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Review: Little Britches: Father and I Were Ranchers

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Moody, Ralph, *Little Britches: Father and I Were Ranchers*. University of Nebraska Press, 1991. ISBN:0803281781. Grades 6-adult.

Description

In the early 1900s, when Ralph Moody's father becomes ill working in the mills of New Hampshire, the family moves west in search of a climate more conducive to his health. Moving to Colorado at the advice of Ralph's Uncle Phil, they believe that their destination is a working ranch. The forlorn little house sitting in the middle of an open field with broken windows and crumbling walls is not what they expected, but Ralph's family is not given to complaining or giving up. They set about to create a safe and loving home. Together they face tornadoes, floods, and wars over water but with hard work, ingenuity, and the help of friendly neighbors, they bring the little ranch back to life. All is not despair in this true account, as Ralph and his family is introduced to farm auctions, roundups, cowboys, and Indians. Ralph himself is a tough, brave, young man who through his own adventuresome nature is thrown into sometimes humorous and sometimes tragic situations.

Critique

An actual account of Moody's growing up; this title is seasoned with memorable characters like Hi the cowboy and Two Dog the Indian. Most importantly, Ralph is influenced by his father who handles Ralph's adventuresome nature with love and firmness, showing Ralph by example that life can be lived with dignity and honor in the midst of trying circumstances. Throughout the narrative, Moody never covers up his mistakes but shares the good and bad with openness and humor. His family exemplifies the virtues of hard work, ingenuity, honesty, family unity and respect for others.

This is a book of living history. Those looking for a title that will capture the attention of both boys and girls alike will find it in this narrative. It is an excellent read-aloud book for the whole family or a read-alone title for those ten and older.

Descriptors:

Moody, Ralph
Little Britches
The West
Colorado
Ethics
Truth
Obedience
Ranches
Cowboys
Death of parent

