

Children's Literature Reviews

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The Journey to Oregon-1934*Jean Braden*

Lulu.com, \$11.96. 2006

Reviews:**Gwynne Spencer (Children's Literature)**

This novella, based on a true story, follows an extended Nebraska family of seven adults and one child as they trek from dust-embraced farms to the rich Willamette valley one summer. With three cars, there is always some automotive difficulty to be faced, and these hardy souls camp out by the roadside and cook up meals from the home-canned bounty they have brought with them. The eternally-grumpy child Gesina is pictured frowning on the first page and maintains her role throughout, bemoaning the fact that she will not be able to attend fifth grade with her friends. Each character takes on a strong individual flavor as the story unfolds, but the blended voices of the adults are what will linger in readers' minds. Moving is never easy, but this family cannot go back and must move on, even though they have very little money at hand (less than \$100 per family). Along the way, the women take on important new roles which make them even more endearing, such as learning to drive the cantankerous cars down treacherous mountain inclines. Descriptions of the scenery are spot-on. Readers familiar with the area will especially appreciate the author's take on the now-closed-to-vehicles scenic Columbia Gorge Highway with its terrifying twin tunnels and her attention to the sense that Mt. Hood sneaks up on the westbound driver in the Gorge. When the Schafers finally arrive in the Salem area after their ten days on the road, they find the bounty of the land provides them with jobs and food. They even manage to reunite with some long-lost family members. The tale of this family journey would make fine reading for middle schoolers and high schoolers, especially in western Oregon where the Willamette Valley still beckons those seeking a better life. 2006, Lulu.com, \$11.96. Ages 12 to adult.

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