

**CHILDREN OF THE COVERED WAGON**  
**LITERATURE GUIDE**

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## **Questions**

### ***Chapter 1***

1. Describe the three children mentioned in the first chapter.
2. Why was Jerry traveling with his cousin on the Oregon Trail?
3. How long was the trip to Oregon estimated to be?
4. The days on the trail were very long. What time did they usually start and why? What kind of alarm clock did they have?
5. With no stove for cooking, what kind of breakfast could they have on the trail?

### ***Chapter 2***

1. Myra awoke alone in her wagon when it was nearly time for the group to move out. What was she searching for so diligently?
2. What was the cause of the early morning commotion outside Myra's wagon?
3. Michael was so exasperated with the donkey's stubbornness he wanted to beat him but Myra prevented him. What did she do?
4. Myra's mother was still not back when the wagons were just about ready to leave. Explain who came to the child's assistance.
5. What special recreation was Myra permitted to do this day?

### ***Chapter 3***

1. May of 1844 was a time for people in Independence, MO to band together for the common goal of reaching Oregon. What states were represented in the wagon train?
2. Previously, only Indians inhabited this land. How did they pass their time?
3. What did the Indians name the road carved by the wagon trains and cattle heading west?
4. The decision to join the wagon train was not an easy one, but their courage was stronger than their fear and their faith greater than their doubt. What motivated the people to go on such a treacherous journey?
5. How were disputes settled in a wagon train?

### ***Chapter 4***

1. Each night when camp was made, the children began gathering wood for supper fires. Who provided the wagon train with enough wood to build a campfire for everyone to enjoy?
2. How was school unique for children living on a wagon train?
3. What was the motto of the Pawnee Indian Tribe?
4. What responsibilities were given to Jim by his father as the threat of Indian problems became more evident?
5. A sobering sign along the trail made Jim acutely aware that their journey was very dangerous. What did it say?

### ***Chapter 5***

1. The Pawnees rode right by the wagon train a couple of times without hurting them. What were they pretending to do, and what was their real intention?
2. What did Henry Devine offer one of the Pawnee braves to try to coax information from him?
3. Nightly, Captain Stephen had the wagons circle just in case of attack. When they were raided by the Indians, what further preparations were made to keep the people safe?
4. Fortunately for the people, the Indians' only interest in this raid was to gather more livestock for themselves. How did they stampede the animals and what was lost?
5. What was the cause for division among the men of the wagon train? Why did the Captain handle things as he did?

### ***Chapter 6***

1. The children and the adults reacted differently to the sighting of the Platte River. Explain.
2. What were the particular hazards that the adults had heard were associated with the River?
3. How far had the wagon train come?
4. What did Jerry want to capture and tame as a pet?
5. As they neared the fording place the travelers came across thousands of bones laid out in intricate designs. What was the purpose of the display?

### ***Chapter 7***

1. Wagons were either pulled across rivers by oxen or floated across as boats. How were they prepared for their crossing?

2. What was the difference between driving horses and driving oxen?
3. The crossing went almost without incident until what happened?
4. How did Mrs. Benjamin save her baby and herself?
5. What happened to the injured animals?

### ***Chapter 8***

1. When Indians approached after the Platte River crossing, how did Devine communicate with them? What was the name of this Indian tribe?
2. Captain Stephen and Devine kept their distance from the Indians, not wanting them to touch them. Why?
3. What were the Crow Indians requesting and what was provided for them?
4. After the meal, the Indians departed quickly. Why?
5. When the wagon train had to lighten their load, what family treasure did the Benjamins have to leave behind?

### ***Chapter 9***

1. Describe the buffalo hunt and the many essential items that one buffalo could yield for a family.

### ***Chapter 10***

1. Jerry was most disappointed by what realization?
2. The many rock formations on the trail had names. What were some of them? Explain.
3. The boys had a daily task now in this treeless environment. What was it?
4. There were many signs reflecting the dangers of their journey. Name some.
5. Why was the trail so hard on the children's feet?

### ***Chapter 11***

1. Finally, the weary travelers approached Fort Laramie at the junction of the Platte and Laramie Rivers. Who ran the Fort and for what purpose?
2. Because the officials of the Fort were powerless outside the confines of the Fort, what was their warning to the travelers regarding their dealings with the Indians?
3. Michael and Dan took Jim, Jerry and Myra into the Fort to look around and when leaving, they were

met by an Indian. What did the Indian want?

4. What had Dan done by laughing at the Indian's proposal?

5. The chief picked out a name for Myra and had a specific reason for wanting her. Explain.

### ***Chapter 12***

1. To soothe Wolf's Brother's anger, what did Bissonette suggest?

2. After joining the men around the campfire, what did the chief offer for Myra?

3. The whistle was used by many members of the tribe for different purposes. Name several.

4. What promise did the chief make to the men of the wagon train?

5. What threat did he make?

### ***Chapter 13***

1. Name some of the aspirations that Wolf's Brother had for his son, Young War Eagle.

2. List the responsibilities of each parent in rearing the new chief for the tribe.

3. What was it that kept Wolf's Brother so intent on having Myra to rear as the young chief's bride?

4. While the chief was away, what happened to his son?

5. What effect did this have on the chief?

### **Chapter 14**

1. Write a paragraph about the events involved with treating Young War Eagle's injury.

### **Chapter 15**

1. How could people tell that Wolf's Brother was a wealthy man?

2. Describe how elaborately White Antelope and her sister were dressed for their guests' visit.

3. What happened when Doctor Dean and Bissonette met with the chief?

4. After their meal, speeches were made and gifts were presented by the Indians. What were the gifts?

5. The chief said that these gifts would do something special for the travelers. Explain.

## **Chapter 16**

1. As the train progressed toward its destination, what other hazards became evident?
2. When they arrived at a safe watering hole, Dan took several of the boys on an excursion. Where did they go?
3. Describe what the boys saw when they climbed the rocky, treeless hill.
4. The boys had a chance to observe what other Indian ritual before returning to camp?
5. In spite of the fact they still had many miles to go, what did Captain Stephen decide to do when the wagon train reached Independence Rock?

## **Chapter 17**

1. Describe the 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebration and the surprise Indian raid.

## **Chapter 18**

1. Who were the unexpected visitors that approached the wagon train and were mistaken for Indians?
2. Describe the trappers.
3. Evidence of their rough and often dangerous lives was revealed even in their appearance. What happened to Jules when he had a close encounter with a bear?
4. What was a free trapper?
5. Many harrowing stories of bravery were relayed by the trappers. John Colter's story had a lasting impact on the young boys of the wagon train. How did he defeat the Indians who were trying to kill him?

## **Chapter 19**

1. As the wagon train progressed through the South Pass of the Rocky Mountains, special attention had to be paid to the oxen. What was done to help them continue on their journey?
2. What milestone did reaching the top of the South Pass signify for the travelers?
3. Different kinds of animals were spotted at this point in their trip and had to be watched as closely as the Indians. What were they?
4. In searching for food, occasional horrible accidents occurred. What happened to one of Stephen Company's men in his search for antelope?
5. What did Henri Devine think the Indian was doing in the thicket?

## **Chapter 20**

1. Forts provided so many essentials to weary travelers crossing the country in their covered wagons. What were some provisions made by the forts?
2. Because the boys outgrew their pants, Aunt Beth said she would buy them buckskin trousers if they were available at the trading post. Why did the boys object?
3. Upon reaching a marked safe source for water, the wagon train circled early for the night and Jim led Jerry away to pretend they were Indian scouts. What happened?
4. What happened to Jim?
5. What did Captain Stephen decide to do?

## **Chapter 21**

1. Jim tried at first to use the technique John Colter had used of going toward the Indians. By doing this, what goal did he hope to accomplish?
2. What did the Indians do to Jim when they caught him?
3. When Jim awoke and the blindfold was removed, he realized Jerry had gotten away. This knowledge gave him the courage to continue to be strong. As he lay beside the sleeping Indians, what plan formed in his head?
4. What was his next step?
5. The final stage of his escape was as grueling as the start. What did he do?

## **Chapter 22**

1. Jim slept so soundly that didn't hear anyone approach his hiding place. Who found him?
2. How had he been located?
3. What did Jack decide was their best plan?
4. Jack had two sidekicks. Who were they?
5. Eventually they found the wagon train again. What information that Jim remembered was crucial in locating his family and the wagon train?

## **Chapter 23**

1. Together the wagons toiled toward Oregon. After traveling up 8,000 feet, they traveled down into a heavenly valley. Describe what they found there.
2. What do we today call the states that they traveled through next?

3. Where were they when the wagon train had to lighten its load again?
4. Why did they take extreme measures again?
5. What happened to Myra's treasured cradle for Annabelle?

### **Chapter 24**

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1. Explain the crossing of the Snake River.

### **Chapter 25**

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1. There was one more river to cross. What was its name?
  2. The men worked from dawn until dusk in preparation for this stage of the journey. What were they doing?
  3. How were they able to navigate the dangerous river?
  4. What was necessary in places where the rapids were too dangerous?
  5. The journey began to reveal itself in the appearance of its travelers. What had happened, even to the children?

### **Chapter 26**

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1. What wonderful gift was given to the wagon train at Fort Vancouver?
  2. Who provided the gift?
  3. Doctor McLoughlin was superintendent of the Hudson's Bay Company business in Oregon Country. What did the Indians call him?
  4. This fort had more facilities than any other the train had visited. List several.
  5. How long would it be now till they reached their new homeland?

### **Chapter 27**

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1. Sum up the end of the Stephen Company's journey.

## **Answers**

### **Chapter 1**

1. Jerry, age seven, and Jim, age eleven, who were cousins, and Myra Dean, age six, the doctor's little girl
2. Mother and Father passed away. Auntie Kay, his nanny, was unable to make the trip because "she had the rheumatiz," and was not able to climb up and down from the wagon.
3. 2,000 miles; approximately six months' travel time
4. They usually left at four o'clock. It took two hours to prepare to move out. The alarm clock was a bugle and gun shots.
5. johnny cake—cornbread fried over open flame in grease from bacon rinds, served with molasses

## **Chapter 2**

1. her china doll named Annabelle, with painted wavy black hair
2. Michael O'Reilly trying forcefully to get his donkey to follow him
3. scratched the donkey's nose and spoke sweetly to him to convince him to follow Michael
4. Laura appeared in Myra's wagon red eyed from crying and explained that Myra's mother was helping the doctor with the sick. She didn't mention the baby that died while she helped the child get ready for the day. Laura and Dan Thompson, brother and sister orphans, were traveling with the wagon train in exchange for helping out where they were asked.
5. walk by the wagons with Jerry and Jim

## **Chapter 3**

1. Kentucky, Tennessee, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa and Missouri
2. hunted, fished, often fought each other over the buffalo herds, lived in wigwams, tepees, and wood or skin lodges
3. Great Medicine Road of the Whites
4. stories of free fertile land, abundant rain, mild sunshine
5. Every five wagons called a platoon, had a captain. The judge and jury were chosen by the captains.

## **Chapter 4**

1. Michael, Dan and Beauty brought in a fallen tree
2. held outside at night with wolves howling in the distance
3. "Let the strongest take what he wants."
4. keep a close eye on Jerry and try to cheer up his mother to keep her from worrying

5. "Robert Brooks - Aged 10 - Died June 1, 1843"

## **Chapter 5**

1. They pretended to be hunting, but were really scouting to see what they could take from travelers.
2. tobacco
3. Boxes and sacks were put behind wagon wheels so movement behind the barricade could not be seen by Indians.
4. They stampeded by yelling wildly and fanning the air with buffalo robes. The people lost fifty horses and mules, ten oxen and fifteen head of cattle.
5. Some thought they should have shot the Indians to stop them from raiding their herds. The captain would rather lose cattle than people and was sure Indians would have come after scalps to avenge the loss of their tribesmen.

## **Chapter 6**

1. The children were excited at the prospect of crossing the river. The adults were apprehensive because of stories they'd heard about the river and what lay beyond— plains, deserts, and mountains to be crossed.
2. strong undercurrents able to sweep even oxen off their feet and quicksand that could trap the animals or mire the wagon and keep them from crossing
3. 300 miles since they left Missouri
4. prairie dog
5. Indians made it as an offering of Thanksgiving to the Great Spirit.

## **Chapter 7**

1. Strips of fabric were stuffed in cracks and coated with tar; floors were lined with buffalo robes or canvas. Wheels were removed to float wagons or wagon boxes were raised with chocks to keep them out of the water.
2. oxen didn't require guiding reins, they responded to spoken commands
3. The lead oxen on the Benjamins' wagon stumbled, halting progress of other oxen and their wagon. All oxen and the wagon then stuck in the quicksand.
4. threw the baby to her husband and jumped into a square canvas sheet held by four men
5. They were shot to prevent them from suffering further by drowning.

## **Chapter 8**

1. sign language; Crow
2. Crow Indians were notorious for pick pocketing.
3. They wanted food and to look inside the circle of wagons. They were provided with a meal.
4. They had stolen all the dishes and cups.
5. dowry chest

## **Chapter 9**

1. Answers will vary. Essential items would include robes, cloaks, hats, moccasins, leggings, teepees, thread, dishes, tools arrowheads, and, of course, meat.

## **Chapter 10**

1. Prairie dogs were not dogs at all, but resembled squirrels or rats.
2. Bear Cavern—looked like a bear in a cave  
Sleeping Giant—reminded the children of a giant resting his head on his shaggy arm  
Fluttering Angel—looked like an angel with wings widespread  
Courthouse Rock—had a domed rock at the top resembling the Capitol  
Chimney Rock—a tall spire with no smoke  
Scott's Bluff—in memory of a gallant hunter who was injured, abandoned, and died alone
3. gathering buffalo chips to burn
4. skeletons of animals, discarded furniture, graves of travelers, cute prairie dogs replaced by rattlesnakes
5. Many were walking barefoot. Alkali dust burned their feet and cactus thorns stuck in skin.

## **Chapter 11**

1. American Fur Company, used solely to safeguard trade with the Indians
2. be on their guard, treat Indians fairly, and show no fear
3. to trade his horses for the blond haired little girl, Myra
4. It offended and humiliated him. He thought it was an honor to offer his horses in trade.
5. The name was Little Daughter of the Rising Sun. He was convinced the Great Spirit had picked her to be the wife of his young son when they grew up and his son became Chief.

## **Chapter 12**

1. say they were honored by offer, flatter him, and offer gifts, but keep child hidden
2. three horses, a white buffalo robe, and whistle made from eagle's wing bone

3. Medicine man—in healing chants  
Warriors—wore as charm for protection  
Sundancers—thanksgiving and petitioning Great Spirit  
Thunder fighters—frighten away thunder storms

4. Myra would be raised as his daughter, intended as bride to new chief.

5. If they didn't comply to his wish, their trip would be filled with danger.

### **Chapter 13**

1. a chief respected by all tribes, a warrior dreaded on battlefield, a wise man to be looked to for counsel, a good example for young men

2. mother: religious and moral training, schooling in language, tribal legends  
father: physical training, learning to be a warrior, hunting

3. fanatical ambition to provide for Young War Eagle's triumphant future

4. thrown from a wild horse and slipped into a deep coma

5. fearful the Great Spirit would take his child as he'd tried to take someone else's

### **Chapter 14**

1. Answers will vary.

### **Chapter 15**

1. His tepee was the largest and finest, requiring many horses to move it from place to place.

2. Gowns, moccasins and hair bands were of soft white deerskin trimmed with fringe and porcupine quill embroidery. Many examples of porcupine quill embroidery are available on the internet.

3. invited to join the chief in a meal of stewed meat

4. white buffalo robe, bone whistle, and horses

5. would be a sign to Dakota family that wagon train had a claim to their friendship

### **Chapter 16**

1. rattlesnakes and poisonous water

2. deserted Indian village

3. They saw many platforms supported by tall poles, each holding a large bundle. Underneath the platforms were designs of circles and stars made out of bones—an Indian burial ground.

4. Indians dancing around to ward off the "thunder birds" by shooting arrows into the sky

5. planned a day of celebration to honor the country's birthday

### **Chapter 17**

1. Answers will vary.

### **Chapter 18**

1. Rocky Mountain trappers

2. dressed more as Indians than white men, timid, lived 15 years in mountain wilds, anxious to talk with American families to hear and speak English

3. A bear scratched his face and forever disfigured him.

4. worked independently from any fur-trading company, arranged his own sales or trading for necessary supply items

5. showed no fear because Indians admire courage; turned and faced his final assailant

### **Chapter 19**

1. Everything that was nonessential had to be left behind. Their feet were bound with buckskin and rawhide.

2. the halfway point in their journey

3. wolves, bears, and bighorn sheep

4. an Indian was shot and killed by mistake

5. either spying or hunting for food himself

### **Chapter 20**

1. resting place, opportunity to buy food and clothing, have animals shod, overhaul wagons, mail letters back east via traders or hunters going that way

2. Buckskin held water like a sponge, then dried stiff as board. If the boys were sitting down when the pants dried, it was barely possible to unbend their knees to stand.

3. They really found Indians. Jim recalled what he'd heard about not showing fear. He sent Jerry running back to the wagon train and stood up to the Indians himself.

4. taken captive

5. stay and search for Jim while his wife and Jerry moved on with the wagon train

### **Chapter 21**

1. gave Jerry an opportunity to escape
2. bound him, blindfolded him and knocked him unconscious to take him to their camp
3. rubbed his bound wrists back and forth over the sharp edge of a bone bowl to cut rope
4. carefully freed his feet and slithered away inch by inch
5. ran until he couldn't run any longer and then hid in the cleft of a rock

## **Chapter 22**

1. a trapper, known commonly as Uncle Jack Robinson
2. A fringe from his pants had come off while running. This made Jack curious enough to search.
3. carried Jim after he cut the fringe from his pants so the Indians couldn't track them as easily
4. Betsy, his rifle, and Molly, his mare
5. sign that said the water was good in this location but bad for two days ahead

## **Chapter 23**

1. grass for livestock, clean water, wildflowers, trout, curious Snake Indians
2. Wyoming and Idaho
3. Fort Hall
4. told that wagons would never make it over the remaining terrain
5. Doctor Dean left it beside the trail to lighten the load, but Michael picked it up and put it on Beauty's back to travel the rest of the way.

## **Chapter 24**

1. Answers will vary.

## **Chapter 25**

1. Columbia River
2. building flat rafts for the people to ride on the week-long journey down the river
3. hired voyageurs (guides), employees of the Hudson's Bay Company, to lead the way
4. women and children walked along the Indian paths
5. even the smallest individuals on the wagon train had lost significant amounts of weight

## **Chapter 26**

1. breakfast like no other they'd had in recent months: potatoes, salmon, bread, butter, tea, milk and sugar
2. Doctor McLoughlin at Fort Vancouver
3. White Chief or White-headed Eagle
4. school, hospital, store, sawmill, grist mill, barns, stables, granaries, homes
5. only a few weeks more

## **Chapter 27**

1. Answers will vary.