

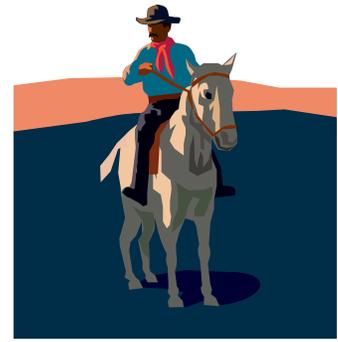


Conflict: External and Internal

Directions: Read the story; then answer the questions on the back.

Stampede!

By Catherine Gourley



The riders crossed the shallow river just north of Conrad's farm. The horses left a cloud of dust behind them as they neared. Conrad reached for the rifle, then opened the cabin door and stood on the porch.

The riders were Belus McCord and his two sons, just as Conrad had thought. He knew what they were going to say even before they said it. Conrad saved them the trouble. "My land's not for sale, Belus. You know that."

The old man grinned, then spit in the dust at Conrad's feet. "I'll give you a thousand. Cash. My boy's got it right here."

Conrad raised his rifle. "You're going to have to run me off, Belus. I'm not giving up what I worked hard to get."

Johnny Q, one of the sons, let his hand slip to the gun belted on his leg.

"Don't do it, Johnny, or your pappy's going to be eating through a hole in his gut."

Johnny froze. Belus stared at Conrad. "I've got 10,000 head of cattle. I need this land. I'm making you a fair offer, Conrad."

A thousand dollars was a lot of money, and for a moment Conrad was tempted. The summer drought was making it hard for farmers and cattle ranchers to make ends meet. Good grazing land was scarce. But Conrad had worked too long and too hard to give in this easily to Belus McCord. Men like him made him sick. They took whatever they wanted without any regard for the law or what other law-abiding citizens thought. They came snooping around at the first sign of trouble--drought, fire, bankruptcy. Now Belus was snooping around Conrad's rich river-valley land.

"No deal," Conrad said.

Belus sighed, "I've got ways to change your mind." The old man wheeled his horse around and started down the road toward the river.

Conrad lowered his rifle, surprised how his hands were shaking. He had never killed a man didn't know if he could. What he did know was that Belus McCord would be back.

Conrad slept fitfully that night, listening in his sleep for the sound of horses. At midnight, a soft rumbling woke him. It sounded like water rushing over rocks. The oil lamp on the table was vibrating. In fact, the whole cabin was vibrating. The rumbling grew louder. Conrad bolted out of bed, grabbed his rifle, and ran outside. What he saw confirmed his worst fear -- stampede!

A herd of cattle thundered over the ridge, heading for the river. Their powerful hooves trampled the land. Conrad was a farmer, not a cattleman. Still he knew nothing would turn the stampede.

In 20 minutes, it was over. Dust still choked the air. The cattle stood quietly now--some lowing, some grazing. In the moonlight, Conrad saw that his crop was destroyed.

At dawn three riders came over the ridge-- Belus McCord and his boys. "I told you that I had other ways of getting what I want," Belus snorted.

Conrad stood firm. "You started that stampede."

"Maybe I did. And then maybe I didn't."

"You're trespassing, Belus. I want you and your cattle off my land by morning."

"I don't believe we'll go," said Belus.

Conrad raised his rifle. His hands were not shaking now. "Oh, I think you will."

Find examples of each type of conflict in the story:

1. Character vs. Nature:

2. Character vs. Character:

3. Character vs. Society:

4. Character vs. Self:

