

the  
beef princess  
of  
practical county

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Companion Guide  
From



## Introduction

The *Beef Princess of Practical County* tackles some unique issues facing agriculture today...from the perspective of a 7<sup>th</sup> grade girl her first time showing cattle at the county fair.

In this companion guide you will find “Power Words” and “Vo-Cow-Bulary”. These are words from each chapter that may be unfamiliar to students. Students could define each, use them in sentences or work to use them in writing. “Power Words” are more traditional vocabulary words, where as “Vo-Cow-Bulary” are words associated with agriculture. Not all chapters have unusual vocabulary words, so in some cases there is not a vocabulary section included. There are “Questions” to use as discussion starters or as reading checks and writing prompts called “Write Away” to encourage students to write more about a specific topic. “Art-Wise” encourages students to use the art portion of Language Arts to research and integrate art into reading time. “Lesson Extenders” have also been added with links to other Agriculture in the Classroom activities. Some questions, writing prompts and art activities build on previous examples. Teacher might consider having students using special notebooks or folders to store all materials for this book for easy reference.

## Prologue

### Power Words

Prologue  
Arena  
Comprehend  
Inevitable

### Vo-Cow-Bulary

Steer  
Lead Rope  
Straw  
Shorthorn

### Questions

1. What purpose does the prologue serve?
2. After reading the prologue, name and describe the main characters.
3. Skim ahead and notice the chapter names. What name would you give this chapter?

### Write Away

\*After reading the prologue, skimming the chapter titles and examining the front cover---write your version of the story. What do you think will happen through the novel?

### Extension Activity

Check out the Illinois Beef Ag Mag at [www.agintheclassroom.org](http://www.agintheclassroom.org).

## Chapter 1 "Granddad's Pasture"

### Power Words

Teetering  
County Seat  
Doubt  
Sweltering  
Exhibitors  
Skittish

### Vo-Cow-Bulary

Pasture  
Acres  
Herdmates  
Grange  
Hay  
Angus

### Questions

1. Define foreshadowing.
2. After reading the Prologue, what could be the outcome of the Practical County Fair Beef Contest?
3. Why is there so little pasture ground in northern Indiana?
4. Practical County is a fictitious location. Given the description of its

location, what area would you think it could be located near?

### *Write Away*

- \*Describe the differences between Libby and Frannie
- \*Page 7 describes the fair food. Have you ever had fair food? How would you describe it?
- \*Hay can be baled in round or square bales—discuss why it might be baled in different forms.
- \*Why do you think farmers keep such accurate measurement of rainfall? It frustrates Libby—why do you think it is important!

### *Art-Wise*

- \*Libby describes the old home place like a folk art painting. Research folk art painting and style and draw your interpretation of this location

### *Extension Activity*

Check out the Illinois mAGic Kit for more information about what we grow in Illinois!

## Chapter 2/"Fair Calves Don't Need Names"

### Power Words

Bellowing  
Scowl  
Panache  
Gusto  
Vehemence

### Vo-Cow-Bulary

Calf  
Corncrib  
Granary  
Chicken House  
Pipe Gate  
Bucket Babies  
Crop Rotation  
Bovine

### *Questions*

1. Carol Ann's dog has a unique name---Phydeaux. How would you pronounce this? How would you typically spell this?
2. Carol Ann and Libby are very different---describe how they are different and how they are alike and how they make their friendship work.
3. When deciding names what Presidents do you think Carol Ann was describing?
4. According to this chapter, why don't calves need names?

## Write Away

- \*Frannie has an active imagination and powerful vocabulary. Give examples of each and describe why you think this is the case.
- \*Mom and Dad have different physical characteristics. Describe these characteristics and who each child resembles.

## Extension Activity

Check out Illinois crops with the Illinois Corn and Soybean Ag Mags!

## Art-Wise

- \*Libby didn't know what panache was, do you? Draw a picture of Libby and Carol Ann in the Barn during that discussion. Be sure to include the eyeroll!

## Chapter 3/"Meet the Darlings"

### Power Words

Precious  
Indestructible  
Scrawny  
Manicured  
Perennial

### Vo-Cow-Bulary

Dualies  
Pitchfork

## Questions

1. Why did Mr. and Mrs. Jim Darling choose the names they did for their daughters?
2. How does the Ryans' farm differ from the Darlings' farm?
3. What would it be like to live in a small town where everyone knows each other so well?
4. What vocabulary makes it obvious that the Darling Girls don't spend much time in the barn?
5. Define alliteration.
6. The author uses several examples of alliteration. Describe some of these.

## Write Away

- \*"Ohma was definitely a different Darling." Describe Ohma and how Libby knows her so well.

### *Art-wise*

\*Make sure you have included the description of your porch on your 'folk art' style painting from Chapter 1.

### *Extension Activity*

Check out the Around the Farm Illinois Agri-Learn Kit for more info about Illinois Farms.

## Chapter 4/"Stubborn As A Mule"

### Power Words

Startle  
Stubborn

### Vo-Cow-Bulary

Mow  
Halter  
Feed Bunk

### *Questions*

1. Describe what Mom does for a living and what she does around the farm.
2. What does it mean when Libby says this calf thing would be a 'Dad thing' not a 'Mom thing'?
3. Libby seems to help out a lot on the farm. What are some of her responsibilities?

### *Write Away*

\*Piggy and Mule are developing distinct personalities. Describe each.

### *Art Wise*

1. The author paints pictures with words---she describes Mule's eyes as having the color of a dark blue summer night. How would that look on a black calf?

### *Extension Activity*

Cattle are different than pigs. Learn more about Pigs in the Illinois Pork Ag Mag.

## Chapter 5 / "Autumn Surprise"

### Power Words

Technology  
Vocational  
Ambled  
Self-Absorbed

### Vo-Cow-Bulary

Harvest  
Corn  
Soybeans  
Barn Clothes

### Questions

1. What is comfort food? What is comfort food for you?
2. What does it mean to 'bring in' the corn?
3. How many chores are there associated with keeping an animal on the farm? How is this different than a house pet?
4. Libby says 'technology that made farming more efficient had also changed the face of the family farm.' What does she mean?

### Write Away

- \*The chapter is called the 'Autumn Surprise', what was the Autumn Surprise? Be sure to include all details about that surprise!
- \*Some say that our current school calendars were set up to help support agriculture, because children could be home to help on the farm during planting and harvest. Would you support moving to a full year school calendar since you are likely not involved in planting and harvest? What changes would need to be made to your school to allow this to happen?

## Chapter 6 / "Soup for Thanksgiving"

### Power Words

Voracious  
Bustling  
Enormous  
Emphasizing  
Frail  
Sarcasm  
Intensely  
Teetered  
Inevitable  
Screeching  
Deceit  
Onery

## Questions

1. What is a 'hopper' that Mom makes Frannie?
2. Why is everyone shocked to see the Darlings in a soup kitchen?
3. Why were the Darlings serving at Thanksgiving?

## Write Away

The Ryan's have several traditions; sitting in a specific pew at church, how they open their Christmas presents and working in a soup kitchen on Thanksgiving. Write about traditions you have as a family!

## Extension Activities

Check out the Seasons on the Farm Agri-Learning Kit for more information.

## Chapter 7 and 8 / "Christmas at Ryansmeade" and "Learning to Walk"

### Power Words

Emphatic  
Precocious  
Boilermaker  
Resentment  
Insidious  
Cantankerous  
Contaminated  
Reluctant  
Obstinate

### Vo-Cow-Bulary

Bellow  
BSE

## Questions

1. In a discussion with Frannie, Libby tells herself to "Pick your battles."  
What does that mean?
2. Why does Ronnie worry about Libby naming her calves?
3. Carol Ann is familiar with the farm, but where does she get most of her information about BSE?
4. What does Libby know about BSE?
5. Describe the barn clothes of both Carol Ann and Libby.
6. How does dad get Mule to move when Carol Ann can't?
7. Dad has a list of qualities it takes to be a champion. How is his list

different than Libby's?

### Write Away

\*Libby considers Mule as champion material for a brief moment. Describe why she is confident that Piggy is the best show animal.

### Extension Activities

Learn more about the beef industry. Check out [www.explorebeef.org/](http://www.explorebeef.org/) and [www.beefusa.org/](http://www.beefusa.org/)  
Learn more about different cattle breeds. Check out [www.thebeefsite.com/breeds/](http://www.thebeefsite.com/breeds/)

## Chapter 9 and 10 / "Jung Chow's and a Really Bad Idea" and "The Day that Never Should Happened"

### Power Words

Unpredictable  
Pathetic

### Vo-Cow-Bulary

Premium  
Vet  
Flank  
Rice Brush

### Questions

1. Why are farm prices unpredictable?
2. Why does Mom want Libby to enter the Beef Princess contest?
3. Describe the spring weather in Indiana.
4. What does it mean that Susan Hansen is one of the three vets at the local practice?

### Write Away

\*What do you think Libby really thinks of the idea of entering the Beef Princess contest?  
\*Chapter 10 is filled with activity. Libby has a harsh reaction to her mother when she suggests shopping. Describe why you think she is so strong in her words. Be sure to include with whom she shares her true feelings.

### Extension Activity

The Beef Industry looks for ways to promote their product with specialty breed royalty programs, like a "Beef Princess". Have students complete the application below with their information, or with Libby's information.

[www.shorthorn.org/Images/breedinfo/lassies/pdfs/National%20Lassie%20Queen%20Contestant%20Application\\_update2010.pdf](http://www.shorthorn.org/Images/breedinfo/lassies/pdfs/National%20Lassie%20Queen%20Contestant%20Application_update2010.pdf)

## Chapter 11 / "Thinking Practically"

### Power Words

Antics  
Disposition  
Insensitive  
Forte  
Travesty  
Atrocious  
Logical  
Mockery  
Vicious

### Vo-Cow-Bulary

Freezer Beef

### Questions

1. Why does Susan think Piggy won't gain much more weight?
2. How does Carol Ann reach her decision that Piggy should be sold?
3. How does Carol Ann react to the suggestion of entering the Beef Princess contest?

### Write Away

- \*In this chapter, Libby refers to Piggy as her "pet" but her dad talks about how the farm raises good quality beef. How do you distinguish between pets and livestock?
- \*Carol Ann doesn't react to Libby about Piggy or the Princess contests the way Libby thinks she will. Describe how she reacts and why you think she reacts the way she does.

## Chapter 12 and 13 / "This Little Piggy Went to Market" and "Feathers and Fluffy Stuff"

### Power Words

Boutique  
Robust  
Cooed  
Tulle  
Coaxed  
Exasperated  
Technique

### Vo-Cow-Bulary

Slaughter  
Show Stick

## Questions

1. Libby thinks Mom gives a 'typical mother answer.' What does this mean?
2. Describe how Libby says goodbye to Piggy.
3. At the end of Chapter 12, Mule acts like Piggy. Why is this so surprising to Libby?
4. Why does Libby wish the store owner wouldn't refer to her as "darling" and "precious"?
5. What is wrong with the way Libby is showing Mule?

## Write Away

- \*Libby replays a conversation with Dad about why cows don't need names. Describe how this conversation comes to Libby and what she is thinking about now.
- \*Ronnie discusses how it is important to remain calm and in control. Why do you think it is important to remain calm and in control when showing an animal?

## Art Wise

- \*Page 107 describes the pile on the floor of the dressing room looking like a clown had melted on the floor. Take a minute and draw the scene of Libby and her dresses.

## Chapter 14 and 15 / "The Clock Started Ticking" and "A Girl Thing"

### Power Words

Anticipation  
Contender  
Sustain

### Vo-Cow-Bulary

Show Soap

1. How does the way Libby views the Princess contest differ from the Darling Sisters view?
2. Describe how Mule has developed a personality.
3. What does Dad think the reason really is for raising cattle?

## Write Away

- \*What do you think; can Libby part with Mule?

## Extension Activity

What does it take to get a cow in show condition? Check out [www.sullivansupply.com](http://www.sullivansupply.com) for cattle grooming supplies!

## Chapter 16 and 17 /"Independence Day" and 'Avocado and Alfalfa Sprouts"

### Vo-Cow-Bulary

Vegetarian

Vegan

Lacto-vegetarian

Lacto-ovo vegetarian

### Questions

1. Why does Carol Ann say Libby becomes a vegetarian?
2. What is Libby talking about when she says there isn't a spider in the barn weaving messages over Mule's head?
3. Why did Libby set Mule free?

### Write Away

1. Describe how Independence Day is "America's Hamburger Holiday".
2. List and describe all the ways you use animal products and by-products in your daily life.
3. Try a taste test and write about your exposure to new and unusual food products.

## Chapter 18 and 19/"Granddad's Secret" and "Another Man's Treasure"

### Power Words

Self Sufficiency

Legacy

Intentions

Confrontation

Pathetic

### Questions

1. How does Libby adapt to her new eating lifestyle?
2. How does Libby get water from the pump?

3. Another Man's Treasure is a 'second-hand store'. What is the beginning of that saying and how does it fit to describe this store?
4. Describe how Libby feels about finding a dress.
5. What does Libby mean when she says her enthusiasm has been 'zapped'?

### *Write Away*

- \*Granddad is proud of his heritage. Describe what he is talking about. What is your heritage?
- \*These two chapters might be the most important in the book—Libby finds out things about her family and herself. Does Granddad's reaction surprise you? Describe what you think in detail.

### *Extension Activity*

Create your own family tree and research your heritage with help from [http://www.grandparents-day.com/html/family\\_tree-nv.html](http://www.grandparents-day.com/html/family_tree-nv.html).

## Chapter 20 and 21 / "Off to the Fair" and "A Very Long Day"

### Power Words

Bloated  
Gondola  
Multitude  
Cohabiting  
Scenarios  
Commotion

### Vo-Cow-Bulary

Show Box  
Bovine

### *Questions*

1. Describe how the Darlings participate in the fair.
2. What do you think Ohma's problem really is? Why is she so cross all the time?
3. What does Libby notice about the Darling steer?
4. How does Carol Ann defend Libby and help her mother?
5. Why does Libby feel sorry for Ohma and her steer?

### *Write Away*

- \*Dad asks Libby if she has any doubts. Of course she has doubts. Describe her doubts and think back to the beginning of the book for other examples. You might refer to Chapter 8 (page 72) for Libby's thoughts of Mule at the fair.
- \*The author completely describes the bumper car ride. Write about your

favorite amusement park, fair or festival ride. Try to use as many adjectives as possible.

### Extension Activities

Illinois has a proud heritage of County Fairs. Find more information about our fairs at [www.illinoiscountyfairs.org/](http://www.illinoiscountyfairs.org/) and research the Illinois State Fair at [www.agr.state.il.us/isf/](http://www.agr.state.il.us/isf/) .

## Chapter 22 and 23/“A Strange Encounter” and “Chaos in the Ring”

### Power Words

Allegedly  
Chaos  
Unsympathetic

### Vo-Cow-Bulary

Underbelly  
Prod  
Class Winner  
Hereford

### Questions

1. What really happened to Ohma's steer?
2. Why does Ohma feel she can't live up to her sisters?
3. How did Ohma and Libby become friendly?
4. Lil Darling doesn't have much control in the ring. Describe the reaction of her mom, dad, and sisters to her predicament in the ring.
5. How does Libby handle winning her class with Mule?

### Write Away

\*The fair was unnaturally silent at night. Write about an experience you have had in a situation similar to Libby's fair encounter

\*In Chapter 19 (page 150) Precious accuses Libby of poisoning Piggy by giving him the wrong feed. Describe the irony in this twist of the plot.

### Extension Activity

Bloat is a real problem with cattle. Check out more information on bloat at [www.thecattlesite.com/diseaseinfo/199/bloat-in-cattle](http://www.thecattlesite.com/diseaseinfo/199/bloat-in-cattle) .

## Chapter 24 and 25 / "A Fair Fight" and "The Final Drive"

### Power Words

Massive  
Counterfeit  
Triumphant  
Fidget

### Vo-Cow-Bulary

Grand Champion  
Reserve Champion  
Rosette

### Questions

1. Libby catches Precious and her family cheating. How does Precious threaten Libby if she tells the truth?
2. Why do you think Ohma turned her sister in?
3. Although Josh wins Grand Champion, how does Libby feel about being Reserve?
4. What does Dad mean when he says showing cattle can indeed be a girl thing?
5. What is going to happen on Saturday to all the cattle shown in the fair?

### Write Away

\*Write about how much things have changed between Mule and Libby. In Chapter 25 she calls them "a team, a super duo". How different is that from the beginning of the book?

## Chapter 26 / "The End of An Era"

### Power Words

Poise

### Questions

1. Why is Libby so nervous with the pageant but not in the show ring?
2. How does Lil Darling answer her question about the beef industry?
3. How does Lil Darling accept not winning the pageant contest?
4. Mom says "Libby, we are family. Win or lose, we support you." Who else has shown that support for Libby?
5. How does Libby decide to honor Mule and Piggy?
6. Chapter 26 ends with the hardest part was yet to come. What is the hardest part?

### Write Away

\*Libby is nervous with her answer about Corn and Beef. Take some time and write your answer to the question listed below. Use research from [www.agintheclassroom.org](http://www.agintheclassroom.org) to support your argument. More and more corn being raised by American farmers is going to Manufacturing rather than to feed livestock. What are these new uses for corn, and what can farmers do to keep their feed costs at an acceptable level?

### Extension Activity

[www.explorebeef.org](http://www.explorebeef.org) offers more information about the Beef Industry.

Also check out [www.ilcorn.org](http://www.ilcorn.org) for more info on Illinois Corn and its uses!

## Chapter 27 / "Going, Going....."

### Power Words

Inevitable  
Instinctively

### Questions

1. Describe a chattery buzz.
2. What does an auctioneer's voice sound like?
3. What is a "seller's song"?
4. Why is Libby so impatient with the auctioneer?
5. Why was Lil Darling trying to cry?
6. What surprise did Libby learn about her mom?

### Write Away

- \*When Piggy went away, Libby couldn't bring herself to take him to the trailer. She is able to with Mule. Describe the change in Libby.
2. Mom describes what Libby learned from the steers and what the steers learned from Libby. Write about something that has taught you a lesson, and where you might have taught a lesson to someone else.

### Extension Activity

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qFXAUIDcJ8> This video features an Illinois Auctioneer.

## Chapter 28 / "The Future of Ryansmeade"

### Questions

1. Explain what Libby meant when she said "Ohma Darling was proof positive that a little kindness could go along way."
2. How did Mule make a contribution to Libby's education fund?

### Write Away

1. At the end of the story, as Libby picks out 2 new calves, she tells her mother that show cattle don't need names. Describe how this is different from the beginning, and also what has changed in Libby.