**The back of beyond**

**Vocabulary preview**

**Put the words in the box in the appropriate column in the table below.**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| shrubbery  sheep  wheel  hog  field  steer  beast  range  graze | pasturage  browse  bluegrass  graze  goose  bull  stock  chicken  runner | wagon  sow  carcass  kid  pig  brake  calf  deer  orchard | hay  cattle  haul  cart  corn  forage  beef  critter  cow |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| flora | fauna | transportation |
|  |  |  |

**Reading**

**Read the passage from Chap 2, “The back of beyond,” and answer the questions that follow.**

|  |
| --- |
| Most of our farmers had neither horse nor mule. For the rough work of cultivating the hillsides a single steer hitched to the “bull−tongue” was better adapted, and the same steer patiently dragged a little sled to the trading post. On steep declivities the sled is more practical than a cart or wagon, because it can go where wheels cannot, it does not require so wide a track, and it “brakes” automatically in going downhill. Nearly all the farmer's hauling is downhill to his home, or down farther to the village. A sled can be made quite easily by one man, out of wood growing on the spot, and with few iron fittings, or none at all. The runners are usually made of natural sourwood crooks, this timber being chosen because it wears very smooth and does not fur up nor splinter.  The hinterland is naturally adapted to grazing, rather than to agriculture. As it stands, the best pasturage is high up in the mountains, where there are “balds” covered with succulent wild grass that resembles Kentucky bluegrass. Clearing and sowing would extend such areas indefinitely. The cattle forage for themselves through eight or nine months of the year, running wild like the razorbacks, and the only attention given them is when the herdsmen go out to salt them or to mark the calves. Nearly all the beasts are scrub stock. Jerseys, and other blooded cattle thrive in the valleys, where there are no free ranges, but the backwoodsman does not want “critters that haffter be gentled and hand−fed.” The result is that many families go without milk a great part of the year, and seldom indeed taste butter or beef.  The truth is that mountain beef, being fed nothing but grass and browse, with barely enough corn and roughage to keep the animal alive through winter, is blue−fleshed, watery, and tough. If properly reared, the quality would be as good as any. Almost any of our farmers could have had a pasture near home and could have grown hay, but not one in ten would take the trouble. His cattle were only for export—let the buyer fatten them! It should be understood that nobody had any provision for taking care of fresh meat when the weather was not frosty.  On those rare occasions when somebody killed a beef, he had to travel all over the neighborhood to dispose of it in small portions. The carcass was cut up in the same way as a hog, and all parts except the cheap “bilin' pieces” were sold at the same price: ten cents a pound, or whatever they would bring on the spot. The butchering was done with an axe and a jackknife. The meat was either sliced thin and fried to a crackling, or cut in chunks and boiled furiously just long enough to fit it for boot−heels. What the butcher mangled, the cook damned.  Few sheep were raised in our settlement, and these only for their wool. The untamed Smokies were no place for such defenseless creatures. Sheep will not, cannot, run wild. They are wholly dependent on the fostering hand of man and perish without his shepherding. Curiously enough, our mountaineer knows little or nothing about the goat—an animal perfectly adapted to the free range of the Smokies. I am convinced that goats would be more profitable to the small farmers of the wild mountains than cattle. Goats do not graze, but browse upon the shrubbery, of which there is a vast superfluity in all the Southern mountains. Unlike the weak, timorous and stupid sheep, a flock of goats can fight their own battles against wild animals. They are hardy in any weather, and thrive from their own pickings where other foragers would starve.  A good milch goat gives more and richer milk than the average mountain cow. And a kid yields excellent fresh meat in manageable quantity, at a time when no one would butcher a beef because it would spoil. I used to shut my eyes and imagine the transformation that would be wrought in these mountains by a colony of Swiss, who would turn the coves into gardens, the moderate slopes into orchards, the steeper ones into vineyards, by terracing, and who would export the finest of cheese made from the surplus milk of their goats. But our native mountaineers—well, a man who will not eat beef nor drink fresh cow's milk, and who despises butter, cannot be interested in anything of the dairy order.  The chickens ran wild and scratched for a living; hence were thin, tough, and poor layers. Eggs seldom were for sale. It was not of much use to try to raise many chickens where they were unprotected from hawks, minks, foxes, weasels and snakes.  Honey often was procured by spotting wild bees to their hoard and chopping the tree, a mild form of sport in which most settlers are expert. Our local preacher had a hundred hives of tame bees, producing 1,500 pounds of honey a year, for which he got ten cents a pound at the railroad.  The mainstay of every farmer, aside from his cornfield, was his litter of razorback hogs. “Old cornbread and sowbelly” are a menu complete for the mountaineer. The wild pig, roaming foot−loose and free over hill and dale, picks up his own living at all seasons and requires no attention at all. He is the cheapest possible source of meat and yields the quickest return: “no other food animal can increase his own weight a hundred and fifty fold in the first eight months of his life.” And so he is regarded by his owner with the same affection that Connemara Paddy bestows upon “the gintleman that pays the rint.”  In physique and mentality, the razorback differs even more from a domestic hog than a wild goose does from a tame one. Shaped in front like a thin wedge, he can go through laurel thickets like a bear. Armored with tough hide cushioned by bristles, he despises thorns, brambles, and rattlesnakes, alike. His extravagantly long snout can scent like a cat's, and yet burrow, uproot, overturn, as if made of metal. The long legs, thin flanks, pliant hoofs, fit him to run like a deer and climb like a goat. In courage and sagacity he outranks all other beasts. A warrior born, he is also a strategist of the first order. Like man, he lives a communal life, and unites with others of his kind for purposes of defense. |

**Arguments**

In academic discourse an argument is a statement of opinion, also known as a claim, which is supported by reasons or evidence.

**The Blue Ridge is not difficult** *as there are only eight ridges to climb and none is particularly high*.

(**statement** + *reason* = argument)

**Read the following statements, find the corresponding sentence in the text and write down the supporting points for each, if there are any.**

1. The sled is more practical than a wagon.

2. The best pasturage is high in the mountains.

3. Most of the cattle are scrub stock.

4. The Smokies are not appropriate for sheep.

5. Goats are better suited to the mountains.

6. The razorback hog is a cheap and fast growing source of meat.

7. Cattle are not butchered often.

**Identifying the writer’s position**

A writer may reveal his/her position towards his/her subject matter in a variety of ways. Evaluative language can be used, such as “extraordinary” or “pathetic.” Comparisons may serve to set the observed phenomenon against a hypothetical standard, such as “unlike the Germans…”. Conditionals can introduce imaginary comparisons between the presumed observed reality and some other or ideal world, for example “If the Greeks didn’t retire at the age of 59, their economy wouldn’t be in such a mess.” The writer may also employ explicit reporting expressions like “I believe….”

**Find the passages in the text that correspond to the statements below and explain how the writer’s position is revealed.**

1. The mountaineers should clear and sow the hinterland but they don’t.

2. The mountain people do not feed their livestock adequately.

3. They don’t butcher their meat properly.

4. Farmers make no effort to protect their animals from predators.

5. The Swiss are more industrious and ingenious than the mountain folk.

6. Razorback hogs are impressive animals.

**Language development**

**Domestic and game animals often have names distinguishing age, sex and state. Put the names in the box in the appropriate blanks.**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| swine  hind  doe  pork | deer  bull  beef  capon | chick  steer  hog  veal | sow  fawn  pig  stag | hart  hen  buck  calf |

1. A \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is the adult male of various kinds of animal of which the female is called cow.

2. A young deer is a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, while the adult female is called a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ or a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

3. The adult male deer also has several names, including \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

4. If a bull is castrated it is called a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, whereas a castrated rooster is called a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

5. A young cow is a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and the meat obtained from the animal is called \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

6. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ are practically synonymous names for swine. The female is known as a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and the meat obtained from the animal is called \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.