

Lesson

24



Vocabulary in Context

1 mishap

These hikers took a wrong turn by accident. They were lost due to the mishap.



2 rustling

A rustling in nearby brush can worry you. Look for the sound's cause, and stay calm.



TARGET VOCABULARY

mishap

rustling

lectured

beacon

torment

surged

disadvantage

balked

quaking

fared

Vocabulary
Reader

Context
Cards



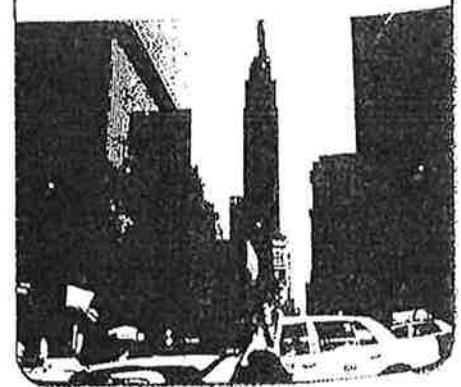
3 lectured

This ranger lectured, or explained, about the importance of staying on the trail.



4 beacon

A tall object in the distance can serve as a beacon to guide you to a familiar area.



L.5.4c consult reference materials, both print and digital, to find pronunciation and determine or clarify meaning

- ▶ Study each Context Card.
- ▶ Use a dictionary or a glossary to help you pronounce each Vocabulary word.

6 torment

This girl suffered torment, or distress, because she couldn't find her homework.



7 surged

After this river surged, or swelled, over its banks, hikers had to find a new trail.



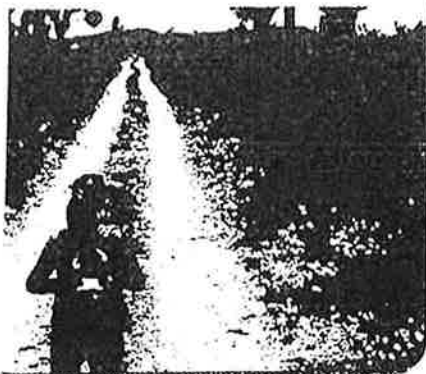
7 disadvantage

Losing the trail was a disadvantage, or handicap, to finding camp before dark.



8 balked

This woman balked, or refused to move, after realizing she was lost.



9 quaking

You may start quaking, or trembling, when you're lost. Your body expresses fear that way.



10 fared

Once he was rescued, this boy slept and ate. He fared, or progressed, better after that.

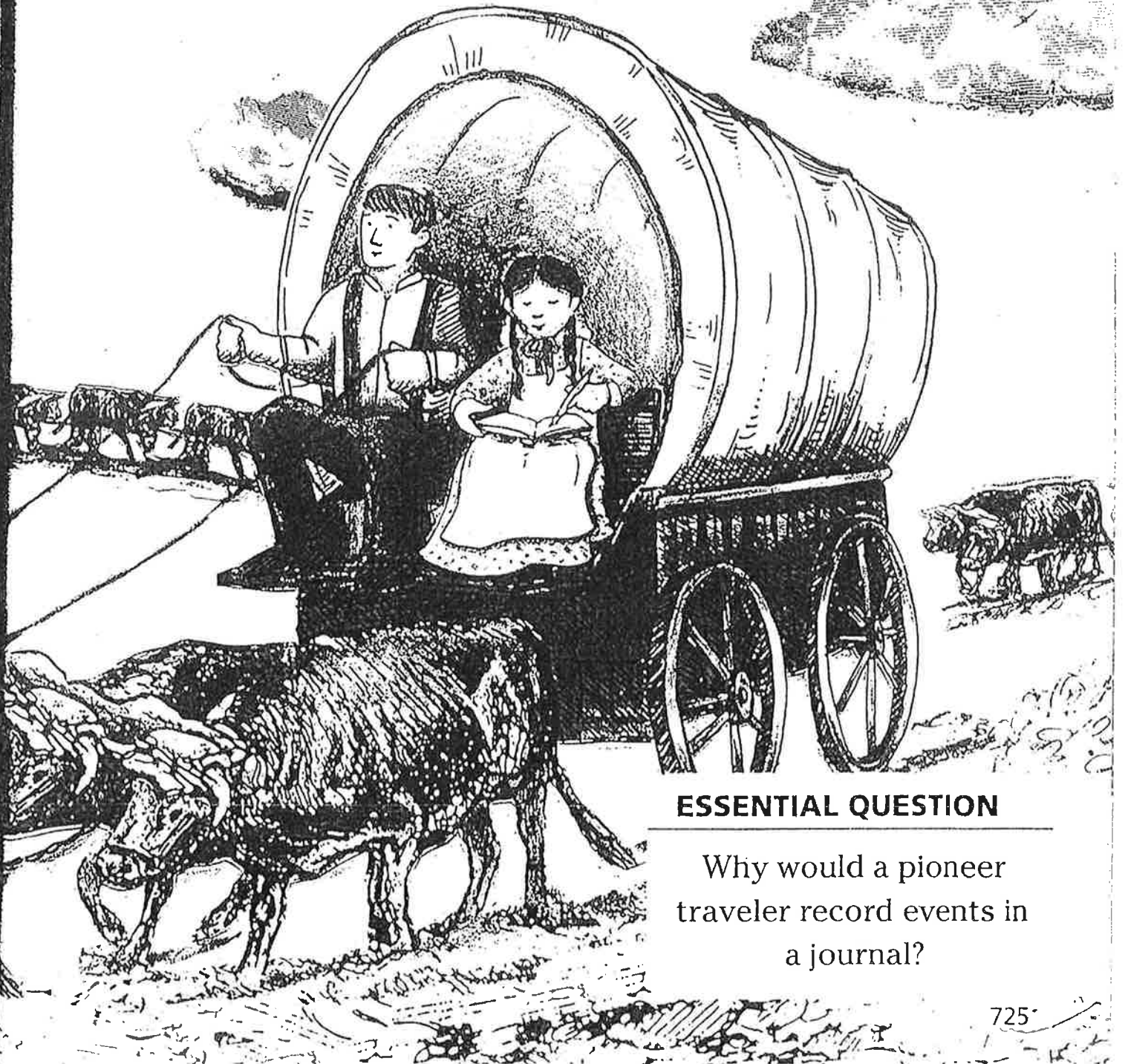


Rachel's Journal

THE STORY OF A PIONEER GIRL

by Marissa Moss

selection illustrated by Megan Halsey



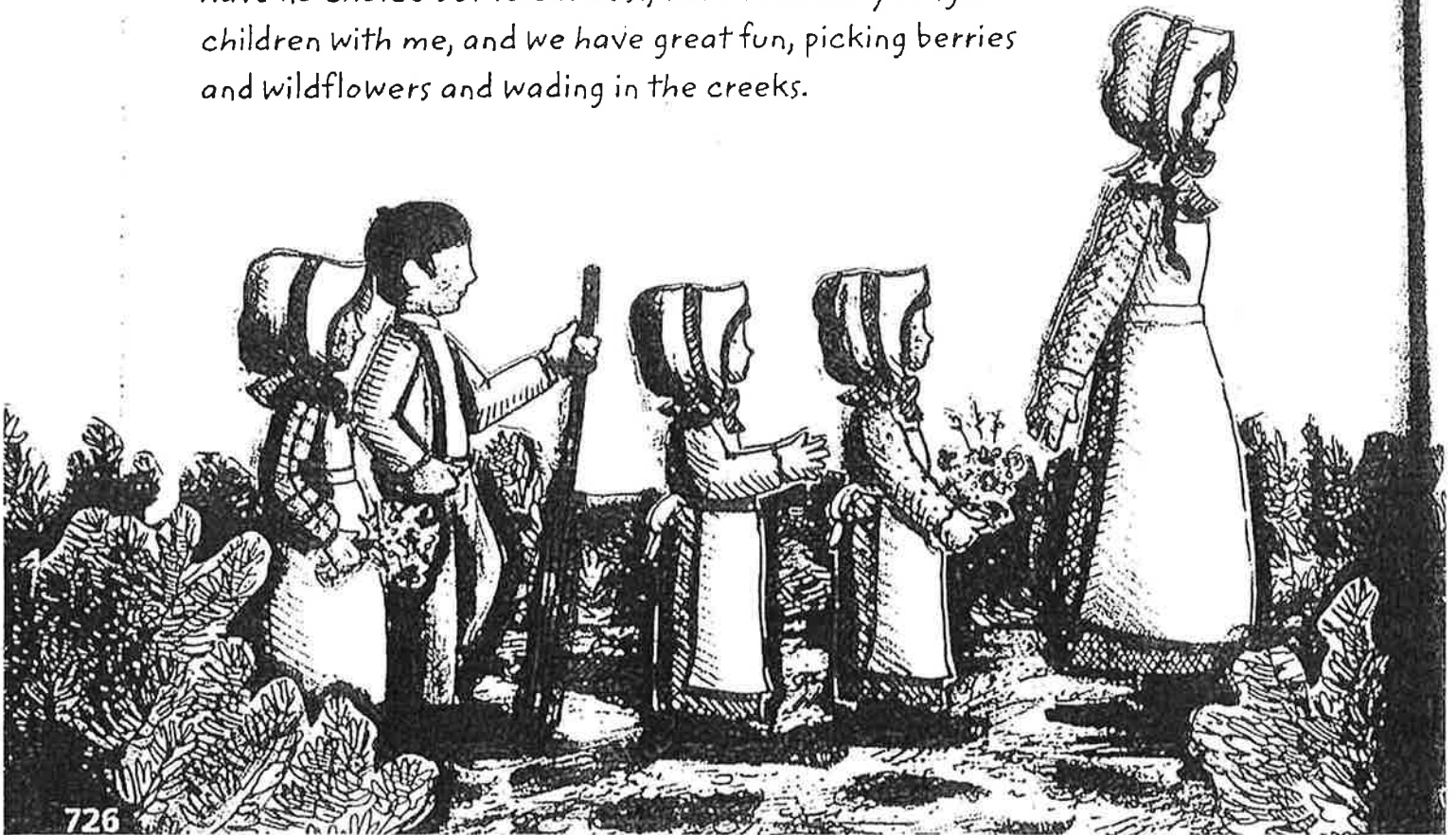
ESSENTIAL QUESTION

Why would a pioneer traveler record events in a journal?

It has been two months since Rachel's family left Illinois in a wagon train bound for good farmland in California. During the long ride, Rachel spends time with her brothers Ben and Will, as well as Frank and Prudence, children from other families in the wagon train. She writes about their adventures in her journal.

May 10, 1850

Pa says we are taking the Oregon Trail until it splits and we veer south for California. Now we are following the Platte River. The sight of the broad river and the bluffs is restful, but the dust kicked up by all the stock is not. Especially when our wagons are in the rear—then it is so thick, I can barely see past our own teams. But I found a way to escape the heat and dirt of the main road. All along the trail there are narrow cut-off paths. Pa says they were made and used by Indians and hunters. These cut-offs run diagonally to the road and are often by shady creeks, so they are pleasant to walk along. Since they always lead back to the trail, there is no need to fret about getting lost. The boys have to drive the stock, so they have no choice but to eat dust, but I take the younger children with me, and we have great fun, picking berries and wildflowers and wading in the creeks.



May 16, 1850

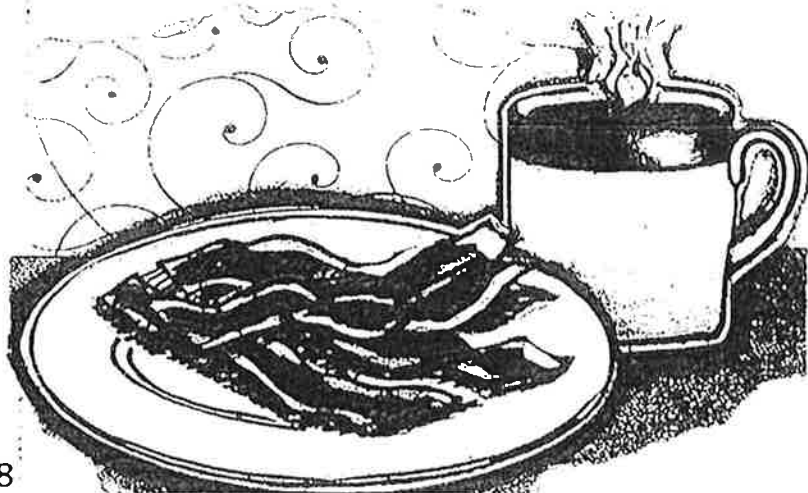
Today I had my first adventure. We had been walking on the cut-off for 2-3 hours, traveling upstream into a deep canyon. The trail was not only out of sight, but out of earshot as well. I liked feeling alone, but Emma fretted that we were lost and the twins were tired, whining that a jouncing wagon ride would be better than tramping on. I tried to cheer everyone by singing "Turkey in the Straw" when we heard a rustling in the bushes. Something much larger than a turkey—Indians! Frank pulled out his little knife, all fierceness, but I hushed him and went to look for myself. (All quaking inside, I admit, but I could not let them see that!) And what should I see when I parted the bushes with trembling hand? The moist snout of a very content ox, chomping on leaves. Somebody must have lost him. If it had been an Indian, Frank declared, he would have protected us. I hope we have no such need.



That was just the beginning of our adventure. When the cut-off reached the trail, there was no sign of our train, either ahead or behind. There was nothing for it but to continue on the cut-off in the hopes of coming out ahead of our wagons soon. On and on we walked. Frank and Emma never complained, nor did little Caroline, but those twins whined worse than the mosquitoes. Still we found no wagons. The sun set, the buffalo wolves started in to howl, and it was too dark to see the trail before us. I would have sat down in the darkness and cried, but I had to take care of the others. Then I recalled what Ben had said about looking for a high view point if you get lost, so I urged everyone up a hill before us. It was not very high, but we were rewarded with the sight of 3 campfires. Since our train is not large, we headed for the smallest one, going straight across country. We barged through brambles and slogged through creeks, but we always kept that light in view, like the beacon of a lighthouse.

At last I was greeted with the welcome sight of Prudence nibbling bacon. I could not help but embrace her, though she did not appreciate my smudged arms and dress. In fact, she was so startled by our abrupt appearance, she screamed as if we were ghosts or Indians.

Mrs. Arabella Sunshine, Mrs. Elias, and Mother were first joyous, then mad. In between hugging me and scrubbing my face, Mother scolded. Now I cannot take cut-offs after the noon break. That means swallowing dust in the hottest part of the day. At least we still have the mornings.



The bacon and coffee smelled wonderful!

May 23, 1850

Now we are not permitted ever to walk along the cut-offs! Not that we got lost today—something much more exciting happened. Once again we were out of sight of the train, singing as we strolled, when an Indian brave came riding straight at us. I was so amazed to see a true Indian, I forgot to be frightened. We all stood staring at him (though Frank once again reached for his knife—I hissed at him to leave it be, no sense asking for trouble). The twins hid behind my skirt, and the others huddled around me when the brave rode up to us and leapt off his pony.

You could have heard a pin drop! He stepped toward me and said something, then held his hand straight out. I did not know what else to do, but shake it, so I did. And that was exactly what he wanted! He offered his hand to each child. Even Frank shook it, grinning so broadly his mouth looked like he had swallowed an ear of corn whole.

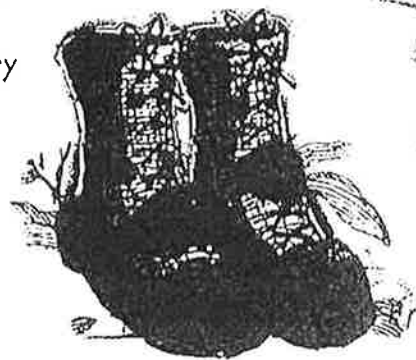
The brave knew some English, and he clearly thought we were lost. He asked if I knew where our wagon was. I nodded yes. Satisfied that we were not in trouble, he got back on his pony, waved good-bye, and rode off. It was all over in two shakes of a lamb's tail. After all the horrible stories we had heard about Indians, we had a story of our own to tell and a pretty funny one at that. Only somehow when the adults heard of our meeting, they were not amused. Instead they lectured us on all the awful things that might have happened. And so the cut-offs are forbidden from now on.

ANALYZE THE TEXT

Figurative Language Authors sometimes use **hyperbole**, or exaggeration, to make a point or to describe something. For example, Rachel says, "You could have heard a pin drop." What does this tell you about how quiet it was when the brave approached the children?



My shoes are so caked with mud, they are more mud pie than footwear.



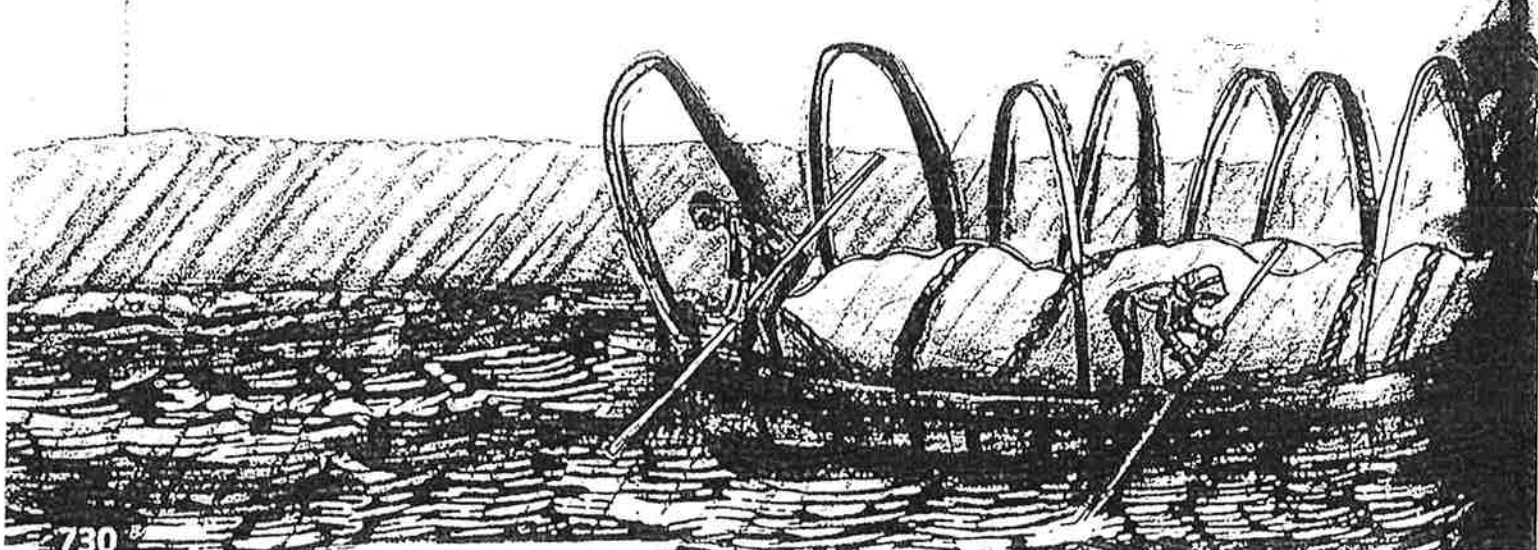
It's hard keeping this journal dry—I do my best.

May 30, 1850

It has rained for days, which has the benefit of keeping down the dust but the disadvantage of turning the trail into an enormous puddle. Despite our cover claiming to be watertight, everything is soaked through. The Platte is swollen and wild. I am relieved we do not have to ford it. Pa says we will reach the government ferry tomorrow.



Sunbonnets are definitely not meant for rain, unless you find a sopping curtain before your face desirable—I do not!

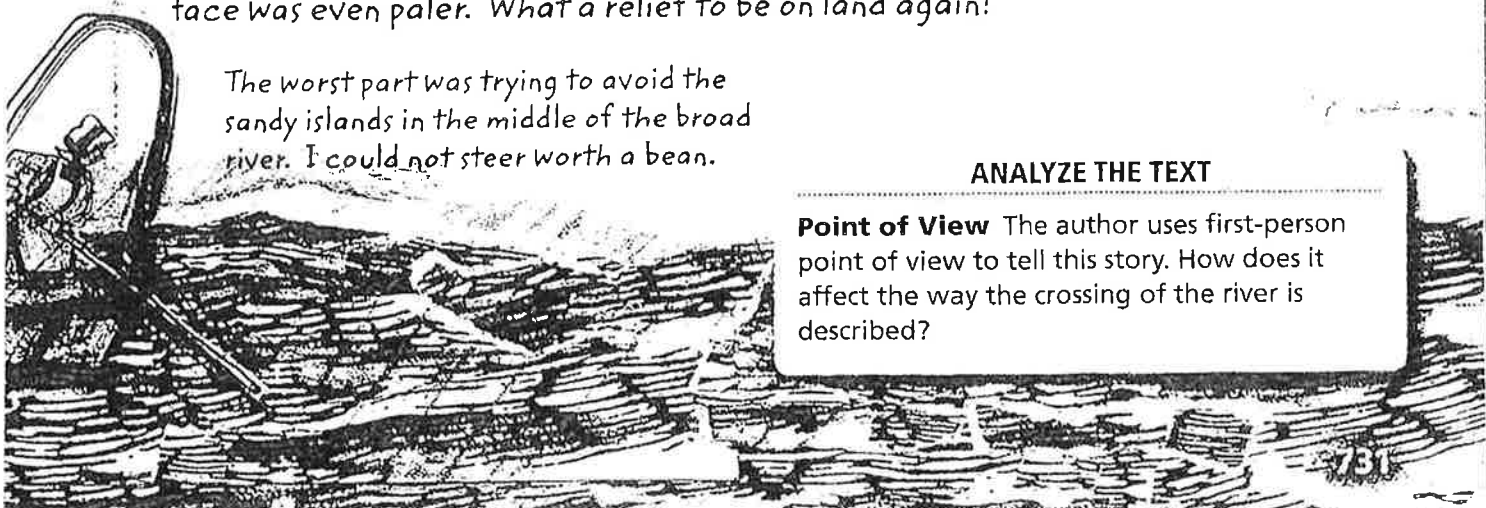




The prairie is so low and the sky so close that in a storm you feel the clouds pressing down on you.

June 7, 1850

Yesterday was the first time I truly felt scared. Getting lost, howling wolves, Indians—nothing compares to the fury of this river! We arrived at the ferry only to discover that it had broken loose of its moorings when the rains started. Some men finally retrieved it, but it took so long that an enormous line of wagons waited ahead of us to take the ferry. The man said it would be 3 weeks before our turn came. Mr. Elias warned that we were already behind schedule and such a long delay would surely mean crossing the Sierra Nevada Mountains in the snow. No one wants to suffer the fate of the Donner Party, frozen and starving in the mountains. Mr. Elias determined that we should take the wagons off their wheel beds and raft them over the river. The current was swift and the banks like quicksand, but there was no other way. Both Sunshine families balked at the danger and refused to go first. Mr. Elias offered to cross, but he has young children, so Pa suggested we go. Mother's face was drawn tight, but she nodded. Ben and Will stayed behind to drive the stock over, so Pa, Mother, and I each took a pole to make our way across. The waves were high and it was hard to keep from tipping. Twice I almost fell in. The second time I lost my pole and clung on to the wagon hoops, not much help to anyone after that. Somehow we landed. My knuckles were white from holding so tightly to the hoops, but Mother's face was even paler. What a relief to be on land again!



The worst part was trying to avoid the sandy islands in the middle of the broad river. I could not steer worth a bean.

ANALYZE THE TEXT

Point of View The author uses first-person point of view to tell this story. How does it affect the way the crossing of the river is described?

The others followed with no mishap. (And Frank declared that he was not scared, not a bit. I do not credit that!) Only the stock still had to be driven over. Ben and Will, along with Samuel, John, Daniel, and Jesse, rounded up all 115 head of cattle and drove them to the river, but they refused to go in. They had no idea of the dangers of the Sierras, but they could plainly see the dangers of the Platte. Three times the boys gathered the cattle together only to have them split and stampede at the water's edge. It was getting dark, and it looked like we would have to camp on opposite shores when Will decided he had stood enough, he would make those cattle cross. He rode next to Bo, the lead herd ox, and just as the stubborn animal reached the banks, Will leapt from his horse onto Bo's back, clung to his horns, and, kicking and screaming, drove that ox into the river. And it worked! Bo started swimming across and all the stock followed. Safe on the other side, Will jumped off Bo and looked back to see his own horse foundering in the water. His foreleg had gotten tangled up in the loose reins. Will rushed into the water to free his horse just as a clap of thunder split the sky open. Lightning flashed with an eerie brightness followed by pitch black and the deafening roll of thunder.

In the dark we could not see Will, but his horse clambered safely onto shore. When the next lightning flashed, Pa cried out that Will had made it to a sandbar in the river. Whether he was dead or alive, no one could say, and while the storm raged, no one dared swim out to rescue him.

ANALYZE THE TEXT

Cause and Effect There are several factors that cause Will to become stuck on the sandbar in the river. What are they?



That was a miserable and awful night! It was total confusion—thunder booming, oxen bellowing, children crying, men shouting, as light as day one minute, as dark as a cave the next. Add to that the torment of not knowing how poor Will fared and feeling utterly helpless to do anything for him. All we could do was huddle together, a pile of drenched human rags, as the men worked blindly to control the stock.

At dawn the storm quieted, and Pa rushed into the churning river and brought back Will's limp body. He was so pale and still, I thought sure he was dead. Pa started rubbing him down. When at last he opened his eyes, the whole company cheered. He was alive! I have never been so proud—nor so scared.



I never thought I would be so happy to see the sun rise.

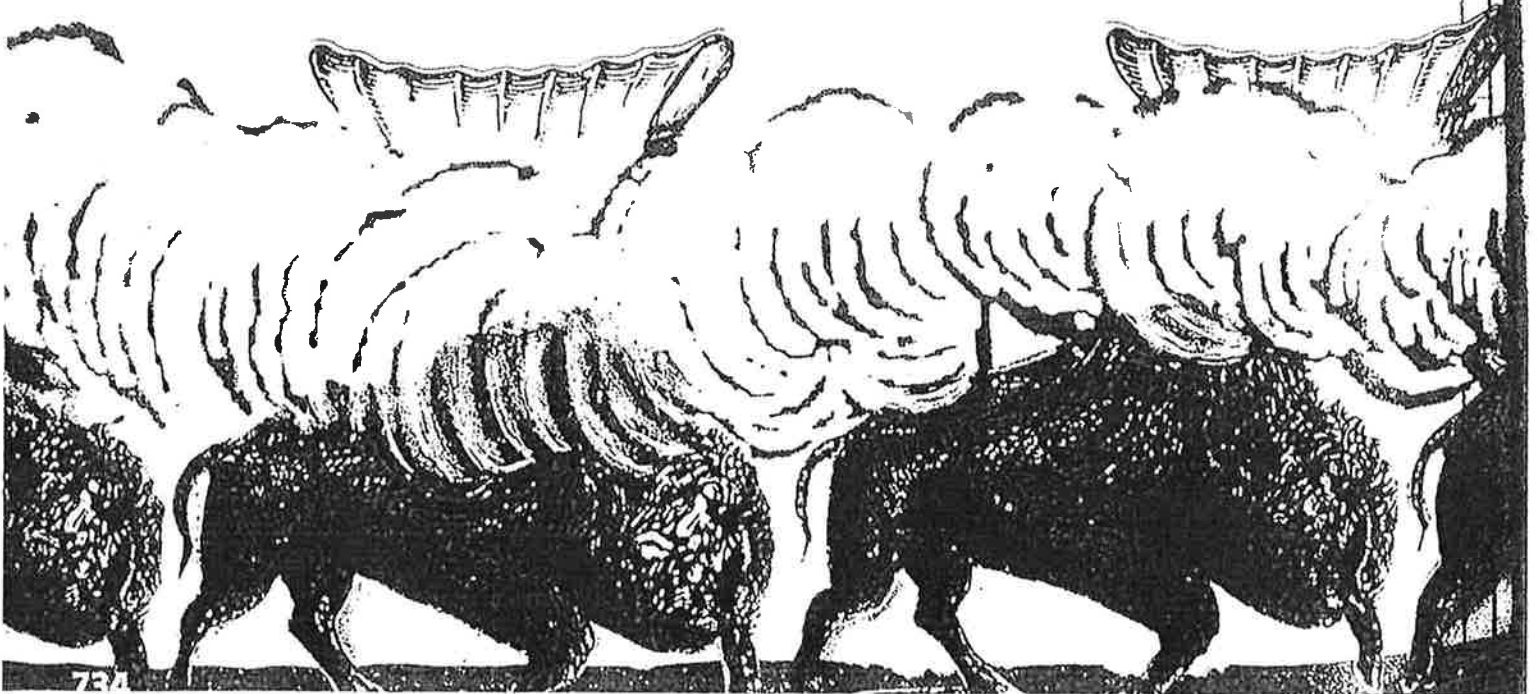
June 15, 1850

We took some days' rest to wash everything and dry it out, to put the wagons back together and repair them, to coddle Will and return him to his usual good health. We are fortunate no one drowned in that crossing. There are several new graves of men who died that way, and we heard that in a wagon train near ours, a woman was killed by lightning. Will has always claimed to live a charmed life, and now I believe him.

June 20, 1850

A different kind of storm passed by us today—a herd of buffalo. It was as if the river had leapt out of its banks and taken solid form to chase us down. A thick cloud of dust surged toward us, then there was a tremendous noise, an earthly thunder. We could see their shaggy backs rising and falling like a great wave. Nothing could turn back such a force, so we hastily pulled the wagons close together while the boys drove the stock away—for once a cow or an ox is caught up in a buffalo stampede, it is gone for good, part of a new wild herd.

The buffalo hooves raised such a cloud of dust that though I tried to hold in my breath, my throat and tongue were coated with grit. I could taste them pounding past! The cloud was so big, it blotted out the sun like a buffalo eclipse.



We cowered in the wagons and watched them come closer and closer. Mother tried to keep me back, but I wanted to see them as best I could. After all, if they plowed into us I would not be any safer in the middle of the wagon than in the front. So I poked my head out into the whirling dust storm. I could see their rolling eyes and flaring nostrils, but Will must have brought us some of his charmed luck, and the massive beasts thundered by and not through us. I have seen cattle stampede, but this was different—buffalo are so big and so wild. I wished I could run after them.

