

# Voyage to California

by Linda Teton

illustrated by Martin Hargreaves



HOUGHTON MIFFLIN

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**HOUGHTON MIFFLIN HARCOURT**  
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## ~ Prologue ~

In 1821, Mexico won its independence from Spain. Since California had been ruled by Spain, it became part of the new nation of Mexico. Mexico ruled California from 1821 until 1848.

The Mexican government wanted its citizens to settle California. So the government offered land grants, or free land, in California. Many adventurous Mexican citizens went to California. They were called *Californios*.

In 1821, the new nation of Mexico controlled a vast territory. Its lands included California.





Each rancho had a *hacienda*, or a large main house. It was usually built around an open courtyard.

Many Californios started *ranchos*, or ranches. They raised big herds of cattle on the ranchos. Some Californios grew very rich from raising cattle.

But the era of the Californios did not last long. In 1846, a war began between Mexico and the United States. Americans wanted the western lands controlled by Mexico, including California. The United States won the war in 1848. Then California became part of the United States.

This story is set during the time of the Californios. A Mexican girl and her family are starting their voyage to California. There they will begin a new life.



## ~ Farewell to Mexico ~

María and her family shuffled forward in the crowd. They were in San Blas, Mexico. They were about to board the ship that would take them to California.

Pablo, María's older brother, held her hand tightly. His hand was sweaty. Pablo was nervous. Mamá was, too. This showed in the way she kept squeezing Papá's arm.


*Why are they worried?* María thought. So far, their journey had been easy. They had traveled from Tepic to San Blas. They had traveled in covered wagons with other families. Many of the families were wealthy. Some of them had relatives in the Mexican government. For that reason, the caravan was guarded. They had been very safe.


Over one hundred people board the *Estrella*, bound for Monterey, California.



## ~ Tío Juan's Letter ~

Months ago, Papá had received a letter from María's uncle, Tío Juan. He owned a large rancho in California.

 In the letter, Tío Juan invited María's family to come to California. He wrote that there was work. To María's delight, he also wrote that in California, some women became great horseback riders. María hoped that she could ride horses.

 "I can't wait to get to California," María whispered to Pablo.


"It could be months until we are at Tío Juan's," Pablo said. "First, we have to sail to the town of Monterey in California."

 María's family will sail from San Blas to Monterey. Then they will travel north to Petaluma.



## ~ Smooth Sailing ~

The first week aboard the *Estrella*, the sun shone every day. The Pacific Ocean was calm and quiet. María walked around the ship with Mamá. They spoke with the other travelers. Everyone had a story to tell about why they were going to California. Many people had received land grants. Like María's family, many others were going to join relatives.

 "I heard that California is the most beautiful place in the world!" a woman exclaimed.

"My cousin says that on her *hacienda* they hold many *fiestas*. They celebrate all night long!" another woman told Mamá.

 The passengers swap stories about California.





Being on the ship's deck is undoubtedly María's favorite part of being at sea.

María loved being on the ship's deck. The sun warmed her face. The air smelled salty. But Mamá only allowed María to go on deck if Pablo was with her. Still, María would sneak onto the deck without Pablo. She took her new friend Ana.


María told Ana what Tío Juan had said. "Just imagine," María said. "In California, we will learn how to ride horses—just like the boys."

"I can't wait," Ana replied happily.




## ~ A Terrible Storm ~

The next morning, María woke up suddenly. She knew right away something was different. The air was colder. The wind was howling. The ship felt like it was sailing over mountains of water. Papá said that a storm had come up during the night.

 “The captain said the storm is going to get worse,” Mamá told María. “I want you to stay below deck.”


At first, María obeyed Mamá. Then it became uncomfortable below deck. One **factor** was the strong rocking of the ship. The motion made some people sick. The crew brought buckets for the people who were sick.

 María felt sorry for the sick people. But the air smelled bad. María wanted to get some fresh air.

“Ana,” María whispered to her friend.  
“Let’s go up to the deck. Just for one minute.”



 María tries to convince Ana to go on deck in the storm.

 “No, María,” Ana said. “It’s too dangerous.”  
“Aren’t you curious about what it’s like outside?”

Ana shook her head.


María was frustrated. “Fine,” she said. “I’ll go alone. I’ll be back in two minutes.”



 The *Estrella* continues to sail in the storm.

### ~ On Deck ~

María climbed the wooden stairs to the deck. The ship was rocking so hard she had to hold on to the railing with both hands. Water had begun to seep under the door to the deck. She pushed open the door.

 A gust of wind nearly took her breath away. *It's raining sideways*, María thought. She stepped onto the deck. The waves were the color of dark bruises. They crashed over the sides of the deck, spraying icy water. Strong winds slammed the door shut behind María. Suddenly, she felt scared. Ana was right. She should not have come out on deck.

🔊 María turned to go back. She was soaking wet and shivering. *If Mamá sees me, I'll be in big trouble*, she thought.

🔊 Suddenly, she slipped and fell. The boat rose up in a big wave, and María slid down the deck, away from the door. A coil of thick rope was tied around a pole by the door. She grabbed the rope.

🔊 María screamed in **vain**. She could barely hear her own voice. The wind and crashing waves were too loud. *No one is going to hear me*, she thought. *What am I going to do?* Her hands began to ache as she gripped the rope.

🔊 María holds on tightly to the rope.






## ~ Saved ~

Then the door was flung open. María's brother stood at the top of the stairs. Ana was standing behind him. "Hold on! I'll pull you back!" Pablo yelled. He braced himself. He grabbed the rope, pulling it toward him. Then he grabbed María's arms. He lifted her to her feet. Sobbing, she hung on to her brother. He closed the door and helped her down the stairs.

 Pablo saves María.






Pablo was angry. His cheeks were red. His hands were shaking. “Why did you go out there?”

“I’m so sorry, Pablo,” María cried. “I should have listened to Mamá.”

“Ana told me that you were going to the deck,” Pablo said. “What would have happened if she hadn’t told me?”

María gave Ana a hug. “I’m sorry, Ana. Thank you so much for telling Pablo.”



“We will have to tell Mamá and Papá what happened,” Pablo said. “But first, change into dry clothes. I don’t want you to get sick.”

Ana helped María to her room. There María changed into dry clothes.

Mamá and Papá were very upset with María. But they were also glad that she was safe. “You were very lucky, *mi niña*,” Mamá said sternly. “What if Ana and Pablo hadn’t come?”

## ~ A New Life Ahead ~

The storm lasted for two more days. The passengers stayed below deck. They passed the time by telling stories.

María was happy when the storm finally ended. It had taught her an important lesson, though. The trip to California would not be all fun. There would be dangers along the way. At times, María would be scared. She would need to stay close to her family. But the Hernandez family would make it to California. Tío Juan and a new life would be waiting for them.

The ship will make it to California.



## Responding



### TARGET SKILL

**Sequence of Events** What is the sequence of events during María's voyage on the *Estrella*? Copy and complete the chart below. Add additional boxes as needed.

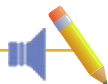
**Event:** María and her family set sail from San Blas, Mexico. They are going to California.



**Event:** The ship sails into a terrible storm. Passengers must stay below deck.



**Event:** ?



### Write About It

**Text to Self** María's family must go on a long trip to reach California. Think about a place you have visited on a trip. Write a paragraph that explains how you got to that place.





### TARGET VOCABULARY

evident

factor

mirages

pace

salvation

seep

shuffled

stunted

undoubtedly

vain



### TARGET SKILL

**Sequence of Events** Identify the time order in which events take place.



### TARGET STRATEGY

**Visualize** Use text details to form pictures in your mind of what you are reading.



**GENRE Historical Fiction** is a story whose characters and events are set in a real period of history.

**Level:** R

**DRA:** 40

**Genre:**

Historical Fiction

**Strategy:**

Visualize

**Skill:**

Sequence of Events

**Word Count:** 1,428

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