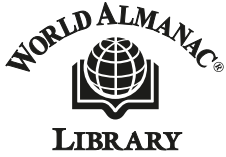


# Landmark Events in American History



## The Oregon Trail

Teacher's Guide written by Susan Nations, M.Ed.

### Series Overview:

The *Landmark Events in American History* series examines important events in the history of the United States. It explores the causes and significance of key moments and developments and takes a fresh look at both myths and heroes. The legacies of these events, whether good or bad, are also explained. Each book is 48 pages in length and includes both full-color photos and archival illustrations. In addition, each book uses an array of informational text features to bring alive these stories of the nation's past, from the cultures of ancient America to the turning points of recent times.

### Features of Informational Text:

Each title in the series *Landmark Events in American History* is filled with such features as clear maps, charts, time lines, archival illustrations, and primary-source documents that enhance and supplement the running text. These important features of informational text invite student inquiry and investigation both in the classroom and independently.

### The Oregon Trail:

From the early 1840s to the late 1860s, the Oregon Trail was the most important route in North America. Thousands of people traveled along the trail to reach lands west of the Rocky Mountains and make new homes for themselves. This book explains how the trail was developed and its significant impact on the expansion and settlement of the United States. It describes the challenges of the journey along the Oregon Trail and settlement in Oregon, and it also looks at the effect of white settlement on the Native peoples of the West.

### The following three pages of the Teacher's Guide include:

- Discussion Questions and Inquiries for Readers
- Introduction and prediction
- Reading the Introduction
- Chapter-by-chapter discussion questions and conversation
- Conclusion discussion
- Time Line investigation
- Focus on Informational Text Features
- Vocabulary Building
- Critical Reading Strategies and Test Preparation

# The Oregon Trail

### Discussion Questions and Inquiries for Readers:

**Introduction and prediction.** Ask students to read the back cover information about the Oregon Trail and browse through the book. Explain to them that the Table of Contents gives the titles of each chapter found in this book. Assign one or more students to each of the chapters and the Conclusion. Students should browse through their assigned chapter further and make a prediction about what they will learn when they read. Each student should share the predictions with the rest of the group.

**Read the Introduction (pages 4–5).** As students read these pages, remind them to read the photo captions as well as the text boxes and running text. After students read, ask them to note any facts or information from these pages that might be found in the chapter they browsed through during the introduction and prediction above. Ask students why they think the map on page 4 provides important information to understanding the Oregon Trail.

**Chapter 1: Oregon Country (pages 6–11).** Invite students to browse through pages 6–11. As they skim and scan, ask them to note how the photos, captions, and text boxes enhance the text. Students can then read this chapter independently or with a partner. When they are finished, let each student select an interesting fact or piece of information to read to the group. Remind students that when they read, they need to read fluently and with meaning.

**Chapter 2: A Trail to the West (pages 12–17).** Prior to reading, ask each student to create a simple T-chart. Label one column “People” and the other column “Contribution to the Trail West.” As students read the chapter, ask each to select five people from the chapter and note on the T-chart the reason they are included in this chapter.

**Chapter 3: Fever and Destiny (pages 18–23).** Divide this chapter into seven parts, five for each subheading, one for the text boxes, and one for the illustrations, captions, and map. Assign one or more students to read each part. Then ask each student to summarize his or her reading for the remainder of the group. Last, discuss why this chapter is titled “Fever and Destiny.”

**Chapter 4: Traveling the Oregon Trail (pages 24–33).** Prior to reading, ask students to share what they think they know about traveling the Oregon Trail. After reading, discuss the chapter and invite each student to share an interesting fact with the group. Talk about hardships on the trail. Ask each student to think of something that might have been said on the trail on an “easy” travel day as compared with a more difficult day.

**Chapter 5: The End of the Trail (pages 34–41).** Students can read this chapter independently or with a partner. After students have read, discuss the following questions:

- How did the Oregon Trail contribute to the creation of new states?
- What are some of the reasons for poor relations with the Native Americans?
- How did the construction of the Transcontinental Railroad impact the use of the Oregon Trail?

# The Oregon Trail

**Conclusion (pages 42–43).** Students should read this section independently or with a partner. Discuss the legacy of the Oregon Trail. Ask each student to use details and information from this section and the rest of the book to support his or her thoughts. Invite students to conduct further research on the Oregon Trail and its legacy using other resources.

**Time Line (page 44).** Prior to discussing the time line, have students browse through the book and look at the illustrations and paintings that depict different aspects of this historical event. Explain that often, historical events have to be depicted with drawings and illustrations when there is an absence of photos. Then ask students to browse through the time line and select an entry to illustrate. (You may want to have them work with a partner on this activity.) Students should share their illustrations with the remainder of the group. They should also write a caption for their illustration. Display these in chronological order on your classroom walls.

### Choose one of the following activities to invite students to revisit the text:

**Focus on Informational Text Features:** The Index is an informational text feature that can help the reader locate specific information quickly. Students should use the Index of this book to review information from the book and practice skimming and scanning. Each student should select three different topics to research about the Oregon Trail. Ask each student to skim and scan the text to locate additional information about each selected topic, referring to the Index to help locate pages on which he or she can find information. Remind students that the Index can be used to locate page numbers pertaining to specific information quickly. Students should use a copy of page 4 of this guide as a record sheet. They can share and discuss their work with a partner or the rest of the group.

**Vocabulary Building:** Strategic readers think about the specialized vocabulary in informational texts as they read. Sometimes these words are defined in the context of the reading, and other times they require prior knowledge or checking other resources, such as the book's Glossary or a dictionary. Students should fold a paper into four columns labeled "Specialized Vocabulary," "Found on Pages," "Definition in Context," and "Definition from the Dictionary." Students should then identify some specialized vocabulary from the text. If the word is defined in the text, they should write a simple definition in the column labeled "Definition in Context." If they need to use another resource to define the word, they should do so and write the definition in the column titled "Definition from the Dictionary."

**Critical Reading Strategies and Test Preparation:** Strategic readers think about their reading and make inquiries as they read. Thinking about and asking "What am I learning?" or "What do I think?" helps the reader monitor his or her text comprehension. Ask each reader to think about and revisit the chapter he or she browsed through in the introduction and prediction discussion above. Each student should write a simple paragraph using one of the following stems: *I noticed...*, *I think...*, *I wonder...*, or *I learned...*. Each student should share his or her paragraph with the remainder of the group.

# The Oregon Trail

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Find It Fast: Using the Index

**Reading Strategy:** Skimming and scanning helps you locate information quickly. When you skim and scan text looking for information, it is important that you let your eyes skim over and through the text quickly, looking for specific information. Scanning then helps you focus on the information and confirm whether or not it is what you are looking for.

**Directions:** Use the Index to research three topics, events, or happenings of interest about the Oregon Trail. Make sure each of your topic selections has more than one page entry. Record the topics you have chosen, the page number references, and interesting facts you learned in the chart below.

Topic	Page(s) where I found further information	What I learned
#1		
#2		
#3		

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