

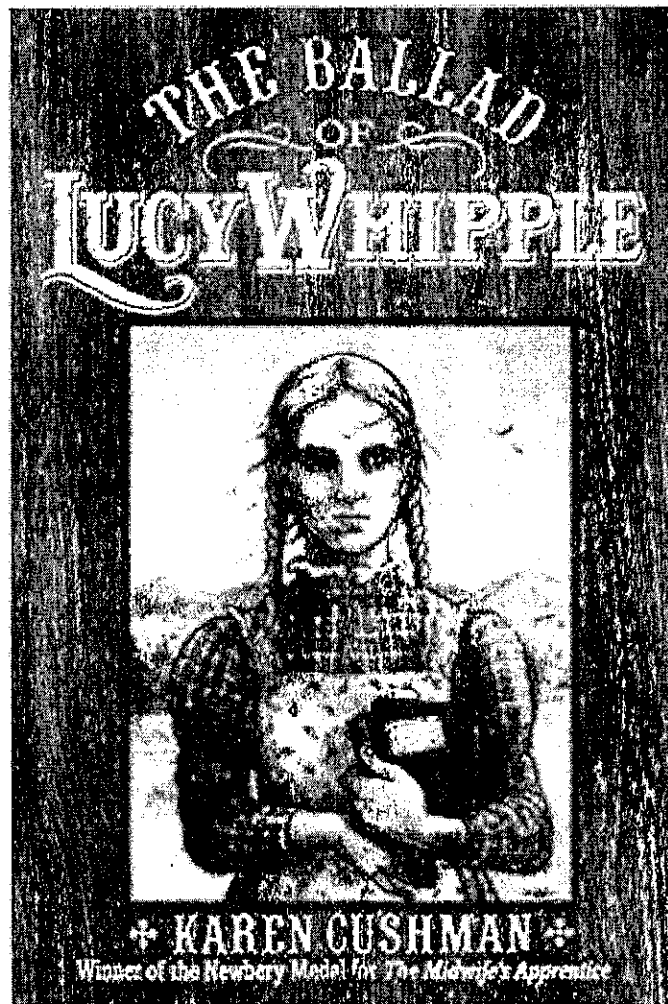
The Ballad of Lucy Whipple

By: Karen Cushman

Character Sketch

Historical Fiction

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For the second marking period of the 2019 - 2020 school year, my literature review project will be character sketch. I have chosen the book The Ballad of Lucy Whipple. This book was written by Karen Cushman and the genre is historical fiction. I will be writing about the main character, Lucy Whipple.

Lucy Whipple is a young woman who moved from her hometown in Massachusetts to the dusty, hot, town of Lucky Diggins, California. Lucy is miserable in California and hates every bit of it. She is determined to find her way back to Massachusetts where she left her home, her grandparents and her happiness. There is one problem with this though. It was her mother's dream to travel west to California during the Gold Rush in 1849, but Lucy does not share her mother's adventurous spirit. She prefers being stretched out on the grass of the rolling green hills of MA with a book in her hand under the shade of a tree. Lucy will do anything to get back to her home.

Have you ever met a person who loved their family, used their resources, was determined, but still was more stubborn than a mule? These are some personality traits of Lucy Whipple, the main character in The Ballad of Lucy Whipple. She has a distinct personality and a zest for life that she expresses throughout her story.

Personality:

One personality trait that Lucy Whipple shows consistently throughout the story is **resourcefulness**. Lucy shows this when she uses what she finds in the environment around her to bake pies to sell for money. An example of this is on page 31, when the text says, "So the next morning I got out of bed long before dawn to do my chores and bake my pies. I gathered enough chokeberries for six pies, put them in to bake, built a carrier out of the old straw basket, and, not long after sunup, set out for the river to make my fortune." This shows that Lucy used the fruit that grew in California to make pies, and then she made something she could carry the pies in out of an old basket the family already owned. She wants to make enough money to travel back to her hometown of Massachusetts. She did her best to make the pies out of what she had to get money.

The second personality trait that Lucy shows in many parts of the story is **determination**. Lucy is determined to go back home to Massachusetts. One way she could get back to MA is with a man named Brother Clyde. Brother Clyde is a preacher who came from the East Coast to California to teach gold miners about God. If Brother Clyde does not find any followers in California, then he will have to go back home to the East Coast, and Lucy thinks she could possibly get a ride back with him. I know this because, on page 96 the text states, "Feeling sorry for the man was one thing, but getting religion for his sake was more than they [the miners] planned on. I, however, had a masterpiece of an idea. *If* Brother Clyde were to lead a group back East, and *if* Mama were to approve of him, she might let me go with him! The next day I started my campaign. "I somewhat like Brother Clyde, don't you Mama?"" This part of the text shows us Lucy's plan. First, she will convince her mom that Brother Clyde is a good man. Then, Lucy will try to convince her mother to let her travel back home with him. Lucy makes a plan to go back with Brother Clyde because she is determined to find her way back to Massachusetts.

The third personality trait Lucy shows in varied parts of the story is that she is **stubborn**. Lucy expresses this when she refuses to hunt for food to feed herself, and her family. I am certain of this because, on page 16 Lucy asks her mother what she should do with her free time and Lucy's mother puts

a shotgun in her hands and tells her to go hunt animals for dinner. Lucy refused and her mother gave up on persuading her to do it. Then the text says, "That night we had no meat for supper. I, in fact, had no supper at all, and wouldn't, so Mama said, until I brought home something to eat." The next day when Lucy was out hunting, something scared her in the bushes. Her mother was disappointed and annoyed with Lucy's skittishness. Then she said, "'Now you're near grown up and you've gotten more scared of things than less! Grizzlies! Indians! Won't shoot a gun! What is to become of you girl?'" Mama plopped a gob of bacon grease on the skillet and shook her head. "Every tub has to learn to stand on its own bottom sometime." I got no supper again, but I must allow that in a curious way I was proud of myself. I might starve to death, but I'd go a New Englander." She was proud of herself because she showed to her mother that she didn't care if they had meat or not, she didn't even care if she died from not eating. As long as she died a New Englander, she would be happy. Lucy proved her stubborn nature by not worrying about whether or not she had dinner, and by refusing to hunt.

The final character trait that Lucy Whipple shows in the story is that she is **loving**. She shows that she loves her family when she is sad for many reasons. One reason she is sad is because her father died and she loved him so much. I know this because, on page 24 the text says, "I didn't much like talking about Pa, it made me miss him terrible instead of just ordinary bad." She shows that she loved many things she lost on page 44 when she writes in a letter to her grandparents, "My heart is so sore with missing you and Pa and Golden and home, sometimes I think I may sigh myself to death." This shows that Lucy is so sad and filled with pain because she lost so many things she loved. She lost her home to a dusty tent in the middle of nowhere, she left her grandparents when she moved to California, and finally, she lost her Pa and her baby sister, Golden, to pneumonia. These are all things that Lucy loved, but lost. This shows that Lucy is a loving person because she is sad she lost things she loved and were special to her.

Physical:

One physical trait that Lucy describes herself having is '**no-color**' eyes. She says this when she is talking to her sister about what her Pa looked like. She said this on page 24, "you have blue eyes, like he did, not no-color like mine." This shows that Lucy's eyes must have been a dull color, or a mash of dull colors that did not resemble a color. Another physical trait Lucy has is in parts of the story a **sunburned face**. She has a sunburned face because she is outside a lot. I know this because, on page 2 the text says, "...so I wiped my sweaty, sunburned face with the back of my hand and went to help." This shows Lucy must have been out in the sun a lot and got a sunburn. This makes sense because California is hot and sunny and sunscreen had not been invented in the 1800's. The third physical trait Lucy has is that she is **tall**. I know this because, in the text they talked about Lucy's mother being tall, and by the end of the story, Lucy is taller than her mother. On page 136 it said this, "...I am taller than Mama now..." This shows that Lucy has grown to be taller than her mother in the past years. Throughout Lucy's couple years in California, she grows up. As she has many different adventures, she changes. In the beginning of the story, Lucy **grows skinny**. On page 6 it says this, "All I saw for five months was the bottom of the bunk above me on that boat. I have got very skinny. Butte says I look like a stewed witch." This shows that Lucy has gotten skinny because she was on a boat for a long time, with a smaller amount of food because there is a limited amount of space on a boat. Then, in the middle of the story, Lucy **gains more weight and becomes more heavy**. On page 43 it says this when Lucy writes a letter to her grandparents, she

writes, "Dear Gram and Grampop, You would not know me. I am so tall and almost fat. I think it is all the biscuits and gravy." This shows Lucy is gaining more weight from what she eats now that she is eating fattening food every day. Then, by the end of the story, Lucy becomes tall and **skinny once again**. It says this on page 136, when she writes a letter to her grandparents. She writes, "I am not fat anymore, am taller than Mama..." This shows that Lucy has grown taller but not heavier, and now she is skinny. The final physical trait Lucy has is **yellow hair**. The fact that she is blonde changes throughout the story. In fact, by the end of the story, Lucy's yellow hair becomes almost brown. On page 136 it says this, "...and my yellow hair is now mostly brown." This shows that Lucy was probably born with yellow hair, and as she is getting older it is changing to brown. Throughout the story of Lucy's adventures in California, the way she looks changes.

When the book ends, Lucy's mother gets married to Brother Clyde. The family, Lucy's mother, Brother Clyde, and Lucy's two younger sisters decide to move from California to the Sandwich Islands. At the last minute, Lucy decides not to travel with her family, but to stay in Lucky Diggins, California because she decides that she is loved and safe and needed there. That is where she believes home is. Soon after Lucy's family leaves, a lady named Mrs. Porterhouse comes to Lucky Diggins, determined to civilize California. Mrs. Porterhouse started campaigning for a school and a brick church in the town. Lucy shares her idea of having a lending library in the basement of the General Store. Mrs. Porterhouse likes the idea, and they start right away. Lucy becomes Miss Whipple, the librarian of Lucy Diggins. Being in charge of books is Lucy Whipple's 'real hearts desire' as she calls it. Lucy is happy, her family is happy, and they all found their true homes.

New Adventure:

I think that Lucy Whipple's small borrowing library in the basement of the General Store will grow to be a major business. I think she will start with hiring one of her friends, Lizzie Flagg, but then, as the population of Lucky Diggins grows, she will hire more and more people. Each person she hires will have a different job, one mending torn pages, another ordering new books, a third keeping track of who borrows what, and Lucy reading and reading the growing shelves of books. After she has a pretty good staff, I think that Lucky Diggins will carry out the plan of the school and the church. A minister will come to preach in the church, and a girl will come to teach in the school. She will bring her brother with her. Lucy will fall in love with the school teacher's brother, Luke. Lucy and Luke will get married and have children. They will have three children, Ivan, Mary, and Alice, all characters in Lucy's favorite books. Since Lucy and Luke will have children, Lucy will have a hard time taking care of three babies and running the town library. The business will get cramped in the small basement of the General Store, so Luke will build a house with two floors. One for them to live in and one to upgrade the library. Lucy will continue running the library in the downstairs floor of their house. Lucy will then have her own house, her own family, and her own business. She will never forget the adventures she had with her brother, sisters, and mother, but she knows there will be many more in the future.