



Deborah Hopkinson's  
*Apples to Oregon*

Questions for Socratic Discussion  
by Missy Andrews





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*APPLES TO OREGON*



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# QUICK CARD



<b>Reference</b>	<i>Apples to Oregon</i> by Deborah Hopkinson ISBN-10: 0689847696 ISBN-13: 978-0689847696
<b>Plot</b>	Daddy and his daughter Delicious fight the forces of nature on the Oregon Trail to deliver their traveling nursery safely to a new home in Oregon.
<b>Setting</b>	The Oregon Trail in the 19 <sup>th</sup> century. A wagon train headed west in the United States during the period of Western expansion.
<b>Characters</b>	Delicious (the narrator) Daddy Momma Delicious's brothers and sisters The Orchard Trees (Daddy's "babies")
<b>Conflict</b>	Delicious wants to help Daddy. Daddy and Delicious want to keep the plants alive on their journey to Oregon. (Man vs. Nature) Obstacles along the way include the Platte River (which represents the danger of drowning) and other forces of nature, including the windstorm, hail stones, drought, and frost.
<b>Theme</b>	Courage Diligence Cooperation Family relationships Fruits of labor Perseverance Determination Self-sacrifice Providence
<b>Literary Devices</b>	Alliteration Simile Personification Metaphor Allusion

## QUESTIONS ABOUT STRUCTURE: SETTING



**Where does the story take place? (1) In what country or region does the story happen? (1a)  
Does the story happen in one spot, or does the action unfold across a wide area? (1c)**

The story takes place on America's Oregon Trail during the period of Western expansion, and that's "no place for babies!" Consequently, the action unfolds across a vast area beginning in the interior U.S. and ending on the West coast in the Oregon territory.

The setting of this story proves crucial both to character development and plot, since the characters' natural surroundings present the main obstacles to their goals.

**Among what kinds of people is the story set? What is their economic class? How do they live? Are they hopeful? Downtrodden? Depressed? Why? (1h)**

The people that made this trek were a hearty, industrious and resourceful set. They endured great hardships and deprivations in order to people the uninhabited wilds.

**When does the story happen? (2)**

The real trip upon which Mrs. Hopkinson's story is based occurred in 1847 when Henderson Luelling left his home in Salem, Iowa to establish a fruit orchard six miles south of Portland in Milwaukie, Oregon.

**In what season does the story take place? (2c)**

The action begins when the wagon train sets out in spring, as soon as roads are passable, and continues through the fall when frost threatens to undo all their efforts.

**In what time of life for the main characters do the events occur? Are they children? Are they just passing into adulthood? Are they already grownups? Does setting the story in this particular time of the characters' lives make the story better? (2e)**

In addition to the historic setting, the story occurs in the childhood of the narrator, Delicious. In the eyes of this young girl, her pioneer daddy is a hero whose genius and work ethic will make him famous with his family and history. Her childlike faith in her father mitigates not only the obstacles of nature, but also the discouraging words of naysayers along the trail.

**In what intellectual period is the story set? What ideas were prevalent during the period of the story? Does the author deal with these ideas through his characters? (2f)**

The people that braved the trail were a hardy breed. They knew the value of honest work and esteemed perseverance and individual industry. The verification code for this resource is 715612. Enter this code in the submission form at [www.centerforlitschools.com/dashboard](http://www.centerforlitschools.com/dashboard) to receive one professional development credit. They were accustomed to want and deprivation and considered these troubles the necessary cost of freedom and prosperity.

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## QUESTIONS ABOUT STRUCTURE: CHARACTERS



### Who is the story about? (3)

The main character (protagonist) is the narrator's father, Daddy, who leads his family across the US to the Oregon territory. Delicious, the narrator, is his oldest daughter.

### Is the character sane or crazy? (3e)

While onlookers consider Delicious's daddy to be downright crazy, she sees him as a dreamer whose diligence and determination make his success a certainty.

### Is the character kind, gentle, stern, emotional, harsh, logical, rational, and compassionate or exacting...? Make up a list of adjectives that describe the protagonist. (3f)

Adjectives describing Daddy include:

brave	determined
daring	harried
ingenuous	diligent
entrepreneurial	a risk-taker
visionary	a dreamer
"sweet as a peach"	

### What does the character do for a living? Is he a professional, or a blue-collar worker? Is he wealthy or impoverished? Is he content with his lot in life, or does he long to improve himself? (3h)

Daddy farms fruit for a living. While he loves his work, he hopes to improve his lot by relocating his orchard to Oregon. He'll take fruit to the west.

### What do other characters think or say about him? (3k)

Other characters, fellow travelers on the trail, think Daddy is crazy. "When they saw us and all our little fruit trees fluttering in the breeze, they burst out laughing. 'Those leaves will be brown as dirt before you hit the plains.'... 'That nursery wagon won't make it halfway across the river.'"

**Is the character a member of any particular religious or social group? If so, what do you know about this group? What motivates this group? What do its members feel to be important? (3l)**

Daddy is a member of two social groups. He is the leader and head of a family. As such, he bears the weight of responsibility for provision. In addition, he is a pioneer, a term that signifies courage, work ethic, endurance, and vision.

**What does the protagonist think is the most important thing in life? How do you know this? Does the protagonist say this out loud, or do his thoughts and actions give him away? (3m)**

For Daddy, the most important thing in life is safely transplanting his “babies” – the nursery of fruit trees he hauls – in the soft and pleasant soil of Oregon. Both his words and his actions bear this out throughout the story.

**Who else is the story about? (4)**

Accompanying Daddy on the trail are Momma, the children, Delicious, the nursery (Daddy’s “babies”), other pioneer families, and Nature with her elements.

**Is there a single character (or a group of characters) that opposes the protagonist in the story? (4a)**

Nature poses the greatest obstacles to Daddy and Delicious. Nature is often personified in the story as a malevolent force seeking to deter Daddy from his objective and to destroy his precious cargo.

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## QUESTIONS ABOUT STRUCTURE: CONFLICT AND PLOT



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### **What does the protagonist want? (5)**

More than anything else, Daddy and Delicious want to successfully transport their orchard across country to Oregon and establish a new orchard.

### **Does he attempt to overcome something – a physical impediment, or an emotional handicap? (5b) Does he strive to overcome a physical obstacle outside of himself? (5c)**

In order to accomplish their goals, Daddy and Delicious must overcome both the negative, discouraging comments of fellow travelers and the natural elements they encounter on the trail.

### **Is the conflict an external one, having to do with circumstances in the protagonist's physical world, or is it an internal conflict, taking place in his mind and emotions? (5e)**

These obstacles represent both internal and external conflict.

### **Why can't the protagonists have what they want? (6) Do physical or geographical impediments stand in their way? (6a)**

Not only do physical/geographical impediments stand in their way (the Platte River, the mountains of Nebraska and Wyoming, etc), but also the natural elements attached to those places during the seasons they encounter. They endure wind, hail, drought, and frost on the trail.

### **Are the protagonists racing against time? (6e)**

As a result of Nature's opposition, the characters race against time, striving to cover the distance before winter arrives.

### **What kind of conflict is represented in the story? (6g-i)**

This is primarily a Man vs. Nature conflict. In addition, however, the naysayers cause a Man vs. Man / Man vs. Self conflict as Daddy and Delicious must endure the taunts without giving way to retaliation or discouragement.

**What happens in the story? (8)**

- Daddy builds a nursery on wheels. They cross a river, and narrowly escape capsizing.
- They endure a wind and hail storm, shielding the plants with their own clothing.
- They survive drought when they fortuitously discover water in their lost boots on the trail.
- They scale mountains and geographical obstacles by sheer determination and teamwork.
- They fight Jack Frost by watchfully tending a fire throughout the chilly nights.
- Finally, they navigate the great Columbia River, harnessing its energy to work for them by turning their nursery on wheels into a boat.

**What events form the climax or highest point of tension in the story? (9)**

Delicious’s fight against Frost constitutes the climax of the story. This is the final obstacle on the trip.

**Does the protagonist solve his own dilemma? Is it solved by some external source or 3rd party? Is he helpless in the end to achieve his goal (like Frodo in Lord of the Rings), or does he triumph by virtue of his own efforts (Odysseus in The Odyssey)? (9e)**

After floating the trees downriver, Daddy plants them in the good Oregon dirt. The family overcomes their obstacles through cooperation.

**How does the story end? (10) How are the loose ends tied up? How does the solution of the conflict affect each individual character? (10a, d)**

As a result of their hard work, the family makes its fortune in fruit. Daddy calls Delicious the “apple of his eye,” rewarding her with a new pair of boots! She calls him a “peach.”

**Does the ending or resolution of the story make any kind of judgments? (10e)**

The family’s success underscores the rewards of industry and single-minded vision.

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## QUESTIONS ABOUT STRUCTURE: THEME



### **What is the main idea of the story? (13)**

The story applauds values such as bravery, cooperation, perseverance, single-mindedness, industry, family, the fruits of labor, and diligence. These are at the “core” of the story.

## QUESTIONS ABOUT STYLE



### **Does the author use the sounds of our language to create interest in his story? (14)**

#### **Alliteration (14e)**

Thicker than Momma's muskrat stew...and muddier...

Fruit trees flutterin'

Daddy's dainties

Peaches are plummetering... plums are plunging...babies go belly-up

### **Does the author use descriptions and comparisons to create pictures in the reader's mind? (Imagery)(16)**

#### **Simile (16d)**

Daddy is sweet as a peach – simile

#### **Personification (16e)**

Clouds stomping

Wind threw

Jack Frost

**Metaphor (16h, 16i)**

The wagon is a Prairie schooner

The wagon is a Nursery wagon

The plants are babies

They lived to a ripe old age (parents as fruits)

Delicious is the apple of his eye

**Does the author use the characters and events in his story to communicate a theme that goes beyond them in some way? (17)**

**Allusions (17f)**

Reference to the poison apple the old witch gave to Snow White

Naming of real landmarks such as Courthouse Rock and Chimney Rock

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# QUESTIONS ABOUT CONTEXT



## Who is the author? (18)

Deborah Hopkinson is the winner of the Golden Kite Award for picture book text and winner of the Spur storytelling award. She is an Oregon Book Award finalist and a winner of the ALA Notable Book distinction. She writes historical fiction for children from her home in Walla Walla, Washington, where she works as a director for Whitman College. She is mother to two grown children. Her other notable books include *Fannie in the Kitchen* (a biography of famed cookbook author, Fannie Farmer), *A Pocket of Seeds*, *Saving Strawberry Farm*, and *Sky Boys* (a biography of the workers who erected the Empire State Building).

## NOTES:

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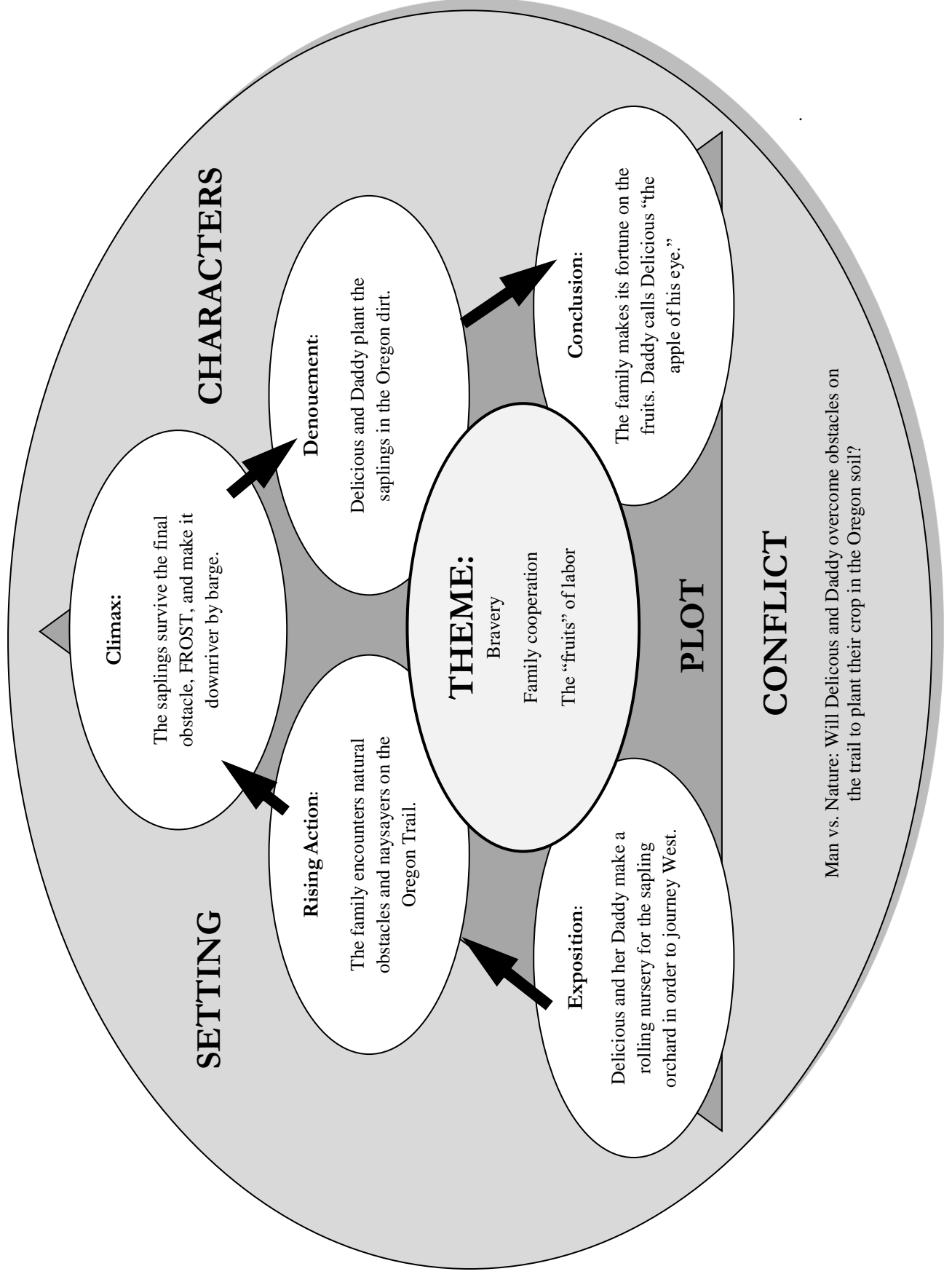
## STORY CHARTS



The following pages contain story charts of the type presented in the live seminar *Teaching the Classics*. As is made clear in that seminar, a separate story chart may be constructed for each of the conflicts present in a work of fiction. In particular, the reader's decision as to the *climax* and central *themes* of the plot structure will depend upon his understanding of the story's central *conflict*. As a result, though the details of setting, characters, exposition, and conclusion may be identical from analysis to analysis, significant variation may be found in those components which appear down the center of the story chart: Conflict, Climax, and Theme. This of course results from the fact that literary interpretation is the work of active minds, and differences of opinion are to be expected – even encouraged!

For the teacher's information, one story chart has been filled in on the next page. In addition, a blank chart is included to allow the teacher to examine different conflicts in the same format.

# *Apples to Oregon* by Deborah Hopkinson: Story Chart







*Apples to Oregon* by Deborah Hopkinson: Blank Story Chart

