

Life on the Trail

Movin' West

Grade: Elementary/Middle School

Purpose/Objective: Students will understand what life was like for the pioneers on the trail as they moved west.

Lesson Plan:

[Use Teacher Resource Information: Life on the Trail, Supplies for the Oregon Trail Journey, Westward Expansion Dates]

1. Introduction/Discussion: When you are traveling long distances, what do you do? What problems are there as you travel? Do you like traveling long distances? Why or why not? Explain to students that they will be learning about what life was like along the trail for pioneers as they came west.
2. Use the Teacher Resource Information and students' textbooks to give students a general idea of what life along the trail was like for the pioneers.
3. Activity 1: (Math)
 - a. Have students complete the Frontier Math Worksheet.
 - i. Students may work on it individually. (or)
 - ii. Break students into pairs/threes and give them one problem to work on. (or)
 - iii. Write one or two problems on the board each day (as you talk about pioneers) for students to solve.
4. Activity 2: (Diary Entry)
 - a. Explain that as pioneers traveled west on the Mormon Trail, Oregon Trail and other trails west, people (and kids) often kept a diary. Ask students if they keep a diary/journal. Explain that these diaries are important for historians today so that we can understand and know what life was like.
 - b. Read journal entries aloud, or have students read some entries on their own.
 - c. Have students take on the persona of a boy or girl along the Mormon Trail. Have the students describe their life while traveling west. Students may want to consider the following when writing their entry: hardships, chores, meals, adventures, sights, significant locations, and fun.
 - d. Possible additions to diary entries: maps, illustrations of events that happen on trail (including drawings of accurate pioneer clothing, wagons, supplies, etc.)

[Follow up with the lesson *Life as a Pioneer*]

Websites:

The Oregon Trail

<http://www.isu.edu/%7Etrnmich/Oregontrail.html>

This website provides brief overview material on the Oregon Trail, with pictures and interesting facts.

The Mormon Trail

<http://www.lds.org/gospellibrary/pioneer/pioneerstory.htm>

This website, produced by the LDS Church, follows the Mormon Trail to Salt Lake City. There are journal accounts from pioneers on the trail associated with various locations.

The Oregon Trail Center

<http://www.oregontrailcenter.org/index.html>

Search the Historical Trails section for information regarding the Oregon Trail, journal entry excerpts, and local trail landmarks. A links section also offers various links to information regarding the Oregon Trail.

❖ Historical Journal Entries

<http://heritage.uen.org/journals/historical.html>

This is a selection of pioneer journal entries and letters describing life along the trail.

<http://heritage.uen.org/pioneers/historical.html>

This is a selection of historical pioneer biographies, including a selection of children's stories.

Standards: SS 4.1.2, 7.2.3, 8.7.1

Use in Classroom: Math, Writing, Social Studies

Frontier Math

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. The first wagon train to travel west consisted of one dozen wagons and 70 men, women, and children. If the pioneers were divided equally among the wagons, how many people would be assigned to each wagon? Round off the remainder to the nearest one.
2. Wagon trains often traveled no more than 15 miles per day. At that rate, how long would a 2,400-mile journey take? If the wagons could have gone 20 miles per day, how long would a 2,400-mile journey take?
3. In 1841, the first wagon train set out from Missouri. By 1869 about 350,000 pioneers had followed the Oregon Trail across the West. On average, how many people per year traveled this route? Round your answers to the nearest one.
4. If one person was buried beside the road for every 17 people who started the journey over the Oregon Trail, write a fraction to show the number of people who died. Convert that fraction into a percent of people who died along the trail.

5. San Francisco's population grew from 800 in 1848 to 50,000 by 1855. How many more people were in San Francisco in 1855 than in 1848? By how many people per year did the population grow during that time period? (Round to the nearest person.)

6. Native Americans once occupied all the land in America. In 1890, they held only 200,000 square miles. The white man had taken three million square miles. How many square miles of land were there altogether in America? What fraction did the Native Americans hold in the end?

7. Frontier teachers were paid meager wages from \$10.00 to \$35.00 per month. Some schools were in session only 4 months per year. How much would a teacher's yearly salary be if they earned \$10.00 per month? How much would a teacher's yearly salary be if they earned \$35.00 per month?

8. A typical sod house measured 16 X 20 feet. What was the area of the house? (Hint: $a=lw$) If the height of the house was 6 feet, what was the volume of the house? (Hint: $v=lwh$)

9. One sod block weighed 50 pounds. How many sod blocks were used to build a ninety-ton sod home? (Hint: 2,000 pounds=1 ton). If one sod block weighed 100 pounds, how many blocks were needed for a ninety-ton sod home?

Frontier Math Answer Key

1. 5.8 or 6 people per wagon
2. At 15 mi./day the trip would take 160 days; At 20 mi./day the trip would take 120 days.
3. About 12,500 people per year traveled this route
4. 1/17; A little under 6% died on trail
5. 49,200 people came to San Francisco at a rate of about 7,000 per year
6. There were 3,200,000 square miles in US; Native Americans ended up with 16%
7. They earned anywhere from \$40.00 per year to \$160.00 per year
8. The area is 320 square feet; the volume is 1,920 cubic feet
9. It took 3,600 50-pound blocks and 7,200 100-pound blocks

Source: *Children of the Wild West*, by Russell Freedman