

One Step at a Time

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英语阅读

# 走稳每一步

*One Step at a Time*

◆ 霍华德·古特纳 著

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# ONE STEP AT A TIME



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**To all the brave men, women, and  
children who traveled west to  
find a new way of life**

# THE WAY WEST

“Whoa!” Joe Carter called as he pulled up on the reins. The four oxen pulling his wagon **halted**. Behind him, 20 other wagons slowly came to a stop, one after the other.

Joe jumped down from the wagon. He walked down the line of wagons and pointed to a group of trees some distance away. “We’ll stop for the night here!” he shouted. “There’s **shade** and grass for the animals, and water beyond those trees.”



Sarah Harding and her mother stopped alongside their wagon and began to shake the **dust** from their skirts. "I've never seen so much dust in all my life," Mrs. Harding said.

Mr. Harding jumped down from the wagon and walked over to Sarah. "Please go find your brother," he said. "You two need to take the buckets and get some water for the animals."

"I'm so tired," Sarah whined. "I just want to sit down."

"Not yet," Mrs. Harding said. "We're all tired, but there's work to be done before resting."

Sarah sighed and walked around the wagon. "JACK!" she yelled. Her brother came running.





"Father says we have to get some water for the animals," Sarah told him.

"All right," said Jack as he unhooked two leather buckets from the side of the wagon. He handed one to Sarah.

"Can't you carry it?" Sarah said.

"No," Jack said, "I can't do your work and mine, too." Sarah reluctantly took her bucket and followed him to the **stream**.

"Come on, Scout," Jack called as they walked. A black-and-white dog bounded to his side. "I don't think you ever get tired," Jack said as he smiled at his dog. "We must have walked 20 miles today, and you're still ready to go."



"Jack," Sarah said as they walked to the stream, "why are we doing this?"

"Doing what?" Jack asked.

"You know, leaving Missouri to go to the Oregon Territory," she said.

"It's a little late to be worrying about that now," Jack replied. "Papa said our farm back east wasn't making any money. He heard there was free land in the Oregon Territory, land so rich the crops almost grow by themselves."

As he talked, Jack remembered the night his mother and father had been worrying about money. His father said the neighbors had received a letter from friends who had gone to the Oregon Territory last year, in 1843. They wrote about a beautiful land with mild winters. Jack's mother finally agreed to go, and they had **started out** in April. Now it was June and they had traveled nearly 700 miles along the Oregon Trail in a wagon train.

"The farm is sold and gone," Jack said, "so we can't turn back now."

"I'm tired of getting up so early every morning and walking all day," Sarah complained.

Jack laughed. "That's how you get somewhere, Sarah; one step at a time!"

As Jack and Sarah started back to the wagons, they heard a shout. They turned as Scout barked and wagged his tail. Their friend Ben Hamilton was trying to **catch up to** them, carrying his own bucket filled with water.





Seeing Ben always made Sarah smile. The Hamiltons were from the east, too. They had come all the way from Philadelphia. To Sarah, Ben still looked like he had just come from the city because he always wore a cap and a white shirt that was as clean as possible, no matter how hot the weather.

"Sarah is getting **impatient**, Ben," Jack chuckled. "She wants to get to the Oregon Territory tomorrow or go back to Missouri!"

Ben put down his bucket and began looking through his pockets.

"What are you looking for?" Sarah asked.

"The map that my father and I made," Ben replied. He pulled out a **wrinkled** piece of paper and **spread** it on the ground.

"Here, Sarah, look. Tomorrow we should get to the place where we cross the North Platte River. After that, it's only a little over a hundred miles to South Pass. Then we're halfway there."

"Just halfway?" Sarah cried. "We'll never make it. My feet will be worn out by then."



## NIGHT ON THE PRAIRIE

When Jack, Sarah, and Ben returned, the wagons had already been **pulled into** a circle. The oxen and other animals were tied to the wagons inside the circle. The children gave water to the animals, and the women looked for firewood. Every day they found less wood to use for cooking fires. Some of the women gathered dried buffalo droppings they called chips. Joe Carter had reassured them the chips would burn well.





Sarah helped her mother **peel** a few potatoes before supper. Mrs. Harding put two large kettles on the fire, one with beans and the other with the potatoes and some beef bones left over from the night before. As Jack **peeked into** one of the pots, his father, who was sitting nearby, smiled at him.

"We might have to go hunting tomorrow or the next day, son," Mr. Harding said.

Jack turned to Scout. "Hear that, Scout? You want to help me catch some rabbits?" Scout barked. He was always ready to go.

“Evening, folks!” Joe Carter said as he walked into the light of the fire. “I just wanted to tell you that tomorrow we’ll be getting up before sunrise again. I want to try to get across the North Platte River before dark.”

There were some groans from the other wagons. “I know, folks, I know,” Joe said, “but we’ve got to get past the mountains before the snow starts to fall, or we’ll be in sad shape. It’ll take us the whole day to **get across** the river.”





After dinner the camp settled down for the night. Everyone was too tired to play the fiddle or sing. No one even talked much. Jack, Sarah, and Ben laid their **blankets** outside near the fire. They were still talking after the adults were asleep.

"What was it like living in Philadelphia, Ben?" Sarah whispered.

"You're always asking me that," Ben said.

"I've never been to a big city," Sarah said.



"Well," said Ben, "mostly I remember the shops, wonderful shops where you could buy anything, like candles, clothes, and bread. There were lots of carriages and people on the street. Philadelphia was never silent like this."

All three of them were quiet for a moment, listening. All they could hear in the darkness were the small movements of the oxen and a creak from a wagon. Suddenly Scout whined.

"What is it, boy?" Jack asked. A moment passed; then they heard a **mournful** howl.

"What is that?" Ben gasped.

"It's a wolf," Jack whispered. Sarah and Ben's eyes widened with fear. "It sounds far away, but don't worry. Wolves almost never attack people."

