



Julie Danneberg

"As a kid, when I daydreamed or played at being grown-up I never imagined myself as a writer. Instead I dreamed of being a famous girl reporter, a secret agent, and a teacher."

With an imagination like that, it's hard to believe that Colorado native Julie Danneberg never considered a career as a writer.

After graduating from the University of Colorado at Boulder, Julie became a teacher. In her classroom she read many children's books and witnessed the profound impact a good book can have on a child. "I was motivated to try and write books like the ones I enjoyed reading."

When Julie became a mother, her interest in writing was further strengthened. During weekly trips to the library with her children, she found herself enjoying the picture books as much as they did. "The funny thing is that my kids eventually graduated from the children's section of the library, but I never did!"

Writing children's books was the perfect medium for blending Julie's many interests—working with kids, being home with her family,

being creative, and being her own boss. She even fulfilled her childhood dreams of becoming the intrepid reporter and world-class secret agent through the research, writing, and character development needed for her books.

Julie earned great success with *First Day Jitters*—the funny and engaging story of Sarah Jane Hartwell's first day at a new school. The surprise ending charms and delights readers time and again. Teachers and students alike love this perennial back-to-school favorite.

Julie lives with her husband and two children in Denver. She teaches at a local middle school where she garners ideas for her books. When she's not writing, Julie enjoys reading, quilting, gardening, and spending time with her family.

Visit Julie at www.juliedanneberg.com.



Margot Apple

"I was always drawing when I was growing up."

Margot Apple was destined to be an artist of some sort. Her father was a musician who played viola in the Detroit Symphony Orchestra. Her mother was a fashion illustrator. Her great-grandmother made stained-glass windows in France in the late nineteenth century.

Margot was always drawing when she was growing up. As an only child, drawing kept her company. She would dream of living on a farm in the country and having a big dog and a horse. She and her best friend would spend hours riding their stick horses and playing on the range or in the forest, as they called the vacant lot in their Detroit neighborhood.

As artists themselves, Margot's parents encouraged her artistic talent and sent her to many art classes for children. Instead of joining the Girl Scouts, she studied drawing. Instead of taking ballet, she took art classes. Instead of taking horseback riding lessons (which she really wanted to do), she learned to become an artist. Margot attended Cass Technical High School where she studied commercial art.

"It was wonderful," she says. "The high point of my little life as a student. I was then sent to Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, New York, to get a

college degree in art. I loved being in New York and learned a lot about the art world there."

After graduation, Margot began shopping her work around to art directors at magazines and publishers in the hopes of receiving an assignment. She was told she was best suited to illustrate children's books. It wasn't as easy as just doing that—Margot held a lot of part-time jobs as she worked toward her goal. She's been illustrating for children for over 20 years now and has more than 50 books to her credit, including *Sheep in a Jeep* (Houghton Mifflin) by Nancy Shaw. Margot's personal favorites include *Blanket* (Houghton Mifflin) and *Brave Martha* (Houghton Mifflin), which she both wrote and illustrated. She also loves *Just Like My Dad* (Boyd's Mills Press), which is about cowboys.

Margot lives in Massachusetts with her husband, seven cats, and three registered Morgan horses. Her studio is in a tiny house in her backyard. She keeps her horses in her front yard or across the street in her neighbor's field. It's almost the farm she wished for as a child!

"Our quiet little corner of this small New England town seems very conducive to imagination," says Margot.

BEFORE READING

Brainstorm

Discuss what your students know about cowboys. After reading the story have your students revisit this list to add information that they learned or to make adjustments to misconceptions.

Predict

Ask your students to predict what they think this story is about based on the title and the cover of the book.

Vocabulary

Preview the story to identify words to teach your students prior to reading. Below are some suggestions.

cowboy, *noun*: a hired person, especially in the western United States, who tends cattle and performs many of his duties on horseback.

slim, *adjective*: thin, slender

ranch, *noun*: an extensive farm on which large herds of cattle are raised

ranch hands, *noun*: people who work on a ranch

calf, *noun*: a young cow

bunkhouse, *noun*: a building where people sleep on a ranch

corral, *noun*: a pen for cattle

bedroll, *noun*: a portable roll of bedding used especially by people who sleep outside

frothy, *adjective*: all worked up and angry

lasso, *noun*: a long rope with a noose at one end used to catch cattle

saddlebags, *noun*: pouches that hang across the back of a horse, behind the saddle

herd, *noun*: a group of cattle kept together

caboose, *noun*: the last car on a train

ravine, *noun*: deep, narrow valley or gorge

heifer, *noun*: a young cow, especially one that has not yet had a calf

dogie, *noun*: a motherless calf in a range herd

catalog cowboy, *noun*: a cowboy who is so new that his clothes look like they just came out of a catalog

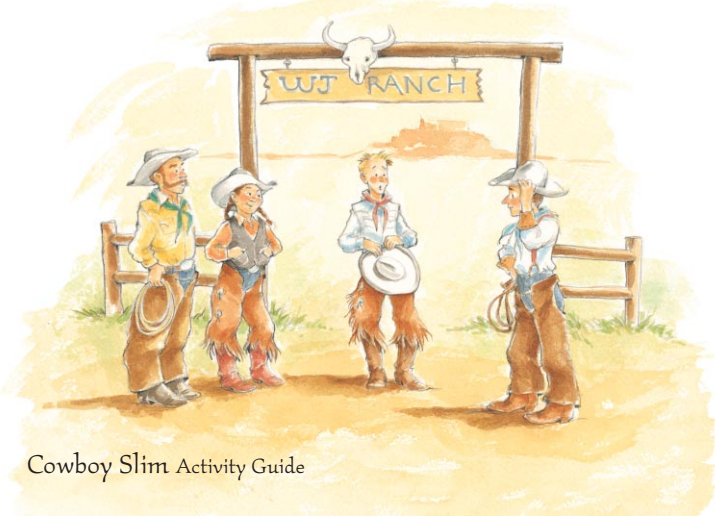
Included is a sheet of picture cards to go with the following words: lasso, corral, calf, ranch, cowboy, herd, saddlebag, and ravine. This will help ELL learners and struggling readers.

COWBOY WORD LIST

Prepare a class chart to keep a list of cowboy words. Have your students organize these words alphabetically, by part of speech, by number of syllables, etc.

I LASSOED A NEW WORD

Have students choose words they learned and complete the blackline master to explain the words' meanings.



I Lassoed a New Word



Choose a word you learned from *Cowboy Slim*.
Describe the meaning of this word on the lines below.

word: _____

word: _____

word: _____

word: _____

word: _____

word: _____

DURING READING

Suggested Comprehension Questions:

What are “real” cowboys supposed to be good at doing?

What is Cowboy Slim good at doing?

Why wouldn't the cowboys let Cowboy Slim ride in the front?

How did Cowboy Slim try to show he was a real cowboy?

What happened?

How did Cowboy Slim save the day?

AFTER READING

Suggested Comprehension Questions:

How did Cowboy Slim change during the story?

How did the other cowboys feelings about Cowboy Slim's change during the story?

Do you think the other cowboys treated him fairly?

Would you consider Cowboy Slim a hero? Why or why not?

Where does the story take place? How do you know?

Discuss why the author chose to leave the “g” off many of the words such as:

bein'

ridin'

sittin'

flickerin'

Author's Note

Share the author's note about cowboys. Discuss what is true about this book.

Buckaroo Banter

Review the words and phrases at the end of the story.

COWBOY SLIM ACTIVITIES

Compound Words

Cowboy is a compound word. Have students brainstorm other compound words. Ask each student to choose a word from the vocabulary list and then illustrate the meaning of each of the individual words. Then ask the students to illustrate the actual meaning of the compound word.

Letter Writing

Julie Danneberg and Margot Apple love to hear what students think about their work. Review the form of a letter with your students and have them brainstorm what they want to say and/or ask. Have them write individual letters, or work together on a class letter. Send letters to Julie Danneberg or Margot Apple c/o Charlesbridge, 85 Main Street, Watertown, MA, 02472.

Similes and Metaphors

Cowboy Slim is full of similes and metaphors. Have your students locate examples in the story and create a chart or bulletin board of their findings. After reading these examples, encourage them to write their own.

He thought about his day, and pretty soon the words tumbled out, one after the other across the paper, like puppies playin' in the yard.

One morning, when the sun was nothin' more than a golden promise on the horizon . . .

Buster snapped his bullwhip in the air until the herd lunged and lurched ahead like a steam engine pullin' away from the station.

In no time flat, the herd caught up to Slim, sweepin' him along like a feather in the wind.

Practice Reading Fluently

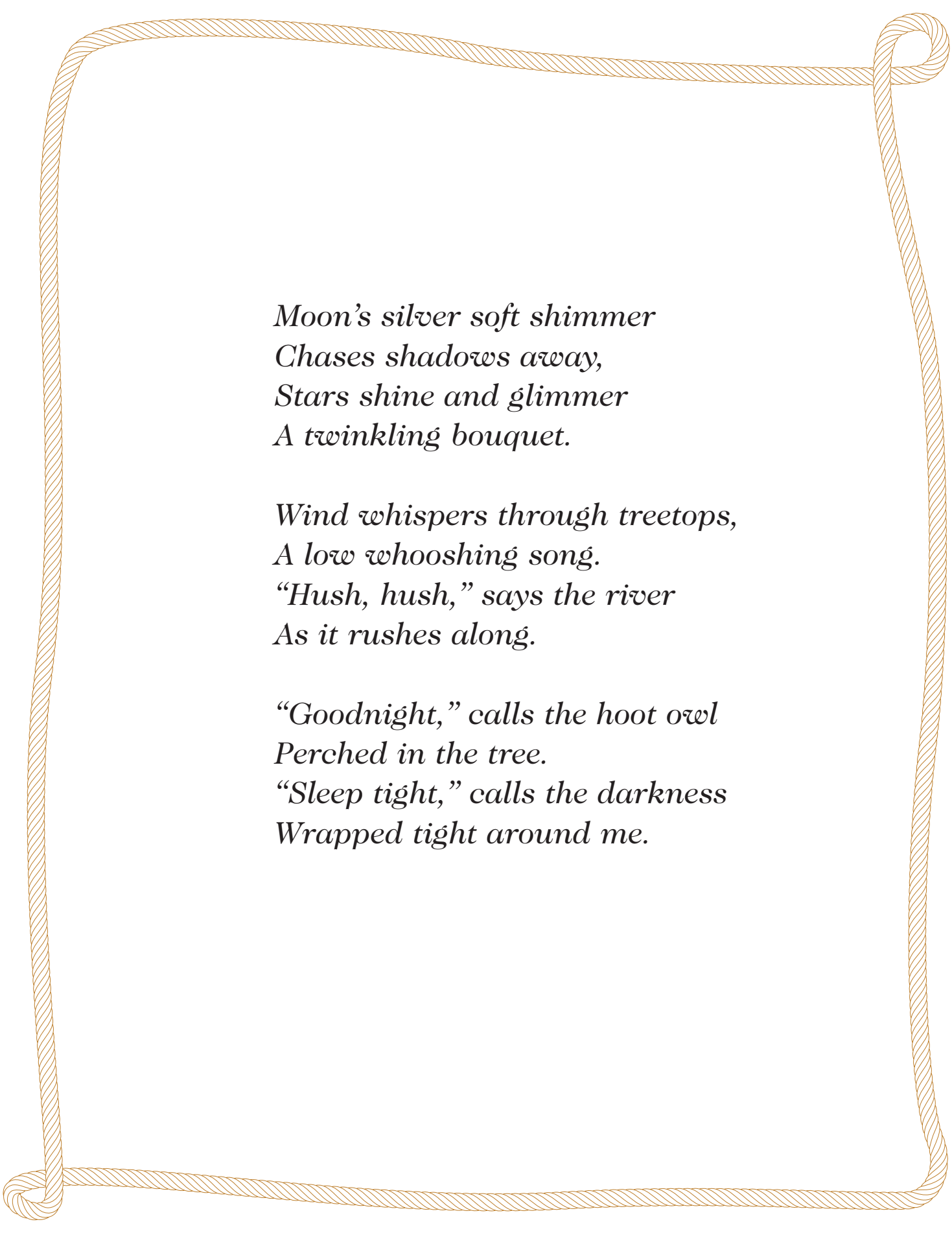
Write *Cowboy Slim*'s poems on chart paper. Have your students practice reading them aloud. Students can echo-read the poems, read them chorally, and try reading them individually.

Links

Discover more information about cowboys and ideas for additional activities at:

<http://www.thevirtualvine.com/cowboys.html>

http://www.educationworld.com/a_tsl/archives/04-1/lesson033.shtml



*Moon's silver soft shimmer
Chases shadows away,
Stars shine and glimmer
A twinkling bouquet.*

*Wind whispers through treetops,
A low whooshing song.
"Hush, hush," says the river
As it rushes along.*

*"Goodnight," calls the hoot owl
Perched in the tree.
"Sleep tight," calls the darkness
Wrapped tight around me.*