



Name _____ Date _____

STAGECOACH MARY FIELDS

Mary Fields lived in the American Wild West. She was born a slave and became an orphan. She never married, and she had no children. This African-American woman found work in a convent in Toledo, Ohio. She formed a strong bond with Mother Amadeus.

The nuns moved to Montana, where Mother Amadeus became very ill. When Mary learned of the illness, she traveled to Montana. She nursed the nun back to health. She then stayed at the mission. Mary protected the nuns from thieves and criminals. She was a pistol-packing woman who never turned away from a fight.

She was six feet tall and as strong as any man. Mary helped build a school and carry supplies. She could fix anything! She became the foreman of the workers. Men reported to her! However, her temper got the best of her, and she was forced to leave the mission. The nuns helped her start a business nearby.

Mary opened a café. She did not make any money. Her heart was too big. She fed the hungry without pay. She could not turn away people who needed help. When the café closed, Mary found a new job.

This job suited her well. In 1895, she became a driver of a U.S. mail coach. She became the second woman—and the first African-American woman—to ever work for the post office. She and her mule, Moses, never missed a day. She earned her nickname, “Stagecoach,” for her reliability. She did this job until she was 70 years old! “Stagecoach” Mary Fields broke boundaries of race, gender, and age.

STORY QUESTIONS

- What was so unusual about Mary?
 - She was gentle and kind.
 - She worked at a mission.
 - She tipped her wagon in the middle of the night.
 - She carried a gun, was tough, and did the jobs of men in the Old West.
- What do you think the phrase “pistol-packing” means?

a. packing a pistol into a suitcase	c. carrying a pistol
b. wrapping up a pistol as a gift	d. burying a pistol
- What do you think would **NOT** have been part of Mary’s job at the mission?

a. carrying firewood	c. digging a well
b. sewing	d. building a storage room
- Why did Mary get the nickname “Stagecoach”?

a. She was as reliable as a stagecoach.	c. She was as fast as a stagecoach.
b. She was as big as a stagecoach.	d. She could carry a stagecoach.