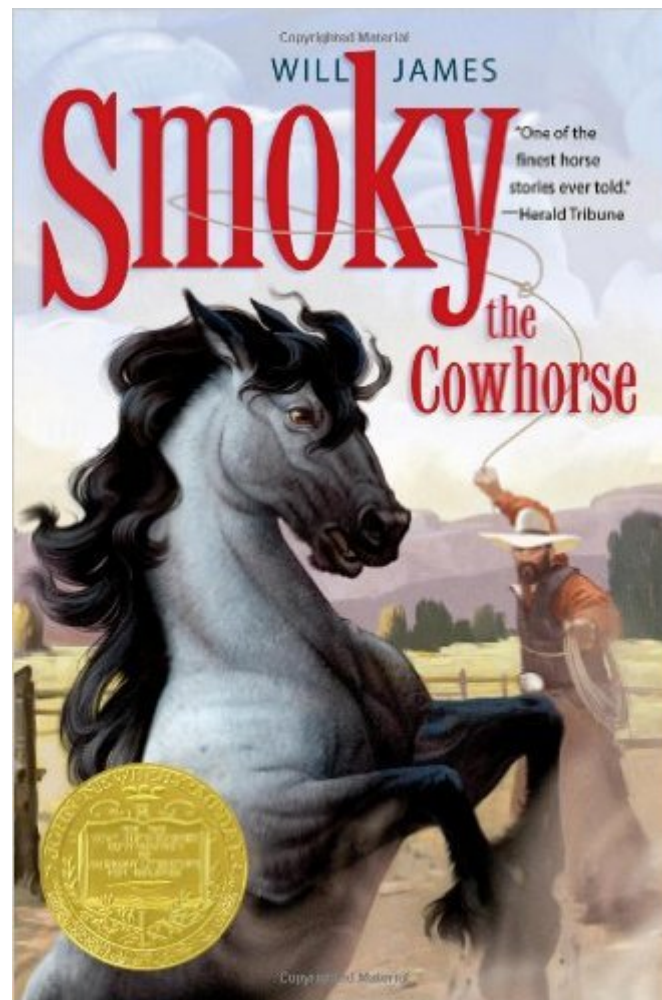


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# Smoky The Cowhorse



## Synopsis

Smoky knows only one way of life: freedom. Living on the open range, he is free to go where he wants and to do what he wants. And he knows what he has to do to survive. He can beat any enemy, whether it be a rattlesnake or a hungry wolf. He is as much a part of the Wild West as it is of him, and Smoky can't imagine anything else. But then he comes across a new enemy, one that walks on two legs and makes funny sounds. Smoky can't beat this enemy the way he has all the others. But does he really want to? Or could giving up some of his freedom mean getting something in return that's even more valuable?

## Book Information

Paperback: 336 pages

Publisher: Aladdin; Reissue edition (January 8, 2008)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1416949410

ISBN-13: 978-1416949411

Product Dimensions: 5.1 x 0.9 x 7.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 7.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 starsÂ Â See all reviewsÂ (126 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #343,224 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #129 inÂ Books > Children's Books > Literature & Fiction > Historical Fiction > United States > Westerns #637 inÂ Books > Children's Books > Animals > Horses #2229 inÂ Books > Children's Books > Classics

Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

## Customer Reviews

This 1926 Newbery winner seems to be written more for adults than for kids. There is no adolescent protagonist or character and the text rambles along. In a slangy, country style the author (as the omniscient narrator) relates the story of Smoky's life from his birth though his old age "reminiscent of Black Beauty in that man's inhumanity to animals is blatantly revealed. Once readers become accustomed to the cowpoke's casual vocabulary the story is easier to follow. An Americanized cowboy from Canada Will James has preserved the details of a cow horse's life and work, including both English and Spanish words and phrases. All the harshness of weather, terrain, natural enemies and human stupidity and cruelty are presented here with no sugaring the truth. Smoky lives several different lives under various names: a free range gelding, a

perfectly trained cow horse for the Rocking R Ranch, a man-hating outlaw, next a ferocious bronco on the rodeo circuit, then an overworked saddle horse for rent, on down to the shameful drudgery of a cart horse. It was the influence of the once feared, next appreciated, then hated human creature which changed the mighty heart of this wonderful animal. Many men recognized his worth at a glance but it was the wise and patient cowpuncher, Clint, who taught Smoky that his hands and voice could be trusted--even desired. But how can a clever fellow hide his favorite horse from the foreman? Or ever hope to own him? What molds the heart of a truly noble animal? Can Love conquer instinctive fear and distrust? Can cruelty erase soft sentiments and create an outlaw? Is equine murder ever justifiable? How many years must pass before the hate is dulledâ "before pleasant memories attempt to resurface?

Artist and writer, Will James (1892-1942) was born Joseph Ernest Nephtali Dufault, June 6, 1892 in Saint-Nazaire-d'Acton, Quebec, Canada. This book is considered the best of his 24 self-illustrated novels about the American West. It won the 1927 Newbery Award and was made into a total of three movies. Will James knew what he was writing about. He was a cowboy, a broncbuster, a Hollywood stuntman, and was once even jailed for cattle rustling in Nevada. 'Smoky' is right up there with "The Black Stallion" (Walter Farley), "King of the Wind" (Marguerite Henry), and "Thunderhead" (Mary O'Hara) on my list of all-time favorite horse novels. The story is told in a cowboy patois that anyone who lives out West or who has ever seen a cowboy movie will understand. Pretty soon, the reader will start thinking in sentences like: "Daggone it Smoky...it's too bad you can't know without I have to use a lot of ropes, as it is sometimes. I bet you don't think I'm a friend of yours, none at all." Smoky is born wild, and Clint the cowboy has to break him in gently, because the mouse-colored cowpony has "a mighty fine set of brains between them little pointed ears of his." Before he meets Clint, Smoky has already had run-ins with a cougar, wolves, and rattlesnakes. He's not going to be easy to ride, but that's part of the fun of this book: the slowly developing relationship between horse and man. We see it happening mainly from Smoky's viewpoint, whose instinct was to "fight the human, and he would fight till that human showed he could handle him and proved a friend." Smoky becomes a good cowpony until he is stolen from Clint and undergoes a series of adventures with cruel and sometimes ignorant owners.

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