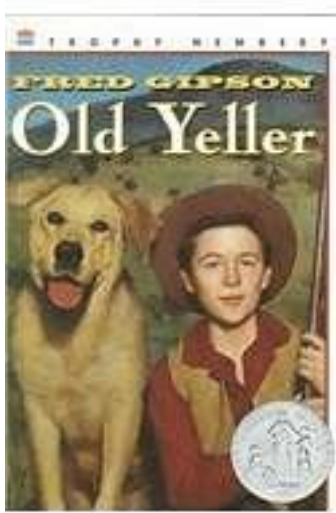


Old Yeller



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著者:Gipson, Fred/ Burger, Carl (ILT)

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When a novel like Huckleberry Finn, or The Yearling, comes along it defies customary adjectives because of the intensity of the response it evokes in the reader. Such a book, we submit, is Old Yeller; to read this eloquently simple story of a boy and his dog in the Texas hill country is an unforgettable and deeply moving experience. The big, ugly, yellow dog showed up out of nowhere one night and stole a whole side of hanging pork, and when Travis went for him the next morning that dog started yelling like a baby before he was touched. Then he got into the spring water with five-year-old Arliss, Travis took an easy hate to Old Yeller, as they started to call him; in fact, he would have driven him off or killed him if it hadn't been for brother Arliss' loud and violent protests. So Yeller stayed, and Travis soon found he couldn't have got along without him. Pa and Ma and Travis and Arliss lived on Birdsong Creek in the Texas hill country. It wasn't an easy life, but they had a snug cabin that Pa had built himself, and they had their own hogs and their own cattle, and they grew most of what else they needed. The only thing they and the rest of the settlers lacked that year in the late 1860's was cash, so

the men decided to get together and drive all the cattle up to the new market in Abilene, Kansas, more than six hundred miles away. Travis was only fourteen, but he was proud of his new role as man of the family and determined to live up to his responsibility. It was hard work, too, plowing until his legs ached, chopping wood until his hands were raw and his head was spinning, weeding the garden in the hot sun, toting the heavy buckets tip from the spring, and trying to keep his mischievous little brother in line. But there were pleasant moments, too: his Ma treating him like a man, and deer hunting in the early-morning stillness, and hot summer nights out in the corn patch under the stars with Old Yeller, trying to keep the coons and skunks out of the winter food supply. And there was plenty of excitement, like the fight between the two bulls, and the time Arliss nearly got mauled by the bear, and trying to catch and mark the new hogs. Here the suspense and excitement reach a peak, only to be topped a few pages later when the crazy-sick loafer wolf goes for Ma. Both times it is Yeller who saves them, only the second time it is not lucky for Yeller, as Travis comes to find out. And in finding out, Travis learns just how much he has come to love that big ugly dog, and he learns something about the pain of life, too. Old Yeller is a story that will be read and treasured by many thousands for years to come. In a shorter form, this has appeared as a three-part serial in Collier's.

作者介绍:

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