Ague in Toledo

By Janet S. Porter

2 characters

Phineas

Teamster

Phineas: (Holding his stomach) Oh, I'm soooo sick.

Teamster: Didn't you just get off that Lake Erie Barge?

Phineas: Yes, and I thought we'd die there too.

Teamster: I heard it was a terrible trip.

Phineas: It was bad enough. There was a bad storm, and we were tossed about seven days, until we thought that little boat would sink. We didn't even know Lake Erie was that big.

Teamster: It's because the lake is shallow. The waves whip up and those light boats just go up and down, never forward. You're lucky to get here alive.

Phineas: I know I'm lucky. But now I'm so sick with a·gue ('ā,gyo͞o), I can hardly even remember the week on the lake.

Teamster: You'll feel like dying, but you won't. It's those darn mosquitoes. They make you sick. You'll just be sick for a month and wish you could die.

Phineas: Are we almost there? This wagon is making me even more miserable. I'm getting fever and chills, even on this hot day.

Teamster: You can get lodging in this part of Toledo. You look like you could use a good night's sleep. Where are you coming from?

Phineas: We're coming from Connecticut—Goshen. (Holds up the map and points to each of the places.) Came up the Hudson River on a wagon and went across New York on the Erie Canal. Then down Lake Erie to Toledo. It took us two months.

Teamster: You're lucky you waited this long to get sick. That trip would make anyone sick. OK we're here now. You can stay at this boarding house for the night. But don't expect a nice comfy bed. You'll be lucky not to sleep on the floor.

Phineas: Thanks. My brother and his wife and children are in the wagon behind us. We'll get along all right together.

Teamster: So where are you headed?

Phineas: My father is in Kalamazoo County, Michigan where he just bought some land for about $2 an acre. I'm taking the cars to Adrian and then hiking to Kalamazoo County.

Teamster: You'll never make it. You're too weak and sick. That's got to be over 100 miles.

Phineas: I have to make it. We have almost no money. We'll ride the train to Adrian and take our chances the rest of the way.

Teamster: Well, you're lucky to have the railroad. It's the first one in this country—not many miles, but, hey, it's 1837. We're making big progress.