

Friend on the Trail

Chapter Five - by Kay Hively

Once the Indians had ridden away, the wagon train moved again. Martha's father said Joe would go with them over the mountains. That's why he had been in camp the night Martha saw him. He was looking for the wagon master to offer his help. But when he accidentally woke Martha up, he left the camp.

Martha wanted to know how Joe was going to make her mother feel better. Mr. O'Connor said the Indians would bring medicine when they returned. Everyone hoped it would make people well.

As the sun reached high in the sky, the wagon train stopped. No fires were built, but the settlers took time to eat, rest and take care of the oxen.

Martha sat on a blanket under the wagon and fed her baby sister. Ruth was in a playful mood. She sucked all the milk out of the cloth. Then Martha laid Ruth on the blanket so she could kick and look around.

Suddenly Martha heard horses coming. The Indians were back. As soon as the Indians got off their horses, they went from wagon to wagon giving medicine to everyone who was sick. Joe came to the O'Connor wagon first. He had a small leather bag filled with medicine. He asked for a cup of water.

Mr. O'Connor filled a tin cup of water from the big water barrel. Then he and Joe climbed into the wagon. Martha stayed under the wagon with Ruth.

She could hear the two men talking. She could also hear her mother mumbling. Her mother sounded the same way she did when Martha made her drink water.

After a short time, the men came out of the wagon. Joe said Mrs.

O'Connor would be feeling better before the sun went down. Martha's father thanked Joe for his help. As Martha looked at her father, she thought he might cry as he shook hands with his new Indian friend.

When the wagon train was ready to roll again, Martha put Ruth back in her cradle. All the sick people had been doctored and everyone was hoping they would be well. Martha watched as the Indians rode away. Then she saw Joe ride his horse to the front of the wagon train.

Many times in the afternoon, Martha peeked into the wagon to see if her mother was better. Mrs. O'Connor never moved. Martha didn't think the medicine was helping. She was disappointed.

Late in the afternoon, as Martha was walking beside her father, she could see the mountains were very close. The sun was already setting behind them.

It would be dark soon. It was time to find a camping place for the night. Martha's father said there was a small creek nearby. Camp would be made there.

As Martha walked along, eager for camping time, she heard a sound that made her heart stand still. From inside the wagon, she heard her mother calling out, "Charles! Charles, where are you?"



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Classroom Extensions

Things to Think About and Do -

- Mrs. O'Connor had fever. What is the "normal" temperature for humans? Name some ways to lower the body temperature.
- Find out which Indian tribes lived in the Oregon Territory in the 1840s and 1850s. Learn about the designs they used on pottery, blankets and other items. Which design do you like best?

Next Week: Chapter Six - A Rescue