

The DUSTERS

Every Saturday afternoon, Pa and I took the wagon into town to get our weekly supplies from the Lee Hitchcock Merchandise Store. *That particular Saturday started out just like all the others.*

But what was about to happen would etch that date on my mind forever. September 7, 1876.

It was coming up to two in the afternoon when we trundled across the iron bridge and into the main town square where the store and just about every other building of importance was located. Across the way was the First National Bank, with its red brick walls and big windows. And right next to the store was the Goodnight Saloon.

Ben was sitting outside, just like he always did on a Saturday, and his face lit up at our approach.

Question

Why do you think Josh realised only in later years that “just about everyone, adult and child alike, treated my pa with respect”?

...September
1876

*“Hey, Mr Barrow,
you stopping off
for a beer today?”*

Sometimes, after we'd loaded up the wagon, Pa would go into the saloon for a drink and Ben and I would sit on the sidewalk and sip the soda pops Pa had bought us and figure out what we'd do the next day after church.

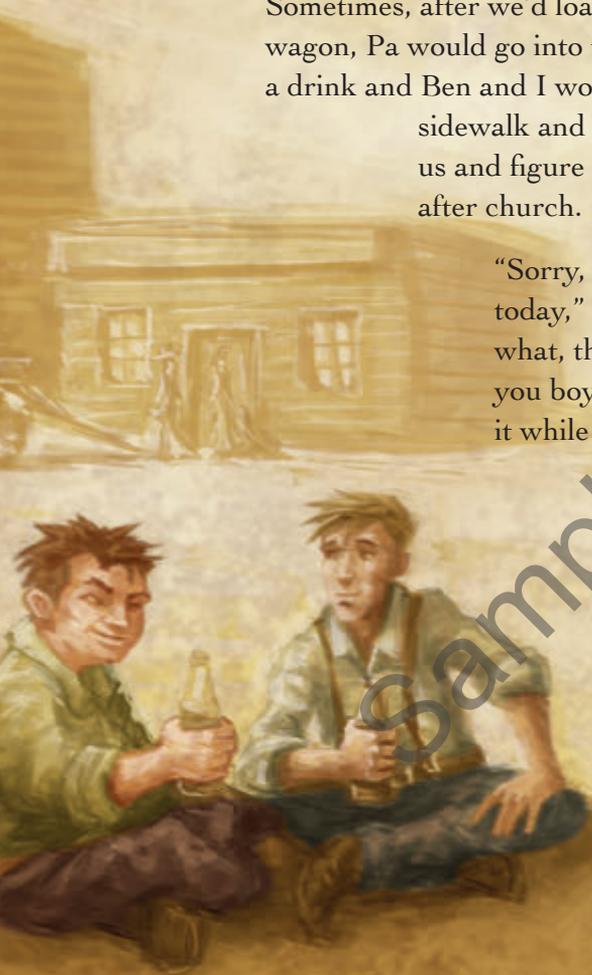
“Sorry, Ben, but we're running kind of late today,” Pa replied. Ben's face fell. “Tell you what, though,” Pa went on. “How about I buy you boys a soda pop anyway and you can drink it while I get the supplies.”

Ben beamed. “Yessir, Mr Barrow! Thank you kindly!”

I always thought it strange that, even though Ben would tease me about how his father could wup mine, whenever he was face to face with Pa he'd be as respectful as anything.

Thinking back now, I realise that just about everyone, adult and child alike, treated my pa with respect.

We hitched up the wagon and Pa brought us our soda pops and we sat near the sidewalk and started making plans.



Clarify

shiver of fear
outfit,
jabbering

Sample pages

I felt a
SHIVER of fear
AT THE
cold look HE
GAVE me

That's when I noticed a couple of strangers tying their horses to the hitching rail directly outside the saloon. They were dressed in long pale coats that reached down below their knees. *Dusters, the cattlemen called them.*

I figured they were cowboys starting their drinking early.

One of them met my eye and I don't mind admitting I felt a shiver of fear at the cold look he gave me. I waited for them to go into the bar, but they just folded their arms and stood there, surveying the street.

"Yo ho!"

It was August Soborn, one of the boys from school. He was a bit older than Ben and me, and he was Swedish or some such thing and couldn't speak a lick of American. But he was a good fellow and we got on fine.

He strode across the street towards us, pausing to make way for a half-dozen riders. They wore dusters, too. Must be part of the same outfit, I thought. Mr Goodnight would have his hands full tonight once these boys were through drinking.

But then they turned towards the First National and I figured they were going to bank their wages instead of trading them in for whiskey and beer. *Three of them stayed mounted while the others trooped inside.*

That struck me as kind of strange, but I didn't have time to dwell on it as August had reached us by now and was jabbering away in that funny language of his. Ben and I just smiled and nodded now and then and that seemed to keep August happy. Then his eyes fell on the horses outside the saloon – the ones the two cowboys had ridden up on. If there's one thing August admired, it was horseflesh.

What do you think will happen in the storyline now?

Plot

Do you think the term "funny language" is a fair or biased description of a foreign language? Why?

Opinion

Beyond the Text

Do you think language difficulties are a barrier to making friends? Why/why not? What connections can you make to this?