**Luzena Stanley Wilson, forty-niner: Memories recalled in 1881**

**for her daughter Correnah Wilson Wright**

The California Gold Rush

covered wagon

containers

carried by boat across a body of water

began

The gold excitement spread like wildfire, even out to our log cabin in the prairie, and as we had almost nothing to lose, and we might gain a fortune, we early caught the fever. My husband grew enthusiastic and wanted to start immediately, but I would not be left behind. I thought where he could go I would, and where I went I could take my two little toddling babies. Mother-like, my first thought was of my children. I little realized then the task I had undertaken. If I had, I think I should still be in my log cabin in Missouri. But when we talked it all over, it sounded like such a small task to go out to California, and once there fortune, of course, would come to us….

Monday we were to be off. Saturday we looked over our belongings, and threw aside what was not absolutely necessary. Beds we must have, and something to eat. It was a strange but comprehensive load which we stowed away in our prairie schooner, and some things which I thought necessities when we started became burdensome luxuries, and before many days I dropped by the road-side a good many unnecessary pots and kettles, for on bacon and flour one can ring but few changes, and it requires but few vessels to cook them. One luxury we had which other emigrants nearly always lacked – fresh milk. From our gentle “mulley” cow I never parted….

Well, on that Monday morning, bright and early, we were off. With the first streak of daylight my last cup of coffee boiled in the wide fire-place, and the sun was scarcely above the horizon when we were on the road to California. The first day’s slow jogging brought us to the Missouri River, over which we were ferried in the twilight, and our first camp fire was lighted in Indian territory, which spread in one unbroken, unnamed waste from the Missouri River to the border line of California. Here commenced my terrors. Around is in every direction were groups of Indians sitting, standing, and on horseback, as many as two hundred in the camp. I had read and heard whole volumes of their bloody deeds, the massacre of harmless white men, torturing helpless women, carrying away captive innocent babes. I felt my children the most precious in the wide world, and I lived in an agony of dread that first night. The Indians were friendly, of course, and swapped ponies for whiskey and tobacco with the gathering bands of emigrants, but I, in the most tragi-comic manner, sheltered my babies with my own body, and felt imaginary arrows pierce my flesh an hundred times during the night. At last the morning broke, and we were off….Our train consisted only of six wagons, but we were never alone. Ahead, as far as the eye could reach, a thin cloud of dust marked the route of the trains, and behind us, like the trail of a great serpent, it extended to the edge of civilization….

The traveler, who flies across the continent in palace cars, skirting occasionally the old emigrant road, may think that he realizes the trials of such a journey. Nothing but actual experience will give one an idea of plodding, unvarying monotony, the vexations, the exhaustive energy, the throbs of hope, the depths of despair, through which we lived. Day after day, week after week, we went through the same weary routine of breaking camp at daybreak, yoking the oxen, cooking our meagre rations over a fire of sage-brush and scrub-oak; packing up again, coffeepot and camp-kettle;

irritations

fastening together at the neck

beat

washing our scanty wardrobe in the little streams we crossed; striking camp again at

sunset, or later if wood and water were scarce. Tired, dusty, tried in temper, worn out in patience, we had to go over the weary experience tomorrow. No excitement, but a broken-down wagon, or the extra preparation made to cross a river, marked our way for many miles. The Platte was the first great water-course we crossed. It is a peculiar, wide, shallow stream, with a quicksand bed. With the wagon-bed on blocks twelve or fourteen inches thick to raise it out of the water, some of the men astride of the oxen, some of them wading waist-deep, and all goading the poor beasts to keep them moving, we started across. The water poured into the wagon in spite of our precautions and floated off some of our few movables; but we landed safely on the other side, and turned to see the team behind us stop in mid-stream. The frantic driver shouted, whipped, belabored the stubborn animals in vain, and the treacherous sand gave way under their feet. They sank slowly, gradually, but surely. They went out of sight inch by inch, and the water rose over the moaning beasts. Without a struggle they disappeared beneath the surface. In a little while the broad South Platte swept on its way, sunny, sparkling, placid, without a ripple to mark where a lonely man parted with all his fortune.

Teacher’s Guide

Name of Text: **Luzena Stanley Wilson, forty-niner, memories recalled in 1881 for her daughter Correnah Wilson Wright**

Question Composers: Temoca Dixon and Marcia Motter

Standards:

Nevada State:

H1. [6-8].7 Explore the lure of the West and the reality of life on the frontier

CCSS:

R17.1, .2, .3, .5, .6, .8, .10

RH 6-8.1, .2, .5, .6, .10

WHST.6-8.1

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| Text Dependent Questions | Teacher Notes and Possible Textual Evidencefor Student Answers |
| Who is the author of this address and what type of document is this in its original form? | Luzena Stanley Wilson, forty-niner (line 1) and she is speaking, sharing memories for her daughter, Correnah Wilson Wright (line 1-2)Reason**:** This orients students to the text. Establishes it as an oral diary to pass along personal experiences.  |
| In lines 6-7, Luzena Stanley Wilson states, “…we early caught the fever.” What is she referring to? | In line 3, The California Gold RushIn line 5, The gold excitement spread like wildfire…Reason**:** The California Gold Rush was a motivating factor of westward expansion as people “caught gold fever” trying to discover their fortunes.  |
| What were Luzena Stanley Wilson’s perceptions of Indians prior to arriving in Indian territory? Were her beliefs justified? Explain with evidence from the text.  | Q1: She was afraid, fearful:Lines 28-29, Here commenced my terrors. Lines 30-32, I had read and heard whole volumes of their bloody deeds, the massacre of harmless white men, torturing helpless women, carrying away captive innocent babes.Q2: Her fears were not justifiedLine 34-37, The Indians were friendly, of course, and swapped ponies for whiskey and tobacco; …but I in my tragi-comic manner…; felt imaginary arrows pierce my flesh a hundred times during the night. Reason**:** Students identify beliefs and stereotypes help by American settlers.  |

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| Text Dependent Questions | Teacher Notes and Possible Textual Evidence for Student Answers |
| What were some of the struggles Luzena Stanley Wilson described on her westward journey? | Line 44-46 – “…unvarying monotony, the vexations, the exhaustive energy, the throbs of hope, the depths of despair, through which we lived.Line 47- ”…yoking the oxen, cooking our meagre rations…”Line 49- “…washing our scanty wardrobe in the little streams we crossed;”Lines 50-51- “Tired, dusty, tried in temper, worn out in patience…”Reason**:** Students identify struggles settlers faced and overcame to settle in the West.  |
| In lines 47-50 adjectives such as meagre, scanty, and scarce are used to describe Luzena Stanley Wilson’s journey. How does this reality contrast with Wilson’s preconceived belief of her journey across the frontier? | Line 7- My husband grew enthusiastic and wanted to start immediately.Lines 11-12- …it sounded like such a small task to go out to California, and once there fortune, of course, would come to us…Lines 17-19- …some things which I thought necessities when we started became burdensome luxuries, and before many days I dropped by the road-side a good many unnecessary pots and kettles…Reason**:** Students analyze the progression of an American settler’s ideals about chasing economic opportunity and prosperity to the reality of working and sacrificing to realize economic opportunity and prosperity.  |
| In line 10 Wilson states, “I little realized then the task I had undertaken.” Using evidence from the text, identify and describe the task she is referring to. | Lines 11-12 …it sounded like such a small task to go out to California, and once there fortune, of course, would come to us…Lines 23-25 …on that Monday morning…we were off.; …the sun was scarcely above the horizon when we were on the road to California.Reason**:** The students identify the effort to take the journey through the western frontier. |
| Using evidence from the text, describe how Luzena Stanley Wilson’s attitude changes over the course of her journey.  | Lines 6-7- Excited and hopeful, “…we early caught the fever.”Lines 8-9- Determined, “I thought where he could go I would, and where I went I could take my two little toddling babies. Lines 28-37- Terrified and protective, “Here commenced my terrors.; I lived in an agony of dread that first night.; …sheltered my babies with my own body.”Lines 64-65- Pensive, “…without a ripple to mark where a lonely man parted with all his fortune.” Reason**:** Students analyze the various feelings and development of character throughout the journey westward across the frontier.  |

Writing prompt:

There were many motivations rooted in American ideals for American settlers to take the journey west. How is conquering the western frontier reflective of the American settlers’ character? Identify and describe three characteristic traits of a settler on the western frontier.

Use 3 pieces of evidence and reasoning from the text to support your answer. Cite the evidence correctly by using line numbers (Lines3-4) at the end of the sentence. Connect the evidence to the claim with reasoning that explains the evidence.

**Some possible answers to this question are:**

* Hopeful, settlers had the opportunity to achieve fortune
* Adventurous, settlers left behind their homes to strike out for new land, fortune, opportunity
* Brave, settlers faced the unknown in new land and new cultures in Indian territory
* Pensive, settlers realized the journey was difficult and not without loss

**In their writing students should:**

* Introduce a topic clearly, previewing what is to follow; organize ideas, concepts, and information into broader categories
* Develop the topic with relevant, well-chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, and quotations
* Use appropriate and varied transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts
* Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone
* Provide a concluding statement that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented
* Quotations are cited correctly using line numbers from the text (Lines 8-9) at the end of the quote.