

From the Author's Desk:

Hello Parents, Teachers, and Home Schoolers! I'm happy you're here and sharing "Seeds of Hope" with your readers. Thank you! I hope this discussion guide will help them reflect on the story and enjoy it on a deeper level. I've added some activities, a recipe, a photo from when I was ten and personal tidbits that might be fun for them.

*All the best to you,
Kristi*

Seeds of Hope: The Gold Rush Diary of Susanna Fairchild, 1849:

About this book: In 1849, fourteen-year-old Susanna Fairchild and her family leave their home in Missouri and board a ship bound for a new life in Oregon. But when a tragedy at sea interrupts their dream they instead disembark in San Francisco where they find themselves in the midst of one of the most exciting times in American history.

California is my native state. I grew up camping with my family in the beautiful forests, and was enchanted by artifacts from the gold rush era. The history still fascinates me so it was a blast writing Susanna's adventure. I wanted to show the pandemonium and the hopes people had for striking it rich. I also wanted to show how sometimes the dreams we have are thwarted because of circumstances beyond our control. Despite the Fairchilds' personal heartbreak and despite Papa's gold fever, the family managed to pull together. Their strength of character saw them through, not the money they made.

For ages 8-12, this is first in my trilogy about the historic American Gold Rush.
ISBN 9781515323228

Discussion ideas:

<> **Part I:** Aboard The Californian [January-February 1849]:

1. Why are fruits and vegetables so vital on a long voyage? How are they important today?
2. Why does Susanna think her sister's corset is silly? What clothing styles today seem silly to you?
3. Why do the Americans want to drag the Peruvians off the ship? What examples of prejudice against foreigners do you see today?
4. What would you do if your family, like Susanna's, had moved to a new place but things didn't turn out as planned?

<> **Part II:** Miner's Creek [March 23, 1849]:

1. What one word caused so many men to pack tools and bedrolls then hike into the hills? Why is this word so powerful?
2. In 1849, what did it mean to "jump ship?" What does it mean today?
3. What does Clara mean when she tells Susanna, "It's foolish to make stupid men angry?"

<> **Part III: Miner's Creek** [May 1, 1849]

1. Why do Yankees cut off the long braids of the Chinese miners? How would you feel if someone cut your hair without your permission?
2. What do you think of the bear and bull fights in the mining camps? What does a "bear market" and "bull market" mean today in the American stock market?
3. Why does Papa say, "gold fever is turning ordinary men into fools?"
4. Susanna wonders why riches made some men crazy and others wise. What do you think?

Activity suggestions:

<> **Write** -- These can be a brief paragraph or several pages:

1. "If I moved to a new town and didn't know anyone ..."
2. Describe someone who's from a different country or is of a different race.
3. What three things would you take with you on a long trip, to keep your mind active?

<> **Draw**

1. A map of Miner's Creek
2. One of the animals in the story
3. A piece of mining equipment

<> **Make**

1. Diorama of Susanna's campsite
2. Log cabin with twigs or Popsicle sticks

<> **Cook**

Miner's Griddle Cakes -- Because supplies and ingredients were scarce in mining camps, recipes were simple but hearty. Makes 16 four-inch delicious pancakes.

Ingredients:

- 1 cup cornmeal
- 1 cup flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 2 cups buttermilk
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 slightly beaten egg yolk
- 1 stiffly beaten egg white

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Mix dry ingredients then blend in buttermilk, oil, and egg yolk.

Fold in egg white then let stand for ten minutes.

Spoon batter onto hot greased griddle or frying pan and cook. I like them when they turn golden brown with crispy edges, mmm-mm.

Now this is the fun part: Invite a friend then serve with fresh fruit, a nice cool drink of water, and plan your day together!

◁> **Read** -- my further adventures about the American gold rush:

1. [Nugget: The Wildest, Most Heartbreakin'est Mining Camp in the West](#) [Idaho Territory, 1866] ISBN 9781505905793
2. [Madam Mustache and the Boys of Bodie](#) [Bodie, California 1878] ISBN 9780986152207

**Behind the scenes of this story:**

◁> Some of the characters also appear in another of my Dear America adventures: [Across the Wide and Lonesome Prairie: The Oregon Trail Diary of Hattie Campbell, 1847](#): Susanna is Hattie's cousin, and Jesse Blue is their family friend. Also mentioned are Aunt August and Uncle Charles from Missouri. It's fun to combine characters, and especially fun when readers discover them and write to tell me!

◁> Susanna's campsite in Miner's Creek is exactly how my father taught us to pitch our tent: on the sunny side of the river where you could stay warm when the air cooled, and far enough from the bank should a storm cause the water to rise.

P.S. The photo below shows my dad cooking pancakes for breakfast. I'm about ten, my brother eight. Our mom took this picture while she and our younger sister were by the stream.



**A secret about the author:**

I love animals! When I was younger one of my pet kitties, was Sergeant Boots, a black stray with pretty white paws. I gave Susanna's cat the same name in honor of my happy memory.

**Contact:** I would love to hear about your discussion. Just click the Contact button on my website, [kristianagregory.com](http://kristianagregory.com), and I'll answer you!