



# The Josefina Story Quilt

by Eleanor Coerr

## Teacher's Guide

Written By Linda Crosswhite

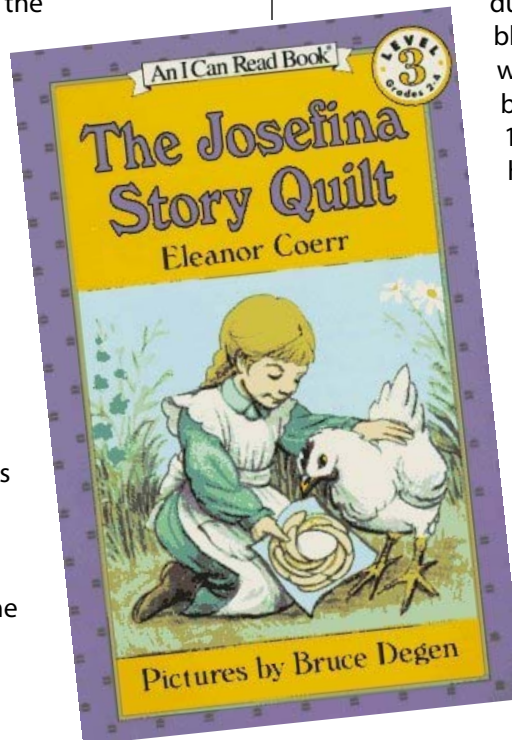


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## Synopsis

*The Josefina Story Quilt* is a historical fiction story about a girl and her hen traveling west in a covered wagon. As the family packed for the long journey, Faith was determined to bring along her pet hen, Josefina. There was no room for Josefina, she was old, and she did not lay eggs. However, Faith got her way, and Josefina went with the family in the wagon. While on the trip, Faith and Josefina had some adventures together, none of which pleased Faith's father very much. Then, just when it seemed Pa had lost all patience with Josefina, she laid an egg. From then on, she was more valuable. She provided eggs for the family to eat, and she used her last bit of energy to warn the family of some robbers. Everyone was very sad when Josefina died. But she would always be remembered through the patches of the quilt Faith made along the journey. In a note from the author, the reader learns more about the importance of patchwork quilts in the lives of settlers moving West.



between Henderson, Nevada, and Pebble Beach, California.

## Critic's Corner

*The Josefina Story Quilt* (1995) is an easy-to-read introduction to historical literature that won praise for making the topic of pioneers' experiences during the Westward Expansion accessible for children. School Library Journal wrote, "Children will appreciate Faith's bond with her pet and the details of an 1850 adventure. The story makes the history go down easily, and an author's note at the end fills in facts about the western trip and the place of quilts as pioneer diaries. ... On the whole, a good introduction to historical fiction that children can read for themselves."

## Bibliography

"Eleanor Coerr,"  
<[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eleanor\\_Coerr](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eleanor_Coerr)>  
"Eleanor Coerr Teacher Resource File," <<http://falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/coerr.htm>>

## Author Sketch

Eleanor Coerr was born May 29, 1922, in Kamsack, Saskatchewan, Canada. She attended the University of Saskatchewan and graduated from Kadel Airbrush School in 1945. Ms. Coerr also attended the American University and the University of Maryland. In 1965, she married Wymberley De Renne Coerr, a U.S. ambassador to South American countries.

As a child, Eleanor Coerr enjoyed reading books, writing and drawing. She began her writing career as a reporter and editor for the *Edmonton Journal*. In 1971, she became a librarian in Bethesda, Maryland. When her husband was the ambassador to Ecuador, she established the first children's library in that country. Ms. Coerr enjoys writing historical fiction and biographies, as well as lecturing and visiting schools across the United States and abroad. She currently shares her time

## Selected Other Books by Eleanor Coerr

*Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes*  
*Mieko and the Fifth Treasure*  
*Chang's Pony*  
*The Big Balloon Race*  
*S is for Silver: A Nevada Alphabet*

## Related Reading

Ackerman, Karen, *Araminta's Paint Box*  
Brenner, Barbara, *Wagon Wheels*  
Bulla, Clyde Robert, *Secret Valley*  
Byars, Betsy, *Golly Sisters Go West*  
Ernst, Lisa Campbell, *Sam Johnson and the Blue Ribbon Quilt*  
Flournoy, Valerie, *Patchwork Quilt*

# The Josefina Story Quilt Eleanor Coerr

Fradin, Dennis B., *Pioneers*  
Harvey, Brett, *Cassie's Journey: Going West in the 1860's*  
Hooks, William H., *Pioneer Cat*  
Johnston, Tony, *Quilt Story*  
Jonas, Ann, *Quilt*  
Knight, Amelia Stewart, *Way West: Journal of a Pioneer Woman*  
Levine, Ellen, *If You Traveled West in a Covered Wagon*  
Van Leeuwen, Jean, *Going West*  
Williams, David, *Grandma Essie's Covered Wagon*

## Themes and Motifs

- westward expansion
- pioneers
- pets
- moving
- families

## Goals and Objectives

- predicting chapters
- identifying the plot line
- making comparisons

## Comprehension Study

### BUILDING THE BACKGROUND

1. Initiate a discussion about moving. Encourage the students to share any experiences they have had in moving from another country, state, city, or neighborhood.
2. Display a quilt or pictures of quilts for students to view. Discuss how these quilts are made. Give the students an opportunity to discuss any quilts or blankets that have special meaning for them.
3. Bring in a hen in a cage for the class to observe. Provide an experience journal or chart so the students can record their observations.
4. Share the first page of the "Author's Note" found at the end of this book (p. 63). Have the students brainstorm the word pioneers. Record their responses.

### INTRODUCING THE BOOK

1. Present the book to the students. Have them locate the title, author and illustrator.
2. Have the students describe the characters and setting based on the cover. You may wish to ask the following questions:
  - How old do you think the girl is?
  - What does she have in her hand?
  - Based on the cover, when do you think this story took

place?

3. Turn to the table of contents and read the chapter titles. This is an appropriate time to teach the Skills and Strategies Activity predicting the chapters.

### PREREADING: SETTING THE PURPOSE FOR READING.

Have the children read to confirm their predictions and gain the meaning of the story.

### POST READING: CONFIRMING, ANALYZING, SYNTHESIZING OR EVALUATING THE READING

Encourage the children to share their feelings about the story. Assist the children in confirming their predictions.

### CHAPTER 1 - JOSEFINA:

#### Prereading

Assist the students in filling in their prediction chart for Chapter 1. Discuss the predictions made by the students. Have the students read this chapter to confirm these.

#### Post Reading

1. Initiate a discussion about Josefina. You may wish to ask the following questions about this chapter:
  - Would you like to have Josefina for a pet? Why?
  - Why doesn't Pa want Josefina to go along to California?
  - Why didn't any of the neighbors want Josefina?
2. This is an appropriate time to introduce the Skills and Strategies Activity on identifying the plot line and Writing Activity 1.
3. After reading Chapter 1, give the students an opportunity to select from Writing Activity 2, Social Studies Activity 1, Science/Health Activity 1 and/or Art Activity 1.

### CHAPTER 2 - CALIFORNIA, HO!

#### Prereading

1. Ask the students what they would do if they thought they were moving and they had to leave a pet behind. Discuss what they think Faith will do next.
2. Have the students fill in their prediction chart for Chapter 2 and read to confirm their predictions.

#### Post Reading

Reminder: Give the students an opportunity to continue Writing Activity 1.

1. Have the students discuss the preparations for the journey. The following questions can be asked to initiate further discussion:
  - What were some of the items placed in the wagon?
  - What else do you think they took along?
  - Why did Pa change his mind about taking Josefina

with them?

- Why were quilts so important for remembering?
2. After reading this chapter, students can select from Social Studies Activity 2, Art Activity 2 and/or Music/Drama Activity 1.

## CHAPTER 3 • TROUBLE

### Prereading

Ask the students to make predictions about the chapter based on the preceding events and the chapter title. These can be recorded on their prediction charts. Have them read to confirm their predictions.

### Post Reading

Reminder: Have the students continue Writing Activity 1.

1. Discuss the trouble that occurred in this chapter. You may wish to ask the following questions:
  - Why were the wagons placed in a circle?
  - What trouble did Josefina cause?
  - What problems could a stampede have caused?
  - Why did Pa give Josefina another chance?
2. Give the students a chance to discuss true friends who understand them.
3. This is an appropriate time to teach the Skills and Strategies Activity on making comparisons.
4. After reading this chapter, students can select from Science/Health Activity 2, Art Activity 3 and/or Music/Drama Activity 2.

## CHAPTER 4 • THE RESCUE

### Prereading

Ask the students to make predictions about the chapter based on the chapter title and record them on their prediction charts. Have the students read to confirm their predictions.

### Post Reading

Reminder: Have the students continue Writing Activity 1.

1. Initiate a discussion about how the river caused problems for the travelers. List these on the board or chart. You may wish to ask the following questions:
  - What happened when Josefina fell into the river?
  - Why was Josefina allowed to stay?
  - What will Faith's next patch for her quilt represent?
2. After reading this chapter, students can select from Writing Activity 3, Science/Health Activity 3 and/or Math Activity 1.

## CHAPTER 5 - ROBBERS!

### Prereading

1. Initiate a discussion about robbers. What do they usually take? Why?
2. Ask the students to make predictions about the chap-

ter based on its title. These can be recorded on their prediction charts. Have them read to confirm their predictions.

### Post Reading

Reminder: Have the students continue Writing Activity 1.

1. Have the students discuss the robbers in this story and how they compare to robbers today.
2. You may wish to ask the following questions about this chapter:
  - What happened on the trail when they reached the desert?
  - What did the Indians want to trade? What was finally traded?
  - Why did the robbers approach the wagons? What happened?
3. After reading this chapter, students can select from Writing Activity 4, Social Studies Activity 3, Social Studies Activity 4 and/or Art Activity 4.

## CHAPTER 6 - GOOD-BYE, JOSEFINA

### Prereading

Reminder: Have the students complete Writing Activity

1. You may wish to have them share these with a partner or in a small group. As a class, discuss what this chapter might be about based on the title. Have the students record their predictions on the charts and read the chapter to confirm these.

### Post Reading

1. Discuss the death of Josefina. Give the students an opportunity to share their experiences and feelings about the death of a pet.
2. You may wish to ask the following questions about this chapter:
  - What patch did Faith add to her quilt? Why?
  - Who helped finish the quilt?
  - Why did the quilt mean so much to her?
3. After reading this chapter, students can select from Writing Activity 5, Social Studies Activity 5 and/or Music/Drama Activity 3.

## TEACHING SKILLS AND STRATEGIES IN CONTEXT

### Predicting the chapters

1. Explain to the students that the titles of stories or chapters often give us clues to the content of the story. These can be used to predict what will happen.
2. Ask the students to look at the table of contents and read the chapter titles.
3. Before each chapter is read, have the students predict what the chapter will contain. Have them record their predictions.
4. Upon completion of the book, review the titles and

students' predictions to note how the title helped in predicting the events in the chapter.

### Identifying the plot line

This is done as the students write a diary from the character's point of view. Evaluate how well the students followed the storyline through the entries made after each chapter. Directions for this activity are in Writing Activity 1.

### Making comparisons

By comparing how things are alike and different, students form a better understanding of concepts presented. Have the students compare and contrast travel in 1850 and now on a two-column table.

## Across the Curriculum

### Writing

1. Assist the students in beginning a diary. Have them choose one character from the story. They will write an entry for each section of the story from the perspective of that person. At the back of their diaries, the students can also record unfamiliar words or phrases to be discussed.
2. Discuss favorite pets the students have had or would like to have. Give them an opportunity to write about the pet and illustrate the story. These can be shared as a class or in small groups. Display these on a bulletin board or compile them into a class book.
3. Give the students an opportunity to create an acrostic poem about a pet. This is done by writing the letters of the pet vertically and using each letter to begin a word or phrase that reflects something about the pet. Examples:

Fresh water  
In a tank  
Swimming  
Hiding

Cuddly  
Always soft  
Timid

### Math

Have the students make calculations of various types of transportation used to travel from a specific point in Missouri to one in California. These might include: covered wagon, horse, car, train, plane, or any other appropriate types. The students must research the average speed of each. Next, they can calculate the time needed to cross each state and the total time for each type of transportation to reach California. This activity can be extended by creating a bar graph to represent the calculated information.

### Social Studies/Geography

1. Initiate a discussion about westward expansion, why Faith's family might be moving, and the use of covered wagons. Have the class discuss what items the family might take with them. List these on the board or a chart. As each item is recorded, have the student state his/her reason for the selection.
2. Display a large map of the United States. Have the students locate Missouri and California. Map a possible trail for the covered wagons moving from Missouri to California. You may wish to refer to historical references for more information on specific trails. Observe the types of topography between these states and the impact of these on the pioneers.
3. Initiate a discussion of Indians encountered by the pioneers as they traveled westward. You may wish to share fiction and nonfiction books related to the relationships between the pioneers and Indians during this time period.
4. Share the information on quilts from the "Author's Note," p. 64. You may wish to contact a local sewing or quilting organization ~o request a member to demonstrate quilt making and/or to display and discuss this craft.

### Science/Health

1. Have the class discuss how bread was made in the 1800s and why this was a food item that the family took with them. You may wish to have the students bake bread and/or make butter to increase their awareness of how this was done.
2. Discuss various birds that would make good pets. Provide the students with reference materials to research these. Have each student write and present a report about one of the birds.
3. Refer to the types of weather mentioned. Discuss these and the positive and negative effects weather and climate would have on the pioneers as they traveled westward.

### Art

1. Assist the students in making a miniature covered wagon from small cardboard boxes. Provide glue, scissors, cardboard or poster board to be cut for wheels, pipe cleaners and small pieces of fabric or paper for the cover, and any other art media necessary for this activity.
2. Initiate a discussion of memory quilts made from patches. Supply each student with an 8 1/2 inch-by-11 inch piece of tagboard or white construction paper. On one side, have the students write

about a memory they have had. On the reverse side, they can design a patch to represent that memory. These can be shared with the class or in small groups. (Save these to use for Art Activity 4).

3. Have each student select one pet bird to draw. (You may wish to have them use the bird they have researched in Science/Health Activity 2.) Supply the students with sheets of drawing paper, crayons, markers and/or paints. Have the students illustrate the bird. A "cage" can be created over the drawing by having the students glue pieces of yarn over the picture.
4. Use the quilt patches created during Art Activity 2 to help the students make a class quilt. Use large sheets of butcher paper to make the "backing" for the quilt. Have the students glue their patches in patchwork quilt fashion to the "backing." Display this on a wall or bulletin board.

## Music

1. Review the sounds of the wagon train. Introduce American folk songs and ballads. Various rhythm instruments can be used to add sound effects of the wagon train as students sing any songs appropriate to the time period and westward expansion.
2. Have the students listen to recordings of banjo music. Discuss other types of instruments used by the pioneers at that time: harmonicas, fiddles, etc. If possible, display these instruments. You may wish to have someone demonstrate the use of one or more of these.

## Drama

Divide the students into small groups. Each group may choose a chapter to dramatize. They can create backgrounds by making murals of the scenes on butcher paper. Other props can be added, as needed. Each group can present its chapter to the rest of the class.

## EVALUATING THE READING EXPERIENCE

- Keep a teacher's journal of those strategies that best helped the students understand the story.
- Record the children's behaviors and learning by jotting these on "Post-its." These comments can later be transferred to a journal containing daily comments on the students.
- Prepare a chart to record the completion of the projects for each of the students.
- Record the students' responses as they briefly retell the story or specific chapters.
- Collect a piece of each child's writing to evaluate.
- Develop criteria for evaluating student work or refer to

established forms of evaluation to assess the projects and activities completed.

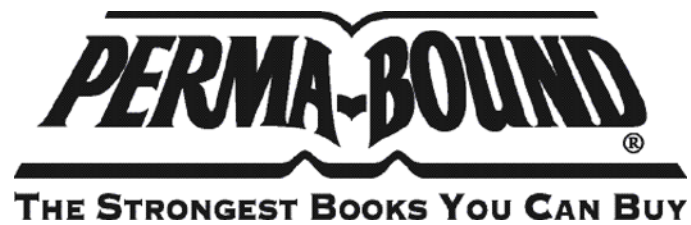
## CULMINATING ACTIVITY

Divide the students into groups of 4-5 to plan a "moving experience."

Considerations can include the following:

- Type of transportation
- Destination
- Time needed
- Places to stop (rest/sleep/eat)
- Items to take

Give each group an opportunity to share their "moving experience" with the class.



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