



Title: Riding Freedom
Author: Pam Munoz Ryan
Illustrated by Brian Selznick

In this fast-paced, courageous, and inspiring story, readers adventure with Charlotte Parkhurst as she first finds work as a stable hand, becomes a famous stage-coach driver (performing brave feats and outwitting bandits), finds love as a woman but later resumes her identity as a man after the loss of a baby and the tragic death of her husband, and ultimately settles out west on the farm she'd dreamed of having since childhood. It wasn't until after her death that anyone discovered she was a woman.

Let's Talk

Why does Charlotte pretend to be a man?

Together let's list some characteristics that contributed to Charlotte's survival. Which of these do you have?

Why does Ebenezer give Charlotte a chance to work at his stable? Why doesn't he turn her in to Mr. Millshark?

How does the trip to California change Charlotte? What are the things she can do in California that she couldn't do in the East? Are there things you can do today in California that you can't do in other parts of the world?

Why was it so important to her to have property of her own?

What is the importance of the strip of leather that Charlotte always wears around her wrist? Do you have an object that makes you feel better? Jewelry? Photo?

What does Vern mean when he says that "a name ought to stand for something"? What does your name mean? How was it chosen? (*Ask readers to bring info about their name.*)

Why is it important to Charlotte to vote? When can you vote? Will you?

Try This

Print and cut out the questions above. Give one to each person and let them read it and let the group respond.

Try to disguise yourself as a boy or girl using wigs, clothes and makeup.

Try drawing horses or riding one!

Online Resources:

Learn more about the California Gold Rush that drove many people to the West at www.pbs.org/goldrush

Pam Munoz Ryan is also the author of *Esperanza Rising* and *Becoming Naomi Leon*. Find out more about her at www.pammunozryan.com

Explore More in the Library

Rightfully Ours : How Women Won the Vote : 21 Activities (J 324.623 Hollihan)

The Rough-Riding Adventure of Bronco Charlie, Pony Express rider by Marlene Targ Brill (J GN history Brill)

California History for Kids : Missions, Miners, and Moviemakers in the Golden State : includes 21 activities (J 979.4 Duffield)

When Esther Morris Headed West, by Connie Wooldridge (J 324.623 Morris)

Gold Rush and Riches by Walker, Paul Robert (J 979.404 Walker)

Master of Disguise by Eugene Baker (J 363.232)

Elizabeth Cady Stanton : Women's Rights Pioneer (J 324.3092 Stanton Miller)