

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

## WAGON TRAIN APPLICATION

Character's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Physical features: \_\_\_\_\_

Present occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

What skills do you have that might be useful on the journey?

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List your personality traits. Circle personality traits that will help you reach the Oregon Country. Underline those that may hold you back.

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What leisure activities do you enjoy?

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List any previous experiences you have had that will make you a good member of our wagon train.

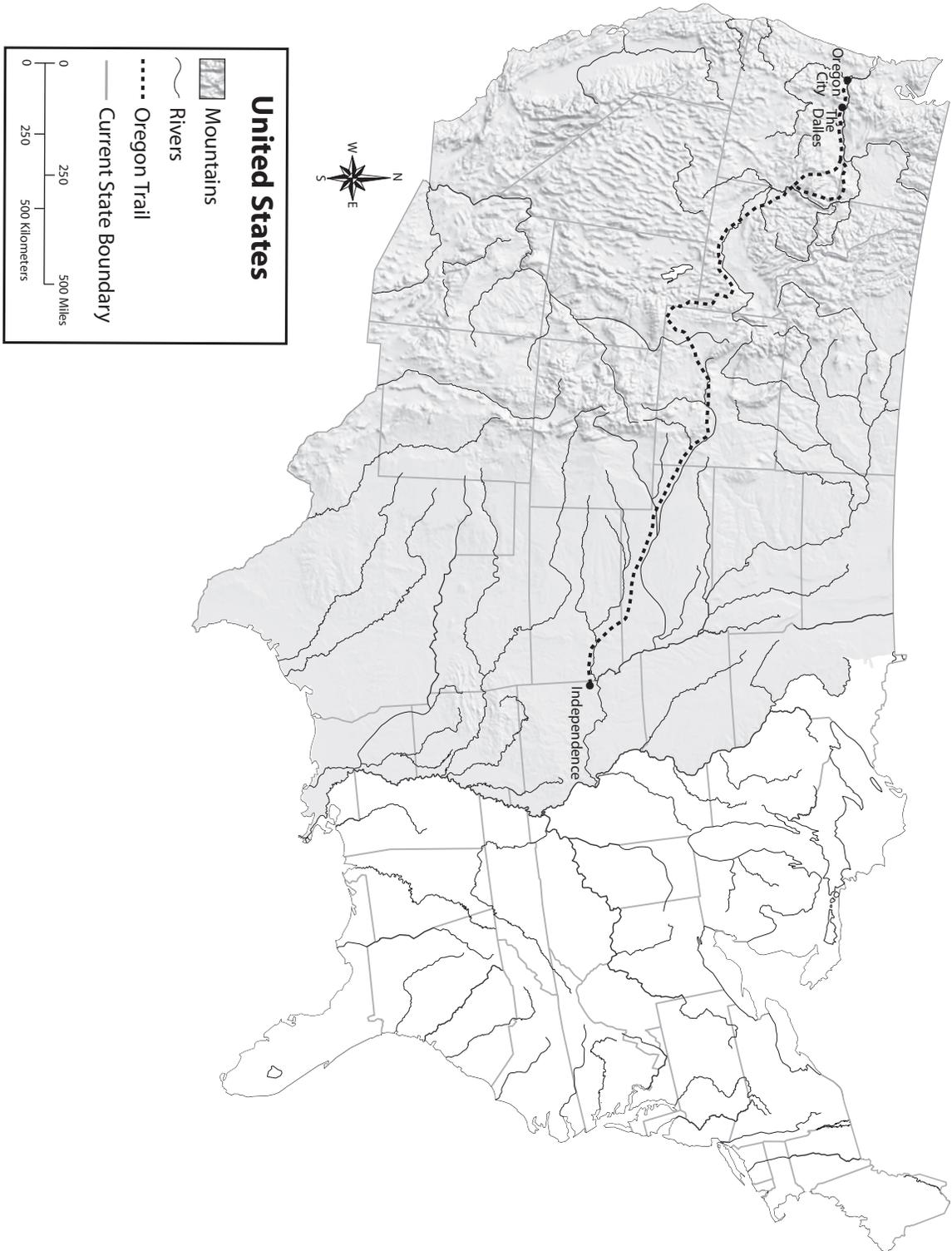
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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

# TOPOGRAPHICAL MAP OF THE CONTINENTAL UNITED STATES



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

**A FAREWELL LETTER**

Charles F. Putnam to his parents, April 11, 1846

**Primary  
Source**

This letter from Charles F. Putnam is genuine. His ideas are expressed here as he wrote them, including errors in punctuation and grammar.

*Dear Father & Mother,*

*We have all arrived at Independence except Nathan, who we left at St. Louis to come on with the baggage that we could not get on the boat we came on; it being already too heavy loaded. Nathan was in good health, Will be here tomorrow. We are all in excellent health & fine spirits & hope this may find you & all enjoying the same. Do not give yourselves any uneasiness about us, for we are well provided with every thing that is necessary for such an expedition, both as it regards our equipment & the number & respectability of the persons that are going to California. Many of the most respectable farmers in this County have sold their farms, and made all the necessary arrangements for such a trip. There will be several companies of single gentlemen who will start in a few days, with only two Mules for each person, one of them to ride & the other to carry their provisions. But we intend to wait until the main body start, as we think it will be more expedient & much safer to go with those who have families. . . .*

*The California fever rages high here. I will tell you what a preacher said who had been there he said this to Mr Webb the editor of the paper here. "That he saw a gentleman in California who said he had died & been to heaven & that he rapped at the door & Father Gabriel came out, and asked him where he was from? he said from California, well said Father Gabriel, you had better go back, California is a heap better country than this!" Webb reports it for the truth, but most persons think he is jesting.*

*The weather is very cold. It has taken up more room than I anticipated to express what little I have, but I am in hopes that I can be able to give you a more definite state of things in my next. Tell Virginia that there are a number of young Ladies going along & that she must endeavor to obtain her accomplishments soon & be ready to start with the next emigrating company. . . .*

*Write soon. Give my love to sister Bell & Joseph & all.*

*From your son,*

*C. F. P.*

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

## PLACES ALONG THE OREGON TRAIL



### THE PLAINS

The sky seemed somehow bigger here. The landscape was an awesome space and an empty openness where nearby objects seemed to shrink and become mere specks on the endless roll of the brown grasslands. This never-ending flatness was a deception; it was riddled with all manner of troughs and bumps, crevasses and hollows, stones and inclines. Occasionally, out of the never-ending flatness would rise curious and stark rock formations, sometimes like huge needles and towers growing from nothing and nowhere. The vegetation was not what it seemed. What looked to an eastern eye like tan, withered grass was, in fact, a rich food supply to great herds of buffalo and other wildlife.



### FORT LARAMIE

We came up the Laramie River, near where it empties into the North Platte, which we crossed on a bridge, the first one we had seen on the whole route. At this point, a road turned off, leading up to the fort. The fort was made up of a parade ground protected by earthworks, with the usual stores, quarters, barracks, and so forth. There was also a post office and blacksmith shop. All in all, it was a pleasant-looking place with mature trees and some fine large stone buildings. At all times there were soldiers on guard.



### THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS

The mountains rose out of the plains like a huge rock barrier. There were no obvious gaps to allow access to whatever lay on the other side. The upper mountains dominated the skyline with a pattern of jagged peaks and smoother curves where it seemed, at least from a distance, that a route could be forged. It was possible to see above the tree line snow fields where the winter snows lingered long into the summertime. Between the forest's edge and the snow were alpine meadows carpeted in an abundance of wildflowers. The mixture of rock, vegetation, and snow created a rich pattern of endless variation and beauty. But this was also a landscape full of danger and foreboding.



### THE SNAKE RIVER

Cutting through the double-baked, sun-blasted desert of lava slabs was the Snake River, a swift-running torrent in a wild, rocky, and barren wilderness. It ran in a dramatic canyon, sometimes hundreds of feet deep, tempting yet inaccessible from the burning heights above. At other points the river hissed and twisted across great flat rock slabs and plunged in huge waterfalls, throwing up great plumes of spray. Further on, the flow widened but ran with a swiftness of current that swept everything in its path at a terrifying rate. The only feasible crossing of the river was at a point where three islands like stepping stones split the channel.

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

**SUDDEN ILLNESS ON THE TRAIL****Primary  
Source**

Where we encamped that night, an arm of the Platte ran between high bluffs; it was turbid and swift as heretofore, but trees were growing on its crumbling banks. . . Through the ragged boughs of the trees, broken and half-dead, we saw the sun setting in crimson behind the peaks of the mountains; the restless bosom of the river was suffused with red; our white tent was tinged with it, and the sterile bluffs, up to the rocks that crowned them, partook of the same fiery hue. It soon passed away; no light remained but that from our fire, blazing high among the dusky trees and bushes, while we lay around it wrapped in our blankets, smoking and conversing through half the night.\*

In the morning we awoke with the dawn and traveled on to Fort Laramie. As our wagon train approached the fort, we noticed that one wagon had stopped. When we went to see what was wrong, we discovered that

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(names of family members)

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were very ill. They have been vomiting and suffer from diarrhea. They have high fevers and are becoming weaker every moment from loss of fluids from their bodies. We don't know what is wrong, but it is clear that they cannot go on.

\* Francis Parkman, *The Oregon Trail* (New York, Signet Classic, 1978), pp. 78–79 (first published in 1849).

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

**EMIGRATION DATA**

- It is important to note that data on Indian deaths caused by emigrant attacks was not gathered and recorded. However, broad statements made in emigrants' journals attest to the decimation of Indian groups.

- Note that the year 1849 shows the impact of the California gold rush and that the years just prior to that show the beginning of the Mormon migrations to Utah.

Emigration by Year and Destination		
Year	Oregon	Utah & California
1840	13	0
1841	24	34
1842	125	0
1843	875	38
1844	1,475	53
1845	2,500	260
1846	1,200	1,500
1847	4,000	2,650
1848	1,300	2,800
1849	450	26,500
1850	6,000	46,500
1851	3,600	2,600
1852	10,000	60,000
1853	7,500	28,000
1854	6,000	15,127
1855	500	6,184
1856	1,000	10,200
1857	1,500	5,300
1858	1,500	6,150
1859	2,000	18,431

Deaths Caused by Indian Attacks
Number of Deaths
0
0
0
0
0
4
4
24
2
33
48
60
45
7
35
6
20
17
(?)
32

From *The Oregon Trail: Yesterday and Today*, by William E. Hill.  
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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## SELF-ASSESSMENT: SOCIAL SKILLS

Social skills are an important part of belonging to a community such as a wagon train. Use this chart to keep track of how well you work with others during this unit.

**Episode:** \_\_\_\_\_

Describe the group situation or event: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Criteria	I need to work on this.	I do this some of the time.	I do this most or all of the time.
I respectfully listened to others.			
I contributed actively to the group.			
I encouraged others to participate.			
I suggested solutions to problems.			
I did my fair share of work.			

One thing our group did well together:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

One thing our group needs work on:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

One thing I really did well:

\_\_\_\_\_

One thing I could do better:

\_\_\_\_\_