left, keeps pressing and squeezing for more. This is not a father, but a slave driver who never rewards his workers' good deeds, but only punishes the less than perfect. Luckily for Jody, all hope is not lost. For there, living on the same ranch as he, is a ranch hand named Billy Buck. Though, like Carl, he may push Jody, but never beyond his limits. Also, he rewards Jody when he does something right. All in all, when placed side by side it is obvious that Billy Buck is a better father figure.

Jody is hard working and loving child. Like any other boy he desires to be like his cowboy father. This is why he works so hard to train his pony. When Carl sees the pony's training he only tells Jody of his hate for "trick ponies". The opposite is seen when we look at Billy Buck. He praises Jody for his work and continues to teach him.

One true way to test a father is to put him through crisis. The perfect example of this is seen at the death of the pony. When Jody kills a buzzard out of hate and sadness Carl only tells him of his foolishness. On the other hand, Billy Buck wraps Jody in the arms of sympathy.

Though some may say that because of the lessons that Carl taught Jody he is the better father figure. This may be true, but it does not excuse his unbalanced behavior. Also, it is noted that Carl is very distant. Steinbeck writes that he only spoke to Jody when he was drunk! This is no way to treat your child! In the end it is the loving and compassionate Billy Buck that is the obviously better father figure for Jody.

Student # 28

Jennifer Mendez, Vista Verde Middle School

Coach: Dale Josephs

What does being responsible mean to you? Well, being responsible can mean many different things. For example, it can mean the things you have to do, but to me it means you do things because you want to. In *The Red Pony* by John Steinbeck, Jody learns how to be responsible. Jody nurtures the pony when it gets sick and he isn't asked to do so. It comes from his own will.

Jody becomes more responsible and changes in a good way. Jody would listen to Billy Buck's lesson on how to take care of Gabilan. Like stated in the text "Jody listened carefully, for he knew, and the county knew that Billy Buck was a fine hand with horses. This shows us that Jody became more knowledgeable on how to treat a horse because he was learning from the best. After learning about horses, he cares for and nurtures Gabilan. Doing so he shows responsibility because he is doing it because he feels he should do it and isn't asked to do it.

Much like Jody, I am expected to be responsible. I have to do many chores, but I don't consider myself as responsible because my parents have to ask me to do it multiple times. One time though I was responsible because I did all my chores and more without being asked to do so. I cleaned the house because it was my will to do so. Being responsible doesn't mean you will get a reward after doing it. When I cleaned the house I didn't expect a reward back even though I did a lot of work.

In Jody's position when he got Gabilan he nurtures it and didn't expect anything back because it came from deep inside of him to do it. When he did his normal chores he was asked multiple times or sometimes forgot to do them. In the text it states, "Jody obeyed him in everything without question of any kind." This tells us that he would do his normal chores when told because he didn't want to get in trouble and then get punished. When he has to do something relating to Gabilan he does it without being told so. Jody does everything for Gabilan but for his normal chores he doesn't.

A time when I had to be responsible was when I got my fishes. I would feed them every day and would clean their water every time it would get dirty. Taking care of them gave a better understanding of fishes much like Jody learning about horses with Gabilan. Same as Jody I wouldn't want to do my normal chores but for my fishes I did a lot of work.

In conclusion, we do things from our own will with things we really love which completely differs from our normal chores. Being responsible means, you do it without being told and don't expect anything back.

Student # 100

Ashley Mendez, Washington Middle School

Coach: Ruth Muldoon

“Dad”. What comes to mind when you hear that? Probably words like caring, protective, and willing to teach their child anything they need to know. Though, this isn’t quite the case of Mr. Tiflin, father to Jody. Based on character and actions, I think Billy Buck is a better father figure to Jody than Mr. Tiflin.

A child is supposed to respect and obey their father. Though, I think you’ve taken it a bit far when you don’t talk to them and make them call you “sir”. On Page 3 of *The Red Pony*, it is stated that, “His father was a disciplinarian. Jody obeyed him in everything without questions of any kind.” A quote from Jody on Page 29, “Yes, sir.” Sir being his father.

Some say that Billy is a simple farmhand, but that is far from the truth. Throughout the book, Billy is constantly teaching Jody important life lessons. Not just about horses but about responsibility and patience; things Mr. Tiflin can’t even begin to fathom. Billy even goes through with his promise of giving Jody another horse, despite the graphic nature of acquiring it. On page 79, he says, “There’s your colt. I promised. And there it is. I had to do it- had to.”

Mr. Tiflin is Jody’s actual dad, correct? Some people may say that is reason enough to be a father figure to Jody. Billy is present throughout the story, constantly in contact with Jody. On the other hand, Mr. Tiflin is simply a background character, fading in and out; easily forgettable. Billy’s presence in Jody’s life makes him a strong father figure.

All in all, Billy Buck is the stronger father figure to Jody. Despite not being his actual father, Billy managed to help change Jody into a better person throughout the book.

Student # 26

Angel Mendoza, Vista Verde Middle School

Coach: Claudia Otero

Even though Billy Buck was just a cow hand, he was a better father figure to Jody than his biological dad. The author states, "Billy turned on him angrily and says, leave him alone. It's his pony isn't it?" Even if Carl tried to help Jody, Billy just helped more. Billy was helpful to Jody by always helping Gabilan. Billy would take care of it, feed it, help it when Jody wasn't around.

Billy was a better father figure than Carl Tiflin. Carl wasn't there to help the pony when it got sick. He may have given his son the pony, he may have been working, but the times he wasn't working he wasn't there for Jody.

In *The Red Pony*, there are many reasons why Billy is a good father figure and why Carl is a good dad too. Carl was Jody's actual dad and cared for him his whole life. Billy is a cow hand and helps Jody through all of his challenges and plays an important role in his life. Billy helps to teach Jody about Gabilan. On pg. 28 of *The Red Pony* it states, "Billy Buck had taken his blankets and gone to sleep in the barn," Billy Buck cares as much as that pony as Jody did.

Carl was his biological dad and he did a good job. Billy Buck on the other hand did an outstanding job and was a better father figure, because he taught Jody responsibility and how to tame a pony and how to properly take care of the pony. They both did good jobs at giving Jody the responsibility to raise and care for Gabilan.

Student # 112

Jahaziel Mendoza-Martinez, Harden Middle School

Coach: Angel Reed

Who Is a Better Father?

There are some good fathers and some bad ones. Billy Buck is a great father for Jody because he worries about him and helps him out. Billy Buck teaches Jody how to take good care of Gabilan. Jody admires Billy Buck because he is nice and respectful. Billy Buck helps take care of Gabilan so that Mr. Tiflin doesn't give him away. Billy Buck is a good father figure for Jody because he helps and cares for him.

Billy Buck is a good father figure because he helps and cares for Jody. According to the book *The Red Pony* Page 28 paragraph 1 states, "See how good it makes him feel," Billy said. "Now we'll wrap him up in the blanket again. Maybe he'll be nearly well by morning." This is showing that Billy cares about Jody because he takes good care of the pony, so Mr. Tiflin doesn't give him away.

According to the book *The Red Pony* Page 2 paragraph 1 states, "Bill Buck sat down on the steps, because he was a cow-hand, and it wouldn't be fitting that he should go first into the dining room." Billy Buck is setting a good model and example for Jody to always wait to be invited inside if you're a guest.

Some might argue that Mr. Tiflin is a good father for Jody because he gave Jody the pony and the rifle. However, Mr. Tiflin gets mad at Jody when he is sad that the pony is sick. According to the book *The Red Pony* Page 23 paragraph 4 states, "Jody's father joined the conversation then and lectured the boy a little. "A horse," he said, "isn't any lap-dog kind of thing." Carl Tiflin hated weakness and sickness, and he held a violent contempt for helplessness." Mr. Tiflin doesn't help Jody, whereas Billy Buck cares and helps him. Billy's actions show that he is a better father figure.

Overall, I believe that Billy Buck is a better father for Jody because he helps him and cares for him. Billy Buck is a better father for Jody. Jody admires Billy Buck because he took good care of Gabilan. Billy Buck is the good father figure in *The Red Pony*.

Student # 115

Genesis Mezta, Harden Middle School

Coach: Marissa Welch

Who Is a Better Father Figure, Billy Buck Or Mr. Tiflin?

Which person is a better father figure, Billy Buck or Carl Tiflin? Some may argue that Carl Tiflin is, but I prove otherwise. In the story, Billy Buck was always willing to be open with Jody while Carl Tiflin was always acting very self-centered. This is just one of the many reasons for why Billy Buck is a better father figure.

For example, in the text it states, "It was Billy Buck who was angry. He lifted Jody in his arms, and had turned to carry him home. But then he turned on Carl Tiflin. "Course he knows it," Billy said furiously. "Jesus Christ! Man, can't you see how he'd feel about it?" This quote is explaining how Billy Buck was mad at Carl Tiflin because he was scolding Jody. Billy Buck shows empathy for Jody and is angry at the fact that Carl Tiflin is showing a lack of proper emotions toward Jody. This quote matters deeply as it is one of the examples that shows that Billy Buck is a better father figure for Jody than Carl Tiflin.

Another reason for why Billy Buck is a better father figure for Jody than Carl Tiflin is because he takes time out of his day to converse with Jody and help him out in times of need. For example, when Jody received the pony Carl Tiflin was so embarrassed that he had to leave the stall while Billy Buck stayed back and explained everything to Jody. Another example is when Billy was the one that was reassuring Jody about his doubts that the pony was okay while Carl Tiflin was the one that felt jealous because the pony was getting all of the attention.

Some people might argue that Carl Tiflin is the better father figure, and yes, while he does have a few positive aspects, the negative outweigh the positive. For example, a positive thing that Carl Tiflin did was buying Jody the red pony. And while he did buy it for him, the first thing that he did was warn Jody that he would take the pony away if he did not take care of him. Carl Tiflin was scolding Jody, while Billy Buck was the one of was congratulating Jody.

There are various reasons for why Billy Buck is a better father than Carl Tiflin. And while Carl Tiflin is a better father figure in some aspects, Billy still outweighs those reasons. Whether it be in the aspects of emotion or conversation Billy zooms past Carl Tiflin with flying colors. In conclusion, Billy Buck is a better father figure than Carl Tiflin.

Student # 113

Jazmine Miranda, Harden Middle School

Coach: Chris Banks

In the beginning of *The Red Pony* by John Steinbeck, Chapter One "The Gift" starts off introducing Billy Buck as a worker for Mr. Tiflin. In this argument it is about who is a better father figure Billy or Mr. Tiflin? When the story introduces Mr. Tiflin, he is going out of town to Salinas. This demonstrates that he is gone a lot while Billy is with Jody helping him more than his own dad.

Later on, in the story the horse gets sick really bad. Billy Buck and Jody tried helping Gabilan with carbolic solve to breathe but it made him worse. Billy cut a little hole in his windpipe, so he could breathe. They helped him to breathe which was good because he couldn't before. Carl (Mr. Tiflin) was bugging Jody to come with him to the top of the hill, and Billy Buck told him to leave him alone. Mr. Tiflin walked away with his feelings hurt. This prove my theory why Biily is a father figure more than Carl because he sticks up for Jody and doesn't neglect his feelings.

Out of all these passages to see who the better father figure is, I would say Billy because, he helped Jody with his horse and help take care of it when Gabilan was sick. When Jody woke up the barn doors were swung open, the pony gone but there were tracks. The night before the pony ran off and Jody brought him back but this time he was gone. Jody found the tracks and he ran after them. He saw black buzzards circling he ran even faster. Jody beat a buzzard with a sharp white quartz until it was dead. Carl said, "They didn't kill your pony." Billy lifted Jody, carried him home, then lashed back at Carl and told him "He knows but Jesus Christ... can't you see how he feels.

Some might argue that Carl is a better father figure because of these reasons. One passage said "...Jody took his twenty-two rifle... he had no cartridges... couldn't have cartridges until age twelve." The person who had gave him the rifle was his father Carl. The next day Carl got Jody a red pony and told him "He needs a good currying" meaning you must take care of this horse.

Then again when the pony dies Billy lifted Jody while, Carl told him the buzzards didn't kill your pony. Carl was more concerned about the buzzards than Jody.

In the end of the story Billy was the one who helped out the most. In conclusion of who was the better father figure it was Billy Buck because, of everything he did for Jody. Carl though "ah he's ten so he will be ok but why did he beat up the buzzard who obviously didn't kill the horse." That's what he was probably thinking when he seen Jody kill the bird.

Billy was more concerned about Jody and how he was feeling to the death of Gabilan unlike Carl who was concerned about the buzzards. That's why I think Billy is a bigger father figure than Carl was being to Jody in "The Gift" by John Steinbeck.

Student # 35

Gabriel Montoya, Vista Verde Middle School

Coach: Janice McKee

With Greater Power, Comes Greater Responsibility

In *The Red Pony* by John Steinbeck, the story of "The Gift" tells about Jody, a young boy who goes through some changes. He learns lessons and responsibility. I've also gone through changes and taken on greater responsibilities.

So, in the story, Jody is a shy boy until his father gives him a pony. He names it Gabilan. Once he got Gabilan he started to open up more and take responsibility for it. He had to take care of him and give him lots of time, attention, and love by feeding him, brushing him, halter and lead rope training him, and cleaning his stall. He would rely on Billy Buck as a father figure more than Mr. Tiflin and trusted him a lot, but overtime he loses some trust for him. One time, Jody was afraid that it was going to rain and Gabilan would get wet. Billy Buck assured him that it wouldn't rain and if it did he would put him back in the stall, but he didn't do that when it rained and Gabilan got sick.

One change I've been through is when I got a dog. So, before I got my dog I would just ride my bike around town with my friends or go to the skate park but all that changed because I didn't realize how much time you have to give to a pet. I had to take more responsibility because now I had to walk him at least two times a day, pick up after him, play with him, spend time with him, and most importantly make sure I fed him two times a day. His name was Blue. I didn't name him though. The story of how he got his name is that my Dad's friend from New Mexico gave it to us and he named his three dogs Red, White, and Blue because he was very patriotic and just got out of the Army.

I've also had experiences of when I lost trust in someone. One example is when I let my friend borrow my bike for a while because he couldn't afford one at the time. His broke and I had a scooter too. Well when I asked for it back, he gave it to me without grips and tires when I went to pick it up. Later on, when I asked him where they were he said that he didn't have them anymore and gave me some other older ones. I learned that I shouldn't trust him as much as I used to and he isn't really a good friend.

Both Jody and I have learned some lessons of taking on responsibilities for animals and learning who isn't as trustworthy as they seem. He learned to care for Gabilan and I learned to care for Blue. He also found Billy Buck not that trustworthy as I found my friend not that trustworthy either. I feel like I can relate deeply to this section of *The Red Pony*.

Student # 22

Lisamarie Moreno, Vista Verde Middle School

Coach: Ruth Muldoon

Jody & Responsibility

In today's age responsibility is a word that young people dread to hear, because they hate the thought of actually having to do something. In the story *The Red Pony* by John Steinbeck we meet Jody a young boy who isn't very responsible and always has to be reminded of chores, like feed the chickens, gathering wood for the wood box. All those things are his responsibility and he is expected to complete and follow through with them. One day Jody receives a red pony, which he names Gabilan. Gabilan plays a very important part in Jody's maturity and growth. Although we do not see the change immediately, we see his growth begin to develop later in the chapter.

After Jody receives Gabilan he begins to wake up before the triangle sounds just to spend time with Gabilan. By doing so Jody is showing a sign of responsibility although with one gain comes a loss. Later in that day it's getting dark and Jody's mother comes to remind him of the chores he must complete. In that moment the reader wonders if the gift of the pony will be a benefit to Jody and his growth as a young boy. Over the course of the story we see Jody gain many benefits of receiving Gabilan. We can also see Jody's growth in Jody's character. Unfortunately, Gabilan comes down with strangles and dies.

I can personally relate to Jody as I myself have lost something that meant something to me. I once had a fish which I took care of and was very responsible of it, until one day I had to trust my grandmother to take care of it until me and my mom moved out of our apartment. But one fateful day my grandmother broke the news that she had found my fish dead. And losing my pet goldfish was devastating and heartbreaking. I was so sad I felt the same way Jody felt sad, angry. Although it was a sad experience I feel like me and Jody both gained something great in our experiences.

Student # 16

Jeovanni Nash, Los Arboles Middle School

Coach: Mari Dehmler

In The Red Pony I'm Learning About People Changing...

In several ways Jody changes. One is that when he gets Gabilan, he cares more about it than anything, even including his chores. When he goes home, the first thing he does is go see Gabilan and does his chores weirdly. He learns that when Billy Buck tells Jody something about the pony, Jody will do it. Jody is in a rush to ride the pony, but Billy Buck tells Jody that he can ride it at Thanksgiving.

What Jody learns is that he needs to care more about school more. For example, once he was in the middle of class and starts to rain, so Jody went home to put Gabilan back in the stalls. He learned that he cannot really trust Billy Buck. Because he told Jody that it wasn't got to rain, now Gabilan has a cold.

I have responsibility like Jody. A time that I had to get a baby brother named "Hunter". When I first met him, he was calm and happy because he has all the attention. I have to take responsibility and learn what he likes and what he doesn't like. One thing is that he doesn't like meat. He is not a vegetarian, he just doesn't like it plain. I care for him because he my only sibling and always will be, just like Jody and Gabilan.

Student # 92

Steven Navarro, Washington Middle School

Coach: Souhad Kahil

Final Draft Essay Prompt A

How can people relate on having a pet? Jody and I have to do many similar new things because of having a new animal or pet.

One thing that Jody has to be soft. Jody has to be soft to the horse, so it won't feel scared. Another thing is you have to train your animal. Jody has to train his horse, so it won't fight back when Jody is riding on the horse. Also, a thing is that he had to feed the horse right, so the horse grows big and strong. A good thing is that he has to take him on rides. Jody has to take on rides so the horse doesn't get lazy.

I had to do these things when my parents bought me a bunny. One thing that I had to do was be soft to the bunny, so it won't want to bite me. Another thing I had to do is train it, so it will listen to me when I want it to go where I want it to move. Another thing is I have to take her to other places than keeping her only in the house, so I would have to take her to the beach or another place than home.

I concluded that human being is the only creature that have pay for their existence on planet earth by giving time, attention, love, and care that leads to maturity, responsibility, care, giving, and empathy.

Student # 90

Kaylee Nickisch, Washington Middle School

Coach: Bertha Jasso

The Better Father

Who is more of a father figure to Jody in the novel *The Red Pony*? Billy Buck or Mr. Tiflin? The obvious answer is Billy Buck for a simple reason: I see that he is more caring to Jody than Mr. Tiflin is.

In *The Red Pony*, Billy Buck helps Jody with Gabilan, the red colored colt that Jody received because an old show was selling their stuff in Salinas, and Jody's father bought him the horse. Billy Buck tells Jody everything he knows about horses, explaining how to take care of them and how to train them. Billy Buck is also very protective over Jody. For example, when Mr. Tiflin explains that "the buzzards didn't kill the pony...", Billy Buck snaps back and responds with "Jesus Christ! man, can't you see how he'd feel about it?"

Many may say that Mr. Tiflin is a better father figure for Jody because he explains the hard reality of life which could lead Jody to grow into an intelligent, strong, young man. But what good will that do? Billy Buck is a sweet, kind-hearted man who loves helping others. I see him as a better example to Jody than Mr. Tiflin, who is strict, unwelcoming, and cares more about his ranch than others.

Billy Buck tried to save the pony when it was sick, and blamed himself for it, while Mr. Tiflin seemed not to care for it. Billy Buck helped train the pony and expressed his delight with the progress they made on Gabilan, when Mr. Tiflin expressed his disappointment and his disgust with how the pony was trained, claiming that he doesn't "...like trick horses..." In the end, it is safe to say that when it comes down to it, Billy Buck is a better father figure, and all in all a better example to Jody than Mr. Tiflin is.

Student # 114

Andrew Olivares, Harden Middle School

Coach: Daphne Engelken

Mr. Tiflin is a strong, stern man. When I think of the head of the household I think of Mr. Tiflin. A father figure owns characteristics that I see in Mr. Tiflin. He urges Jody to go to bed on time, he ensures that he will need Jody in the morning.

He groomed him to be a responsible young man on the ranch. Even though I saw these traits in Mr. Tiflin, he demonstrated thoughtfulness and caring when he took the long journey to Salinas to acquire a pet pony for his son.

Billy Buck, a ranch hand and close friend of Mr. Tiflin, almost befriended Jody. Billy Buck took care of Jody's pony when it fell ill, sometimes over stepping his boundaries. At times he misguided Jody to feel that the pony was getting better, when in fact he knew it wasn't

Carl Tiflin is Jody's dad. Mr. Tiflin has a lot of good discipline. Mr. Tiflin showed he wanted to cheer Jody up when the pony was sick. Mr. Tiflin told Jody a story. "Isn't that funny?" he asked. Jody laughed (really not listening) politely and said, "Yes, sir." His father was angry and hurt." This means that his father felt dismissed and simply wanted to be a loving father.

Student # 118

Samantha Ortiz-McLendon, Holy Cross Middle School

Coach: Joanne Oien

The book *The Red Pony* focuses on a young boy named Jody and his journey towards maturing and more responsibility. Throughout the book Jody has two father figures looking over him: Billy Buck, the cow-hand, and Mr. Carl Tiflin, his father. Both Billy Buck and Mr. Tiflin help Jody learn responsibility and to care for others. When Jody faces challenges Billy Buck and Mr. Tiflin help him get over the hurdle in different ways. Billy Buck was the cow-hand on the farm and would help with the horses. On days that he and Mr. Tiflin would be riding he would saddle up the horses. One morning he got up early to put the saddles on two horses because he and Mr. Tiflin would be riding toward Salinas. Billy Buck helps Jody learn how to take care of horses and look after them. Mr. Tiflin is Jody's father. He stood a tall figure and was stern but did not like to be cruel. For example, when an old man came to the farm asking to stay there Mr. Tiflin did not like to say no but he felt he had to. He decided to let the man stay the night. Mr. Tiflin managed the farm and liked every decision made to be checked by him. During the story Jody asked Billy Buck if he could do something but Billy Buck told Jody to ask his father because he liked to check every decision. While Mr. Tiflin was Jody's father he was a disciplinarian and Jody would obey him without any question.

Billy Buck and Mr. Tiflin both were supportive of Jody in distinctive ways. When Mr. Tiflin gets Jody his first pony he talks sternly with Jody to build up his responsibility. Mr. Tiflin would constantly talk crossly or order Jody when he was telling him something. For example, when Mr. Tiflin was giving Jody his pony, he ordered "Come here!" and he told Jody "If I ever hear of you not feeding him or leaving his stall dirty, I'll send him off in a minute." There were many examples in the book when Mr. Tiflin would talk strictly with Jody to build his responsibility. Jody was thrilled about his new pony, Gabilan. When Billy Buck and Jody were in the barn Billy Buck would teach Jody about horses. One time, he explained how horses love conversation to Jody and that he should always explain reasons for everything to the horses. This was only one of the lessons that Billy Buck taught Jody. Jody trusted Billy Buck and everything he told Jody about horses.

When Gabilan got sick Billy Buck kept assuring Jody that he would be fine. He told Jody "Now he'll feel better, that yellow poison is what made him sick." When Gabilan passed away Jody's belief system started breaking down. He recognized that adults cannot always do everything. Though his belief system was breaking down it began rebuilding. Jody began to realize that Billy Buck did all he could to help save Gabilan. His belief system grew to something where he still put his trust in adults but recognized that they could make mistakes. Mr. Tiflin did not help Jody like Billy Buck had done. His sternness with Jody helped him build up a sturdy belief foundation. Sometimes, Mr. Tiflin would talk about something harshly, like when he told Billy Buck "This country's full of these old paisanos." Billy Buck politely argued back that they were good men and worked hard into their old age. Another time, Mr. Tiflin asked Jody, "Jody, the buzzard didn't kill the pony. Don't you know that?" Jody responded wearily but Billy Buck was angry and

told Mr. Tiflin “Course he knows it, Jesus Chris! Man, can’t you see how he’d feel about it?” Billy Buck stood up for Jody and guided him.

Mr. Tiflin and Billy Buck had different feelings and manners towards people and things. For example, when Jody’s grandfather came to visit there was a different in the way the two men would speak with Jody’s grandfather. Billy Buck engaged grandfather in conversation he would talk kindly with grandfather and listen when he would tell stories. Mr. Tiflin would try to change the subject or turn the conversation away from the stories grandfather wanted to tell. In the book, Billy was getting up to leave the room but kindly offered to show grandfather the old powder horn and a cap and ball pistol to him, but grandfather declined. Mr. Tiflin tried to change the conversation because he did not want to hear grandfather’s stories. Jody followed Billy Buck’s example and asked grandfather to tell him stories and would listen politely.

Billy Buck and Mr. Tiflin helped Jody grow mature and responsible. In many ways Billy Buck is like my father. When my mom says something he does not agree with he would politely disagree like Billy Buck does with Mr. Tiflin. I think Billy Buck is a better father figure to Jody because he helped him learn to be responsible and to care for others. Mr. Tiflin did help Jody to build a strong foundation but not in the same way Billy Buck did. Jody learned many things about horses from Billy Buck. Jody looked up to Billy Buck and trusted him. Billy Buck was a better father figure to Jody because he listened to him and taught him many things while Mr. Tiflin just taught him many things while Mr. Tiflin just taught Jody responsibility by being strict with him.

Student # 48

Oswaldo Pantoja, Vista Verde Middle School

Coach: Angel Reed

Who's the Better Role Model?

Throughout life, many people will possibly experience a horrible thing known as divorce. It is both challenging for the parent and their children. If this happens, you may find a step father or mother. For the kids, it may be hard to decide who's the better mother or father. In the story *The Red Pony*, readers will encounter a similar situation with two main characters, Billy Buck and Carl Tiflin. There is a debate on who is a better father figure for a child named Jody. The way I see it, Billy Buck is the better father figure.

To begin with, even though Carl Tiflin is the actual father, Billy does a better job at being Jody's father. Throughout the story, Jody is taking care of a pony which was given to him by Carl Tiflin. The moment Carl gave Jody the pony on page 9 paragraph 3 he says, "He needs a good currying, and if I ever hear of you not feeding him or leaving his stall dirty, I'll sell him off in a minute." Through this quote alone Carl is predicted to be the bad model for Jody which eventually turned out to be true because throughout the rest of the story, Billy Buck is always described to be with Jody and Carl is almost never with him.

However, some may argue that Carl is the better father figure for Jody. They may argue this because of something he teaches Jody which is discipline. Carl clearly shows that he would be very strict with Jody about the pony. The reader knows this because of what he says about selling of the pony if he hears that Jody isn't taking good care of the pony. Therefore, Carl shouldn't be seen as the bad model, plus it is good for Jody to learn discipline because it was teaching Jody about responsibility for his life in the future.

Although this may be true, it seems to be the only thing Carl does for Jody. For example, in the story it starts raining and the pony gets very sick. The whole time, Billy Buck is helping Jody with the pony while Carl Tiflin does absolutely nothing to help. For example, on page 30 paragraph 3, Billy Buck cuts open a lump on the pony's throat so it can help it breathe. This proves that Billy Buck helps more than Carl Tiflin.

To conclude, the better father figure for Jody is clearly Billy Buck. Although Billy is better, Carl Tiflin does still teach Jody a valuable lesson about responsibility. Though this is great for Jody, the actions Billy Buck expresses through the story, makes Billy capable of teaching Jody more difficult and useful things in the long run.

Student # 80

Trisha Patel, Bolsa Knolls Middle School

Coach: Guadalupe Lopez

The Fatherly Love of Billy Buck

What do you see in a fatherly figure? I see love, compassion, and trust. As for Jody, I see Billy Buck. He is loving, compassionate, and caring towards Jody. He has been with Jody every step of the way, unlike Mr. Tiflin. Therefore, I believe that Billy Buck is a far better father figure to Jody.

An important element to a fatherly relationship is being there for each other. For example, Billy Buck is always there for Jody. Just like how for every lightning, there is thunder. Billy Buck is with him in presence and in mind. He helps him take care of his pony. The story states, "Jody found Billy Buck in the barn harnessing and currying. Billy stood with him and looked long at Gabilan and told Jody a great many things about horses." (pg. 14) This scene illustrates that Billy Buck helps Jody by sharing his knowledge of horses.

A child responds best when their fatherly figure leads by example and not just harsh words. For example, Billy helps Jody by modeling how to make a rope, "Jody collected tail hair in a bag and he sat and watched Billy slowly constructing the rope..." (pg. 17) In another scene, "Billy could give examples, too. He had known, for instance, a horse nearly dead beat with fatigue to perk up when told it was only a little farther to his destination." (pg. 14/15) Billy Buck shares his anecdotes, hoping Jody will benefit from his vast experiences.

Billy Buck demonstrates and guides Jody by using kind words and good examples. In contrast, Mr. Tiflin guides Jody in a judgmental manner. Always the disciplinarian, Mr. Tiflin complains, "He's getting to be almost a trick pony... I don't like trick horses." (pg. 17) Jody is very bothered it because his father is quick to judge. Their interactions show that theirs is not a typical loving and warm relationship. In fact, Jody's interactions with his with his father was based on obedience: "His father was a disciplinarian. Jody obeyed him in everything without questions of any kind" (pg. 3)

In conclusion, Billy Buck and Mr. Tiflin have different ways of interacting with Jody. Some people might respond better to authoritative style of leadership. Other people, such as myself, favor the style of Billy Buck. The aforementioned examples demonstrate that Jody and I have the same preference.

Student # 74

Alejandra Perez, Bolsa Knolls Middle School

Coach: Eva Pabilona

Who is Jody's Real Father Figure?

In my family, my dad is the father figure, who cares for his children and whom everyone looks up to for his hard work and dedication. So, from my experience I believe a father figure should be someone who cares for their children and will do anything to make them happy. After reading the book who is the better father figure, Billy Buck or Mr. Tiflin? In my opinion, I strongly believe Billy Buck is Jody's father figure as well as role model. There are many reasons why I believe this and that is that Billy helped Jody when his horse, Gabilan had strangles and was dying. Billy also understands Jody on a much deeper level than his real father. On the contrary, all Mr. Tiflin did was buy Jody the horse.

First, in the story Jody asked Billy to take Gabilan inside, instead of Mr. Tiflin. I can infer that Jody trusts Billy Buck more than his cruel and disciplinary father. To back my claim on page 21 it says, "Well if it does rain, you put him in will you, Billy?" This quote is explaining that Jody had faith in Billy to ask him to take his horse, so he would catch a sickness. It matters because it proves Jody's trust in Billy and not Mr. Tiflin. If Mr. Tiflin was his true father figure, then he would have asked his father to put Gabilan inside.

On the other hand, many will argue and say Mr. Tiflin is his real father figure. That is where they are wrong because Mr. Tiflin never once helped Jody when Gabilan was sick. In page 33 it said, "Jody's father walked into the barn and stood with them in front of the stall. At length, he turned to the boy. 'Hadn't you better come with me. I'm going to drive over the hill.'" From this quote I can tell Mr. Tiflin doesn't really care for Jody's horse, being that he hates weakness. It matters because a father figure in my opinion from experience, I believe a fatherly figure should care for their children.

Accordingly, I also believe Billy had more sympathy and understood Jody more than Mr. Tiflin. On page 37 it says, "But he turned back on Carl Tiflin. 'Course he knows it' Billy said furiously. 'Jesus Christ! man can't you see how he'd feel about it?'" This quote explains how Billy Buck knows how Jody feels, he knows the feeling of grief, because his mother at a young age and so he connects with Jody through that. The quote is important, since it reinforces the idea that Billy and Jody have a strong bond. While at the same time his own father doesn't understand what Jody is going through when Gabilan dies.

In conclusion, I strongly feel that Billy Buck was more of a father figure to Jody than his own biological father, Mr. Tiflin. The reason that I am so certain Billy Buck is Jody's father figure is because he gives the impression of caring for Jody as a father should do so. I think Mr. Tiflin helped Jody and the family financially, while Billy Buck contributed to Jody emotionally. Billy showed his emotional support when he helped Jody care for Gabilan and stood up to Mr. Tiflin for him. Mr. Tiflin, however, never helped Jody except for the time he bought him the horse. From past personal experiences, I can conclude Billy Buck is a father figure to Jody.

Student # 88

Edric Perkowski, Salesian Elementary & Junior High

Coach: Elizabeth Hibbard

Jody's Responsibilities

When people grow up, they also group up in living, thinking, and knowing. It's common knowledge and Jody Tiflin was no exception from growing up emotionally.

Before Jody received Gabilan the pony, he was a normal ten-year-old boy doing normal chores every day. Then, one morning, Jody found out his father had given him a pony. A beautiful red colt, he named Gabilan, after the mountain range.

Now, Jody had more responsibilities than just cleaning around the house. He now had to take care of a living animal, and a big one as a matter of fact.

But he was excited about it, so the next morning Jody isn't slow about getting out of bed. "Jody never waited for the triangle to get him out of bed after the coming of the pony." (Page 13)

Although I for one cannot relate to having a pony, I do take care of my two cats, and one dog. I have to feed, take care, and play with them. Just having a pet around is beneficial and can help you grow in responsibility, even if you don't notice it right away, it still might help you a great amount. People don't just grow by age, but also emotion, and with that comes great responsibility.

Jody had many more responsibilities now. He had to take care of the pony completely and independently, without much help. He had to feed, wash, comb, train, and do a great number of other chores just to keep Gabilan in shape and trained. He knew if he did not do any of his tasks completely or correctly, Gabilan wouldn't become the best pony he could be.

It's the same situation with dogs, you must train them, and even though doing tricks is not necessary, training a dog to behave well around others is. Our family had to train our dog in order to make her better, and not crazy in front of other dogs and people. Despite the differences between a horse and a dog, I am sure it's the same way of training.

These responsibilities aren't hard, but they do require time and patience. Jody had both of these gifts to help him with training Gabilan. Everybody grows up in their life, but Gabilan helped Jody become less of a kid and more of a man because of responsibility.

Student # 8

Tristan Pflieger, All Saints Day School

Coach: Orlando Laso

“Below, in one of the little clearings in the brush lay the red pony. In a circle around him stood the buzzards, waiting for the moment of death they knew so well” (pg. 36).

In John Steinbeck’s novel, *The Red Pony*, Jody learns about the ultimate responsibility of cherishing the moments he has with the things he loves. Jody, a young boy who lives on a ranch with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Tiflin, and the cow-hand, Billy Buck.

One day, one usual day, Jody feels a change in the air. “He felt an uncertainty in the air, a change of loss and a gain of a new thing (p. 4).” This feeling, combatted with the sightings of two black buzzards, the feeders and symbols of death, promised a sudden shake in the chain of life. Thus, when Jody returns to the fire place, his father speaks about “needing him in the morning.” His father and Billy Buck depart for Salinas, and Jody for his bed. The next day, awoken by the harsh ringing of the triangle, Jody saunters out of bed. After breakfast, his father crossly commands Jody to follow him and Billy Buck. At the barn, the doors swing open to reveal something that will change the foundation of Jody’s life.

A beautiful red pony looked back at the shy gray eyes of the boy. Carl Tiflin his father, warned him of the punishments of carelessness. “If I ever hear of you not feeding him, I’ll sell him off in a minute (pg. 9).” With that being said, Carl stepped outside. Billy Buck stayed with the boy and told him of the dangers of not caring for the horse. Over the course of a few weeks, Jody poured love and compassion into the horse, something I learned to do with the people I love. My grandmother passed away when I was five, and I remember staying with her often, watching movies with her, baking cookies with her, just enjoying her presence. Throughout Jody’s time with the creature, he becomes increasingly closer to the horse, and the horse promise to be better and better every day until... “If it does come to rain, you put him in, will you, Billy?” (pg. 20) Billy Buck, confident in his predictions, claimed no rain would slip from the sky’s ever teetering bowl, and onto the ground. Jody trusted Billy and left the horse outside. But it rained, harder than ever, and the horse became plagued with an awful sickness called “strangles”. Billy, admitting the severity of the sickness, performs a quick cut in Gablian’s mouth, which causes yellow puss to dribble from the horse’s maw. While this helped Gabilan’s situation, it was not enough. Jody spent the night with the horse. The blanket of darkness swept over the land, and the invisible horses of the wind galloped through the air; shrieking and howling through the night, which stirred Jody’s mind and blew open Gablian’s stall. Jody still stayed asleep until the haunting noise of the horse’s breath cured his drowsiness. As Jody awoke, he glanced around for the horse, noticing the open door of the barn. Jody sprinted out, his eyes flicking quickly through the darkness. He quickly grabbed an oil lantern, a small symbol of hope in the darkness of death. Jody found Gabilan slowly dragging himself through the piercing blackness of the night, in an utterly defeated and shambling walk. Jody sprinted towards the horse, caught him and led him back to the barn. As the night wore on, Jody’s eyelids never drooped once.

Billy Buck arrived the next day, staring at the horse with newfound worry. Billy Buck made a decision. He warned Jody, that "I've got to do something you want to see (pg.22)." Jody refused, knowing he couldn't have left even if he yearned to. Billy carefully pulled out his knife, and whetted it, Jody held the horse's head still. Billy quickly and carefully cut a small hole in the horse's neck, and oxygen as well as blood sported from the wound. A new and sudden burst of strength emitted from the horse and attempted to rear, but was stopped by Jody's hand upon his head. The horse's neck was seen to and cared for by Jody and Billy Buck, and over the course of a few more days Gabilan's health deteriorates to the point of near death. Jody, who correctly assumed the worse. He again slept with the pony that night, watching the hole in its neck. As he slept, the wind roared and slammed into the barn doors. Gabilan quietly and painfully crept from his stall and into the night. The next day, Jody awoke to find the horse gone, and quickly ran outside. The horse's ragged trackers were plain. Jody followed them into a small clearing, where he saw the black buzzards disappear over the ridge. Jody ran fast then, fueled by the wild fear and anger, combining into a sort of madness. Gabilan's slow twisting legs and gasping breath infuriated Jody, as well as the black buzzards picking at Gabilan's carcass. One singular vulture, a large, black, powerful bird pecked at Gabilan's head. Jody sprinted into the black ring of Death's birds, and they erupted into the chaotic frenzy of black feathers and wings. The buzzard on Gabilan's head attempted to fly away, but Jody caught its wing. The bird slammed its wing onto Jody's head, rhythmically, beating at its attacker's skull. Jody hung on, and with strength born from anger and despair, slammed the bird onto the ground and crashed his knee upon the bird's chest. Jody took a sharp piece of quartz, and vigorously slammed it into the bird's unblinking red eyes. This moment of Jody's life deeply intertwines with mine. While I did not brutally slay an animal, I did feel the same sadness and anger her did, the kind that can't be tamed, only slowly cured.

Jody learned responsibility of cherishing the small moments one has left with the things they love. I also learned this, by experiencing many different kinds of loss. I remember the feeling well, wishing I spent more time with my grandma, my old dog Eros, and my uncle, all who passed away with time left to spend. In Jody's life, just as I did. The catacombs of sadness in which me and Jody sunk into was crushing. Crying at a funeral in pain when you're just five or experiencing the death of your dog just a year later. Jody experienced pain like that, pain that cannot be truly sated, merely subdued under a volcano threatening to burst within your very heart.

Student # 21

Faustino Pizano, Vista Verde Middle School

Coach: Julie Minnis

Best Red Pony Father

Both Carl Tiflin and Billy Buck are father figures to Jody in *The Red Pony*. Billy Buck is a huge person in the story because of the father like person in the story. Carl is a literal father to Jody but does not like to show emotion toward his son. I believe Billy played a bigger father figure character in the story than what Carl played in the story.

Billy played a bigger role in the pony's well-being. While Jody was at school Billy fed and helped Gabilan not starve. Billy as well-trained Jody how to ride a horse. To not say anything but Billy taught to Jody the tricks Gabilan knows. Billy also helps Jody be a better person overall.

Jody does like Billy, but I believe he thinks Carl is a father figure to him. Carl bought Gabilan for Jody to learn life lessons. Carl knew that Jody was supposed to care of the pony by himself, but Billy wouldn't listen. Billy like to Jody telling him that Gabilan would be alright. Billy should have just let Jody take care of Gabilan by himself.

Jody helped Billy more with himself and the ranch than Carl ever did. Billy as well felt terrible for Gabilan passing away. Billy even tried helping the pony in everything he did. Carl even knew Jody felt mad about Gabilan passing that he killed a vulture. While Billy was trying to calm him down.

In total, I believe the reason Jody sees Billy Buck as a father figure is because Carl doesn't show his emotions. It is very likely that Jody tried getting close with his father, but Carl pushed him away. I believe that Jody's father loves him but does not want to show emotion because he might think it is a sign of weakness.

Student # 63

Aaliyah Prasad, North Monterey County Middle School

Coach: Troy Ishikawa

My own experience is when I took care of a puppy. At first, I didn't know what to do because this was my first time taking care of a puppy. With Jody, his experience of taking care of Gabilan was weird because Jody didn't know how to train the pony.

To begin with, my stepmom had to teach me how to train a dog because the dog was going to be my responsibility. Also, Jody had responsibility to take care of Gabilan. When Carl Tiflin gave Jody the pony he told him "He needs a good currying, and if I ever hear of you not feeding him or leaving the stall dirty I'll sell him off in a minute. Jody couldn't bear to look at the pony eyes." (Steinbeck 9)

I had the same experience as Jody because my stepmom had told me "Take care of the dog and clean the cage. If not, we will give her up to the pound." Jody and I learned a lesson we're to give love and all of our support to our animals.

Jody emotions to taking care of Gabilan was happy, focus, and sad. My emotions to taking care of my puppy was the same as Jody because I was happy to have a pet but then I put all of my effort in taking care of puppy and then I was sad because I had to give her up.

In conclusion, Jody and I were similar because we had all the experience of taking care of our pets. Also, we had a lot of emotions of losing our pets due to a bad situation.

Student # 76

Ricardo Ordaz Pulido, Bolsa Knolls Middle School

Coach: Jim Eddy

Prompt A Essay

Have you ever had a point in your life where you've faced a certain situation that provided lessons on responsibility to care for others? Many of us have and so did Jody from *The Red Pony*. His position on acquiring Gabilan was one of excitement. He admired the horse and learned the essential skill to raise the pony, as a father would raise his son. I've also been in one of these situations before, and I've learned many indispensable skills throughout this scene.

Jody was given a pony that he named "Gabilan". Before acquiring the pony, he had no clue of how to care for it and be a father-like figure to another being. He didn't know the amount of dedication he would be required to provide the horse. Throughout the process of raising the pony, he learned it wasn't an easy as people thought of it to be. In caring for the pony, he obtained the characteristic of a father. In rearing the pony, he dedicated much of his time towards the pony and the hardships Jody had to face.

I myself have been in one of these situations before. I've taken care of my ill grandfather that was unfortunately diagnosed with colon cancer. I had to take care of him while he was doing radiation therapy. Luckily, it cured the cancer. I had to constantly be checking up with my grandfather. I cooked for him at times and was always willing to spend time with him while he was lonesome.

In conclusion, responsibility is clearly needed for caring for people and animals we love. Steinbeck's book, *The Red Pony* highlights that life is about responsibility, caring, and loss.

Student # 24

Alina Ramirez, Vista Verde Middle School

Coach: Catherine Faber

A father figure is one of the most important things you can have in your life. Just having the peace of mind that there's always someone you can rely on to stick by your side through the bad times just so they can see you in the good can make a world of difference. In the story, *The Red Pony*, by John Steinbeck a young boy named Jody Tiflin is caught between the storm of two chaotic people, Jody's Father, Carl Tiflin, and his ranch-hand Billy Buck. Jody is constantly stuck between the two potential father figures struggling to pick his ideal role model.

When it comes to being involved in Jody's life, Mr. Tiflin plays a complicated role. When Jody is in distress and Mr. Tiflin sees him run to Billy Buck, it upsets him, yet he does nothing to change that. My father has alcoholism and because of that, there was a few points in time where I too lost my emotional connection with my dad. This helps me gain a greater understanding of the situation and I can draw the conclusion that Mr. Tiflin really doesn't realize the position his son is in. Carl Tiflin is all about dignity and appearance. For example, in the text when Jody's father is watching the pony gallop he talks about how he's getting to be a trick pony and how that takes all the dignity out of a horse. Mr. Tiflin doesn't realize that Jody is just a boy, so he puts up an emotional block. I do believe Carl Tiflin is capable of being a good father figure, but in this situation, he is not the best option.

When you think of a father figure, the first thing that comes to mind probably isn't a ranch-hand, but in this case, I think Billy Buck is a more suitable father figure than Carl Tiflin. For example, when Jody gets in the fight with the buzzard, instead of scolding him like Carl Tiflin he gives the boy the comfort he needs. Billy Buck is devoted to Jody all the time, and not just when it's convenient for him. Billy is also the one to give Jody reassurance when his father takes it away. He provides Jody with the emotional relationship that Mr. Tiflin doesn't know how to. Billy's constant effort to reassure Jody is one of the most crucial qualities of a father figure.

A few more aspects of fatherhood are guidance, support, and unconditional love. At this point in time, a father figure was only held to the standard of being a great provider. While I see how some people would look at Carl Tiflin as a better father figure, because he worked and provided for his family, Billy did more. He not only took the time to teach Jody the skills it takes to care for a horse, but he taught Jody what it is to have a true father figure.

The Red Pony provides a dramatic illustration of what it is to be a father. Despite Mr. Tiflin's ideas about appearances, when you look beneath the surface, you can see that this story is so much more than just a boy with a pony. It goes to show that a father figure isn't just a set of words, it's a collection of qualities. One of which is to be a true role model. But most importantly the story goes to show that blood really isn't thicker than water.

Student # 29

Jennifer Rios, Vista Verde Middle School

Coach: Catherine Faber

The Red Pony A Life's Lesson

Have you ever had the task of caring for one's life? If you have, you would know it's not an easy job. You have to be responsible in order to do this. Being responsible means being able to complete devoirs you have been assigned. It also means being reliable and trustworthy. In the story, *The Red Pony* by John Steinbeck, the young boy, Jody, had to care for a pony named Gabilan. It was his duty to keep the pony healthy and alive. Billy Buck, the helping hand, helped Jody with this process as Jody trusted him. Unfortunately, the pony got sick and died. Although there was loss, I believe Jody gained knowledge, matured, and learned how to be responsible.

To begin with, Jody changes as he wakes up earlier every morning after the coming of the pony. In fact, the text states, "It became his habit to creep out of bed even before his mother was awake, to slip into his clothes and to go quietly down to the barn to see Gabilan." This demonstrates Jody's determination and devotion in being able to keep the pony healthy. In addition, there's a point in the novel when Jody takes the time to learn more about horses, so that he could care for Gabilan the proper way. Not only that, but when Gabilan gets sick, he even sleeps with the pony to make sure he would be okay during the night.

Similar to Jody, I've had and still have responsibilities at home too. When I was younger, I had a dog to care for. However, it didn't live with me. Therefore, I wasn't able to commit fully to the dog, so it ran away. Although my dog didn't die, I still lost something that was very dear to me. Also, being the middle child comes with a lot of responsibility as my older sister went off to college. All her old duties or chores are now mine. That includes caring for my younger sister. Like Carl, my mom would be furious if I didn't care for my sister right.

Jody and I both grew as people and learned many things throughout our lives about being responsible. We learned from our mistakes and will not repeat them again. We matured as we now know responsibilities came with commitment. Now instead of watching people, we do things ourselves. This is due to the fact that when caring for a living life, it no longer is just you. It's about them as well.

Overall, growing up is one of the hardest things of life. Maturing and learning from your mistakes are essential parts of becoming an adult. Most importantly, being responsible is a key trait to evolving as a person.

Student # 121

Daniela Rodriguez, Vista Verde Middle School

Coach: Ron Wormser

When you're ten years old your only responsibilities are to go to school, get home on time, maybe do some chores, and do your homework, but when living in a farm or ranch it could be a total different story. In the story *The Red Pony* by John Steinbeck Jody is a ten-year-old boy whose father gives him a pony as a gift. Jody will have to learn how to train and take care of Gabilan, his pony, on his own. He will learn how to be responsible and will also learn about who he can and can't count on.

Carl Tiflin, Jody's father, tells Jody to wake up early because he will need him in the morning. Jody has no idea what his father might need him for but he's excited to find out. The next day after breakfast his father and Billy Buck, cowboy and a family friend, take Jody out to the horse stalls. And a red pony pokes his ears out, Jody confused at first asks, "mine?". Carl then tells him that Gabilan will be his pony, and his responsibility to take care of. With a huge smile on his face Jody starts his way to school and he just can't wait to tell his friends about his new gift.

After the pony's arrival you start to notice that Jody starts to mature and also takes his responsibilities pretty well. Before the pony's arrival Jody would never wake up until his mom rang the triangle to call him for breakfast, but after the pony's arrival Jody would wake up even before his mom. Every day before breakfast Jody would go to Gabilan's stall to feed him and give him water before school. After school Jody would do all his chores and then go and brush his pony and as well as clean his stall. Little by little Jody started to train Gabilan. Jody started with helping the pony learn how to gallop, and halter breaking him, to eventually start to help Gabilan get used to the idea of getting ridden. Jody as a ten-year-old showed that he was mature enough and responsible enough to take care of his pony. If you think about it there are not so many ten-year-olds that would take the time out of their days to do all that Jody did. At only ten years old he showed so much maturity and responsibility.

In some ways I think that I can compare myself to Jody. Growing in a Hispanic home expectations are held high. At only three years old my parents' expectations of how mature and responsible I had to be were unreal. My little brother was born with acid fluid in his stomach which meant my parents always had to keep an eye on him and go to the hospital often. So, at three years old I had to start to understand that I had to do a lot of things on my own. I had to learn that if my parents asked me to do something I had to do it because they didn't need any more trouble on their plates. At such a young age, just like Jody, I had to mature and learn about how important it was to have the characteristic of being responsible was.

Being responsible is a characteristic you learn to have. All the experiences you have and how you are raised play a big role in how responsible you come to be. Responsibility is a word that definition can be so much more than what is defined as.

Student # 85

Savannah Rodriguez, Bolsa Knolls Middle School

Coaches: Rod & Susan Neubert

Responsibility is a very important thing in life that doesn't just take time it also takes patience. In the story *The Red Pony* by John Steinbeck Jody has to learn about responsibility and how to take care of an animal. Here are some ways that Jody learned how to take care of an animal and the responsibilities that come with it.

When Jody first got his pony, he didn't know much about how to care for one and what he would have to do to keep Gabilan clean and healthy. My first example is that every morning he would curry and brush the pony before letting him go out to the corral. Another example is that when he started training the pony there were times when the horse wasn't cooperating. Jody had the patience and time to keep training him. He didn't give up.

Jody learned many lessons about responsibility. He learned that taking care of a horse is a very serious thing and that it's not something that he can mess around with. He started taking his chores more seriously and took his time with things. An example is that Jody would wake up before everyone to go take care of Gabilan.

There had been times where I had to face responsibilities. Just like Jody I have responsibilities for an animal and situations that happened. I have a pet dog this is a very big responsibility. My family and I have to make sure that he has food, water, goes out to the bathroom and that he stays clean. A situation that happened to me that is similar to Jody was when it was a windy day and the back door wasn't closed all the way, because of this my dog ran away just like Gabilan did. We ended up finding him, but he could have been run over or even taken.

In conclusion, I learned that it is important to take things seriously even though at times it might be hard and take patience. Jody showed patience when Gabilan was sick. Jody did not give up, he kept trying. This shows that even at the hardest times you should be patient and not give up.

Student # 103

Dulce Ruiz Hernandez, Washington Middle School

Coach: Steve Prodes

Who Is The Best Father Figure?

In the book *The Red Pony* who do you think is Jody's best father figure, Mr. Tiflin or Billy Buck? I feel it is important to consider why Jody's best father figure is Billy Buck. Billy Buck is Jody's best father figure because he disciplines him, but at the same time makes him happy. For example, Carl Tiflin got Jody his pony, but only if he took care of it. Jody finds it easier to share his feelings and talk to Billy Buck. This is evident when the author states, "It was easier to talk to Billy Buck". This evident supports my claim because Jody doesn't feel that his father listens to him or answers his questions very much, so he goes to Billy Buck.

Some people might think that Mr. Tiflin is the better father figure for Jody because he disciplines him. A counter argument for that is that Mr. Tiflin is just disciplining him, and not having fun with his son or even having a conversation like Jody does with Billy Buck. Mr. Tiflin also does not think Jody is responsible enough to feed and care for his pony. This is evident when Mr. Tiflin states, "... if I ever hear of you not feeding him or leaving his stall dirty, I'll sell him off in a minute". This implies that he simply does not have enough trust in Jody to take care of his pony.

Jody's father shows love in ways Jody doesn't understand so in the end I feel that Jody's best father figure is Billy Buck due to Billy being kind, easy to talk to and funny.

Student # 53

Nikki Ryan, Vista Verde Middle School

Coach: Cynthia Peck

Jody is the main person of the story, *The Red Pony*. Jody soon in the story starts to gain a responsibility and caring for Gabilan, the pony that Mr. Tiflin had gotten for Jody. Jody finds Gabilan in the stall, but it is also raining. Gabilan has been getting wet by the rain. When Jody sees Gabilan cold and wet, that's when Jody feels that he is responsible for Gabilan that he has to stay with him, in the stall. Jody was going to stay with him, but Billy Buck convinces him to go and leave. Billy Buck instead stays with Gabilan. During this part of the book, Jody gets a kick of responsibility for the pony Gabilan.

After Jody notices that the pony is wounded, he seems to grow affection for the pony. Jody had found Gabilan in the stall that he was in. Under Gabilan's throat was a lump. Billy Buck had checked and felt the lump under his throat. The lump that he had can pop inside the pony and if it did, it would be harder for the pony to breath. Billy Buck got a knife and cut open the lump. Jody at first did not want Billy Buck to cut it open, but Billy Buck still did. After Billy cut it open some puss came out of the lump. Jody looks away when the knife went towards Gabilan's neck. After the lump was cut, Gabilan seemed to look better.

To see a living thing hurting must have brought a certain feeling to Jody. After that situation, Jody's caring for Gabilan seems to start from that moment and grow. Jody's affection for Gabilan starts to grow more and more over time. One day when Gabilan passes, Jody has a mix of emotions. His emotions go from disbelief of the situation to sadness.

I myself have gone through a similar situation like Jody. I have always wanted a dog and one day my grandparents got me one. It was a small white dog. When I saw it, I was very surprised. Even though I only had it for a little bit, I was already growing affection for the dog. Other than just affection for the dog, I knew I was to be responsible for the dog. Similar to Jody I would need to feed it, take care of it and many other things just like how Jody did.

I had it only for a couple of hours. But also, like Jody there is a sad ending. My parents said I could not have it, so my grandparents took the dog back with them. Similar to Jody, I had many different emotions. I went from mad because I couldn't have the dog, to understanding why I couldn't have it, to sadness because I really wanted a dog. Many people all over the world in different places go through different situations in life, but they all have the same reactions. I have been through a similar situation. After reading that scene in the book, I started to think about it, I have been in a similar situation. I can relate to Jody and how he felt about Gabilan. It was just a dog, not a pony. Sometimes you can just relate with a book. Just open a book.

Student # 66

Leonard Salas Ramirez, North Monterey County Middle School

Coach: Jim Eddy

Path to Become Mature

The story, *The Red Pony* by John Steinbeck is about a boy who took on the responsibility of caring for a pony.

At first Jody did not want the responsibility of caring for the pony, but later on decided to take on task to love and care for the pony. Later on, he learned to care for the pony just like the day in my life when my sister was born. I learned and decided to take good care of my younger brother and sister. Another example was when my family and I went to the boardwalk. My parents were going on a ride and I wanted to go on a different one, but I needed to wait and take care of my sister and brother, while they were on the ride. So, I took the responsibility of taking care of my sister and brother. By doing this I grew stronger and more mature.

In conclusion Steinbeck's story about *The Red Pony* can help you learn the lesson you need to become more mature.

Student # 83

Kalia Salviejo, Bolsa Knolls Middle School

Coach: Christy Dawson

The Better Father Figure

How important is a father figure to a son? "The Gift", by John Steinbeck illustrates the connection Jody has with his father, Carl Tiflin, and the hired hand, Billy Buck. Mr. Tiflin is a very strict man who believes in strict rules; however, that may not be the best role model to look up to. On the other hand, Billy is outgoing and is comfortable to be around physically and emotionally. Thus, Billy Buck is the better father model due to his personality. Billy shows support, experience and encouragement with Jody.

The novel portrays Billy being very supportive of Jody and easy to talk to. The text states, "It was easier to talk to Billy Buck," and, "sure! That is, if you look out for him and breaks him right. I'll show you how." This means that because of Billy's personality, Jody can talk to him more easily and more comfortably than with his own father. Also, Billy is an advocate for Jody with his new pony. This is important due to the fact that Jody looks up to Billy as not only a mentor, but someone he feels comfortable and secure with.

Another form that presents Billy as a father figure is the experience Billy passes which gains Jody's trust and the encouragement Billy presents with Jody. For example, Billy uses his experience with horses and teaches Jody everything he knows in order to take care of the red pony. Also, Billy inspires and encourages Jody by being patient and open when educating Jody about the care of horses. This matters because Jody builds trust with Billy and has faith in him and everything Billy does.

While Billy demonstrates many great characteristics of a father figure, Mr. Tiflin does have good intentions as well; however, he does not show it as well as Billy. Carl Tiflin, the biological father of Jody, presents a negative attitude with Jody. For instance, Carl gives him a gift (Red Pony), but he tells Jody right away that if he doesn't take care of the pony, he will give it away.

This means that even though Carl wants to do something nice for his son, he ends up applying consequences to his gift right away and frightening Jody. This is significant because if Carl showed a more positive attitude with Jody, their relationship would be different and maybe Jody would look up to Carl more as a father model than a strict man.

As you can see, a father figure is very significant in a child's life. A father figure can also impact a child and their actions in either a positive or negative way. Therefore, that is why Billy portrays the best father figure with Jody due to his support and personal qualities.

Student # 89

Lizet Sambrano, Washington Middle School

Coach: Sue Ellen Stringer

Who is a Better Father Figure for Jody? Billy Buck or Mr. Tiflin?

Billy Buck is a better father figure because he shows Jody how to take care of his red pony. The gift he got was a red pony, Billy Buck shows him how to take care of it. Billy Buck shows him to do his chores without being told to do it and Jody learns responsibility. Billy shows Jody how to brush Gabilan's mane with a brush and a curry comb. Billy shows him to tame him with care.

Many people may think Mr. Tiflin is a better father figure. I think he was disciplinary and stiff. For example, when Jody asked if the pony was his, Mr. Tiflin walked away with no answer. Another example is when Mr. Tiflin looked sternly at Jody as he told him to go to bed.

In conclusion, this is important because it shows that Billy Buck can be the father figure of Jody by being kind and caring and showing Jody responsibilities.

Student # 13

Gloria Sario-Perez, Chalone Peaks Middle School

Coach: Gabriela Lopez Chavez

Being a father can be a huge responsibility. A father needs to know how to care for his child, how to feel proud of them, but most importantly, how to be a good role model. In the book *The Red Pony* by John Steinbeck, a ten-year-old boy, Jody has two guys by his side. Billy Buck who is just a worker and his actual father, Carl Tiflin. Both could be good role models in many ways, but they can also be a little bit of a failure in others.

Mr. Tiflin, can show Jody how to be tough, and how to be a hard worker. Yet he never really is with his son. In the book, Mr. Tiflin only talks to Jody if he had been drinking to get him in trouble or to give him a "gift". Rarely did they ever talk. Jody knew that a lot of boys looked at their fathers as the best role model. I feel like Jody wanted to do the same, because throughout the book you can see that he tried his best to talk to his father, not when he was drunk, but when he was sober. Not so he could get Jody in trouble, but to have a good talk. He could've given Jody a gift, but instead of giving it to him then leave as soon as his son open or saw it, Carl could stay with his son and ask, "Do you like it?" or say, "This is for my boy". Carl is a disciplinarian, isn't he? If he is, he should know that in order to discipline your children, you need to be by their side to make the job easier.

Even though Billy is too young, he can be an awesome role model. When Carl gets Jody a pony the only thing he says is, "He needs your currying, and if I ever hear of you not feeding him or leaving his stall dirty, I will set him off in a minute." Billy, on the other hand, taught Jody how to take care of the colt. Jody can also show him how to be mature and hard worker. Then again, he isn't a father, so he doesn't know how to truly help Jody. By "truly", I mean he doesn't really know. If he were to try, though he wouldn't be able to give Jody the advice only a father can give. He could try talking to Jody about responsibility or other guy stuff but will never sound like a way a father talks to his child.

In my honest opinion, Billy is a better role model. Why? Because even though he isn't a father yet, he spends more time with Jody than anyone. Jody can learn from Billy how to be a caring yet, responsible man. It could be disappointing that Jody's role model couldn't be his own father. Though it's good knowing he has another by his side.

In conclusion, all kids especially teenagers need someone they can look up to. Most girls choose their moms and once again boys choose their fathers. In this case, a ten-year-old boy couldn't look up to his dad but had an amazing friend who he can look as an amazing influence.

Student # 9

Rubina Shrestha, San Carlos School

Coach: Christopher Salas

The Red Pony: "The Gift"

The acceptance and the fulfillment of responsibility is a work in progress, filled with challenges and obstacles that an individual must overcome. At the time of adolescence, young adults are discovering themselves and how they make an impact on the lives of the people they hold dear. Realizing the presence of responsibility in an individual's life leads to maturity, growth, and compassion towards others. In *The Red Pony*, specifically "The Gift" by John Steinbeck, Jody Tiflin learns more about better decision-making, empathy, and he also gains a taste of adulthood.

One way Jody shows maturity is by keeping an eye out for meticulous detail when caring for Gabilan, his pony. For example, on page 12 of "The Gift" the book states, Jody curried and brushed until a pile of dead hair lay in the stall and until the pony's coat had taken on a deep red shine. Each time he finished he thought it might have been done better." This quote illustrates Jody's concern for his pony, as he takes the time to carefully brush his horse. He is never satisfied and constantly wants the best for Gabilan. Jody's attention to detail shows his selflessness and love towards Gabilan. Personally, I show love for my cousin by constantly giving her advice on her school projects. In my family, my suggestions are valued, so I keep giving pieces of advice, so she can improve and be the best she can be. The more responsibilities I have, the more I realize that I am competent and confident.

Another way Jody shows change is through his growth in self-confidence. An example of his is stated on page 11 of "The Gift", "Jody's courage was up. He too felt the superiority of the horseman." This quote describes the boost of confidence Jody gains through the coming of his pony. Before Gabilan arrived, Jody was a shy boy who did what he was told in fear of punishment. When Gabilan arrived, Jody gained the confidence to stand up and do the right thing, which was to keep the well-being of his pony first. In my life, when I am selected to be the leader of a group, I have to keep in mind that my decisions have an impact on everyone. Jody realizes that his decisions have consequences.

Finally, Jody Tiflin experiences a glimpse of adulthood when he sees buzzards engulfing Gabilan's almost dead body. This example can be found on page 36 of "The Gift", "and in a circle around him stood the buzzards, waiting for the moment of death they know so well." Jody trusted Billy Buck to care for his horse, but because of Jody's bad judgement, it led to Gabilan's death. Jody learns the consequences of his actions are on his hands and they affect more than just this firsthand. When I went to San Diego, I trusted my uncle to feed my fish. He overfed it and that led to the death of my fish shortly after. I couldn't help but feel guilty because the fish was my responsibility.

In brief, responsibility is a powerful tool which helps adolescents forge their way into adulthood. With responsibility, there is meaning along with grave consequences. Through responsibility, we all can learn the valuable lessons of empathy, thoughtfulness and purpose.

Student # 122

Rachel Stuercke, Chalone Peaks Middle School

Coach: Silvia Cortez

Have you ever noticed when you have two friends, that one of them is more supportive, or one of them is better at understanding? In the first chapter of *The Red Pony* by John Steinbeck, Jody notices that he has two father figures in his life, Billy Buck and Carl Tiflin. Both, Billy and Carl, make an impact on Jody's life. Out of the two, Billy Buck is a better father figure for Jody.

Being a father figure to Jody meant they both had to have the right characteristics and be very supportive. Billy was being very supporting by assisting Jody with Gabilan. I think Billy Buck is a better father figure because he is younger than Carl Tiflin, so he can relate, and he is very supportive of Jody caring for Gabilan. Unlike Carl, Jody trusts and believes Billy Buck. "Well, if it does come to rain, you put him in, will you, Billy?" (Steinbeck 21). Jody asks Billy to watch Gabilan and take care of him while he's at school. "Billy Buck wasn't wrong about many things. He couldn't be. But he was wrong about the weather for that day." (Steinbeck 22). Jody trusts Billy more than he trusts Carl. We can tell this, because we don't see him asking Carl to take care of Gabilan. We can infer that he won't ever ask Carl for help because then Carl would think he's not responsible enough to take care of Gabilan. Billy Buck is a very good father figure for Jody and tries to assist Jody with Gabilan.

Carl Tiflin is a strict disciplinarian; his son is very observant and respectful to him. Carl loves his son, but he doesn't show his affection toward Jody. "Carl Tiflin went out of the barn and walked up a side-hill to be by himself, for he was embarrassed." (Steinbeck 9). Carl was embarrassed for showing a sign of affection for Jody, that he had to leave the barn, a good father figure would've stayed like Billy. "I don't like trick horses. It takes all the dignity out of a horse to make him do tricks." (Steinbeck 17). Carl Tiflin is taking Jody's self-confidence away, by saying how bad of a job he's doing with training Gabilan. He makes it very hard for Jody to trust him, and listen to him, especially when he is always strict.

Billy Buck is a better father figure than Carl Tiflin, however Carl is still able to help Jody learn responsibility, obedience, and to become more mature. A way he helps Jody become more responsible is by giving him a pony to care for. "But, Ruth, I didn't give much for him." (Steinbeck 7). Carl tells his wife, Ruth, that giving him a pony is good because he hasn't given Jody much and when he does, each thing comes with limits. For instance, when Jody received the twenty-two rifle, he didn't get cartridges until he turned 12. "Jody, the buzzard didn't kill the pony. Don't you know that?" (Steinbeck 37). Jody's father was trying to be considerate and caring by telling Jody what happened. Mr. Tiflin helped Jody become responsible, and obedient

Billy Buck was a cow-hand, on the ranch, but was also a father figure for Jody. Carl Tiflin tried to be a good father figure, but he was too strict. However, his strictness and discipline were very good because it helped Jody become more responsible, mature, and obedient. Billy Buck was a much better father figure for Jody.

Student # 124

Isabela Terrazas, Holy Cross Middle School

Coach: Susan Tasner

In the book *The Red Pony* by John Steinbeck, a young boy named Jody is given a horse and has to take on new accountability. Jody and I can be similar in some ways because I had to take on new responsibilities as well. A time I did take on a responsibility was when my brother was born. Throughout the book Jody changed as a character because of his job of taking care of his pony, which he named Gabilan which means sparrow hawk.

Jody received a pony from Billy Buck and had to take on new chores to care for the pony. In the morning Jody always woke up early to see Gabilan, before his mother rang the triangle. He had to collect the tail hair from Gabilan, to make a rope. He would use a brush and a currycomb to brush Gabilan. Jody was taught by Billy Buck on ways to take care of *The Red Pony*, Gabilan. When Jody received the horse his personality changed, he was not his shy-self anymore. He became more curious and asked Billy Buck more questions about taking care of Gabilan.

A time I had to be more responsible was when, my brother was born. I had to help my mom by bringing her things she may have needed. Once I had to bring her rice cakes because my brother was hungry. I had to rock him to fall asleep. Once my brother was one year old, I did not have to help out my mom as much. My personality changed after I learned about taking leadership in the chores I do.

Jody and I had some similarities when we were given our chores and responsibilities. Jody had to take care of a horse a living animal that needs care in order to maintain clean and be fed. As I had to take care of my brother that is similar because you must take care of creation and teach the animals and the baby's to be taken care of.

Jody learned new tasks and responsibilities to care for his horse, and made it become a chore he does on a day to day basis. I learned way to have leadership and take care of my brother. Jody and I are similar to take on a responsibility to help another person or animal.

Student # 123

Paulina Torres, Chalone Peaks Middle School

Coach: Troy Ishikawa

Have you ever had a tough moment or experience in your life? In the first chapter of *The Red Pony* by John Steinbeck, "The Gift", a shy, courteous boy named Jody Tiflin goes through difficult experiences when given a red pony from his father, Carl Tiflin. Jody names the pony, Gabilan. Unfortunately, Gabilan becomes deceased. Through the journey of caring for Gabilan, Jody learns about responsibility and caring for an animal.

Before receiving Gabilan, Jody was not very responsible or mature. In the mornings, Jody's mother, Mrs. Tiflin, would ring a triangle and Jody awoke to it. As the story states, "The high jangling note of the triangle put the boy Jody in motion." (Steinbeck 2). Jody was not responsible to wake himself up without the ringing of the triangle. The triangle was Jody's alarm. Similar to Jody, before I was given my puppy, my mother used to wake me up in the mornings. I wasn't responsible to wake up on my own. Both Jody and I, prior to receiving animals did not know about responsibility.

Jody, after being given his pony, was already showing signs of maturity and responsibility. "Jody never waited for the triangle to get him out of bed after the coming of the pony." (Steinbeck 13). After receiving Gabilan, Jody showed responsibility by waking himself up and not being awoken by the triangle. Comparing my experiences to Jody's, I, too, had a similar situation. A few days after being given my young dog, I was like Jody. I woke up by myself, no alarm, and before my mother. I woke up bright and early and took my dog outside to pee and get some fresh air. Jody and I grew, to the point where we both were a bit more responsible for ourselves and our animals.

As Jody changes as a person throughout the story, the readers aren't the only ones to notice, but the characters as well. Jody's mother, Mrs. Tiflin starts to notice that Jody is maturing and starts to feel proud. As the story says, "She was angry when she came, but when she looked in at the pony and at Jody working over him, she felt a curious pride rise up in her." (Steinbeck 13). Mrs. Tiflin sees how hard Jody has been working and feels a sense of pride, she notices the change in Jody. I once had a similar experience to Jody's. One afternoon, when coming back from a run with my dog, I walked into the kitchen and my mother then said, "I'm proud of you, for taking care and being responsible of your dog. As well as taking care of yourself by exercising." My mother had noticed how I had changed for my puppy and myself. Mrs. Tiflin and my mother noticed how Jody and I changed and became responsible for our animals.

In conclusion, both Jody and I learned about responsibility from our experiences about caring for our animals. We both grew from being immature to responsible.

Student # 109

Michelle Torrez, Chalone Peaks Middle School

Coach: Joe Truskot

Wanting to be or seem like a perfect person can be hard, but also having to be a great person for someone to look up to you is even a more difficult task. To be a great father figure means plenty has to be done in order for that to happen, you would have to balance in showing love and being strict. Mr. Tiflin may not be a perfect father figure to Jody, but he does have a great balance of keeping him ready for life.

Mr. Tiflin is a great father, in many different ways. He is a great father such as being strict to Jody. Why it's great for him to be strict to Jody is because in result it would end to be good for Jody. For example, when Mr. Tiflin in page 7 tells Jody he should go to bed because he would be needing him for the morning, is for Jody's good so he can later wake up on time to be ready for his father. Part of Mr. Tiflin being strict on Jody is part on giving him chores to do around the house. Having chores to do will make Jody very helpful at home as well for his future.

As well as being strict Mr. Tiflin also gives love to Jody in many different ways. Carl giving Jody, Gabilan shows a way he shares love towards him. How Gabilan is an act of love towards Jody is by knowing that having will be great responsibility and he would have to mature for it which will be great need for him in the future. Although Mr. Tiflin is very strict towards Jody it shows the boy that Carl cares about him. Being strict shows caring because if Mr. Tiflin didn't have rules for Jody it would mean he didn't bother to have any expectations for him.

Having people to be over your shoulder pushing you to the correct lane to a bright future is a great gift. My parents are strict towards me mostly on my responsibilities which I respect. Being corrected in many of my mistakes is fantastic because I'm learning from them as well as growing.

Billy Buck has a great communication with Jody and has a great relationship. Jody also has a lot of trust with Billy such as when he wasn't sure of it was when it was going to rain when Gabilan wasn't feeling well. Although both characters have a great relationship Billy Buck isn't raising Jody Mr. Tiflin is which is why he is stricter and cares more.

Being or wanting to be perfect won't matter in order to someone your child looks up to but caring and loving them will. Although Mr. Tiflin doesn't say he loves Jody Mr. Tiflin sure does show it but in his unique way. Having someone over your shoulder can be the best thing you have.

Student # 111

Samuel Umbarger, Chalone Peaks Middle School

Coach: Alice Ann Glenn

Jody and I learned that working on our responsibilities can change us and we can learn lessons from working on responsibility. Jody got a pony from his father, Carl Tiflin, and Jody named him Gabilan. Jody realizes that having a pony means having a lot of work to do. I have responsibilities outside of my house to feed and give water to my dog, Floyd, and if I do not do that he will die. Jody and I are both learning how these responsibilities will make a difference.

One responsibility Jody has is he has to feed the pony. On page 33 it says, Jody's mom brought some food for Gabilan and said to Jody for him to eat it and maybe he will feel a little better. If Jody does not feed Gabilan, he will die, and Jody will not be trusted to take care of another pet. Another responsibility Jody chose to do was Gabilan was sick and Jody was lying next to Gabilan and trying to make him feel better. On page 29 it said, Jody walked in with a lantern and saw Billy Buck sleeping. Jody lays down by the pony and moves his hand through his red coat. Jody does not want Gabilan to die because this is Jody's first pet. I think Jody is learning that life is sometimes good and sometimes difficult.

Jody was proud to show off Gabilan to his friends and I want people to know I am successful at sports. When I was nine, I played flag football and I would practice very hard and play in games the best I could. After my season was over, I got an award called "MVP" and I earned it because I was responsible. I played my best and did my part.

I also like to play baseball. I play centerfield and it is a big responsibility. Centerfield is the middle of the outfield and the job is to let everyone else in the outfield where to go with the ball. Letting them know where the ball goes is important because our team does not want someone to throw the ball to the wrong place. I learned that sometimes I need to be in charge just like Jody was in charge of taking care of Gabilan.

In conclusion Jody and I both learned some lessons. We both grew more mature. I think if I was in Jody's shoes I would be more sad than happy. I think if Jody was in my shoes he would be more happy than sad. I think that the responsibilities are changing us to be more grown up. I think a lesson that Jody and I both had was sometimes you need to be the bigger person.

Student # 54

Andrea Valdez, Vista Verde Middle School

Coach: Judith Butler

Development

Have you ever wondered how Jody changed throughout the story *The Red Pony* and what he learned? A few ways he changed were by becoming independent, responsible, and he learned what it was like to lose something close to you which many of us can relate to.

One way Jody changed in *The Red Pony* was by being more independent and waking up by himself instead of relying on the triangle. For example, it states in the book, "Jody never waited for the triangle to get him out of bed." I can relate to Jody in a similar way because I wake myself up to get ready for school and I don't rely on my parents for certain things.

Another way Jody changed in the story is by becoming more responsible. Jody became more responsible when his father gifted him the red pony and he had to care for it and look after it. It states in the book, "It became his habit to creep out of bed even before his mother was awake, to slip into his clothes and to go quietly down to the barn to see Gabilan." This shows how Jody was waking up early to go see Gabilan and take care of him. I can relate to Jody because I have a pet of my own that I have to be responsible for just like how Jody is responsible for Gabilan.

Finally, one important thing Jody learned was what it was like to experience loss. He experienced loss when Gabilan had unfortunately died. For example, it states in the story, "And in a circle around him stood the buzzards, waiting for the moment of death they know so well." This shows how the buzzards were waiting to eat Gabilan's eventual dead body. I can relate to Jody because I've also lost people in my life who were very important to me and I know how he feels.

All in all, Jody's character in *The Red Pony* developed in many ways. He became independent, responsible, and learned how in your lifetime you lose things and people that are important to you.

Student # 31

Angel Velasquez, Vista Verde Middle School

Coach: Julie Minnis

Fathering Jody

Have you ever felt that somebody cares and is nice to you more than your own father? I have personally never felt that way, but in my opinion Jody, a character from John Steinbeck's *The Red Pony*, felt that a worker on the ranch that he lived on, Billy Buck, was a better father figure to him than his own father. Although, I strongly believe this claim, some people may say that Carl Tiflin, Jody's dad, is a better father figure than Billy Buck.

Based on my knowledge of *The Red Pony* I have found that Billy Buck acted like a better father to Jody than Carl Tiflin. First of all, when Jody had the pony, Billy Buck helped him care for it, while Carl Tiflin just criticized Jody because of how he trained the pony. For example, the story states, "Jody's father, watching the pony stop and start and trot and gallop, was little bothered by it." This quote shows that Jody trained the pony very well, and Carl instead of being proud of his son, he was bothered by the training. While Carl was being bothered, Billy Buck was taking care of Jody. For example, the story states, "He [Billy] had lifted Jody and had turned on Carl Tiflin." Jody killed a buzzard that had pecked at Gabilan's carcass, and instead of caring for him Carl tells him that the buzzard had not killed Gabilan, and Billy got angry at Carl for that.

Some people will disagree with my claim that Billy Buck is a better father figure to Jody, and they will say that Carl is a better father figure. One reason for this is Carl is the person who got Jody the pony, and that shows that he cares about him. Also, other people may argue that Carl has a hard time showing emotion. That is why Carl doesn't show much affection to Jody. For example, the story states "Carl Tiflin went out of the barn for he was embarrassed. . . "shortly before this Jody received the pony, and he and Carl had a moment of affection, but Carl couldn't handle it, so he left. Another piece of evidence that shows Carl as a better father figure is he buys Jody a new colt because he saw that he took care of Gabilan very well, and that Jody grew as a person with Gabilan.

Although Carl does show Jody love in his own weird way, he doesn't show enough for Jody to notice. Instead, Jody is afraid of his dad because he is so strict that Jody feels as though he is a prisoner. For example, at one point in the story, Jody's mother tells him that his father was looking for him, and Jody feared that he was going to be scolded for something that he had done. If Carl showed more love to Jody, he wouldn't have been afraid.

I have read *The Red Pony* twice, and both times I have felt that Billy Buck played a better father figure to Jody than Carl Tiflin, but some people may say otherwise. They may say that Carl is actually a better father figure to Jody than Billy Buck. Maybe my opinion is lessened by the fact that I have never had a similar experience as Jody. If you have been in a similar situation, would you agree with my claim of Billy being a better father to Jody than his biological dad?

Student # 67

Ana Velasquez, Harden Middle School

Coach: Stephen Carrillo

Father Figures

Mr. Tiflin is very strict and wants Jody to learn responsibility. The only thing wrong is Mr. Tiflin doesn't know how to express his feelings, nor how to show emotions. Billy Buck, on the other hand, is more understanding and there for Jody. Billy also helps out Jody the best he can.

To begin with, Billy is a better parent figure by spending more time with Jody. Billy gave Jody advise on how to take care of Gabilan the pony. Billy helped Jody with Gabilan, too. This helps Jody, because Billy is sharing his knowledge and teaching Jody how to take care of something that has meaning to you.

Next, Billy is more understanding and comforting to Jody. Billy tells Mr. Tiflin when Gabilan passes away (37), "He lifted Jody in his arms, and had turned to carry him home. But he turned back on Carl Tiflin, "Course he knows it," Billy said furiously. "Jesus Christ! Man, can't you see how he'd feel about it?" This quote shoes Billy being protective and understanding to Jody. This quote also shows Carl to not have that much empathy towards Jody.

However, from an understanding Carl Tiflin possibly had lived a very stern and hard life. His father probably was a disciplinarian as well. So, this might be why Carl has a hard time showing emotions to Jody. He seems very embittered and tough.

Finally, Jody learns responsibility and how to care for things. Carl has hard times expressing his feelings. Billy is more of a father to Jody by just building a father and son relationship. Billy also spent way more time with Jody taking care of Gabilan and they also take care of each other.

Student # 120

Nicole Victorino, Holy Cross Middle School

Coach: Cliff Andrews

Billy or Carl?

The best father figure would be Billy Buck because he defends Jody when Carl is screaming at him when he does something "wrong." He takes care of Jody's pony when Jody is at school and helps him train Gabilan, so he can be ridden by Thanksgiving. On the other hand, Carl Tiflin would also be a good father figure. For example, Carl wants Jody to grow up and not rely on someone else, especially Billy. Carl is also more trustworthy. Billy lied to Jody about rain being good for Gabilan. But he was wrong because Gabilan later died of strangles. Carl bought Jody the red pony because he wanted Jody to learn responsibility.

Billy Buck defends Jody when his father is yelling at him for doing something "wrong." In the first chapter Gabilan is killed and Jody is angry. His father starts yelling at him when Billy tells him to knock it off. Carl wants Jody to grow up and not rely on anyone. That is why Carl is so tough on Jody.

Billy takes care of Gabilan when Jody is at school He trains him, so he can be ridden by Thanksgiving, feeds him, and exercises him. Jody was given Gabilan to reach him responsibility. Carl did not want Billy doing everything for Jody because Jody would never learn responsibility.

Billy says that Gabilan would be fine in the rain and he wasn't. This proves that Billy Buck is untrustworthy. Carl did not lie to Jody and always told the truth. Gabilan eventually died from strangles. Carl Tiflin is the better father figure because he does not lie to Jody, buys him a pony, and wants him to grow up and not rely on anyone.

Student # 99

Lauren Villanida, Washington Middle School

Coach: Bill Breen

Have you ever wondered who is a better father figure to Jody? The two candidates for this position are Mr. Tiflin or Billy Buck. However, one of these people is clearly better suited to the job of caring for Jody. Billy Buck is evidently a better father figure than Mr. Tiflin. This is due to Jody's ability to talk easily to Billy, Billy helping Jody train his horse, and Billy's ability to understand Jody's emotions.

As shown in the book, Jody is shy and has a hard time speaking up. However, when Jody is around Billy, Jody finds Billy easy to talk to. When Jody and Billy are alone in the stable, Jody even remarks on how much easier it is to talk to Billy than it is to talk to his father, Mr. Tiflin. In chapter one, "The Gift," Billy and Jody seem to talk more than Jody and Mr. Tiflin. Jody seems to be more comfortable speaking to Billy than Mr. Tiflin.

Billy also helps Jody train his horse, Gabilan. Billy teaches Jody how to halter-break Gabilan and helped teach Gabilan the long halter. Billy even made Jody a rope out of Gabilan's hair. Billy cares about Jody enough to help Jody teach Gabilan which is a very fatherly thing to do.

Additionally, Billy seems more understanding than Mr. Tiflin when it comes to Jody. Billy knows not to carelessly tell Jody that everything will get better. Also, when Gabilan dies, Billy is the one who comforts Jody. Billy cares about Jody's feelings and sympathizes with Jody's sorrows.

Now some people may believe Mr. Tiflin is the better father figure because Mr. Tiflin is a good provider. However, Billy is still the better choice because Billy is more open-minded. Mr. Tiflin is very strict and hates weakness. Billy is kinder and less obsessed with rules.

In conclusion, Billy would make a better father figure to Jody than Mr. Tiflin would. Billy talks to Jody, helps Jody train Gabilan, and understands Jody's feelings. Billy has been kind to Jody and really tried to help support Jody. Therefore, Billy would make a better father figure than Mr. Tiflin would be.

Student # 23

Jennifer Zavala, Vista Verde Middle School

Coach: Gabriela Lopez Chavez

Discipline Is Not Everything

A father is not just someone that takes care of you and that you call "Dad." Fathers can have many responsibilities. What makes a father is when they care for you, protect you, and love you. It can also be a role model that you may want to follow. For example, people might prefer someone who is there for them all the time, rather than someone who just buys their affection with nice things. In *The Red Pony* by John Steinbeck there is a 10-year old boy, Jody, who gets a pony from his father Carl Tiflin, although it is Billy Buck who helps Jody with the pony's necessities. I believe that Billy Buck is a better father figure to Jody because he cares for him more than his actual father, Mr. Tiflin.

I think Jody's better father figure would be Billy Buck. One reason is because Billy Buck not only helps Jody out, but defends him sometimes. Billy teaches him nice things. He is not as rough as Mr. Tiflin. As Gabilan is dying, Mr. Tiflin says something, and Billy responds saying, "Jesus Christ man, can't you see how he'd feel about it?" Which shows his kindness to Jody? Unlike Mr. Tiflin who Jody refers to as a "disciplinarian." He is most of the time, harsh on Jody and really strict. Billy, on the other hand, talks to Jody in a kinder voice. Also, Billy was the one who taught Jody on how to take care of the pony, like how to curry the horse. Thanks to Billy, Jody was able to keep the pony.

Other people might disagree with me and say Mr. Tiflin is a better father figure because he disciplined Jody well and made him respectful. In addition, people might say that Mr. Tiflin is a better role model because he is teaching Jody to be disciplined and tough by being really stern and not showing any type of sensitive emotions. One quote that shows Jody is disciplined is when the book states "It didn't occur to him to disobey the harsh note." Another reason may be that Mr. Tiflin gives Jody a gift, so he can learn to be more responsible.

People think Mr. Tiflin is better, but I still think it's Billy Buck who is the best role model. My mom is my role model because she is always there when I need her, and she loves me. She is like Billy Buck, she talks to me in a calm voice. She still disciplines me, just not as harsh as Jody's father. We have a special connection. Everyone has their own opinions and perspective of what a father or role model is. Overall, a father is someone who you love and that they care for you. People should discipline but also show affection towards others.