

Dear Ms. Stockton,

I would like to share with you about the story Bound for Oregon, written by Jean Van Leeuwen. This book leads you through the adventures of the Todd family. They leave Arkansas looking for the well known beautiful Oregon. Traveling 2,000 miles in a wagon, many adventures occur. The family goes through troubles with Indians and sicknesses. The trip is tough and many people get sick, tired, and some even die. Having just a small map, Mary Ellen Todd and her family make it to Oregon.

Throughout the story, Leeuwen shows how Mary Ellen's attitude changes. At the beginning of the book she is confused as to why her family would leave their nice home in Arkansas. Since her parents make the decision of leaving she agrees, and ends up being excited. During the story it uses the wagon wheels to get across some of Mary's feelings. At the beginning of the story it says, "The wheels rattled and creaked. 'Going-to-Oregon,' they seemed to say. 'Going-to-Oregon.'" Later, during the families hard times the wheels changed what they are saying. It says, "No longer did they seem to be saying, 'Going-to-Oregon. Going-to-Oregon.' Instead they just whispered softly, 'Chuggety-chug. Chuggety-chug. Chuggety-chug.'" Sometimes I felt as if all I had ever done was ride in this wagon, and those wheels were going to keep on turning forever." Near the end of their journey, Mary is excited to almost be in Oregon. This time the wheels once again say, "Going-to Oregon. Going-to-Oregon." I think that the author's idea to use the wheels of the wagon was a good way to show Mary's feelings. It made it a little more interesting.

Through reading this book, I was really able to see what it is like on an adventure to Oregon in 1852. It was a dangerous trek that would take months to complete. Many people died along the way because of deathly diseases and sicknesses that were passed around. Some of the illnesses they faced were cholera, mountain fever, and many other fevers. There were other hardships too; animals that hauled the wagons got sick and died and people had to continue on foot. The book states, "All along our way through the mountains we kept seeing abandoned wagons and yokes and chains, as well as dead oxen and mules. It looked as if many families had been forced to travel the last miles of their journey on foot." It also says on page 84, "As we moved along, we began to see more and more signs of distress ahead. Sometimes it was worn-out oxen abandoned to the wolves." These passages from the book both painted a picture in my mind. It is hard for me to imagine what it would be like for Mary and her family to encounter so many difficulties. I am glad that my family isn't going on a wagon trip to Oregon...

I was surprised at the end of the book when Mary Ellen's grandmother doesn't come to Oregon. It kind of seemed like she would have come. I wish that somehow she could find a way to get her grandma to Oregon. Maybe she could live with them there like she did in Arkansas. Throughout their journey Mary really misses her grandma, so I predicted that she would come. It ends up that she doesn't because it would be too

long and hard of a journey for her to complete. I guess this too was showing the reality that family was left behind in order to move forward to a new land.

In my opinion, the most important part of the book is when Mary's father gets sick. John, a family friend, has to do all the cooking, care for the animals, do the milking and look after mother, who was also sick. On page 139 Mary thinks, "We all depend on father. It was his strength that had brought us this far. Now suddenly it was gone." Decisions had to be made by the family. Mary also thinks, "What were we going to do? I wondered, as I walked back to the fire. Should we wait for father to recover, or try to move on? Could we move on?" Having their father be sick caused the trip to take even longer to get to Oregon. They stopped along the way many times to take care of their father. Their trip got delayed, but it was necessary.

This book is mostly about the struggles and hard times of the Todd's adventure. During the book, everyone in the family gets sick at least once. Back then, if you got a fever it was really hard to recover. Some people would die from it. At one point in the story, Louvina, one of Mary's sisters, gets cholera. In the book it says, "Many other wagons were stopped near us. The cholera epidemic had been growing worse by the day, and nearly every evening we heard about a new illness or death...For two days Louvina hovered between life and death...At times he was sure that she was dead, she lay so very still..." Later in the book Cynthia, Mary, and her mother all get sick. Sickesses were just passed around by wagon to wagon.

Jean Van Leeuwen really makes the story, Bound for Oregon interesting. Although it is a history book, reading it was really enjoyable and exciting. At the end of a chapter I didn't want to put it down because it left you wondering what would happen. When I picked it up off the book shelf, I expected it to be kind of boring and different than the types of books I normally like. Once I started reading it, my thoughts changed. I like how the author retold the true story of Mary Todd and her family heading to Oregon. I learned a lot about the history of that time period through this book and it was still interesting. I learned a lot about how difficult it was to travel by wagon that I didn't know before and enjoyed reading it.

I hope that I've inspired you to pick up Bound for Oregon or another book written by Jean Van Leeuwen. I don't think that you will be disappointed.

Sincerely,

Corinne Sampson