

***Seasons of the Trail***, by Lynn Glaze, is the story of a young girl's journey by wagon train from Missouri to California in 1860. Fourteen-year-old Lucy Scott sets out from Greenwood, MO with her family in April, sad to leave the only home she has ever known. The family must leave almost everything they own behind since they will be traveling by covered wagon, horse, and foot the entire way. A set of 17-year-old twins, Aaron and Seth Alexander, offer companionship as well as the excitement and confusion of first love for Lucy. Along the way the team travels through prairie, mountains and desert and must endure extreme weather changes, encounters with wild animals and restricted diets. But five months, nearly 2,000 miles, and many adventures later, Lucy is glad she made the journey from Missouri to California.

### PRE-READING ACTIVITY

Before reading ***Seasons of the Trail***, discuss with your class what they already know about the wagon trains that crossed the country in the 1860's. After sharing responses, read the title and tell them that the story is set during April through September of 1860 and follows the journey of one wagon train from Missouri to California. Some questions for discussion might be:

- This story took place in 1860. What else was happening in America around the same time? Where does it fit in chronologically with other events of American history already studied?
- How many people lived in America/California/Missouri in the 1860's? How many traveled by covered wagon "on the trail" around this time?
- Look at the cover illustration. What do students notice in the picture? What might "Seasons of the Trail" refer to in this story?
- Look at the map at the beginning of the book. Have students find different cities and landmarks that are noted. How many students have been to the places listed on the map? What are their impressions of these areas as they are now? Have any students traveled across America? What kind of transportation did they take? What was the journey like? How long did it take?

### CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

**Literature • Social Studies • Art • Writing • Health Science • Music**

1. After reading all or part of the book, discuss historical fiction as a type of literature, a mixture of fact and fiction. Some of the characters in the story actually existed and many of the events really occurred. Even those characters that are created by the author probably shared some of the experiences and feelings of real people. Discuss how the reader can distinguish between what is fact and what is fiction. Groups of students might try researching events and characters in the story using

sources such as encyclopedias, almanacs, atlases, historical documents, newspapers, etc. Have a mini-lesson about how to use these sources and a class debriefing. What names and events could they read about in other sources and which were most likely created by the author?

2. This story exposes children to what life was like for one young girl traveling by wagon train to California, but there is much more to learn about this interesting aspect of American history. Encourage them to dig a little deeper into the past to discover more information:

- This story took place in 1860, a little more than ten years after the Gold Rush of 1849 and about seventy years before the horrible droughts and depression of the 1930's sent many more families west. Read more about the different migrations to the western part of our country, past and present.
- On page 61, Lucy considers sending a letter by Pony Express. Find out more about this intriguing delivery system and the history of the postal service in the U.S.
- There is mention of the Indian tribes that wagon trains encountered on their journey west. During the 1860's, what tribes lived along the trail mapped out on the inside covers of this book? What was their perspective of the pioneers' journey west? Read more about their lives and traditions

3 On the first page of the book, there is a list of the few family heirlooms that Lucy's family can fit in their wagon. Have students find these items and talk about why they think the Scotts might have selected them. Next ask your students to think about the one or two treasures (family or personal) they would pack if they had to leave most of their things behind. Have students write and illustrate a page explaining what they would choose and why. Compile the pages to make a class book and/or ask students to share their responses with the class.

4. The members of the wagon train gathered at night to cook, eat, and relax around campfires. For entertainment they would sing songs like those mentioned on pages 18 and 43. Get copies of the music of songs from that era and ask a parent, student or music teacher to accompany your class on guitar for a wagon train sing-along.

5. Seth taught Lucy some trail signs so she would not get lost again (page 32). Encourage your student to learn more about trail signs in books and/or from students, scouts or community members who are familiar with them. Take a walk through a park and practice making trail signs using stones and sticks. Re-trace your route back using the trail signs your class created.

# TEACHER'S GUIDE

## SEASONS of the TRAIL

6. Throughout the story, Lucy writes in her journal about her feelings for Seth. She thinks these feelings are mutual. But when she tries to tell Seth how much she cares for him towards the end of the journey (pages 72-73), he laughs and rides away. On page 81 she finds out why—he is to be married to someone else! Have students look back through the novel and, using post-its, mark places where Lucy and Seth interact: What do they say to one another? How do they interact? If you were Seth/Lucy would you think the other person was interested in you? Come together as a group to read passages and discuss these and other questions: Should Seth have told Lucy about Emily earlier? Why do you think he didn't?

Break into small groups where students may feel more comfortable talking about a time someone did not share important information with them. If it is too difficult to talk about real situations, invite groups to make up hypothetical situations (i.e. Janine's grandmother had a stroke but her parents waited two days to tell her since she was taking a test/celebrating her birthday the next day.) Post a list of questions to guide their discussions: Do you think this was right? How would you have felt if you were \_\_\_\_? etc. Within these small groups, have students make up skits where one person is withholding information from another. At the end of each skit discuss different reactions/feelings about the situations.

7. Learn more about Independence Day, July 4th. Since many schools do not meet in the summer, July 4th is a holiday rarely discussed or celebrated in schools. Reread the description of how Lucy's wagon train celebrated July 4th in 1860 (page 48) and have students share special family/community traditions they participate in on July 4th. For homework, have students interview parents, grandparents, and older neighbors about the Fourth of July celebrations of their childhoods. Plan a Fourth of July party in \_\_\_\_\_ (September, October, etc.) using a combination of traditions, past and present (minus the fire crackers, of course!).

### STORY EXTENSIONS

#### Recreate the habitats of the Western States in 1860

Lucy and her wagon train travel through so many different kinds of terrain on their journey west. Make a list of the different habitats they cross: prairie, mountains, desert, etc. and have students read back through the story to find descriptions of plant and animal life, climate, natural wonders such as rock formations, salt water lakes, etc.

Split the class into small groups, assigning a different habitat to each, and have students read and research more about their habitat. Ask students to share what they have learned in a creative way: habitat "boxes" with clay figures of the animals that live there, a "guide book" of the animal life in their habitat, a computer slide show illustrating the natural wonders of the habitat they studied, etc. Invite other classes in to learn from and admire the finished products!



by Lynn Glaze

