

Cobblestone™

ON THE OREGON TRAIL

Use the articles, lessons, and activities in this Teacher Guide to help students understand why pioneers traveled on the Oregon Trail and what it was like.

CONVERSATION QUESTION

Why was the Oregon Trail important to the expansion of the United States?

TEACHING OBJECTIVES

- Students will explore how the environment dictated life on the Oregon Trail.
- Students will explain why people and families traveled together.
- Students will create a journal.
- Students will learn why the Louisiana Purchase was important to the United States.
- Students will understand why both Britain and the U.S. wanted to claim the Pacific Northwest.
- Students will create a timeline.
- Students will understand why missionaries went west on the Oregon Trail.
- Students will explore the reasons for conflict between the Cayuse and the Whitmans.
- Students will engage in a debate.



In addition to supplemental materials focused on core Social Studies skills, this flexible teaching tool offers vocabulary-building activities, questions for discussion, and cross-curricular activities.

SELECTIONS

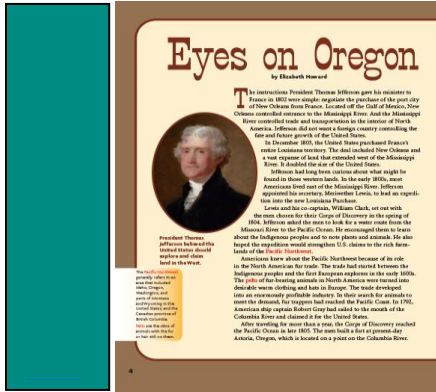
- **Eyes on Oregon**
Expository Nonfiction
- **Wagons Ho!**
Expository Nonfiction
- **The Mission at Waiilatpu**
Expository Nonfiction

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Eyes on Oregon

pp. 4–7, Expository Nonfiction

Use this article about the Louisiana Purchase to understand how important westward expansion was to the U.S.



RESOURCES

- Sequence of Events

OBJECTIVES

- Students will learn why the Louisiana Purchase was important to the United States.
- Students will understand why both Britain and the U.S. wanted to claim the Pacific Northwest.
- Students will create a timeline.

KEY VOCABULARY

- indigenous (p. 4)** people who have been living on a land from the earliest times or from before the arrival of colonists
- treaty (p. 5)** a formal, legally binding written agreement between countries
- negotiation (p. 6)** the process of discussing something with someone in order to reach an agreement with them

ENGAGE

Conversation Question: Why was the Oregon Trail important to the expansion of the United States?

Show students a modern map of the United States. Point out its borders with Mexico and with Canada, as well as places where the U.S. can access rivers, the Great Lakes, and oceans. Explain that these are important for the U.S. to trade with other countries. Then show a map of the United States before the Louisiana Purchase, showing the Louisiana territory owned by France. Point out the same access points. Did the U.S. have the same opportunities for trade at that time?

INTRODUCE VOCABULARY

Define each word with students. Then have students fill in the blank in the following sentences with the correct word.

- Great Britain and the U.S. signed a _____ to define the boundary between the U.S. and British North America.
- The _____ peoples were the first to trade furs with the European explorers.
- The British and the Americans resolved their boundary disputes through a process of _____.

READ & DISCUSS

Have students read the article. Then use these questions for discussion:

- Why was it important that France no longer control the part of North America next to the United States?
- Why did Jefferson want the U.S. to control the Mississippi River? What might happen in the future if they did not?
- Why did Jefferson send Lewis and Clark to explore the new lands that now belonged to the United States? What do you think he wanted to know?

CONCEPT/SKILL FOCUS: Sequencing

INSTRUCT: Explain to students that this article shows the sequence of events that led to emigrants traveling on the Oregon Trail. Then have them fill in the *Sequence of Events* graphic organizer listing the specific examples from the article.

ASSESS: Have students compare their organizer with the rest of the class and discuss any differences, especially which events each included.

EXTEND

Science: Have students research the different types of fur-bearing animals that were important to the fur trade in 1803, and create a poster or booklet illustrating them.

Sequence of Events

Understanding the sequence of events helps to see how a historical event often develop from a single incident or circumstance. The Oregon Trail was the result of events that expanded the U.S. territory. Look at the chart below. Starting with the origins of the fur trade, create a timeline of important events through the settlement of the Pacific Northwest.

Event	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1600s• European explorers trade with indigenous peoples for fur pelts.
Event	
Event	
Event	
Event	

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Wagons Ho!

pp. 10–13, Expository Nonfiction

Use this article about traveling on the Oregon Trail to learn about what the journey was like.



OBJECTIVES

- Students will explore how the environment dictated life on the Oregon Trail.
- Students will explain why people and families traveled together.
- Students will create a journal.

KEY VOCABULARY

- **bustling** (p. 10) a place that is busy and full of activity
- **livestock** (p. 11) animals that are raised or used on a farm
- **emigrant** (p. 12) someone who leaves their home country to live somewhere else

ENGAGE

Conversation Question: Why was the Oregon Trail important to the expansion of the United States?

Ask students if they have ever moved from one town or state to another. Do they know why their family moved? Was it because of a better opportunity for work or school than they had at home? Was it hard to move from a familiar place to a new place? Present the article, “Wagons Ho!” and tell students that they will be reading about why so many people in the 1800s chose to make the long and difficult trip along the Oregon Trail to the West.

INTRODUCE VOCABULARY

Define each word with the class. Then have each student create a word search puzzle that includes all three vocabulary words, plus an additional 17 theme-related words. Have students trade and complete each other’s puzzles. Finally, tell students to look for these words as they read the story.

READ & DISCUSS

Have students read the article. Then use these questions for discussion:

1. What was the environment that pioneers traveled through? How did it affect their journey?
2. Why did emigrants on the Oregon Trail travel in groups?
3. How did wagon trains protect themselves on the trail?
4. Why was it important to assign everyone specific jobs on the trail?
5. Why did pioneers have to leave behind belongings on the trail?

CONCEPT/SKILL FOCUS: Understanding Perspective

INSTRUCT: Explain to students that this article describes not only the details of traveling the Oregon Trail, but also what the experience was like for the people on the journey. It also discusses some of the reasons why people made such a difficult and dangerous trip. Using print and digital resources, have students research primary sources written by travelers on the trail. Then have them write a fictional journal entry from the perspective of a traveler during that time.

ASSESS: Have students share their journal entries with the class. Assess whether the narrative and the details of the trip are accurate according to their research.

EXTEND

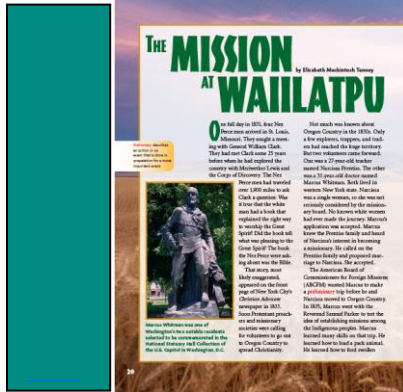
Social Studies: Invite students to use print and digital sources to research the emigrant perspective of different groups of travelers, such as minorities or immigrants from other countries, and write a journal entry from their perspective.

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The Mission at Waiilatpu

pp. 20–23, Expository Nonfiction

Use this article about Marcus and Narcissa Whitman to explore the relationship between settlers and indigenous people.



OBJECTIVES

- Students will understand why missionaries went west on the Oregon Trail.
- Students will explore the reasons for conflict between the Cayuse and the Whitmans.
- Students will engage in a debate.

KEY VOCABULARY

- **missionary** (p. 20) a member of a religious group who is sent into an area in order to promote its faith
- **ford** (p. 20) to cross a river, where it is not deep, on foot or in a vehicle
- **adobe** (p. 21) a mixture of wet earth and grass made into bricks and dried in the sun, used to build houses

ENGAGE

Conversation Question: Why was the Oregon Trail important to the expansion of the United States?

Ask students if they have ever had someone come to their door to talk, or address them in a public place to talk about their religion. Alternatively, ask students if they have read/heard something on the news about people, who because of their religious beliefs, go to help in other parts of the world or during disasters. Display the title of the article. Discuss with students how some of the travelers on the Oregon Trail went west to bring their religion to the indigenous peoples there.

INTRODUCE VOCABULARY

Define each word with students. Then have students work in groups to create sentences using the vocabulary words, with one sentence for each word, and then additional sentences using two or three vocabulary words.

READ & DISCUSS

Have students read the article. Then use these questions for discussion:

1. Why did Marcus and Narcissa Whitman travel west? What did they hope to do?
2. What kinds of changes did the Whitmans make in the lifestyles of the Cayuse? Do you think this was the right thing to do?
3. Why did the Cayuse massacre the people at Waiilatpu? Did they understand what would happen as a result?

CONCEPT/SKILL FOCUS: Exploring Viewpoints

INSTRUCT: Explain to students that events like the establishment of the Waiilatpu Mission, and the later massacre, can be viewed from two perspectives: the Whitmans, and the Cayuse. Divide the students into two teams. One team will argue that the Whitmans were trying to help the Cayuse. The other team will argue that the Whitmans were not helping the Cayuse because they wanted to change their way of life.

ASSESS: Student teams will debate with each other, and the teacher will assess each team's arguments without assigning a winning or losing team.

EXTEND

Language Arts: Have students write a newspaper article about the Waiilatpu mission, either from the point of view of supporting the Whitmans, or the point of view supporting the Cayuse.