

A classroom guide to

# Ranch Girl and the Orphan Lamb Adventure

by Brenda Ethridge Ferguson

Guide created by: Brenda Ethridge Ferguson, retired teacher and librarian



## About the Book:

This exciting story of Kelsi Fairgate and her lamb captures the warmth of ranch life and the special relationship between a girl and the animal she loves. Middle-grade readers will relate to Kelsi's struggles, fears, and triumphs as she works hard to become a lamb's best friend.

Recommended for ages 7–10.



## About the Author:

Brenda Ethridge Ferguson grew up on a livestock ranch in Texas where she was raised among cows, sheep, goats, and thousands of turkeys. When she grew up, she went on to teach at secondary and college levels and to serve as a librarian and library coordinator in schools. She writes books, short stories, and sometimes poetry. After her husband retired, her family returned to their roots.

## Pre-Reading Exercise:

Have students study the cover of the book and the title. Ask what they think the book is about. Ask students if they've ever had to take care of an animal. Let students discuss their experiences.

## Understanding Theme:

Ask students what they think the theme or themes in this book are. Remind them that a theme is an idea that is found throughout the book but is not directly stated. They may think of theme as the "meaning" in a story implied through such elements in the story as character and plot. Ideas: the importance of being responsible, the value of friendship, love, etc.



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## Recall and Discussion Questions:

1. At the beginning of the story, where is Kelsi and what is she doing? How is she feeling?
2. What do her mother and father have when they come in from one of the pastures?
3. What does Kelsi ask her dad to let her do? Why?
4. Why do her parents hesitate to let Kelsi take care of the lamb?
5. Why do they usually give orphan lambs away? Do you think that is a good idea considering their circumstances? Why or why not?
6. Do you think Kelsi will do a good job with the lamb?
7. Do you like the name Kelsi gives her lamb? Why or why not?
8. Why is Kelsi lonely in the summertime?
9. Have you ever been lonely? If so, what do you do to try to be less lonely?
10. What was the first problem Kelsi had with Dopey? What would you have done in her place?
11. What did Kelsi do during the storm? Was that a good idea? Why or why not?
12. Were you surprised how Kelsi's mother handled Kelsi's poor decision-making?
13. What mistake did Kelsi make that she thought would cause her to lose Dopey?
14. Were you surprised by what her father wanted to discuss with Kelsi after the "heifer" incident? Why or why not?
15. Have you ever had a best friend? Is a friend important? Why or why not?
16. How well did Ampara and Kelsi play and work together? Explain.
17. Why do you think Ampara and Kelsi knew how to react to a rattlesnake?
18. Why could Ampara run from the snake, but Kelsi could not?
19. Do you think Dopey was trying to save Kelsi from the snake? Why or why not?
20. Did Kelsi and Ampara react appropriately to Dopey's situation after the snake bite? What might they have done differently, if anything?
21. What does the last scene in the book tell you about Dopey? About Ampara? About Kelsi?



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## Reading and Research:

1. Have students read about raising sheep. Kelsi's parents raised sheep for wool. Some students could research wool production.
2. Have students read about how sheep are sheared. Sheep shearing is an interesting skill.
3. Ask students to research snakes found in Texas. Their research may include both poisonous and nonpoisonous snakes. They may write down facts and report to the class.
4. Research nursery rhymes, children's songs, poems, and stories that have a lamb or sheep as the subject. Let students report.  
*Examples: "Baa Baa, Black Sheep," "Mary Had a Little Lamb"*
5. Read about famous friendships in history.  
*Example: John Adams and Thomas Jefferson*
6. Ask students to name or locate other books that feature pets in the story. Take them to the library to look for these books.
7. Read or have students read about famous ranches in Texas.  
*Examples: The King Ranch, The 6666 Ranch*
8. Read articles, books, or online about smaller family farms and ranches.
9. Read about water lilies and lily ponds.
10. Research famous paintings that feature water lilies and lily ponds.
11. Read about a famous Impressionist painter who often painted lily ponds.
12. Read about at least three different varieties of watermelons and describe them to the class. Ask students if they have favorites.



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## Building Vocabulary:

Complete the following directions for each word listed below. Write the word on your own paper. Find the word in *Ranch Girl and the Orphan Lamb Adventure* (page number is given) and write the sentence in which the word is found. Now, find the word in a dictionary or at an online dictionary site. Choose the best definition for the word as it is used in the sentence and write the definition. Finally, using the word, write a sentence of your own.

### Example:

*monitor*

*The monitor was new, and Kelsi didn't know her.*

*A person who admonishes, cautions, or reminds.*

*The monitor told me to be quiet.*

lily pads, p. 7

countenance, p. 9

impertinence, p. 9

colostrum, p.10

assembling, p.12

skeptical, p.13

bounded, p.16

dehydrated, p. 20

Stetson, p. 22

shrouding, p. 25

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suppress, p. 26

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transgressions, p. 38

heifers, p. 39

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contemplate, p. 46

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sentimental, p. 52

sentry, p. 63

feeble, p. 71

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## For Author Visits

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