A Gold Rush Story

My family and I left Independence, Missouri, in January of 1851. We headed west with forty other people to look for gold in California. We traveled for 2,000 miles in a covered wagon!

We arrived in Bear Creek, California, in August of that year. Ma says that Bear Creek is called a boom town because it grew so quickly. I think that’s a funny name!

Now we are living in a cabin in Bear Creek. There is no school in this town! Ma teaches my sister Mary and me. We have lessons every day. I hope that I can go to a REAL school soon.

Sometimes I help Pa look for gold. Some miners dig deep into the earth. Pa uses a gold pan instead. The pan is about eighteen inches across and it’s made of iron. The sides slope. I think it looks like a big pie pan!

The gold pan is simple and easy to use. First Pa puts some dirt in the pan. Then I fill it with water from a stream. The water breaks up bits of clay and dirt.

Pa shakes the pan gently from side to side. If there is any gold, it falls to the bottom. Then Pa moves the pan in a circle. When he does that, the lighter sand washes over the side of the pan.

Today we were really lucky. We looked down in the pan and found a nugget of gold! Boy, was Ma happy when we showed it to her! To be honest, on MOST days, we aren’t that lucky.
Answer the questions. You may reread parts of the passage to help you.

1. Which sentence BEST describes the beginning of the story?
   - Pa looks for gold.
   - Ma teaches the children at home.
   - The narrator and Pa find a gold nugget.
   - The family leaves Missouri and settles in California.

2. How is Pa DIFFERENT from the other miners?
   - He digs deep into the earth for gold.
   - He uses a gold pan to look for gold.
   - He doesn’t shake his gold pan.
   - He has never found gold.

3. If traveled means “made a journey,” what does traveler mean?
   - something a person travels in
   - a person who travels
   - a series of journeys
   - to plan a journey

4. What made Ma happy?
   - leaving Missouri
   - teaching her children
   - Pa finding a gold nugget
   - a school opening in town

5. What is life like for the family in California? Use details from the passage to support your answer. Write your response on another sheet of paper.