

WHAT IS THE OLD KENTUCKY HOME?

Can you imagine what it would be like to grow up in a house shared with strangers? That's exactly how Thomas Wolfe spent most of his boy hood. In 1906, when Tom was six years old, his mother, Julia, bought a house called the "Old Kentucky Home" which she ran as a boardinghouse. A boardinghouse was somewhat like a hotel. Mrs. Wolfe served three meals a day and gave the boarders who stayed with her a place to sleep, all for \$1.00 a day.

Living in the boardinghouse changed young Tom's life. As the youngest of eight children, he continued to live with his mother in the boardinghouse. His brothers and sisters, though, lived a few blocks away with their father in the house in which Tom had been born. This caused a split in the family, which was hard on Tom. He felt that the boarders received more of his mother's attention than he did. It took a lot of her time to run the boardinghouse.

The "Old Kentucky Home" has twenty-nine rooms. In the summertime, Mrs. Wolfe often had as many as thirty boarders living in the house. Tom never had his own bedroom. He never knew from one night to the next where he would sleep. He slept wherever there was extra space. Mrs. Wolfe relied on her children to help her with the chores. She was a difficult person to work for, and her hired help often did not stay around for long.

Visitors came to Asheville in the early 1900's for the cool mountain air. Although there were several hotels in the area, these were often very expensive and some people chose to stay at the several boarding houses in town. There were over one hundred boardinghouses in the Asheville area at this time. Many came just for vacations

while others came for their health. The mountain air was thought to be good for those with lung illnesses like tuberculosis.

Thomas Wolfe's mother ran the "Old Kentucky Home" until her death in 1945. By this time she was eighty-five years old and had outlived half of her eight children. All of Tom's family members are buried beside Tom in Riverside Cemetery in Asheville except for one of Tom's sisters. She is buried with her family in South Carolina.

A few years after Mrs. Wolfe died; the boardinghouse was opened to the public as a memorial to Thomas Wolfe. Today it is preserved with the same furniture and family possessions that were there when Tom was growing up. Visitors to the memorial can see all of the rooms that Tom described in such detail in his book *Look Homeward, Angel*. The boardinghouse is now operated as a State Historic Site and is called the Thomas Wolfe Memorial.

MULTIPLE CHOICE
THE "OLD KENTUCKY HOME"

Circle the best answer to the following questions.

1. Thomas Wolfe was almost ____ years old when his mother bought a boardinghouse.
A. 10
B. 6
C. 16
D. 29
2. Mrs. Wolfe's boardinghouse was called the _____.
A. Altamont
B. Land of the Sky
C. Old Kentucky Home
D. Grove Park Inn
3. Mrs. Wolfe charged _____ per day for three meals and a place to sleep.
A. \$1.00
B. \$10.00
C. \$3.50
D. \$0.25
4. The "Old Kentucky Home" had _____ rooms to accommodate as many as thirty boarders.
A. 50
B. 150
C. 10
D. 29
5. Mrs. Wolfe relied on _____ to help her with the chores around the boardinghouse.
A. hired help
B. the boarders
C. her children
D. her husband
6. Many visitors were coming to Asheville in the early 1900's for the _____.
A. cheap land
B. mountain air
C. Biltmore Estate
D. gold
7. There were over _____ boardinghouses in Asheville during the early 1900's.
A. 20
B. 50
C. 75
D. 100

8. Mrs. Wolfe was _____ years old at the time of her death in 1945.
- A. 85
B. 50
- C. 100
D. 70
9. Thomas Wolfe would describe many of the rooms in the boarding house in his novel _____.
- A. *The Old Kentucky Home*
B. *The Land of the Sky*
- C. *Look Homeward, Angel*
D. *Of Time and the River*
10. Today the boarding house is preserved as a State Historic Site called the _____.
- A. Thomas Wolfe Memorial
B. Vance Birthplace
- C. Old Kentucky Home
D. Wolfe Monument

**MULTIPLE CHOICE
THE "OLD KENTUCKY HOME"**

ANSWER KEY

1. B
2. C
3. A
4. D
5. C
6. B
7. D
8. A
9. C
10. A