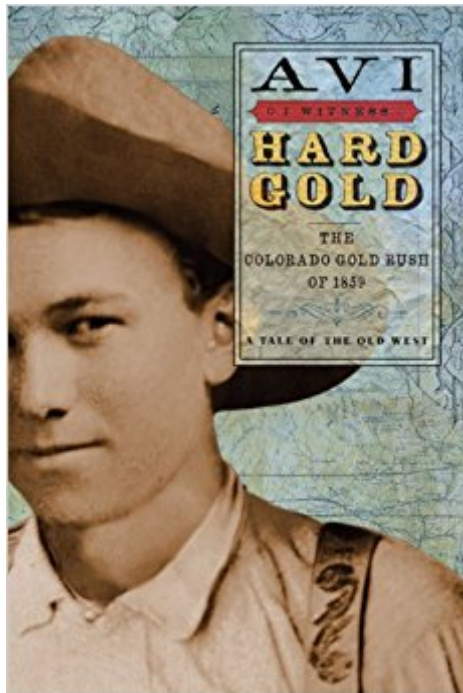




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# I Witness: Hard Gold: The Colorado Gold Rush Of 1859: A Tale Of The Old West (I Witness Novels)



## Synopsis

Early Whitcomb's family needs a miracle. Their Iowa farm has been in the family for generations, but a long drought has withered their savings and left them in debt. Meanwhile, the great Chicago and Northwestern Railroad wants their land, and if the Whitcombs can't pay their loans, the local banker, Judge Fuslin, will foreclose and sell the farm as his own. Early's uncle (though he's more like a brother), Jesse, thinks he has the solution: to head West and dig for gold. Fueled by reports of prospectors striking it rich in the Rocky Mountains, Jesse can't think about anything but gold, and his determination to get to the western territories grows stronger by the day. Early is wild to go with him, as much for the adventure as for the gold. But the journey costs money--more than the boys can afford--and when Jesse flees during the night, after being accused of a robbery, Early doesn't know what to believe. Then Jesse sends an electrifying message--that he has found gold, but his life is in danger--and Early knows he must do whatever it takes to find him, even if it means running away and joining a wagon train with a strange family. The journey is dangerous and full of hardships, and the closer the travelers get to their destination, the more ruined lives they encounter--lives consumed by the hunt for gold. Then to his horror, Early learns that Jesse has been accused of another, much bigger crime and has fled to a secret place in the mountains. Somehow, Early must get to him without leading Jesse's pursuers right to his door. And even if he succeeds, Early will still have to make the hardest choice of his life.

## Book Information

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in  
Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Friendship, Social Skills & School  
Life > Self-Esteem & Self-Respect

Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

## Customer Reviews

Grade 4  
•Fourteen-year-old Early Whitcomb's family is trying desperately to hold onto their Iowa farm during hard times. The local banker is pressuring the Whitcombs to sell their land to the Chicago and North Western railway, promising to foreclose on their mortgage if they refuse. This prompts Early's Uncle Jesse, 19, to head west and find gold, disappearing under suspicion of bank robbery. After he writes that he has found gold but suspects that it will be stolen, Early sneaks away and signs on to a wagon train destined for Cherry Creek and Pike's Peak. A representative of the railroad is also traveling with the wagon trains, and the boy suspects that he wants to find Jesse and prevent him from helping his family save the farm. Early makes an unlikely ally in Lizzy Bunderly, the free-spirited daughter of his wagon-train employer, and the two friends face heartache, hardship, and loss while learning the value of endurance on this journey that takes them across the wild, unsettled territory. The novel deals with difficult times in the life of a young person, but emphasizes Early's optimism and hope for better days. The lessons he learns as a result of the choices he makes, as opposed to those made by his uncle, reveal the importance of making decisions wisely. The period reproductions add much to the understanding of an earlier way of life. The chapters are short and broken up into diary format so as to mimic travel journals of the early wagon train adventurers. A rewarding addition.  
•Debra Banna, Sharon Public Library, MA  
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The I Witness series strives to make history more appealing by presenting fiction decked out with an array of nonfiction trappings: maps, diagrams, period photographs, and a multitude of paintings. This entry opens with a classic western setup: an unscrupulous banker tries to force the Whitcomb family off their farm, thus making way for the railroad snaking its way across the country. Young Early and his uncle Jesse hear rumors of a gold strike out in the Rocky Mountains, and see an angle to save the family farm. Jesse takes off without warning and sends word back that he's struck it rich but is being threatened by thieves. Determined to help him, Early hits the

trail with a migrating family and discovers how gold fever can change even the best of men. The beginning and end of the story provide good excitement, but the middle section, the dull Nebraska crossing, is stretched a bit too thin. Still, the detailed, authentic touches of history and adventure are a good combination for readers who might resist straight nonfiction. Grades 5-8. --Ian Chipman

Buy it buy it Buy it buy it Buy it buy it Buy it buy it Buy it buy it Buy it buy it Amazing  
insanely good great buy

Good for middle school students.

Good read aloud for 4th grade to extend Colorado History Unit.

Excellent read

Super story!

i purchased this book so i could like it but i hated this book its not fastanating at all I NEVER  
WANT TO READ IT AGAIN

Early Whitcomb comes from the state of Iowa, where he's never traveled very far from his family's farm. That all changes during the droughts of 1859, when his father falls behind on the mortgage and the local bank threatens to foreclose on their land. Left with no other choice, Early heads out west to track down his cousin Jesse, who had set off to Colorado in search of gold. Along the way he discovers that Jesse is actually wanted for robbery, and that law and order have a completely different look in the Wild West! Although Early's story only concerns his family and friends, it takes place at a very busy time in our country's history. John Brown's raid on the town of Harper's Ferry served to spark a heated discussion about slavery, and southern states were seriously considering secession. I thought that the author did an awesome job of painting these historical events into the background, while still keeping the focus on Early. I also appreciated all the details that were included in this adventure. It's one thing to know that covered wagons traveled for months at a time, but when you start to think about what

these settlers ate and where they slept, you almost start to feel as if you're right there alongside them!! love reading about this period in American history since it seems like adventure was around every corner, for better or for worse! It still amazes me to think of how settlers could take such a huge risk in search of a better life with absolutely no guarantee of success. If you had everything you own piled into a covered wagon and were traveling to someplace new, do you think that you might be just a little worried about what lay ahead? What might you do if things didn't work out?

The best thing about Hard Gold is the story. It's really intriguing. The story is about (HUGE SPOILERS) a boy whose uncle lives with his family. His family consists of his dad one brother him and his uncle. The problem in the story is that the town wants to build a railroad track across their land and they don't have enough money to pay off the mortgage. So the town offers a deal that they will clear the mortgage and give them a lot of money if they let them build a railroad through their land. The story really takes off when Jesse goes west from Iowa to where there's gold. Jesse gets into trouble with the law then so Early Jesse's step-brother goes to help him. Jesse doesn't come home but Early gets enough gold to pay off the mortgage.

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