

Name: _____ Hr. _____

Excerpts from Residents and Visitors of the Gold Rush Area

Directions: Read each of the following excerpts and answer the questions on the back of this paper.

Excerpt #1

My dear Wife,

I have worked harder here than I ever worked at home. I have been repeatedly disappointed in making the amount of money I expected to make here. I knew that you were very anxious to see me and I could hardly bear the thought of telling you that I must be so long away from you. So you must excuse me for writing to you so seldom. I have never taken any comfort since I left you, no my dear for more than two long years I have never known what it was to lay down upon any bed at night contented and happy. Your image is ever before my central vision, and the only ray of earthly happiness that dispels the gloom from my heart proceeds from the thought of meeting you again in this world.

Horace Root,
October 11, 1851
Nevada City

Excerpt #2

My dear and faraway wife Janey,

I will briefly describe the look of things around me. I am sitting in the tent a box covered with a cloth is our eating table on which I write. At the back end is piled our beds on either side is hardware of all descriptions from Steam Cylendor to a paper of Tacks. Outside are casks of Codfish Meal etc. ... Our fireplace is close by with a small stove. ... Just beyond is the beach, a little to the right they are building a Steam boat, and all round is the sound of hammer on boat house or iron. Clothing of all descriptions strews the ground all over. Left by those that have camped here and gone to the mines. Shirts never worn but once or twice are thrown away rather than pay for washing. 50 cts is the charge for washing a piece or \$6 per dozen and no less — so collars boosoms (sic) etc. are thrown away indiscriminately. I have seen pants whole and sound and but little soiled thrown away.

In front at the distance of 1/3 of a mile the shipping begins and extends for 2 miles in a body of some mile and 1/2 in breadth. It is a swamp of Spars and Masts shutting out the vision as far as water extends from a point of rocks close by on my right to the point on the left. ... there is some 4 or 500 ships in the harbour and almost every tide brings in others and multitudes of Emigrants are constantly arriving showing as I think that the Dupes are not all dead yet. I expect that the mines will be literally crowded but I need not anticipate.

Hiram Pierce,
San Francisco, California
Oct. 18, 1849

Excerpt #3

T'is true a California life is not one of pleasure, but to the contrary one of fatigue, toil and privation. Which I presume ere this time you are aware of. I have never regretted the moment I left Missouri and were I there again I would not remain there long. But I would launch my bark for the Land of Glittering Dreams.

Martin Rodney
August 9, 1852

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Directions: Answer the following questions using the excerpts from the Gold Rush Era. Make sure to reference the excerpt number(s) when answering each questions (e.g. In excerpt #2, he states that...).

1.) What new information did you learn by reading these documents? What did you already know?

2.) How were the people in the letters different from what you had imagined as you read about the Gold Rush?

3.) How much did the letters talk about gold? What else did these men write about?

4.) From what you read, does it sound like most miners struck it rich? Why do you think more and more people kept emigrating West, even though stories such as these were being told back home?