

# Decision at Fort Laramie

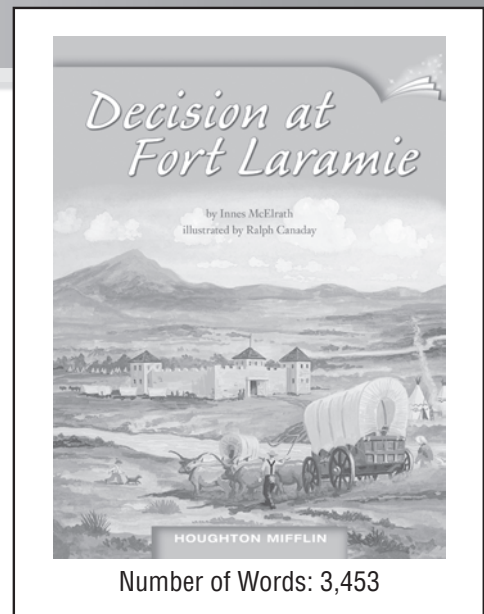
by Innes McElrath

Fountas-Pinnell Level W

Historical Fiction

## Selection Summary

The Wheaten family travels west on the Oregon Trail. The hardships they face include deep rivers to cross, the threat of cholera, and the difficulty of finding clean water to drink. When young Alice Wheaten falls ill with influenza, the family heads for Fort Laramie to find a doctor.



## Characteristics of the Text

<b>Genre</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Historical fiction</li> </ul>
<b>Text Structure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Third-person narrative</li> <li>• Chapter breaks divide the text</li> <li>• Many long paragraphs</li> </ul>
<b>Content</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Details about westward travel</li> <li>• Difficulties faced by families on the Oregon Trail</li> <li>• Families and groups of families working together</li> </ul>
<b>Themes and Ideas</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is important for families to stick together.</li> <li>• It is worth taking chances to try for a better life.</li> <li>• Traveling on the Oregon Trail was very difficult.</li> </ul>
<b>Language and Literary Features</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dialogue has formal, nineteenth-century feel.</li> <li>• Dialogue in narrative sections supports the details about dangers faced</li> </ul>
<b>Sentence Complexity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many complex sentences</li> <li>• Dependent clauses</li> <li>• Adjectives highlight extremes of weather and other challenges</li> </ul>
<b>Vocabulary</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many difficult words: <i>burdensome, cooed, emigrants, cholera</i></li> <li>• Nineteenth-century terms: <i>bullwhip, grippe, roadside telegraph</i></li> </ul>
<b>Words</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many multisyllable words: <i>sheepishly, dismayed, treacherous</i></li> </ul>
<b>Illustrations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Illustrations show historical setting</li> </ul>
<b>Book and Print Features</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seventeen pages of text with illustrations on most pages</li> <li>• Six chapter headings</li> </ul>
© 2006. Fountas, I.C. & Pinnell, G.S. <i>Teaching for Comprehending and Fluency</i> , Heinemann, Portsmouth, N.H.	

Copyright © by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company

All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying or recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner unless such copying is expressly permitted by federal copyright law.

Permission is hereby granted to individual teachers using the corresponding (discipline) Leveled Readers to photocopy student worksheets from this publication in classroom quantities for instructional use and not for resale. Requests for information on other matters regarding duplication of this work should be addressed to Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, Attn: Contracts, Copyrights, and Licensing, 9400 SouthPark Center Loop, Orlando, Florida 32819.

Printed in the U.S.A.

978-0-547-30683-4 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 0940 15 14 13 12 11 10 09

If you have received these materials as examination copies free of charge, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company retains title to the materials and they may not be resold. Resale of examination copies is strictly prohibited.

Possession of this publication in print format does not entitle users to convert this publication, or any portion of it, into electronic format.

# Decision at Fort Laramie

by Innes McElrath

## Build Background

Help students use their experience with travel to visualize the story. Build interest by asking questions such as the following: *Has your family ever moved to a different neighborhood, city, or state? If so, were you excited about moving, frightened about moving, or both?* Read the title and author, and talk about the cover illustration. Tell students that this story is historical fiction. Ask them to describe the kind of information they expect to find in this kind of selection.

## Introduce the Text

Guide students through the text, noting important ideas, and helping with unfamiliar language and vocabulary so they can read the text successfully. Here are some suggestions:

**Pages 2–3:** Tell students that the story focuses heavily on Alice Wheaten and the many responsibilities that she has. Look at the illustrations.

**Suggested language: Cholera**, *originating in dirty water, was considered to be one of the deadliest dangers on the Oregon Trail. What might be some other difficulties facing families migrating in prairie schooners?*

**Page 6:** Explain to students that families had to be resourceful, and collected **buffalo chips**. Read the last two sentences of the first paragraph. **Ask:** *What was the primary use for buffalo chips?*

**Page 8:** Read the description of Alice’s illness in the fifth paragraph. **Ask:** *What is the meaning of the term **grippe**?* Explain to students that the term we use today is influenza.

**Page 9:** Read the chapter heading. Explain that Fort Laramie was a place for wagon trains to rest and resupply. **Ask:** *What sorts of supplies might the Wheaten family have needed for their journey?*

*Now turn back to the beginning of the story to read about the Wheatens’ journey along the Oregon Trail.*

## Expand Your Vocabulary

**buffalo chips** – pieces of dried bovine dung, p. 6

**cholera** - an acute infectious disease of the small intestine, p. 2

**emigrants** – someone who leaves one’s country or region to settle in another, p. 2

**encampment** – a place set up or occupied as a camp, p. 17

**grippe** – influenza, p. 8

**prairie schooner** – a covered wagon, drawn by horses or oxen, p. 3

# Read

Have students read silently while you listen to individual students read aloud. Support their understanding of the text as needed.

Remind students to use the Visualize Strategy  **TARGET STRATEGY** and to try to form a picture in their minds about what they read.

## Discuss and Revisit the Text

### Personal Response

Invite students to share their personal responses to the story.

**Suggested language:** *If you were living in the nineteenth century, would you take a risk by traveling the Oregon Trail? Why or why not?*

### Ways of Thinking

As you discuss the text, help students understand these points:

Thinking Within the Text	Thinking Beyond the Text	Thinking About the Text
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Wheaten family is traveling on the Oregon Trail.</li><li>• They face many hardships.</li><li>• Illness is a major problem for the Wheatens and for other families on the Oregon Trail.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Working together with others is essential to solving big problems.</li><li>• People can find hidden strengths within themselves in times of crisis.</li><li>• Pets can be considered as loyal family members.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The story is told by a third-person narrator.</li><li>• The author includes many details about the old west.</li><li>• The map provides information about both the setting and plot.</li></ul>

© 2006. Fountas, I.C. & Pinnell, G.S. *Teaching for Comprehending and Fluency*, Heinemann, Portsmouth, N.H.

### Choices for Further Support

- **Fluency** Invite students to work in partners and choose passages from the text to demonstrate emphasis. Remind them to choose passages in which italics or all capitals are used. Students should consider why the author has chosen to emphasize certain words with italics or capital letters.
- **Comprehension** Based on your observations of the students' reading and discussion, revisit parts of the text to clarify or extend comprehension. Remind students to go back to the text to support their ideas.
- **Phonics/Word Work** Provide practice as needed with words and word parts, using examples from the text. Remind students that the word root *dis* can mean "opposite of." An example from the story is *discouragement* on page 7. Other examples of this usage include *dissuade*, *disparage*, and *disappear*. Have students use the meaning of the word root *dis* to explain the meaning of each word.

# Writing about Reading

## Critical Thinking

Have students complete the Critical Thinking questions on BLM 21.9.

## Responding

Have students complete the activities at the back of the book, using their Reader's Notebook. Use the instruction below as needed to reinforce or extend understanding of the comprehension skill.

## Target Comprehension Skill

**Sequence of Events** ✓ **TARGET SKILL** Remind students that sequence of events is critical to understanding a story. Stories like this one describe sequence in chronological order. Model how to add details to the Graphic Organizer, using a “Think Aloud” like the one below:

### Think Aloud

*After Ollie goes missing, the Wheaten family heads for Fort Laramie because Alice is very sick. After Ollie is reunited with the family at Fort Laramie, the Wheatens give a lot of thought to whether or not to continue on to Oregon. List these as two important details in the sequence of events.*

## Practice the Skill

Encourage students to share an example of another story in which sequence of events is provided in chronological order.

## Writing Prompt: Thinking Beyond the Text

Have students write a response to the writing prompt on page 6. Remind them that when they think beyond the text, they use their personal knowledge to reach new understandings.

## Assessment Prompts

- What were two obstacles that the Wheaten family faced in this story?
- What are three examples of how the author used historical details in the story?
- What is the meaning of the word **encampment** on page 17?

# English Language Development

**Reading Support** Make sure the text matches the student’s reading level. Language and content should be accessible with regular teaching support. Remind students that the Wheaten family would face many hardships while traveling on the Oregon Trail.

**Cultural Support** The story provides important background information on the importance of westward expansion in American history. Remind students that many parts of the West were sparsely populated until fairly recently. You might tell students that Oklahoma did not become a state until 1907, and that New Mexico and Arizona achieved statehood only in 1912.

## Oral Language Development

Check student comprehension, using a dialogue that best matches your students’ English proficiency. **Speaker 1** is the teacher, **Speaker 2** is the student.

Beginning/Early Intermediate	Intermediate	Early Advanced/ Advanced
<p><b>Speaker 1:</b> Who is telling the story?</p> <p><b>Speaker 2:</b> a third-person narrator</p> <p><b>Speaker 1:</b> Where are the Wheatens headed?</p> <p><b>Speaker 2:</b> Oregon</p> <p><b>Speaker 1:</b> How does the family carry its belongings?</p> <p><b>Speaker 2:</b> in a wagon</p>	<p><b>Speaker 1:</b> Why does Martin join the Wheatens?</p> <p><b>Speaker 2:</b> He is an orphan who wants to go to Oregon.</p> <p><b>Speaker 1:</b> Why does the family stop at Fort Laramie?</p> <p><b>Speaker 2:</b> They stop to find a doctor because Alice is very ill with influenza.</p>	<p><b>Speaker 1:</b> Why do groups of families travel in wagon trains?</p> <p><b>Speaker 2:</b> Traveling together allows families to be safer and to help each other. The families can also keep each other company, especially at night when they set up camp and have time to visit together.</p>

### Responding

**TARGET SKILL** **Sequence of Events** What events lead up to Martin joining the Wheaten family on their trip to Oregon Territory? Copy and complete the chart below, adding additional boxes as necessary.

Event: Ollie goes missing on the trail before Fort Laramie.

↓

Event: ?

↓

Event: ?

**Write About It**

**Text to Self** The Wheaten family buys provisions and has their wagon repaired at Fort Laramie. Think about the preparations your family makes before taking a trip. Write several paragraphs explaining how to prepare for such a trip.

19

Lesson 21  
BLACKLINE MASTER 21.9

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Critical Thinking

**Read and answer the questions.** Possible responses shown.

- Think within the text** What is the correct sequence of the following events of the story: July 4<sup>th</sup> at Independence Rock; Harry is almost run over by a wagon; Ollie returns, accompanied by Martin Campbell; Alice gets sick with influenza; Alice finds a diary; Harry is almost run over by a wagon; Alice finds a diary; Alice gets sick with influenza; Ollie returns, accompanied by Martin Campbell; July 4<sup>th</sup> celebration at Independence Rock.  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- Think within the text** What decision does Alice help her family make at Fort Laramie?  
 to continue their journey and take Martin along  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- Think beyond the text** Why do you think so many people were willing to emigrate to Oregon even though the journey was difficult?  
 Many people thought life would be better in Oregon.  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- Think about the text** Why do you think the author chooses to end the story with the Fourth of July celebration at Independence Rock?  
 To show how much the people moving west love America; to show that Alice and her family are refreshed and ready for the next stage of their journey.  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Making Connections** Alice’s family moves to Oregon. If your family could move anywhere in the world, where would you want to move? Explain your answer.  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Write your answer in your Reader’s Notebook.**

Critical Thinking © Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. All rights reserved. 11 Grade 5, Unit 5: Under Western Skies



Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

# Critical Thinking

## Decision at Fort Laramie Critical Thinking

Read and answer the questions.

1. **Think within the text** What is the correct sequence of the following events of the story: Fourth of July at Independence Rock; Harry is almost run over by a wagon; Ollie returns, accompanied by Martin Campbell; Alice gets sick with influenza; Alice finds a diary?

---

---

---

2. **Think within the text** What decision does Alice help her family make at Fort Laramie?

---

---

3. **Think beyond the text** Why do you think so many people were willing to emigrate to Oregon even though the journey was difficult?

---

---

4. **Think about the text** Why do you think the author chooses to end the story with the Fourth of July celebration at Independence Rock?

---

---

---

**Making Connections** Alice's family moves to Oregon. If your family could move anywhere in the world, where would you want to move? Explain your answer.

**Write your answer in your Reader's Notebook.**

# Decision at Fort Laramie

## LEVEL W

**Decision at Fort Laramie**  
Running Record Form

page	Selection Text	Errors	Self-Corrections
16	<p>On a bright morning in late June, the wagon train left Fort Laramie. Alice was greatly recovered and had enough strength to walk for some hours each day. Martin, who had been exceedingly grateful when the Wheatens invited him to join their party, soon proved himself to be a hard worker and a pleasant companion on the trail.</p> <p>Eight days after leaving Fort Laramie, on the Fourth of July, the wagon train came to Independence Rock. The travelers were especially pleased to have arrived that day. It was said that if you reached Independence Rock by the Fourth of July, you were right on schedule.</p>		
	Comments:	<b>Accuracy Rate</b> (# words read correctly/105 × 100) _____ %	<b>Total Self-Corrections</b> _____

Behavior	Code	Error
Read word correctly	✓ cat	0
Repeated word, sentence, or phrase	Ⓜ cat	0
Omission	̄ cat	1

Behavior	Code	Error
Substitution	cut cat	1
Self-corrects	cut <sup>sc</sup> cat	0
Insertion	the ^ cat	1
Word told	Ⓢ cat	1

