Meanwhile, Back at the Ranch…

The phrase, “Meanwhile, back at the ranch” was originally used as a stock subtitle in the silent movies to indicate a segue (transition) from one scene to another, and the reference to the ranch was literal. In the example below, the first sentence indicates the end of one scene, while the second sentence indicates a transition to a new setting and scene.

EXAMPLE: With grim determination and only one bullet, John set off after the wrangler. Meanwhile, back at the ranch, Miss Kitty was doing some wrangling of her own.

YOUR ASSIGNMENT: Write a short story that transitions back and forth between two settings. The story should involve two related events. For example:

- Two friends who have been separated on a camping trip are trying to find their way back to each other.
- A father has to travel far away to find work, while his family struggles on at home without him.
- A woman and her daughter trade bodies for a day. The woman (in the girl’s body) has difficulties at school, while the daughter (in the woman’s body) has difficulties at work.

You may use one of the ideas above, or an idea of your own. Use a variety of transition words, phrases, and clauses to convey sequence and signal shifts from one setting to another.

DID YOU KNOW?

The phrase “meanwhile, back at the ranch” has become a cliché, and these days is used loosely and with a sense of mockery or levity, and has taken on a life of its own. For example, one might say, “Meanwhile, back at the ranch, prices keep getting higher and people keep getting poorer.”