

PONDERINGS for MATTHEW'S SECRET

by A.G. CLINE

Prologue Pondering:

Do you tend to look for the good or the bad in things?

Chapter 1 – Not Soon Enough - Pondering:

If you were to move away from your home and never return, what would be something you would miss?

Chapter 2 – Preparation - Pondering:

Do you agree or disagree that it's not things that make people happy, but love and honest work? Give an example from your own life to explain your thinking.

Chapter 3 – Packed - Pondering:

If you could only take 3 small personal belongings on a seven-month trip across country, what would they be?

Chapter 4 – Farewell - Pondering:

Think of a time when you had to choose whether to look at a big problem positively or negatively. What happened?

Chapter 5 – Hit the Trail - Pondering:

What are some of your strongest leadership skills? At what do you wish you were more skilled?

Chapter 6 – Calamities - Pondering:

Can you recall a specific time when you were the muddiest/dirtiest? Is that a good or bad memory for you? Why?

Chapter 7 – Choosing a Leader - Pondering:

Think of a time when you felt ashamed that you couldn't do something. What did you do about it?

Chapter 8 – Time for a Dip - Pondering:

What's the most fun you've had in water?

Chapter 9 – Mired - Pondering:

Why is it so difficult for some people to apologize? Would your family say you have difficulty apologizing?

Chapter 10 - Failed Attempt - Pondering:

What is a funny thing you've seen an animal do?

Chapter 11 – Fire When You Need It - Pondering:

Some people don't like to try new things because they don't want to fail. Some people don't like to taste new foods because they think they won't like it. How about you?

Chapter 12 – Sharing the Load - Pondering:

When a decision needs to be made, do you prefer that someone else makes the decision, or do you like to be the one to decide?

Chapter 13 - Surgery at Ash Hollow - Pondering:

Can you describe a special time when someone helped you and then you later helped them?

Chapter 14 – Lost Treasures - Pondering:

At the end of Chapter 3, you thought of 3 personal belongings that you would take with you on a trip across country. Which of the three things would you discard if you now were required to leave one behind?

Chapter 15 – Prince - Pondering:

Have you ever had the experience of forgetting to take care of an animal or a person?

Chapter 16 – Stampede! - Pondering:

Life on the Oregon Trail was not easy. What about the journey do you think would be the most difficult for you? What do you think you would enjoy the most?

Chapter 17 – New Addition - Pondering:

What is something simple that someone did for you that made you feel grateful?

Chapter 18 – Storms - Pondering:

Have you ever been in a frightening storm? What did you do?

Chapter 19 – Lost Wagon - Pondering:

What is a difficulty on the Oregon Trail that you think you could handle?

Chapter 20 – Fort John - Pondering:

Matthew was afraid of a lot of things. Of what are you most afraid?

Chapter 21 – Surprise - Pondering:

Have you ever met someone and become instant friends?

Chapter 22 – All Day, All Night - Pondering:

Many people starved and died on the Oregon Trail. Have you ever experienced extreme hunger or thirst?

Chapter 23 – Seeing the Elephant - Pondering:

Have you ever stopped and given up on something because it was too difficult for you? How do you feel about that now? Was it a smart decision, or do you regret it?

Chapter 24 – Independence Rock - Pondering:

Pa and Grandpa made the effort to make memories for their families. What is a good memory given to you by someone older?

Chapter 25 – Holding up the Train - Pondering:

Describe a time when your disobedience got you into trouble.

Chapter 26 – The Letter - Pondering:

If you received a letter from someone on the Oregon Trail, what kinds of things would you want to know?

Chapter 27 – Ice Slough - Pondering:

Has anyone ever put ice down your back? Have you been in a friendly water fight? Describe the perfect water fight on a hot day.

Chapter 28 – The Great Divide - Pondering:

Describe the most thoughtful, generous person you know.

Chapter 29 – Indians! - Pondering:

Have you ever been helped by a total stranger?

Chapter 30 – Starvation - Pondering:

What is something you've eaten, not because it tasted good, but because it was all you had to eat?

Chapter 31 – Soda Springs - Pondering:

What is a fun, humorous memory you have of your brother, sister, or friend that you will long remember?

Chapter 32 – Horse Trading - Pondering:

Some people seem to complain about everything. When people complain to you, do you tend to agree with them, ignore them, challenge their negative words, or what?

Chapter 33 – Quest for Water - Pondering:

Have you ever done something dangerous to be helpful?

Chapter 34 – Death and Separation - Pondering:

When fording a river, would you have preferred to be in a wagon, on horseback, swimming on your own, or carried by a strong man?

Chapter 35 – Boise River - Pondering:

Which would you rather have: a warm coat or a beautiful horse?

Chapter 36 – Baby Sarah - Pondering:

About what have you had to be brave?

Chapter 37 – Which Way to Go? - Pondering:

Trust was a big issue on the Oregon Trail. There were many unknowns. Of all the characters in the book, who would be the most difficult person for you to trust?

Chapter 38 – Treasures - Pondering:

Of the two material possessions you kept from Chapter 14, which one would you give up now if you were forced to give it up?

Chapter 39 – Rocky Road - Pondering:

Do you recall a time when your mother or other family member was very sick? How did you handle that?

Chapter 40 – Ma Gets Worse - Pondering:

Have you ever thought everything was fine, and then unhappily discovered that everything was NOT fine? Has the reverse happened to you as well: you thought everything was horrible, and it turned out great?

Chapter 41 – Trade - Pondering:

What would you give up to provide for your family?

Chapter 42 – Dead Man - Pondering:

Name the most difficult food for you to give up.

Chapter 43 – More Death? - Pondering:

Would you describe yourself as cheerful? Do you enjoy helping people?

Chapter 44 – Mama - Pondering:

If you had enough money and could buy a big gift for someone, what would it be?

Chapter 45 – Family Reunion? - Pondering:

What's the longest time you've been away from your closest family members?

Chapter 46 – Patience Tested - Pondering:

Describe the coldest you've ever been.

Chapter 47 – Turned Around - Pondering:

A good sense of humor often helps makes a difficult situation not so tense. Share a time when you or someone else used humor to make things better.

Chapter 48 – Generosity - Pondering:

Of all the secret treasures Uncle Jim kept hidden in his wagon, which do you think was the most precious?

Afterword - Pondering:

Feel free to email the author, A.G. Cline, with some ponderings of your own: author@agcline.com