

A Letter from a Pony Express Rider

by Lucius Lodosky Hickok



ABOUT THE READING An ad for Pony Express Riders appeared in a San Francisco Newspaper. It read: "WANTED—young, skinny, wiry fellows, not over 18. Must be expert riders, willing to risk death daily. Orphans preferred. Wages \$25.00 a week . . ." Lucius Lodosky Hickok rode the Pony Express out of Sacramento, California. The following excerpt is from a letter he wrote to his wife in 1860.



As you read the letter below, think of how courageous the riders had to be.

My Dear Blessed wife

I place my pen to paper oncemore to inform you how londsom I am & of my health & other things in general first my health is good I am awfull lonsom & grow so more every day I want to see my family as bad as you can want to see me I know I wrote you on Oct 29 & sent you ten dollars & agreed to send you some more in 15 days but I have failed again but don't blame me for I could not get the bill of exchange in time I will send it the fifth of Dec. I want you should write when you receive money from me every time for I have a receipt of the money & when you receive it I have to deliver it—the man I get the draft of I am still on the Pony Exprys yet & how long I shall stay there I don't know I have had a prety hard time of it through this Presidential Campaign you bet Pruilla the Pony came through from St. Joseph on the Missouri river to Sacrimento in six days & 16 hours & I rode 75 miles of it 6 hours & 3 minutes by the time I changed Ponys only 6 times what do you think of

Because this letter is written without punctuation, read slowly and try to pause where you think a period or comma should be placed.

Mail service operated between St. Joseph, Missouri, and Sacramento, California, in 1860 and 1861.

Source: Pony Express Home Station, www.xphomestation.com/firm-riders.html

that we had Presidential news from the states on my trip owt we had the same of Cal Cal has gone for Lincoln I voted for him. . .

The average day's work by a Pony Express rider consisted of a trip of 75 miles or more.

I my home here in San Juan looking aro ight for to makemoney faster at present t to go out with the Exprys twice a week that take me two days in all the rest of the time I have to myself and it takes the rest of the week for me to get rested it is the hardest work that I ever done in my life think of me on every Thursday & Friday fro the hours of six in the morning until the hours of 10 in the evening for sometimes I have to wait for the return exprys the longest I ever waited was 4 hours but it is seldom I have to wait any v then I get back about seven! In the evening think of your husband riding a Pony at the rate of 12 miles an hour & on his back from 6 in the morning until 7 in the evening. . .

The Pony Express operated day and night.

I cant write any more this time Excuse bad writing and bad spelling. . . this is from your mo neglectfull husband L.L. Hickok to his most blessed wife Pruilla Hickok.

ANALYZING LITERATURE

1. Main Idea What does Lucius tell his wife in the letter?

2. Critical Thinking: Drawing Conclusions What were some of the hardships faced by the Pony Express riders?

3. Activity You are a map maker in early 1860. You have been hired by the Pony Express to draw a map of the route from Sacramento, California, to St. Joseph, Missouri. Use the Internet to research the routes and draw your map, including some of the pony express stations.