



OUT IN LEFT FIELD

DON LEMNA

**GRADES
4–7**

About the Book

The companion novel to *When the Sergeant Came Marching Home* offers more feel-good, laugh-aloud adventures of eleven-year-old Donald growing up in post-World War II Montana.

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EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

Literature/Language Arts

Questions for discussion/writing—Students may discuss the following questions as a whole class or in pairs or small groups, or choose one or more about which to write.

- ❖ Most of Donald's experiences from August 1947 to June 1948 stemmed from his trying to live down the humiliation he felt when he was hit in the head by a baseball during a big game. Describe similar feelings you've had when you were trying to prove yourself to your teachers, family, or other kids.
- ❖ Donald always worked very hard for something he really wanted. He earned money for the archery set, and he practiced skating, singing, and pitching so that he could improve. Describe similar experiences you have had in your own life when you had to work very hard for something you really wanted.
- ❖ Donald often teased his little brother Pat, or said things to scare him. Is this how all kids treat their younger siblings? Do you think it's fair? Why or why not? Do you think Donald really loved his little brother and this was his way of showing it? How do you treat your younger siblings?
- ❖ Axel and Slade were bullies who were always teasing and threatening Donald. What do you think of the way he handled it? How do you deal with bullies at your own school?
- ❖ Donald and his family were waiting for electricity. The author included many examples of things they were able to do without electricity. How would your life be different today if you didn't have electricity? Have you ever experienced an electrical blackout due to weather? What did you do?
- ❖ There were many examples of humor in the story. What were some of your favorites? What do you think made them so funny? Do you think every story should have humorous parts? Why or why not?
- ❖ Compare Donald's and Pat's lives on the farm and in their school with your own. How are they the same? How are they different? Which do you prefer? Why?
- ❖ Donald's teacher, Miss Scott, wrote, "Out of every failure a greater success can come, although it may come from another direction" in a book that she gave to him. Later in the story he realized that she had been correct. What does her advice mean to you? Do you agree with it? What experiences have you had where something seemed to be terrible, but ended up being a good thing?
- ❖ At the end of the book Donald remembered all the things that had happened to him during the year and said, "I feel like myself again." What do you think he meant by that? What do you think he learned from all of his experiences?

Literature

Donald was an avid reader. Students may like to read some of the same books he read which should be available (yes! —even today!!) at their school or public libraries. He also saw some movies that were made from books. They can search for the following titles: (starred titles became movies) *Arabian Nights*, **Call of the Wild* by Jack London; *Captain January Series* by Laura Elizabeth Howe Richards, *The Hardy Boys series*; *Ozma of Oz* by L. Frank Baum; **Robin Hood* (various versions); **The Yearling* by Marjorie Rawlings; and any books by Robert Benchley.

Music

Donald's school performed the operetta, *The Pirates of Penzance* at the end of the school year. Students might want to hear a CD of this well known operetta, which is still performed today. Various versions are probably available at your local public library.

Online Resources

Old radio programs—www.old-time.com/weekly/index.html Presents links to the radio programs Donald and his family enjoyed: *Edgar Bergen & Charlie McCarthy*, *Fibber McGee & Molly*, and *The Shadow*. Students may be interested in hearing how they sounded in the 1940s.

The Great Depression—Many resources and lesson plans related to this era of history are here: www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/themes/great-depression/

World War I—www.periodpaper.com/index.php/subject-period-art/war-wartime/1917-print-wwi-sahara-desert-aerial-view-world-war-i Presents an aerial photo of the Sahara from 1917. (Note: This site wants to sell prints of the photo, but it's an excellent shot that is worth viewing.)

—www.loc.gov/vets/stories/wwi-abovebeyond.html Presents first-hand accounts of veterans' experiences during World War I.

Research

Several things were mentioned in the story with which students of today may not be familiar: Archery sets; Meccano Set; Triangulum Galaxy; Victrola. Students may search on google.com and Google Images to find links to information and photos of these items.

Donald's dad told a story of an incident from his own life during the Great Depression. Students may find additional information on this era in encyclopedias or online resources. (See below.)

Donald's friend "Old Hermit" told Donald a story of his experiences in the "Arabian Desert" (probably the Sahara) during World War I. Students can see what it looked like and perhaps find out more about soldiers' experiences there. (See below.)

Prepared by Sandy Schuckett, school library consultant