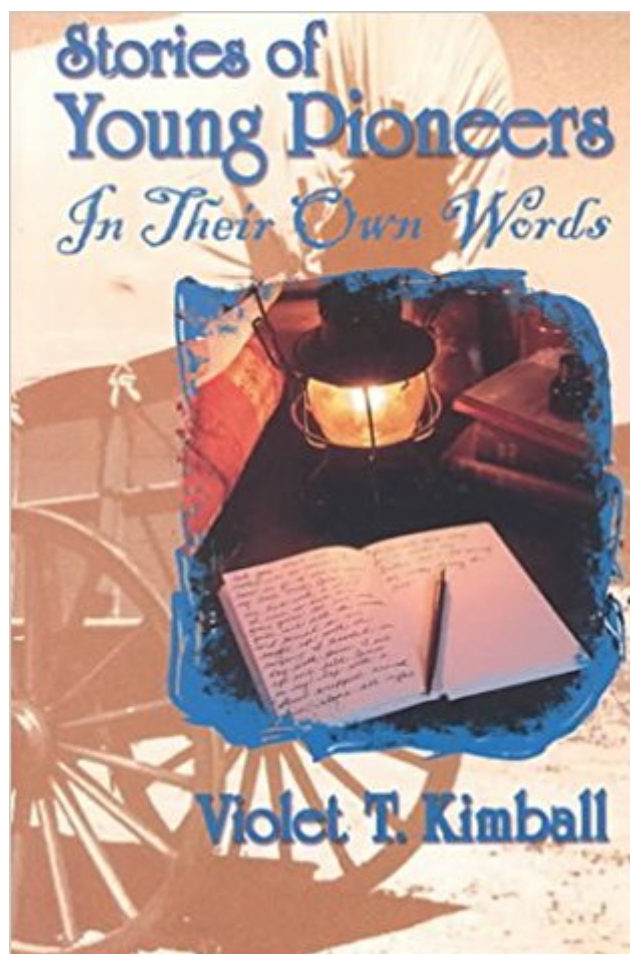


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# Stories Of Young Pioneers: In Their Own Words



## Synopsis

In *Stories of Young Pioneers: In Their Own Words*, Violet Kimball has collected memoirs, letters, and journal entries of children who were between ages six and nineteen when they made the overland journey. The book is organized by topic -- including romance; animals; fun and recreation; danger, disease, and death -- and peppered with detailed profiles of individual youngsters. Feel the mixed emotions of thirteen-year-old Kate Scott as she and her family leave the comforts of their home. Sit in the driver's seat with thirteen-year-old teamster John Stoughton as he drives his oxen across rocks, water, sand, and icy mountain passes. Unwind after a long, arduous day by joining in a hand of cards or, better yet, a night of music and dancing. Young historians will find *Stories of Young Pioneers* not only exciting reading but also a thorough and well-researched tool to learn about life on the Oregon, California, and Mormon Trails.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Gr. 6-9. This lengthy, thorough book relies on diaries and memoirs to bring to life the experience of traveling westward in the mid-nineteenth century. The trip was arduous, but also adventurous, and as Kimball examines the experience, facet by facet, readers will begin to sense what an amazing feat moving west really was. About half the travelers were under 18, and it is their youthful memories that tell the story--though many of the actual accounts were written when the participants were much older. Kimball organizes her material around a series of logical topics: preparing for the trip; life on the trail; danger and disease; encounters with Native Americans; and settling down, to name a few. She also addresses pioneer prejudices against Native Americans and maintains that

during the time these trails were widely used, most Indians were friendly. Though not a title young people are likely to read on their own, this can provide valuable curriculum support, and history teachers may find that selected details can spark a lively lesson. Extensive bibliography included.  
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"This lengthy, thorough book relies on diaries and memoirs to bring to life the experience of traveling westward in the mid-nineteenth century."

I am a living-history performer emphasizing the Western Movement and the Gold Rush. This book contains excellent information, has a pleasing inviting format, and offers a wonderful cross-section of experiences from the "young pioneers. I often refer teachers/educators to it as a resource.

My grandchildren have truly enjoyed reading these stories from other children who lived in the Pioneer Days. It's also introduced them to another way of life; one that was better then than now, morally speaking.

Since my early childhood I have been fascinated by stories of pioneers who went west to settle the wilderness. The idea of leaving one's friends, and everything they owned, except a few things they could carry, or put in a wagon or a handcart, and heading west into unknown territory has always seemed almost unbelievable. "What was going on in their minds?" was the question that intrigued me. I think this is an unprecedented work and has no equal anywhere. To be sure she could catch the flavor of the pioneer experience she even traversed every inch of the three major pioneer trails, sometimes riding and sometimes walking. This magnificent compilation of references is the result of researching over 500 documents including letters, diaries, and news reports. An exhaustive piece of research! I marveled at the fourteen-year-old boy who was cutting timber in 1845, hauling it nine miles, then boating it across a river. I laughed at the way eleven-year-old Edwin Petit dressed up as a girl (in Huckleberry-Finn fashion) to stow away on a wagon train. I was awed by the courage of youngsters like the Sager children who became orphans once when their parents died, on the trail in 1844, and again a few years later when Narcissa and Marcus Whitman, who had adopted them, were killed. Many of the children's writings begin with "I can see," or "I can still see", then they paint the most vivid pictures of "shimmering heat waves", dark masses of buffalo", and "empty plains with their rolling land waves". They were incredibly literate and poetic in their descriptions. I spent 37 years in public school work, as a teacher, and later as a counselor, and it is my opinion that this

book should be found in every school library, both elementary and secondary. Many adults will also love it, as I do. My hat is off to Mrs. Kimball for a job well done. Richard Rogers, Ed.D

My mom got me this book and I loved it. I couldn't stop reading it even when I was jumping on the trampoline. I thought it was great to read about kids like me, who were pioneers and had to go through such hard times. My favorite story in the book is one where they took some cows across a river and they had to separate the moms and the babies and they didn't know how they would get them both across, but the moms and babies wouldn't leave each other and just swam across to stay together. What I liked most is learning how much these kids had to do on their own and how grown up they were. They worked just as much as the adults and some of them even had to take care of their families when their moms and dads died. I thought it was great that this book was made up from things these kids actually wrote and told about, so you could tell what they thought. I wish there were more books about how kids really are and what it was like to live in a different time. I think everyone should read this book.

"I can see why this book won three awards. I read "Stories of Young Pioneers, In Their Own Words" in one night. It is a fabulous, swift-moving read. Favorite things about the book: The history of black pioneers: seeing the Native American "threat" into perspective, and the profiles of individuals such as Welborn Beeson, Lizzy Flake, and the Donner, Reed Children. I wonder how much time the author spent finding a photograph of a black pioneer, (Lizzy Flake) I was grateful for the photos of the landmarks, especially Independence Rock, which would have been difficult to picture without the photo. I felt like I was there on the trail. I appreciated how the author incorporated all three trails--The Oregon, California, and Mormon Trails--and that the illustrations enhance the history by putting us there on the trail. She must have had to pare down mounds and mounds of material to create an exciting narrative. I wanted more, more: I wanted to know more about the brave youngsters like eight year old Nicolean Bertlesen who had to stop in St. Louis and earn money to complete her journey, and those like the orphaned Sager children who were adopted by Marcus and Narcissa Whitman; and orphaned again when the Whitmans were killed by the Cayuse. This author has done a great job getting a variety of quotes and using original quotes from those outstanding young pioneers.

This hagiography of Mormonism and the Mormon exodus to Zion (as it is referred to constantly in this book), while interesting, should not be confused with an historic account. Ms. Kimball refers to "the Saints" (her capitalization, not mine) repeatedly throughout the book. I was also interested to

read that apparently the Mormons were friendly to the Indians, and helped them. They also, apparently prohibited the killing of bison for sport while others slaughtered them "by the thousands". This statement was immediately followed by an account of a herd of bison being driven off of a cliff by a party on the Mormon trail. This book is Ms. Kimball's book, not the book of Young Pioneers "In their own words"... they are her words. She cherry-picks small pieces (sometimes as small as a single sentence) from various diaries about the Oregon, California and Mormon trails in order to prove her points. I appreciate her effort, and the book is well written, for what it is. But it is not history. Not by any stretch of the imagination.

A wonderful history lesson out of the mouths of "babes". I have just been in awe of the courage these very very young people possessed.

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