



Jo's Journey
Nikki Tate

Interest level: ages 8–11
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128 pages
AR Quiz # 107112

Consider the following question as you read *Jo's Journey*:
When is wearing a disguise a good idea?

Story

It's 1862 and orphan Jo has made it from Carson City, Nevada, to San Francisco without anyone figuring out that she's a girl in boys' clothing. When she hears talk of gold strikes in the Cariboo, Jo and her friend Bart sign on for what turns out to be a journey far more difficult and dangerous than anything they experienced as Pony Express riders.

Author

Nikki Tate is the author of more than a dozen books for children, including *Jo's Triumph*, her first story about the spunky orphan girl in the Wild West. Nikki was first bitten by the gold bug when she was a child vacationing in northern British Columbia. She now lives on a tiny farm on Vancouver Island, surrounded by horses, goats, birds, dogs, cats and koi. When she's not writing, Nikki works as a professional storyteller and writing workshop leader.

Connecting to the Curriculum*Language Arts*

- Jo travels incognito, or in disguise. Have students make a list of the pros and cons of such a venture. Consider what alternatives she might have had.
- Mr. Emerson sounds and acts like a rather unpleasant character. Have students write a paragraph describing his character, in either a positive or negative way. Draw a portrait of him to accompany the writing.
- A variety of equipment is required when you go in search of gold. It may include: a sluice box, a gold pan, a shovel, tweezers, a magnet, an area map and claim tags. Find out what each is used for and then create a picture dictionary related to gold and the gold rush.
- Using primary sources as suggested in the Social Studies section below, have students write about what they think is going on in the pictures they view.
- Jo's journey to the Cariboo is filled with hardship and challenges. As either Jo or Bart, have students write journal entries for five days describing how they or one of the other characters felt along the way. You may want them to illustrate their entries.
- Using primary sources from the Resources section or another source of your choice, look at pictures taken during the time of the gold rush in the Cariboo. Have students collect four or five pictures that are related in some way and write a short story connecting the photos.

Social Studies

- Jo's party hires six horses to help them haul supplies up to Antler Creek. Throughout history, horses have been important to humans for a variety of reasons. Divide students into several smaller groups. Assign each group a different historical time period and culture. Each group must research that time period to reveal the importance of horses in that culture and age.
- On a map of North America, mark out the route that Jo takes from San Francisco to the Cariboo. Label key cities and bodies of water. Using a map key, calculate the distance they travel.
- In *Jo's Journey*, travelers carried all their supplies with them on their journey. This was a challenging task. Divide your class into five or six groups and assign them the task of packing for such a trip. Discuss basic human needs—food, clothing, shelter and water—then decide what they would take along, with an explanation of their choices.

- Divide students into small groups to research the Cariboo Gold Rush. Students will create a PowerPoint presentation to share with the class. Using the jigsaw strategy, where each student becomes an “expert” in the subject, students should include information about the geography of the region, the struggles faced by prospectors, and the development of towns and settlements in support of the gold rush.
- The *Eleanor Lancaster* was a sailing ship that traveled in 1849 from the gold fields of Australia to those in California, bringing passengers who had heard of the gold rush. Have students find out more about sailing and steamships and how they were connected to the gold rush.
- Travel by steamship up and down the west coast of North America was common in the 1800s. The S.S. *Beaver* was the first steamship to travel up the Pacific coastline. These vessels were originally intended to move coal, but were also instrumental in the gold rush. Have students find out how the S.S. *Beaver* and other steamships were used in the gold rush. Where are those ships today?
- At the end of *Jo's Journey*, Bart names the creek Jobart's Creek. Many place names originated in much the same way. Discuss how some familiar landmarks in your city were named, including your school. Assign students to choose two place names in your local area to find out who named them or how they were named.
- Some famous names that are connected to the gold rush are: Levi Strauss, Billy Barker, Phillip Armour, Eleanor McClatchy, Judge Matthew Begbie and John Cameron. Find out what contribution each made to the gold rush. Create a gold rush newspaper highlighting an event or two that these people were involved in.

Science

- There are two kinds of gold deposits: *placer* and *lode*. The former is found in the sediment of stream beds; the latter is found in veins in the rockbed. Have students conduct research to find out information about each kind of deposit. What are the current methods of extraction? How do these differ from the days of the gold rush?
- Gold is found on the periodic table of elements. With students, investigate gold's structure and special features. Discuss similar metals. What makes gold so valuable to humans?
- As a class or in small groups, find out how steamships work. What replaced steamships as a method of transport? What is the most common method of marine transport nowadays?

Art

- Using original photographs found on one of the historic websites listed below or another of your choice, have students create a picture of what that location might look like today. Using archival photographs of your own community, have students do the same before-and-after activity.
- At the end of chapter 1, Jo and Bart are on the ship, the *Sierra Nevada*, heading north to British Columbia and the gold fields. Have students draw the steamship and the scenery the passengers would see enroute from San Francisco to Fort Victoria.
- Look at pictures of the steamships and sailing vessels that traveled up and down the Pacific Coast during the gold rush. Have students draw or build one of these ships in detail.
- Lighthouses are an important part of coastal navigation. Discuss with students the reasons for, and placement of, lighthouses along the west coast. Have them select a photo of a lighthouse (past or present) and create a paper collage (see link below for lesson).
- In chapter 7, the woodsmen build a bridge. Have students draw it after reading the section describing its construction.

Drama

- Jo disguises herself to go on her journey to the gold fields of the Cariboo. Have students act out key scenes where Jo's disguise either helps or hinders her.
- Using the original photographs found on one of the historic websites listed below, have students create short skits around what they see in the photos. They may be able to connect their skits to events from *Jo's Journey*.
- Choosing different events from the story, have students create scenarios around whether or not a given character has made the right decision. For example: In chapter 14, when Jo finds Bart barely alive; at the end of chapter 8, when Jo doesn't confess to Bart that she is a girl; or in chapter 6 when Mr. Emerson tells the group to stop.

Connecting to the Text

- Have students choose one character from *Jo's Journey* that they didn't particularly like. Ask students to write a paragraph explaining their feelings for that character. In another paragraph, ask students to draw some inferences about why that person might behave the way s/he does. Finally, have students provide specific examples of how they could change that character to be more likeable.

- Nikki Tate uses similes to enhance the description in *Jo's Journey*. For example: "I felt stunned, as if I had been struck a physical blow..." and "I leaned forward into my work like a carthorse and concentrated on the progress of my leather boots." Have students find three more similes from the book. Divide a page in two and illustrate each simile both literally and figuratively. Then, using these as starters, have students write their own similes relating to events from *Jo's Journey* and illustrate them.
- In chapter 1, we learn that Jo has disguised herself as a boy. She has to remember to stand, walk and even talk a certain way so she won't be found out. Why is it so important that she not be discovered? Ask students to brainstorm a list of other books, TV shows or movies where characters have assumed fake identities. Have students choose one of these characters and write a paragraph explaining why it's so important for that character's true identity not to be discovered in their story. Share these with the class.
- Discuss adages. An adage is a traditional saying expressing a common experience or observation. Jo's father used to say: "Settling is for mud in the bottom of a river, not for a man with dreams." What does this mean? Can students think of any other sayings that have this wise, adage-like quality?
- Nikki Tate is skilled at using dialogue to move the story along. The words her characters exchange are meaningful, exciting and informative for the reader. Have students locate a few passages with interesting dialogue. Share these with the group. Have students select a passage of expository text (one with no dialogue) and turn it into meaningful dialogue between two or more characters. Possible scenes to rewrite: the first paragraph of chapter 4; the section in chapter 5 where Bart is watched by a number of men as he out-gambles the pale man on the steamship; or when Jo's party is passed by a pack of camels in the swamp.

Connecting to the Students—Discussion Questions

1. In chapter 1, Jo asks Bart whether he'd like to leave the livery and go do something else. Bart teases Jo for always looking for something better—and he tells her that different isn't always better. Is he right? Explain.
2. As you see it, why does Jo so badly want Bart to come along on the trip? Why is she so worried that he'll turn back?
3. Why is Jo so determined to make it to the gold claim?
4. Seeing the mother and daughter on the ship makes Jo's heart ache. She says she wants to tear out the memories and throw them overboard so she doesn't have to deal with them anymore. Have you ever been upset by sad memories like this? What do you do to cope?

5. As you see it, how hard would it be to keep up a false front like Jo does? If you were in Jo's position, what would be the hardest part for you?
6. Throughout the book, Jo shows herself to be a reasonably good judge of character. She has a good understanding of what motivates a person. How does this help her as she faces the challenges along the journey to the gold fields? Do you consider yourself to be a good judge of character? Why or why not?
7. At one point in the journey, the horse Jo is leading falls to his death from a narrow ledge. She feels shocked, devastated, and incredibly guilty. How does Sassafrass's death change the way Jo views the journey to the gold fields? What do you think about how Jo's feelings change?
8. When people drop away from the quest for the gold fields, turning back with other parties that have been unsuccessful, Jo wonders who the smart ones really are. Who do you think are the fools, and who are the wise ones? Is there a lesson in there for us?
9. Although Jo desperately wants Bart to continue on the journey with her, she doesn't pressure him. She resists the urge to control him in order to get what she wants. How hard is this? Do you sometimes try to control other people so that things can go your way?

Author's Note

Dear Reader,

Before I began to write *Jo's Journey* I had no idea how brutally difficult it was to get to the Cariboo during the early days of the gold rush. Fortunately, some of the miners who made the arduous journey kept journals and wrote letters home. W. Champness, Jo Lindley, Wm. Mark and John B. Wilkinson wrote accounts I found particularly useful. Reading them was so grueling I had to keep stopping to rest and make cups of tea.

Because this is a fairly short book, many of the trials and tribulations had to be left out of the final draft, but hopefully you'll get a sense of what life must have been like for those hardy souls who set off to seek their fortunes in the wilderness.

Knowing how difficult it must have been to travel through the wilderness before the Cariboo Road was built, the thought that intrepid souls lugged heavy camera equipment into the middle of nowhere is nothing short of astounding. Early photographs of the Cariboo were both informative and inspiring—can you imagine how you would have felt if you had seen a camel on your travels through the mountains of British Columbia? When I saw photographs of these ungainly beasts I just knew I had to add them to the story. I am very fortunate to live close to Victoria, home of the Royal BC Museum. At the museum I was able to see many items used by miners, read accounts

of their journeys, and imagine what it must have been like to travel in the interior of British Columbia during the 1860s. I think that doing the research for this book was a lot more fun than it would have been to actually make the journey during the Cariboo Gold Rush!

Nikki Tate

Resources

Books

Fiction

- Berton, Pierre. *Before the Gold Rush; City of Gold; The Klondike Stampede*
 Coerr, Eleanor. *Chang's Paper Pony*
 Dole, Mayra L. *Drum, Chavi, Drum!*
 Duncan, Sandy Francis. *Cariboo Runaway; Gold Rush Orphan*
 Fleischman, Sid. *By the Great Horn Spoon!*
 Gaetz, Dayle Campbell. *The Golden Rose*
 Galloway, Priscilla. *Our Canadian Girl, Lisa: Overland to the Cariboo*
 Gregory, Kristiana. *Seeds of Hope: The Gold Rush Diary of Susanna Fairchild*
 Howarth-Attard, Barbara. *A Trail of Broken Dreams: The Gold Rush Diary of Harriet Palmer*
 Hutchins, Hazel. *I'd Know You Anywhere*
 Kay, Verla. *Gold Fever; Covered Wagons; Bumpy Trails*
 Kerr, P.B. *Children of the Lamp: The Akbenaten Adventure*
 Kroll, Steven. *Pony Express!*
 Lawson, Julie. *Destination Gold; The Klondike Cat*
 Levitin, Sonia. *Nine for California; Boom Town*
 Manuel, Lynn. *Camels Always Do*
 Mills, J.C. *The Goodfellow Chronicles*
 Reinstedt, Randy. *Tales and Treasures of the Gold Rush*
 Stevenson, Robert Louis. *The Little Land*
 Ruurs, Margriet. *Me and Martha Black*
 Tate, Nikki. *Jo's Triumph*
 Walsh, Ann. *Moses, Me and Murder*

Nonfiction

- Greenwood, Barbara. *Gold Rush Fever: The Story of the Klondike 1898* (971.9)
 Henry, Tom. *The Good Company* (387.2)
 Kalman, Bobbie. *The Gold Rush* (338.2); *The Life of a Miner* (662)
 Klein, James. *Gold Rush! The Young Prospector's Guide to Striking it Rich* (622.34)
 Langston, Laura. *Pay Dirt! The Search for Gold in British Columbia*
 Malczewski, Carol and M.R. Burke. *Barkerville: Boom or Bust?*
 Martin, Carol. *Martha Black: A Gold Rush Pioneer* (971.9)

Sheret, R. *Smoke, Ash and Steam: West Coast Steam Engines*
Stead, Tony. *Is That a Fact? Teaching Nonfiction Writing K-3* (372.62)
Woodworth, Meredith Bain. *Land of Dreams: A History in Photographs of the
British Columbia Interior*
Wright, Richard Thomas. *Barkerville: A Gold Rush Experience*

Online

Lighthouse collages

www.princetonol.com/groups/iad/lessons/elem/poinsett_lesson.html

Nikki Tate's Homepage

www.nikkitate.com

The American Experience/Gold Fever

www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/gold

Pony Express National Historic Trail

www.nps.gov/poex/index.htm

The Gold Rush

www.isu.edu/~trinmich/fever.html

Historic Barkerville

www.barkerville.ca

Vancouver Maritime Museum

www.vancouvermaritimemuseum.com

Mining Techniques of the Gold Rush

www.sierrafoothillmagazine.com/goldmethods.html

British Columbia Archives

www.bcarchives.gov.bc.ca/index.htm

Gold Facts

www.goldgold.com/goldfacts.htm

Famous People of the Gold Rush

<http://projects.edtech.sandi.net/balboa/goldrush/teacher.htm>

Cariboo Gold Rush/Barkerville
www.cariboogoldrush.com/barker/index.htm

The Cariboo Trail
www.humanities.mcmaster.ca/~pjohnson/h5trail.html

The Cariboo Gold Rush
www.cariboogoldrush.com

Pony Express History
www.ponyexpress.org/history.htm

History of the United States Postal Service
www.usps.com/postalhistory/welcome.htm

Women in the Gold Rush
www.goldrush.com/~joann

The Maritime Heritage Project: Maritime History, Gold Rush Ships and Passengers.
www.maritimeheritage.org/PassLists/mining.html

Our Canadian Girl
www.ourcanadiangirl.ca/lisa_history.php

Steamships
www.saburchill.com/history/chapters/IR/033.html

The California Gold Country
<http://malakoff.com/goldcountry/history.htm>