Welcome to another Clubhouse meeting. The days are still nice and warm (usually) and all those yummy treats from the garden and orchards are giving us lots of great things to eat...except maybe in northern Alaska! So we hope you're enjoying these last days of summer and are preparing for the fun things that fall has to offer. We also hope that you'll remember to thank God for all the good things in your life. Praise God for his many blessings!
"Still no luck, my dear?" Mr. Caspar clucked sympathetically. "Well, don’t you fret over that money, girl. We’ll work something out."

Archie Caspar hooked his thumbs through his suspenders. "You ain’t much to look at, but in St. Joseph, Missouri, a gal gets work where she can. With winter comin’, the only places hiring are my saloon and the Pony Express."

Amanda brushed her dark red hair back and stared defiantly at Mr. Caspar’s greasy face. "I helped Pa break horses back home in Kentucky, an’ that’s what we planned to do in California. I’m beholden to you for helpin’ when Ma and Pa got took with cholera, but I’ll pay back every cent without working in no saloon!"

“Suit yourself,” Mr. Caspar shrugged. "I ain’t waitin’ forever." Amanda sat down on the steps and propped chin on hand, her elbow on her rough, homespun skirt. "I surely do hope you’re not thinkin’ about that polecat’s offer, ma’am."

The voice startled Amanda. A tall, lanky youth with a bristly, brown mustache grinned at her from the porch. "I’d rather see you be a pony rider than working for the likes of him. M’name’s Donny Rising, ma’am. I ride for the Express, and if you’re huntin’ a job, they’re the ones to see...ifyou can ride any."

Amanda flushed and said, "What good would that do? They ain’t likely to hire a girl."

"Reckon not, but hack off your hair, and you’re skinny enough to make a passing fair boy." Donny chuckled. "You got grit, too. Why I even got you a name. Feller called Boston left town headin’ back east a couple days back. About your size even. You about 15...16?"

Amanda’s chin shot up. If you think I’m gonna try this hare-brained idea of yours, you’re loco! Anyway, I can take care of myself."

A few days later, Amanda swallowed nervously and looked around the cramped Pony Express office. Her hat was pulled low and she felt hot in her Pa’s heavy jacket. "Name?" Alec Majors snapped the question without looking up. "Boston."

"Age?"

"Seventeen. I got no family. I can ride just like the ad said. What else you needin’ to know?"

Alec raised his eyes and met Amanda’s steady look squarely. "Ever had trouble with the law?"

"Nope. And I don’t drink, neither."

Alec chuckled. "OK, boy, put your hand on this Bible and swear not to cuss, fight or drink and do your best to get the mail through, and you’re hired."

You get $100 a month plus food and bunk. The company supplies your outfit and horses. You’ll start as relief rider out of Fort Kearny. You’ll go about 100 miles over flat prairie with stops for fresh horses every 10 miles or so. Shouldn’t be any Indians; you’ll mostly be concerned about outlaws. Any questions?"

The dark-haired man looked up. Amanda swallowed hard and shook her head. "Good. Remember, the mail comes first, before your horse or your hide. And never fight if you can still run. The stage leaves in two hours, so report next door for your outfit. Good luck!"

The wind screamed down the chimney at the Ft. Kearny Station. Amanda stood in front of the fire, pulling on her beaver gloves. The rider from Rock Creek, 110 miles away, was late. This snowstorm would make travel downright impossible, Amanda thought grimly. When the door burst open, a swirl of snow blew in with the half-frozen rider. Amanda went out, struggling against the wind to the snorting gray mare already wearing the light, leather mohilla that carried the mail in its locked pockets. "Good day to stay inside, hey, Boston?" The yardman wheezed.
Christopher looked at the folded piece of paper as if it were a snake poised to bite him. “Read it, silly,” I whispered.

Christopher unfolded the note under his desk. “I know where to get a boat. Meet me after school, and I’ll help you catch the horseshoe crab you need,” I had written.

I flashed him a smile. Maybe this would do the trick. Ever since Christopher had been pronounced officially gifted, he seemed determined to live up to his reputation as a nerd. He was also known as the last great male chauvinist in North America—that meant he thought males were, well, superior.

But I had a reputation to live up to, too. Everyone called me “Dear Abby” (after the newspaper columnist) because I had a knack of solving other people’s problems. But Christopher didn’t even realize he had a problem. Like when I asked him, “Hey, Christopher, what are you doing for your science project?”

He said, “I plan to investigate the ecological niche of horseshoe crabs. That’s the common name for a marine arthropod of the genus Merostomata.”

“Oh. Uh, where are you going to get a horseshoe crab?” I asked.

It was not easy to have a conversation with this guy. Ever since Christopher had been pronounced officially gifted, he seemed determined to live up to his reputation as a nerd. He was also known as the last great male chauvinist in North America—that meant he thought males were, well, superior.

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He said, “I plan to investigate the ecological niche of horseshoe crabs. That’s the common name for a marine arthropod of the genus Merostomata.”

“Oh. Uh, where are you going to get a horseshoe crab?” I asked.

Christopher replied, “I plan to capture one in the river. They inhabit tidal estuaries.”

“I plan to capture one in the river. They inhabit tidal estuaries.”

“Need any help?” I asked. “Oh, no. It’s too dangerous for a girl.”

I had to bite my tongue. “Well, good luck!” I said. How could someone so smart be so dumb?

So at three o’clock I was waiting outside the school, as I had planned. Christopher didn’t seem too thrilled to see me. “Oh, uh, what, uh, what are you doing here, Kara?” he stammered. “It’s all set,” I announced. “Jordan is letting us use his boat, and he told me where to find the biggest crabs.”

“I am perfectly capable of catching a crab without any help from a girl,” Christopher replied.

I ignored his little dig and started in the direction of the river, with Christopher following in my wake. The pungent smell of the muddy river water rose up to meet us as we walked out.
Jokes and riddles sent in by readers. Send yours to:
Clubhouse
P.O. Box 15
Berrien Springs, MI 49103

An elderly farmer was recently thrown from his horse and hit his head. The doctors thought he might have a brain injury, so they asked him a question. “One hundred sheep are in a field. One wanders off. How many sheep are left?”

The farmer replied, “None.”
The doctors said he was wrong, and that the answer was 99.
But the farmer said, “Your’re wrong. When one of those dumb critters wanders off, they all follow him!”

–by Jake Tucker, NY

When an electric train goes east, where does the smoke go?

Q: What did the teddy bear say when he was offered a piece of cake?
A: No thanks. I’m stuffed.

When a baby was born just right now,
With her skin white as snow;
Her eyes blue as crystal water;
Her glamorous lips red
As a just-bloomed rose.
Oh, what a beautiful baby!
–Geraldine Lanting, Canada

There was a cat of Shetland
Who, at an early age joined the band.
He decided to practice,
And sat on a cactus.
He now is the highest soprano in the land.
–Geraldine Lanting, Canada

When I stepped out into the moonlight,
I fell asleep below the stars.
Wishing that I could stay there forever.
I will soon have to return home again.

I fell asleep again under the moonlight
When I woke it was so cold,
I climbed into my sleeping bag.
The campfire started to go out.
The stars were so bright.
“Tomorrow, I said, I will have to head home.”
–Flor Hernandez, TX

Who is the shortest man in the Bible?
A: Bildad, the Shuhite! (shoe-height)

Send your poem, drawing or joke to:
Clubhouse,
P. O. Box 15,
Berrien Springs, MI 49103.
(If you submit a picture, be sure it is on white paper without lines. Otherwise we won’t be able to use it.)
Bible Snapshots

Illustrated by Jon Woodard
Based on God Cares by Doris Burdick

Where to find the story: Genesis 27:1-41

Isaac asks his favorite twin son Esau to prepare food for him so that he can give him a special blessing. Isaac doesn’t know that Esau has traded away his birthright to his twin brother Jacob. Their mother Rebekah overhears.

Rebekah tells her favorite Jacob about his father’s plans. She has him quickly take his father’s favorite food to him, and has him dress in animal skins so that his hands and arms will feel hairy (like Esau’s) to Isaac, who is nearly blind.

Jacob comes to his father Isaac pretending to be Esau. “Your voice is Jacob’s voice, but your hands are Esau’s,” Isaac says as he feels the animal skins. He is suspicious, but finally believes Jacob, and he gives Jacob the birthright blessing.

When Esau returns, he discovers that Jacob has been there before him. “Who are you?” Isaac asks. “I am thy son, thy firstborn Esau,” is the reply. Isaac realizes he has been fooled, but the blessing has been given and can’t be taken back. Esau is livid with anger.

Puzzle Power

1. Mark out the fourth letter. In the sentence below, mark out the first letter...then begin counting down the line until you come to the fourth letter (which is an E). Put an X through it and continue the same way, putting an X over every fourth letter. If you correctly divide the string of letters that don’t have X’s through them, you’ll find an important message.

POUREFATHERHERAINSHESAVOENPKNOWHSALNLABOUT
DOURENEEFDSIGNSTHEADIOFWJORKYINLGABMOUTH
THENMWEOSHOPULDOBECRONCERMTENEDMUOSTUA
OFAWLLWWITHXDOIYNGZODSAWILBL.

Our Father in Heaven knows about our needs. Instead of worrying about them, we should be concerned most of all with doing God’s will.

2. Who was it? Draw a line from the statement on the left to the person who said it.

a. “Who are you.”
b. “Those skins will fool your father.”
c. “Make my favorite food and come to me for the birthright blessing.”
d. “Your voice is Jacob’s voice.”
e. “Take this food to your father, Jacob.”
f. “Are you truly Esau?”
g. “I am thy son, thy firstborn.”
h. “Your voice is Esau’s.”

ESAU
JACOB
REBEKAH
ISAAC
My brother Abel stood at the end of the potato row and brushed dirt off his shirt. Weeding potatoes was hot, tiresome work. We were glad to be done.

Ned helped yesterday, but this morning he left with Pa, because deer had been seen along the river. We hadn’t hunted much deer this spring. Venison for supper would be a fine reward for our work.

“You’ve got stripes, Sam,” Abel told me as we climbed the rail fence that protected our acre of potatoes, corn and squash.

“You, too,” I said. Wherever Abel had rubbed his face, he had left a smear of dirt.

“First to the creek!” Abel yelled, running.

I raced after him, my shorter legs no match for his.

The creek was clear and cold. We splashed away dirt and the day’s heat. We were loud and careless, forgetting caution. The spring of 1773 had been warm and peaceful in our valley, west of the Pennsylvania mountains. We’d had only one warning of Indians.

When Abel and I returned to the cabin, Ma scolded us soundly for running off alone. Eight-year-old Liza scowled like a judge, and little Luke puckered his mouth and began to cry.

Lucky for us, Ned and Pa returned and got everyone’s attention. They brought deer meat, which we hung in the smoking shed for the night. We feasted on venison steaks for supper. Afterwards we sat outside and listened to Pa’s tales until the air cooled and it was time for bed.

The cabin was stuffy, but we closed and barred the door as usual. Pa reminded us of the need for caution. I fell into a restless sleep and dreamed of dangers in every shadow.

In the middle of my dream, I woke to tapping on the window. Abel touched my arm. “Shhh,” he warned. The tapping was our signal. The express, a man from the fort, whispered his warning in the night. “Indians coming!” Then he was gone in the darkness to warn the next settler.

We dressed quickly and silently. We couldn’t wake little Luke for fear he would cry. Living away from the fort could be dangerous business, because, as Ma said, the Indians were upset that we were moving into their territory.

Pa grabbed the shotgun and hatchet. Ned took the rifle and his skinning knife. Each of us made a bundle of clothes, bedding, pots or wooden dishes as big as we could easily carry. In minutes we were ready. We had done this so often that we didn’t need to light the candle. We felt safer in the dark.

At the last moment, Ma took up Luke, holding him against her chest to muffle his murmurs. We slipped quietly from the cabin. With Ned leading and Pa behind, we hurried into the woods. Alert and listening, we moved through the trees. My breathing sounded loud in my ears. So I held my breath until the ache in my chest made me let it go. At last we came to the fort.

“Who goes there?” the guard challenged from one of the blockade towers.


We rushed across the cleared land near the fort. The stockade gates swung open for us.

We went straight to our cabin, which was one of several built along
one side of the twelve-foot-high wall. We spent winters in this cabin and fled here whenever an alarm was raised in the settlement. I was glad that we also had a cabin at our farm. The fort seemed closed in after being outside.

Other families had arrived before us, and more came during the night. I could hear guards call a challenge as each arrived. Near morning, I heard distant gunfire. At last, I slept.

Pa went out early with an armed group of men to bring in the rest of our household things. We would stay at the fort until all danger had passed.

The men came back just before supper, their wagons loaded with stools, tables, pots and all manner of clothes and quilts. Cows, mules and horses were herded into a small corral. We sorted our things from the piles on the wagons.

“Did you see Indians?” Ma asked.
“Not a one.”
“But the shooting...” Ma began.
“Probably Zach and his boys shooting at shadows,” Pa said.
“You mean we moved back here for nothing?” I complained.
“I think not,” Pa answered. “I expect some Indians had a fine dinner today, Sam.”
“How do you know?” I asked.
“Our venison is gone,” Pa said.
“What!” I shouted. “Indians took our meat?”
Pa nodded. “But it would only have spoiled. It takes days to smoke properly, Sam. Who would stay to tend the fire?”
Still, I felt a tear squeeze from my eye at the thought of the steaks we would miss. Now there would be only mush and milk for supper.

As we sat down to our evening meal, Pa gave thanks for our safe journey to the fort. Not one friend or settler had been lost or attacked.

“Give thanks for the deer, too, Papa,” Liza said.
“But we lost it,” I told her.
“No,” Liza said, shaking her head.
“Thanks that the Indians found our deer, and it won’t be all wasted.”
“And we won’t go home to a smelly carcass,” Ned laughed.
Liza wrinkled her nose. “Phew,” she said.

But I was still thinking about Liza’s thanks. “Pa,” I said, “didn’t the deer belong first to the Indians?”
“Well, yes, Sam, I guess they did—as much as any wild thing can be thought to belong to any man.”
“I’m sorry we have to run away from the Indians,” I went on. “I’d like to not be afraid—to be friends.”
“I know what you mean, Sam. I’m proud that you can use your mind to seek what is better.”

There were more thoughts crowding my head that night, and I wanted to puzzle them out—to discover what was important to me. I sat at our table and stared at the mush in my bowl. I remembered the delicious steaks we had enjoyed last night. Then I looked around the table—at Ma and Liza, Ned and Abel, little Luke and Pa, watching me with his face full of pride. We were a family still, together and safe. We could hunt other deer to replace the stolen one, but if one of us had been taken, we might have been gone forever.

“This mush is pretty good,” I said.
“Maybe the best I ever ate.”

Pa smiled and put his hand on my shoulder. I smiled back, for I knew I had learned something important about the value of things. And I was sure Pa knew it too.
on the old half-rotten pier. Jordan saw us, rowed to shore and tossed the rope casually over the piling.

“Who’s going to row?” he asked.

“I am, of course,” Christopher answered. “The dynamics of aquatic locomotion is a subject I’m quite interested in.”

Jordan raised his eyebrows. “Huh?”

“I think he means he knows how to row,” I explained as I stepped into the boat and sat down.

Christopher clutched the piling and gingerly dangled one long leg toward the boat.

“Hey, are you sure you know what you’re doing?” Jordan asked.

“You’ll find I’m quite capable, once I establish my equilibrium.” Christopher said, lurching into the boat.

“All right,” Jordan said dubiously. “Off you go,” and he gave the boat a shove.

Christopher closed his eyes as if he were trying to read something on the inside of his eyelids. “What in the world are you doing?” I asked.

“You’ll find I’m quite capable, once I establish my equilibrium,” Christopher answered, breaking the silence. He held out his hands, revealing two huge blisters where his unskillful struggle with the oars had rubbed his hands raw.

“Change places, I commanded. “Here, let me move first and…” Christopher leaped to his feet. As I moved to the left, he bobbed in the same direction.

“Stop! Wait! Stay!” I cried, but he lunged toward me.

For a long moment I felt the boat tilting, tilting, tilting, and then… the sting of icy water. My shoes and sweater filled with water, dragging me down like an anchor. I shrugged them off and forced myself to the surface with strong strokes, gasping for breath as the numbing water tugged at me. Grabbing the boat, I shook my head. Where was Christopher? I looked in every direction. Nothing. Nothing. Nothing...

“All right,” Jordan said doubtfully. “Let’s see…” He rowed ineffectually, tossing his oars at me and he sputtered, swallowing more water. I focused on the shore and prayed for strength. But his frantic thrashing still dragged us downward.

“Come on, take it easy,” I yelled as we went under again. Then my toes felt oozy mud, and I stood in neck-deep water and pulled Christopher to his feet.

“Help, I’m drown…. Oh!” He stopped in mid-scream, his face pale blue. Quickly he pulled himself together.

“We can wade ashore,” he declared. “But we must abandon our efforts to retrieve the capsized vessel.”

“You dope!” I shouted. We clambered up the slippery bank and threw ourselves on the rough grass, breathing raggedly.

Christopher leaned over and threw up a stomach full of river water. I let my thoughts wander in this vein, and by the time I looked up, we had drifted far out into the river, away from the sandbar.

“The only problem is this blister,” he said, breaking the silence. He held out his hands, revealing two huge blisters where his unskillful struggle with the oars had rubbed his hands raw.

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Then he burst to the surface like a whale, shouting and gulping mouthfuls of water. “Help! I’m drowning!” he managed to cry as his head went under again.

“OK, remain calm,” I told myself. “Lord please don’t let him drown.” I prayed as I dived. The salty, tea-colored water stung my open eyes, but

“Where is he? Where? Help, Lord!”

Then I felt his hands like claws digging into my arms. He kicked and scratched wildly, almost ripping my shirt. I slipped my arm around his shoulders and kicked hard, propelling both of us to the surface.

Air! I filled my lungs, struggling to keep Christopher’s head above water. “OK, here we go,” I said as I tried to swim, using only my legs and one arm.

Christopher’s fingers still clawed at me, and he sputtered, swallowing more water. I focused on the shore and prayed for strength. But his frantic thrashing still dragged us downward.

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Christopher looked pale and sweaty. “The only problem is this blister,” he said, breaking the silence. He held out his hands, revealing two huge blisters where his unskillful struggle with the oars had rubbed his hands raw.

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“OK, remain calm,” I told myself. “Lord please don’t let him drown.” I prayed as I dived. The salty, tea-colored water stung my open eyes, but He looked at me as I sat shivering, my arms wrapped around my knees and my hair dripping water into my eyes.

“This has been a most educational afternoon,” he said grandly.

“Educational!?” I gasped.

“Yes, I’ve gained new insight into tidal undercurrents. Plus, I’ve discovered that females can be quite efficient in an emergency. You were very cool-headed for a girl.”

“And what’s that supposed to mean? This girl saved your life.”

“Yes, right. Uh… I mean… thanks.”

“You’re welcome. Now let’s get home before we catch cold.”

“You know, that’s a common misconception. Actually, viruses are the causative agents, not exposure to cold.”

Oh no. Would he ever learn anything? I wondered what Dear Abby did with her hopeless cases.

What important safety rule did both Kara and Christopher ignore? This is something you should do every time you get into a boat. Hint: This is much like always wearing a seat belt when you’re traveling in a car.

***DO YOU KNOW?***

What important safety rule did both Kara and Christopher ignore? This is something you should do every time you get into a boat. Hint: This is much like always wearing a seat belt when you’re traveling in a car.
Wildest Ride  cont.
as he watched Amanda climb into the saddle.

The biting wind stung her face, and she could only see a couple of feet ahead of the mare’s nose. At least the wind kept the trail clear. Eighteen hours later, Amanda stumbled into the Cottonwood Springs Station and stared at a grinning Donny Rising!

“So, Boston, how do you like these mild prairie winters? Got any advice on how to stay warm?” he smiled cheerfully.

“Quit that fool grinnin’ unless you want your face to freeze that way!” Amanda snapped, as she hobbled to the fire.

By March, 1861 Amanda had been riding for three months. Mr. Caspar, the saloon owner, was getting paid each month, and he still hadn’t figured out where she was. She didn’t even think so much about Ma and Pa anymore, but for some reason it was even harder not to think about Donny. His teasing irritated her, and he was sure to slip and give her away some-day. But on lonely stretches of trail, she couldn’t help day-dreaming some.

Amanda was resting when the scheduled rider burst back into the station.

“Where’s Boston? Jay Kelley just rode in carrying President Lincoln’s speech bound for California, and he won’t turn it over to anybody but Boston. He says the warmongers want it pretty bad, and Boston’s the fastest rider on this run.”

Amanda was out the door in seconds, tearing down the trail. At each stop, a horse was standing saddled, and she barely touched the ground as the mochilla was yanked from saddle to saddle in one swift move. In seven and a half hours, Amanda scraped to a stop at Cottonwood Springs and wearily looked around for Donny’s familiar grin. Instead, the stockman limped out, leading a rangy dun and spoke shortly.

“We been hit. Renegades, I’d say. Relief rider’s shot up; you’ll have to go on.”

Amanda dashed into the station. Donny’s side was bandaged, and his feverish eyes looked unsteadily into hers.

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Amanda dashed into the station. Donny’s side was bandaged, and his feverish eyes looked unsteadily into hers.

“Looks like you get the honor, Boston, as I’ll be takin’ some time off. It’s up to you, Mandy,” he added quietly. “Don’t let us down.”

“I can’t go—you need tending!” Amanda wailed.

“Shhh, someone’s comin’. I’ll be all right.” He spoke a little louder, “T’other rider went to Ft. Kearny to fetch the Army Doc. You best git goin’, Boston. I’d watch my back trail some, if’n I was you.”

Amanda walked slowly to her horse. Every instinct screamed at her to stay, but she couldn’t let Donny down. If she quit, he’d be hurt for nothing.

She rode hard for an hour, trying not to think about Donny. As she neared Junction House Ranch, her senses came abruptly to life. She could see riders off to her left. They hadn’t seen her yet. On a fresh horse she could outrun them.

“Riders comin’,” Amanda yelled as she tore into the yard, ripping the mochilla off her saddle and slapping it onto the snorting Appaloosa dancing by the corral. In seconds, she was racing out of the yard on the half-broken animal. As she reached the open plains, the riders spotted her and turned to cut her off.

“C’mon girl, quit jumpin’ around and put some of that fire into runnin’, ” Amanda tried to keep her voice calm as she dug her spurs into the horse’s sides. It bolted, Amanda clinging to the saddle like a burr. The riders were left behind, but Amanda didn’t slow down.

As she left South Platte heading toward Julesburg, the end of her run, the stockman called after her, “I reckon you know Julesburg’s a hangout for bad men around here.” Amanda just nodded.

Amanda uneasily entered the trees a few miles outside Julesburg Station. Suddenly, three men were blocking the trail, right in front of her!

“Hand over that bag, boy, and no tricks,” a fat, dirty man said roughly.

“I have to get down to get it off,” Amanda answered shakily. “The other two men relaxed when they saw she wasn’t putting up a fight. Their horses danced around a little as she fumbled with the mochilla.

One man sneered, “I’d a robbed a pony boy sooner, if’n I’d known it was this easy.” The
horses shifted some more, and Amanda saw what she’d been hoping for.

“He-yah!” She slapped her horse’s rump and hung onto the saddle horn for dear life. The startled animal bolted through the rearing horses, and, with her remaining strength, Amanda hauled herself back into the saddle. She heard yelling behind her, and a shot whizzed over her head. Now her life depended on making the station.

The miles seemed to drag by. The riders were behind her as she galloped full speed into the yard. She rode onto the porch and, grabbing the mochilla, fell inside.

Gunfire erupted all around her. Through the smoke, she could see the three turn tail, and then all was quiet.

Amanda managed a weak grin as she surveyed the tense men gathered around the room. She held up the mochilla.

“Who’s gonna be the lucky man?,” she asked and then handed off the mochilla as she limped out the door.

“Where you headin’? If anyone’s earned a rest, it’s you,” the station boss started in disbelief.

“I got business back in Cottonwood Springs,” Amanda called over her shoulder. And once again she headed for the trail.