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**Review: Little Britches: Father and I Were Ranchers (Revised)**

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***\*Little Britches: Father and I Were Ranchers***

By Ralph Moody

University of Nebraska Press, 1991 (orig. 1950)

DESCRIPTION:

Around 1906, when Ralph's father becomes ill, the Moody family leaves New Hampshire and moves west to settle on a rented ranch in Colorado. Through the eyes of eight-year-old Ralph, we witness the family's joys and sorrows as together they face the difficulties of ranching in the early 1900s. When they arrive, they find that the house promised to them is in sad condition and the soil on their land is poor, but they determine to move forward with resourcefulness and determination. Auctions, roundups, and working the land become part of the family's life as well as windstorms, wild horses, and wars over water. Ralph finds that he must assume responsibilities that would normally fall to someone much older, and his father rewards him by asking him to become his 'partner' on the ranch. Challenges abound, but so does humor, wisdom, and family love. Although the move to Colorado was meant to improve the health of Ralph's father, his health continues to decline. When he dies, Ralph shows how much he has matured and proves himself to be a tough, brave young man who is able to take on the mantle of "man of the family."

CRITIQUE:

Be prepared for this story to tug on your heart. The family is engaging and the straightforward writing style carries you right through the adventures with them. This is a great choice for reading aloud. The enduring character building messages it conveys run throughout the story with emphasis on honesty, integrity, and hard work. These characteristics are taught by example as well as by words. As testimony to its ageless appeal, this book has been in print continuously since it was first published in 1950. Ralph's story is continued through seven more titles including: *Man of the Family*, *The Home Ranch*, *Shaking the Nickel Bush*, and *The Dry Divide*. Ralph Moody also authored another popular book for young readers titled, *Come on Seabiscuit!*

RELATED SUBJECTS:

1900s, Biographies, Colorado, Death of parent, Family life, Father-son relationships, Frontier and pioneer life, Humor, Natural disasters, Problem solving, Ralph Moody, Ranches

CHARACTER THEMES:

Coping, Courage, Family love, Honesty, Ingenuity, Knowledge, Perseverance, Resilience, Responsibility, Strength, Survival, Work ethic