

THE WALTON BOYS

The Walton boys grew up in the 1960s in eastern Arkansas. Their father was a sharecropper who worked for Charlie Bowman, the man who owned the farm where they lived.

When school was out each year, the boys took off their shoes to run and jump through the summer, never putting them back on until it was time for school in the fall. They had work to do too. They helped their father with the cotton, the garden, and the hogs, but when it comes to memories, they mainly think of the fun.

The boys, Clarence, Lawrence, Ernest, and Lemon, were the closest in age of all the 13 Walton children. When they left the house early each morning, they had nothing but adventure on their minds. They usually found it in the woods behind the house, or in the creek that ran through the woods.

“Hey, look at this,” one would call out to his brothers. It might have been a snake, or a broken tree limb just inviting enough to see if it would hold them as they tried to cross the swollen creek. They might have fallen in, but without that possibility, it wouldn’t have been an adventure.

The closest neighbors were too far away to be seen, but their grandson, Melvin, was easily spotted from the Walton boys’ hiding place as he walked to the roadside mailboxes each day. It was great fun for them to chase him back down the dirt road after he picked up his grandparents’ mail. There were four of them, but as much as they tried every day, they never caught up with the speedy neighbor who left them behind in the dust.

They weren’t trying to be mean. They wouldn’t have hurt him if they had caught him. Racing after something, or someone, was just what you did during the summer on a farm in eastern Arkansas; that and building your own wooden toys from sticks or from things you found in the shed. Once, they even built their own car, though it never ran and was really more like a small pushcart.

Later, after they were grown, they discovered how close they had lived to the Mississippi River and to the states of Mississippi and Tennessee. As boys, they just knew each other and the farm, so there wasn’t any reason to wish they were somewhere else. A cotton farm in eastern Arkansas, especially during a long barefoot summer, was a big enough world for the adventures of the four Walton boys.

1 According to the story, which of these is something that the young Walton boys did **NOT** do?

- A help their father
- B travel to Tennessee
- C chase a neighbor
- D build wooden toys

2 You can tell the brothers liked growing up on the farm because -

- A there were 13 children in all
- B they lived close to the Mississippi River
- C they shared so many fun adventures
- D their father was a sharecropper

3 Why did the Walton boys chase their neighbors' grandson?

- A He was mean to them.
- B They wanted to start a fight.
- C He stole their mail.
- D They liked to run races.

4 The author gives you reason to believe that -

- A the soles of the boys' feet were tough when school started in the fall
- B the other children in the family did not have fun on the farm
- C the boys wished their family had more money
- D the boys didn't like to eat what was grown in the family garden

5 Which of these is a **FACT** from the story?

- A There are no snakes in Arkansas.
- B The boys grew up near Mississippi.
- C Mr. Walton owned the farm that he worked.
- D The boys did not like to go to school.

HANDS-ON ACTIVITIES

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Materials Needed:

NYSTROM United States Sculptural Relief Desk Map or Wall Map

Water-soluble marking pen

OPTION: Notebook paper and pen or pencil for answers

1. Locate Arkansas on a United States map. • Draw a line around its border.
2. Write the names of the **six** other states that share a border with Arkansas.

3. Locate the elevation key in the legend of the map. • What is the elevation range *in feet* in **eastern** Arkansas where the Walton boys lived? _____
4. Locate the “Agriculture” thematic map.
 - What is the land used for in **eastern** Arkansas? _____
 - Name at least 10 other states with this same land use. _____

 - What is the name of the most **western** state that has *some* land with the same land use as **eastern** Arkansas? _____
5. Traveling on the best highways, it is 856 miles from Blytheville, Arkansas, to Lubbock, Texas. (Both of these places are in cotton-producing areas of their states.) This trip goes through Oklahoma City. It is 515 miles from Blytheville to Oklahoma City. • How many more miles is it from Oklahoma City to Lubbock? _____
6. Locate the “Growing Seasons” thematic map. All of Arkansas has the same growing season. • How long *in months* is the growing season in Arkansas?

7. No other state that borders Arkansas has the same growing season for the entire state. • Name a state that is straight **north** of Arkansas that does have the same growing season throughout the entire state. _____
8. Locate the “Annual Rainfall” thematic map. Cotton is grown in some parts of western Texas. • Where is it **more likely** that cotton farmers also need to use irrigation, in **eastern Arkansas** or in parts of **western Texas**?

9. Write a paragraph about a time when you had “barefoot fun” during the summer.