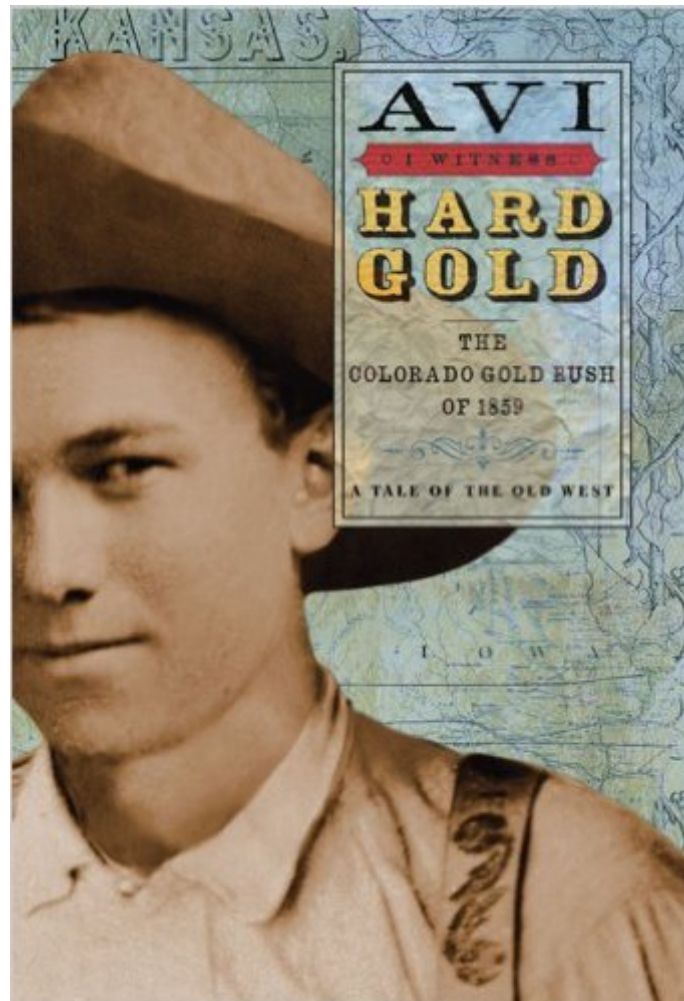


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# Hard Gold: The Colorado Gold Rush Of 1859 (I Witness Novels)



## 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. 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. When Jesse sends an electrifying message--that he has found gold, but his life is in danger-- 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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Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

## Customer Reviews

Avi is one of those writers who has authored so many books about such a wide variety of subjects. I always marvel at how he is able to come up with yet another topic for a book. My library has a fairly large collection of his work, yet I have read only a few of them. A few weeks ago I picked up *Hard Gold* by Avi at the public library. My school doesn't own this one, and since it is historical fiction, it was calling my name. Set during the mid 1800's during the Colorado Gold Rush, I was able to learn a great deal about a topic in history I have heard of but never studied or read about. As the story unfolds, Early is just fourteen years old, growing up on a farm in Iowa. His family is struggling to pay their mortgage due to the recent drought. The railroad company makes an offer to purchase their farm for a good sum of money, yet Early's father won't give in, hoping to pass down the farm to his oldest son, Adam. Early's uncle, Jess, who was raised by Early's parents, is older than Early, but more like a brother than an uncle. He has grand dreams of moving west to Pike's Peak to find gold. By doing so, he will be able to pay off the farm debt. No one is surprised when they find a note from Jess one morning telling them goodbye. However, they are surprised to find that the bank in town was robbed a few days before that, and that Jess is being considered a suspect. Now that he has run off, the authorities are sure he is the thief. Early can't get Jess out of his head and makes his own plans to head west. Things are much harder on the trail than he thought possible, but he makes the best of the situation, enjoying his time with Lizzie, the daughter of the family he was hired to help along the trail. There are many adventures along the way, as well as a bit of humor.

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