

A responsible western hero



When *Shane* was published in 1949, it was considered a very unusual western fiction novel. Unlike other books at the time, the book's hero was the title character. Still more unusual was the fact that Shane himself was not a cold-blooded killer. Instead he was a brave, strong, loyal man who only fought if it was unavoidable. Shane did not show off his gun, but rather kept it out of sight although it was always handy and ready for action. Throughout the book, Shane shows good leadership and, at the same time, made everyone's life better. Farmers looked up to him because they knew he was a good leader. Shane was a good leader because of his experience, because he did what was best for his family, and finally, because of his influence on others. Shane is a role model because he has the experience and virtue that the others are lacking. He is loyal, strong, and brave, and knows how to identify when it is time to use guns to settle an argument, unlike other cowboy heroes who constantly use their guns to settle arguments. Shane shows his experience in many ways. One time, after hearing that the hot-headed Wilson had come to town, Shane offers his valuable advice, but it comes too late and Ernie Wright is shot. A second incident occurs when Fletcher comes with a plan to hire Joe and Shane. Joe starts to grab his gun but Shane stops him. Shane knows Fletcher would have shot him and then said that it was self-defense. Shane is always thinking about what is best for the family. In the third chapter, shortly after Joe has hired him, Shane takes advantage of the fact that he is the most able and experienced man in the house. ' When [Shane] came in to the first meal after he agreed to stay on with us, he went to the chair that had always been father's and stood beside it waiting for the rest of us to take the other places... [Father] walked to the chair across from Shane and sat down... I could not see any reason for the

shift until the first time one of our homestead neighbors knocked on the door while we were eating and came straight on in as most of them usually did. Then I suddenly realized Shane was sitting opposite the door so he could directly confront any coming through it'. We see that Shane is watchful and knows, as the most experienced man, it is his duty to protect the family from bad men and gunfighters. When Fletcher comes to the house to offer to hire Shane and Joe, and then threatens Marion, it becomes clear that Shane cares about Marion and the whole Starrett family. Shane influences many characters in the book. Bob Starrett, the narrator, perhaps feels his influence more than anybody else. Bob does not know what to think of Shane at first, but he comes to realize Shane is a better role model than his own father. Shane embraces his natural leadership by helping to uproot the stump from the ground. For Joe and Marian's anniversary, he finishes cutting the alfalfa field as a surprise for them. He gives Bob a lot of valuable information about growing up and teaches him that not all fights should be fought with guns. Even though he is new to the town, Shane knows what is best for the town. When Shane embarks on his mission to finally kill Fletcher and Wilson, Joe says it is not Shane's business and that he should go instead of Shane. They get into an argument and Shane does what he has to do. He knocks Joe unconscious and rides to the town, where he shoots both Wilson and Fletcher. Inspired by Shane, Chris goes to the Starrett's house and asks to be forgiven and hired in Shane's place. By the time Shane leaves town directly after the fight, he has made life better for everybody in the town and changed it for the better. He has freed the town from Fletcher's tyranny, he has taught Bob and Joe valuable lessons, and converted Chris. Everyone in the town learns from Shane. His loyalty, bravery, responsibility, and

leadership make him an excellent role model for even contemporary readers. Shane is a good model and a good leader, one who is experienced and assumes charge over those who are less so, influences others, and puts his positive characteristics to good use.