

## **Reading Guide to *Rufus Steele: 1938* by Susan C. Turner**

### **ABOUT THIS BOOK**

In 1938 in the small farming community of Friendsville, Maryland fourteen-year-old Henry Murphy and his brothers fight for their lives. Mysterious and courageous, Dr. Rufus Steele proves to be a powerful ally, and strong bonds develop among them. But larger questions remain. Who is Rufus Steele? Why did he come to Friendsville? How long does he plan to stay?

### **ABOUT THIS AUTHOR**

Susan C. Turner is the author of several picture books, most notably *Benjamin Barley's Button*, and other works of nonfiction. Her work engages children's timeless interests in outdoor adventure and the challenges of growing up. She now lives and writes in Tampa with her husband, John, and cat, Jake.

### **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. Henry and his family live in rural Maryland. How does the family earn their living?
2. Breakfast for Henry is something most of us have probably never had. What did Henry and his brother Jim usually have for breakfast?
3. Henry's quick thinking and first aid saved Stanley's life when the bear attacked. Do you know enough first aid to save someone's life?
4. What are some of the things the family does to provide for their needs?
5. How do Henry and his brother get to school when it snows?
6. Think about the search for the calves that wandered away. What do you think would have happened if Dr. Steele had not come along?
7. Why do you think Henry was reluctant to show Dr. Steele around town? How did Dr. Steele end up getting his tour of Friendsville?
8. Who is Woodrow and why is he mad at Henry?
9. What is Henry's favorite radio program? Which program is Jim's favorite?
10. Have you ever listened to any "old time" radio programs? If you have, what did you think?

11. How does Henry describe what he does as he listens to his radio programs? Does his family do the same things when they listen?
12. What are some of the family's other favorite radio programs?
13. What happened in September 1939 that was catastrophic for Henry and his family?
14. What are some of the things Henry does to help pass the time when he gets trapped in the mine cave-in? How would you pass the time if you were trapped somewhere?
15. Henry knows at least two poems from memory. Name them. Do you know any poems from memory?
16. What other things does Henry do to try to stay calm while trapped?
17. Who comes to Henry's rescue and how do they make it out of the abandoned mine?
18. As they are finding their way out of the abandoned mine Henry and Dr. Steele talk and Henry asks a question that he has wanted to ask for a while. What did Henry ask?
20. How did Henry heal the rift between him and Woodrow? Have you ever lost a friend because you did something and could not bring yourself to apologize?
21. How did Henry and Dr. Steele prepare Woodrow for the 1940 baseball season?
22. How does the book end? Were you surprised by the ending?