



STUDENT HANDOUT

The Oregon Trail

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SET 1

Student Handout

Questions:

1. Look at the map below and read the dateline on page 3. How did the United States grow in 1803? (*understanding visuals*)
2. How might the growth in 1803 have influenced people to move west? (*making inferences*)

Slide 1

Why did America grow?

In 1800, the United States was only 24 years old and occupied less than one-third of the land it does today. But it was getting bigger quickly. Its population grew and there was increased immigration to America.

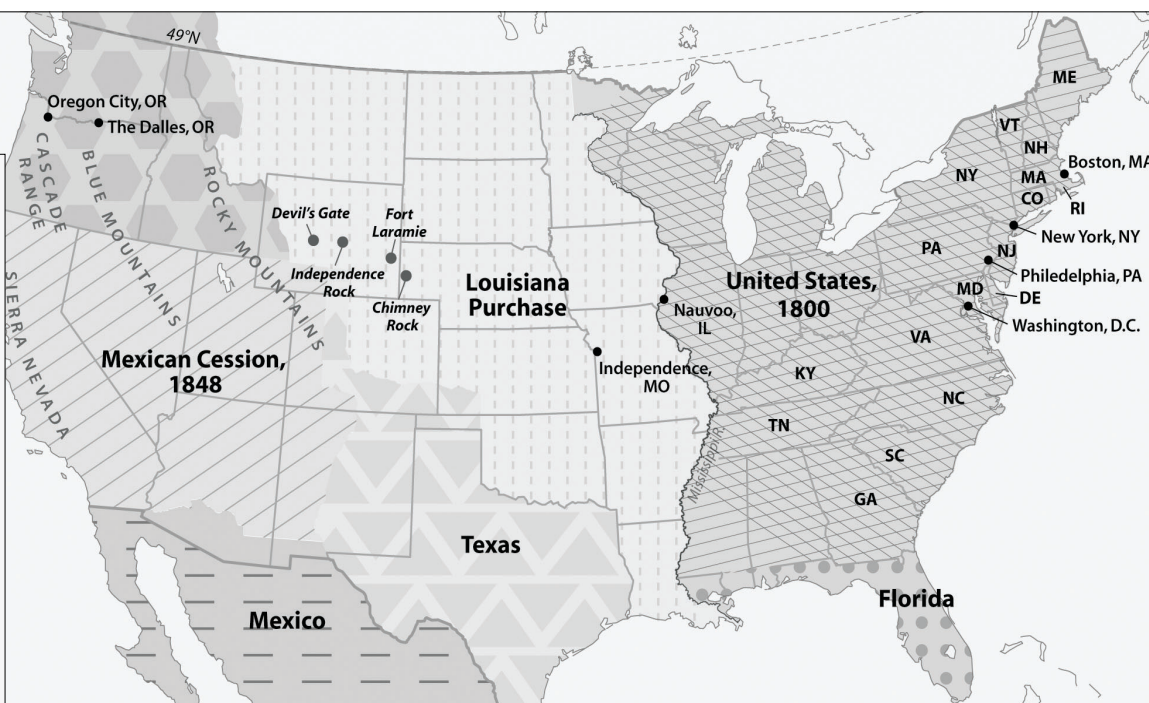
During this period, Great Britain, France, Spain, Russia, Mexico, and the United States claimed parts of the same western regions. Even though American Indians had lived there for thousands of years, these countries thought that the land was available for taking since the Indians did not farm or settle it. Over the next 60 years, the United States would take over much of this territory, both through peaceful negotiations and bloody battles. And as the doors opened to westward expansion, people living in the East set forth, first to states such as Illinois and Missouri, and then on to mysterious California and Oregon.

Slide 8

The Growth of the United States in the 1800s

- The United States, 1800
- Louisiana Purchase, 1803
- Oregon Country
- Florida
- Mexico
- Mexican Cession, 1848
- Texas
- Present-day boundaries

0 250 500 Miles
0 250 500 Kilometers



Map by Mapping Specialists



Dateline

1776 In the Beginning

The United States is formed as a nation of 13 colonies along the East Coast, with a population of about 4 million.

May 2, 1803 Louisiana Purchase

President Thomas Jefferson pays France \$15 million for the land between the Mississippi River and the Rocky Mountains, known as the Louisiana Territory. This new land almost doubles the size of the United States and people begin to think about moving west.

1804–1806 Lewis and Clark Expedition

Meriwether Lewis and William Clark explore the Louisiana Territory. They travel beyond the Rockies into the Oregon Country and return with stories of a beautiful region filled with fertile land and abundant game.

1812 South Pass Discovered

The South Pass, a valley passage through the Rocky Mountains, is discovered by fur traders.

1818 Treaty with Great Britain

This treaty establishes the northern border of the United States from the Lake of the Woods to the Rocky Mountains and allows both countries to settle the Oregon Country.

1824 U.S. Treaty with Russia

The Russians give up claim to the Oregon Country and sign a treaty with the United States designating the northern boundary at 54° 40'. Great Britain still claims a right to the Oregon Country. The rights of the American Indians who live there are not considered.

1827 Independence, Missouri

This town is established as a jumping-off point for the Oregon Trail to the north and the Santa Fe Trail to the south.

1859 The Thirty-Third State

In February, Oregon enters the Union as a free state with a population of about 50,000..

1836 Missionaries Defy the Odds

Two missionary families travel to Oregon Country, proving that women and wagons can make the trip.

1837 Depression Strikes America

In cities, thousands lose their jobs. The price of corn drops below cost and farmers struggle to survive. The idea of cheap, fertile land in the West becomes very appealing.

1842–1844 A Topographical Map

John Charles Frémont travels the Oregon Trail and charts a series of topographical maps of the route.

1843 Mass Migration Begins

One thousand emigrants set out in wagon trains to make a new life in the Oregon Country.

1846 The Oregon Question

Joint occupation of Oregon ends when President Polk signs a treaty with Great Britain. The 49th parallel becomes Oregon's northern border.

1846 The Mormon Trail

Thousands of people of the Mormon faith are driven out of their homes in Nauvoo, Illinois. Led by Brigham Young, they head west and settle in what is now Utah.

1848 Territory Status

Oregon becomes an official U.S. Territory.

1848 Mexican Cession

Mexico gives up claims to the land that makes up present-day California, Nevada, Utah, and parts of four other states.

1849 Gold Rush

Gold is discovered near Sacramento, California, in January 1848, but the news doesn't reach the East until late summer. Thousands set out for California in hopes of striking it rich.



Questions:

1. The painting shown below was painted in the 1840s. How does it portray the emigrants' move west? Give two reasons why you think this painting does or does not show manifest destiny. (*understanding visuals*)
2. How might the newspaper excerpts on page 5 have influenced someone to go west? (*scanning, making inferences*)

Slides 1, 2

◀ Why did people want to move west?

In the 1840s, newspapers became more popular in America. Through newspapers, Americans learned for the first time about what was happening in different places. Newspapers were often biased and contained exaggerated versions of events, but they also helped create a distinct American culture. Americans turned less to Europe for standards of fashion and social behavior, and on the tip of every tongue was talk of the Oregon Country.

Population growth and increased immigration to the United States caused eastern cities to grow, but also made jobs harder to get and land more scarce. Some religious groups, like the Mormons, could not find the religious freedom America promised. So people began to look westward for opportunity and freedom. Between 1843 and 1870, about 350,000 men, women, and children packed up their lives, bade farewell to families and friends, and headed west in covered wagons. Emigrants, or pioneers, moved west for many reasons, including tales of gold, cheap farmland, and the thrill of adventure. Pioneers knew the journey would be hard, but no one could be prepared for the perils they faced along the 2,000-mile trail—from unfamiliar terrain to unexpected illness and famine.



Emmanuel Gottlieb Leutze's 1861 painting, *Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way*, helped to romanticize western emigration.



Primary Source

► Slide 2

November 26, 1830
News Flash ★ ★

The Rocky Mountains

In a few years, a trip to the Pacific, by way of the Rocky Mountains, will be no more of an undertaking than was a journey from the Atlantic cities to Missouri twenty years ago. Well and truly may it be said that “Westward the Star of Empire takes its way.” We noticed, two weeks ago, the return of Messrs. Smith, Sublette, and Jackson, from the Rocky Mountains, and stated that they had taken two wagons out and back again. We now learn from

them there was an error in the number two; the actual number was ten. . . .

Messrs. Smith, Sublette, and Jackson are the first that ever took wagons to the Rocky Mountains. The ease with which they did it and could have gone on to the mouth of the Columbia, shows the folly and nonsense of those “scientific” characters who talk of the Rocky Mountains as a barrier which is to stop the westward march of the American people.

► Slide 3

Newspaper Excerpts from the 1800s

April 24, 1820 “Today Congress passed the Public Land Act to help settlers purchase land in the West. Anyone thinking about buying land beyond the Rocky Mountains can now do so for a minimum of \$100.”

May 10, 1837 “Today most of the banks in New York City stopped making cash payments to their customers. Some experts estimate that over 600 banks will fail this year. If so, unemployment will increase across the nation.”

March 9, 1846 “[California’s] natural advantages are of the most important character—a most salubrious [healthy] climate, a perpetual spring, as it were, without the sultriness of summer, or the chilling winds of winter—a soil unsurpassed for richness and productiveness, some of the principal articles of agriculture growing in a wild, uncultivated state...”

Manifest Destiny In the 1840s, many Americans believed it was their manifest destiny, or inevitable God-given right, to stretch the nation across the continent to the Pacific Ocean. However this view of western expansion had no regard for the American Indian people who already lived in the west or for their way of life.

► Slide 4

Newspaper excerpts courtesy of Philadelphia National Gazette, 1830.



SET 3

Student Handout

Questions:

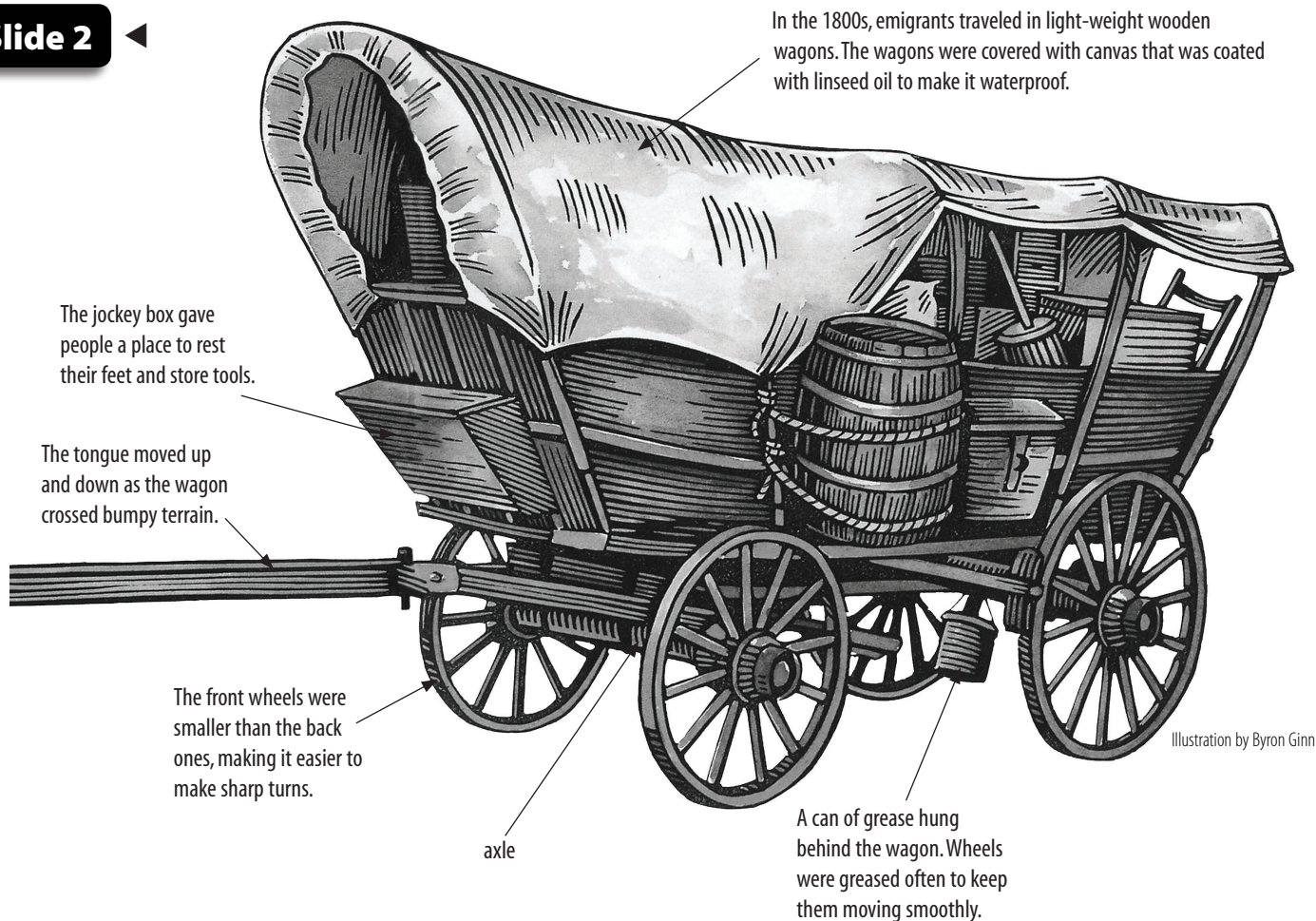
1. What challenges did emigrants have to plan for as they prepared for their journey? How did they prepare to meet the challenges? (*main idea/supporting details*)
2. Explain how the wagon illustrated below was built for a long journey west. (*scanning*)

Slide 1

What did emigrants need for the journey west?

The emigrants had to do many things to prepare for the long journey west. Without freezers, they had limited ways to preserve food, so they needed to pack the raw materials—such as flour, dried beans, and bacon—to make meals as they traveled. They had to pack items they would need for the journey, as well as supplies to set up their new homes and carry them through the first winter. This meant they needed to bring farming tools, cloth to be made into clothing, extra materials and tools to fix broken wagon parts, weapons and ammunition, and anything else they needed to survive—all in a farm wagon!

Slide 2





▶ Slide 1



supplies for the journey

washboard

▶ Slide 3

Bringing Animals

Emigrants needed to decide whether to use oxen or mules to pull the wagons. Mules were more expensive, but were faster for distances less than a thousand miles. For longer journeys or journeys over rough terrain, emigrants often chose oxen because they were hardier. Oxen could also be used for beef if no other food was available. Cows were good to have on the journey, too, because their milk was a valuable addition to the food supply. In an emergency, cows could be used to pull the wagon.

▶ Slide 4

Primary Source

The journal entry below shows how fear of the unknown often led emigrants to link Indians with violence.

From the journal of Benjamin Franklin Bonney, 1845:

I can well remember the hullabaloo the neighbors set up when father said we were going to Oregon. They told him how his family would all be killed by the Indians, or if we escaped the Indians we would either starve to death or drown or be lost in the desert, but father was not much of a hand to draw back after he had put his hand to the plow, so he went ahead and made ready for the trip.

Data on animals on the trail from *The Road to Oregon* by W.J. Ghent, New York: AMS Press, 1929.
Journal entry excerpted from Lockley, Fred. "Recollections of Benjamin Franklin Bonney," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 24 (1923):36–55.



SET 4

Student Handout

Questions:

1. What qualities would an effective leader need? (*making inferences*)
2. How might the wagon train's laws help everyone survive the journey? (*making inferences*)

Slide 1

Why did emigrants form wagon trains?

Emigrants usually traveled in groups called wagon trains. They formed these groups at one of the many jumping-off points, or frontier cities. Many emigrants had to travel hundreds of miles to get to these frontier cities, but those miles were through settled country.

On the five- to six-month journey west, wagon trains became mini-communities. They usually elected a leader or hired a guide who decided the route they would take, where and when they would stop, the posting of the guards, and the rotation of the wagons. On such a dangerous trip in unknown territory, it was very important that every member of the wagon train work together and respect the rules.

Slide 1

This 1869 painting shows how wagon companies corraled, or circled, their wagons whenever they stopped. This helped keep the horses, mules, and cattle from running away.





Primary Source

From the journal of James Willis Nesmith, 1843:

Without orders from any quarter, and without preconcert, promptly as the grass began to start, the emigrants began to assemble near Independence, at a place called Fitzhugh's Mill. On the 17th day of May, 1843, notices were circulated through the different encampments that on the succeeding day, those contemplating emigration to Oregon, would meet at a designated point to organize.

Promptly at the appointed hour the motley groups assembled. It consisted of people from all the States and Territories, and nearly all nationalities. The most, however, from Arkansas, Illinois, Missouri and Iowa, and all strangers to one another, but impressed with some crude idea that there existed an imperative necessity for some kind of organization for mutual protection against the hostile Indians inhabiting the great unknown wilderness stretching away to the shores of the Pacific, and which they were about to traverse with their wives and children, household goods and all their earthly possessions



► Slide 2

Wagon Train Laws

Many wagon trains made “laws” for the train and had a system to punish those who broke the laws. However, these systems often broke down under the strain of the difficult journey. The following excerpt is from the constitution and by-laws of the wagon train led by Solomon Tetherow:

- Anyone guilty of indecent language shall be fined at the discretion of the [Executive] Council.
- Any dog found running about camp at large shall be shot at the discretion of the [Captains].
- There shall be a driver of every 33 head of loose cattle and every one shall drive in proportion to the loose cattle he may have.
- The Committee for the purpose of drafting the Constitution, have wrote out a few by-laws for the Consideration of the emigrants.

► Slide 3



Questions:

1. Find specific details that describe an average day on the trail.
(*main idea/supporting details*)
2. How was life different for men, women, and children on the trail?
(*comparing and contrasting*)

Slide 1

What was life like on the trail?

Life on the road was hard. Wagons did not have headlights, so companies used every hour of daylight to move along the unfamiliar trail. On an average day, companies traveled about 12 to 15 miles, although this number could be significantly less if they encountered rough terrain or other hardships. Despite the many hardships, the pioneers tried to replicate life as it had been before they took to the trail. At night, they might gather around a fire and listen to stories or sing and dance. And if the company were lucky enough to include a teacher, children might have taken lessons along the way. Where emigrants lacked the modern conveniences available in cities, they improvised to make life as interesting and normal as possible.

Slide 1



Because the wagons did not have shocks to absorb the bumps from the ride, most emigrants walked or rode livestock the 2,000 miles, herding cattle as they went.



Primary Source

When the wagons stopped along the trail, children had work to do, such as gathering buffalo chips or milking cows. Still, many children saw the journey as a great adventure.

► Slide 2

From a letter of Eliza Donner recalling the journey, 1879:

During a rest break, we children, who had been confined to the wagon so many hours each day, stretched our limbs, and scampered off on Mayday frolics. We waded in the creek, made mud pies, and gathered posies in the narrow glades between the cottonwood, beech, and alder trees. . . The staid and elderly matrons spent most of their time in their wagons, knitting, or patching designs for quilts. The younger ones and the girls passed theirs in the saddle. The wild, free spirit of the plain often prompted them to invite us little ones to seats behind them, and away we would canter with the breeze playing through our hair.

Women On the Trail

Early settlers did not believe that women could make the journey to the West. But in 1837, Narcissa Whitman and Elizabeth Spalding took the Oregon Trail west. Over the next 23 years, thousands of other women also made the journey with their families. Many women



On the treeless plains, emigrants collected buffalo chips, or dung, to fuel fires.

► Slide 3

had babies while traveling and even more had children to tend to along the way. Lots of them lost children or husbands on the journey and had to bear many hardships.

Pioneer women worked as hard as men. They did their traditional work of cooking, cleaning, sewing and taking care of the family, but they did “men’s” jobs, such as herding cattle, too. Because of limited resources, these women often had to find new ways of doing things.

From Letter, Eliza Donner to McGlashan, 1879. BANC MSS C-B 570. Reprinted by permission of The Bancroft Library.



Questions:

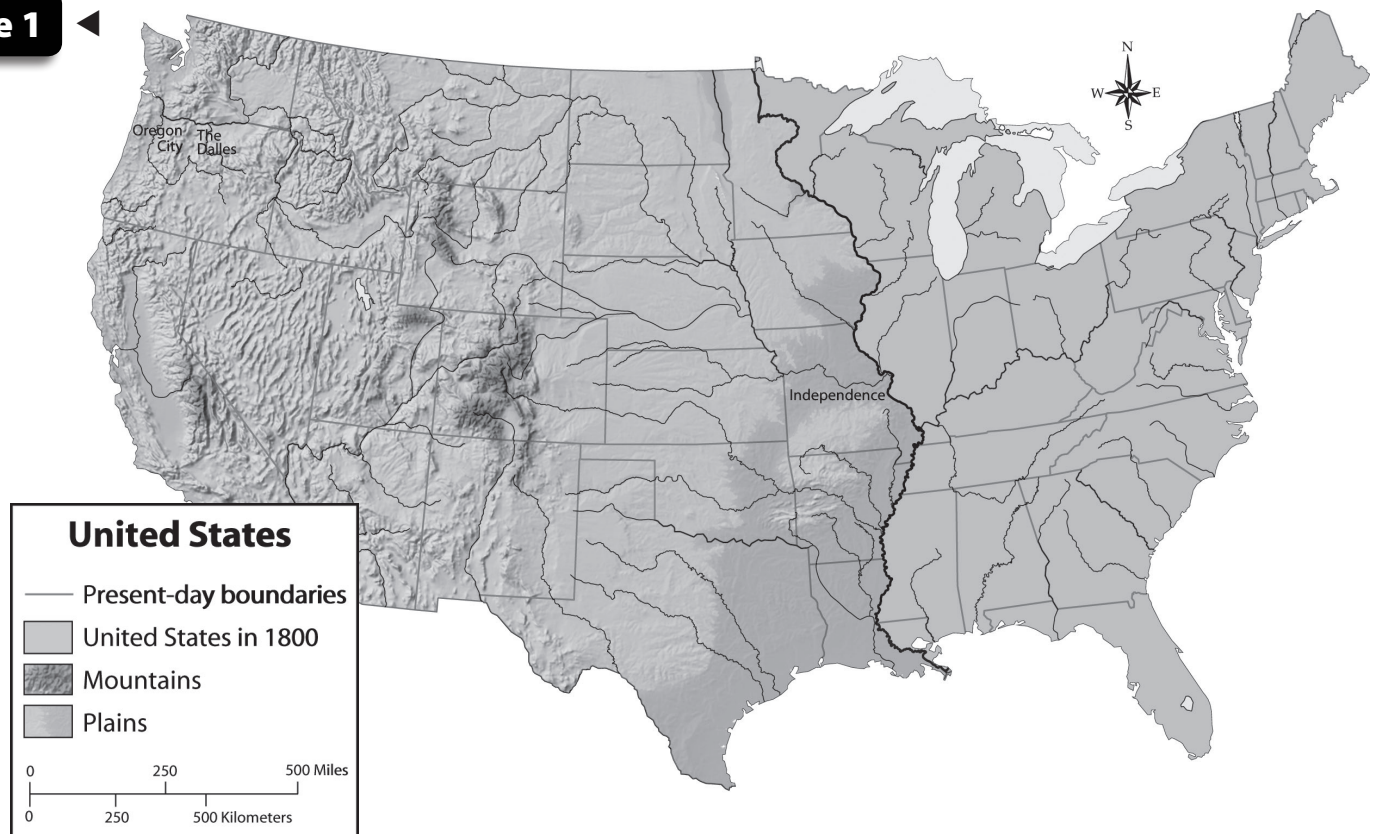
1. Look at the photos on pages 13 and 14 and read the text. What information about the land can you get from the photos and the text? What do the photos tell you that the text does not? (*comparing and contrasting*)
2. Compare the challenges experienced by emigrants in the plains to challenges they experienced in the mountains. (*comparing and contrasting*)

Slide 1

How did terrain and weather affect the journey?

The emigrants who traveled the Oregon Trail encountered terrain such as they had never seen before. Much of it was breathtakingly beautiful, fulfilling the promises of the guidebooks and newspapers. However, vast, barren plains, raging rivers, and steep, stark mountains impeded their travel. Not only did the pioneers brave unfamiliar geography, but they were also subject to violent lightning and thunderstorms on the plains and harsh snow in the mountains. Geography and climate literally stopped many emigrants in their tracks.

Slide 1





Mountains

Mountains were a new challenge for the emigrants. Often, several men worked together to push the heavy wagons up steep inclines. The way down the other side of the mountain could be even worse. The same men then had to act as brakes for the wagons. Wagons were attached with rope and held so they would not run over the oxen and be smashed to pieces.



Rivers

For most of the journey, emigrants traveled along the banks of rivers. These rivers served as their guides and provided water for the weary travelers and their animals, but they could also be very dangerous. The water could be contaminated quickly by dead animals left on the banks. And there were no bridges when the pioneers wanted to cross, but sometimes an Indian would ferry them across for a price.

Usually, the emigrants would brave the rapids in their wagons. The wheels were removed, and children put a mixture of tallow, or animal lard, and ashes in any cracks to keep the water out. Unfortunately, wagon contents often got soaked anyway, and many people and animals drowned in these dangerous crossings.





SET 6

Student Handout

Slide 4

Plains

The first segment of the emigrants' journey took them across the Great Plains, a vast, dusty prairie covered with many kinds of grasses but few trees. No one wanted to be at the end of the train, choking in the great dust cloud produced by all the wagons and animals ahead of them. So most emigrants set up a system to rotate their places in the wagon train from day to day. Still, the trail often spread out as wide as a mile as emigrants sought to avoid the dust.

Emigrants who left in April found ample food for their animals along the trail. As traffic became heavier, grass became scarce and people sometimes traveled as much as four miles off the trail to graze their livestock at the end of a day. That's far when you have already traveled 12 to 15 miles!



Thunder, lightning, and hailstorms sent emigrants running for the shelter of their wagons. Emigrants and their goods were often soaked anyway.



Questions:

1. Identify reasons why landmarks were important to pioneers on the Oregon Trail.
(*main idea/supporting details*)
2. In what ways did emigrants rely on forts? (*scanning*)

How did forts and landmarks help the emigrants?

► Slide 1

There were no street signs to tell the emigrants if they were headed the right way, and no markets where they could replenish their food supply or ask directions. However, there were some forts along the way where the travelers had a chance to clean up and get new supplies. There were also many landmarks that let them know they were headed in the right direction. Guidebooks gave detailed accounts of where these forts and landmarks were and the number of miles between them. During the heavy travel years of 1849, 1850, and 1852, forts could not be relied upon to have supplies. Often, emigrants arrived at a fort only to find that the party just ahead of them had purchased the last of the food. Still, these forts provided a welcome, if temporary, feeling of civilization.

Devil's Gate, Wyoming

After following the Sweetwater River for six miles past Independence Rock, the emigrants were amazed by the spectacular sight of Devil's Gate, two 350-ft rocks set 30 feet apart to let the Sweetwater through.



► Slide 1



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Student Handout

Slide 2 ◀



Fort Laramie

Slide 2 ◀

Fort Laramie

Fort Laramie was located about 35 miles west of the Wyoming border. Most emigrants traveling from Independence reached it about 40 days (or 667 miles) into their journey. Fort Laramie was one of the largest and most populated forts along the trail. It was like a small town, with a blacksmith, traders, soldiers, and other government personnel living there.

Emigrants could receive mail at the fort. They could trade for or buy food and other supplies, too, but prices were very high. There was also a register at the fort that emigrants could sign as they passed through. By 1850, 9,000 wagons and 40,000 emigrants were recorded in this register. Some important treaties with American Indians were signed at Fort Laramie.

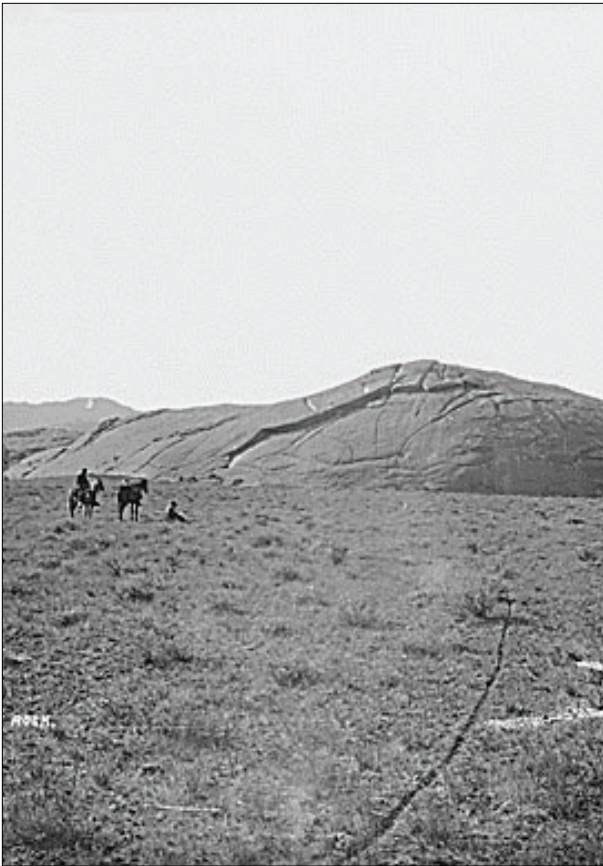


Primary Source

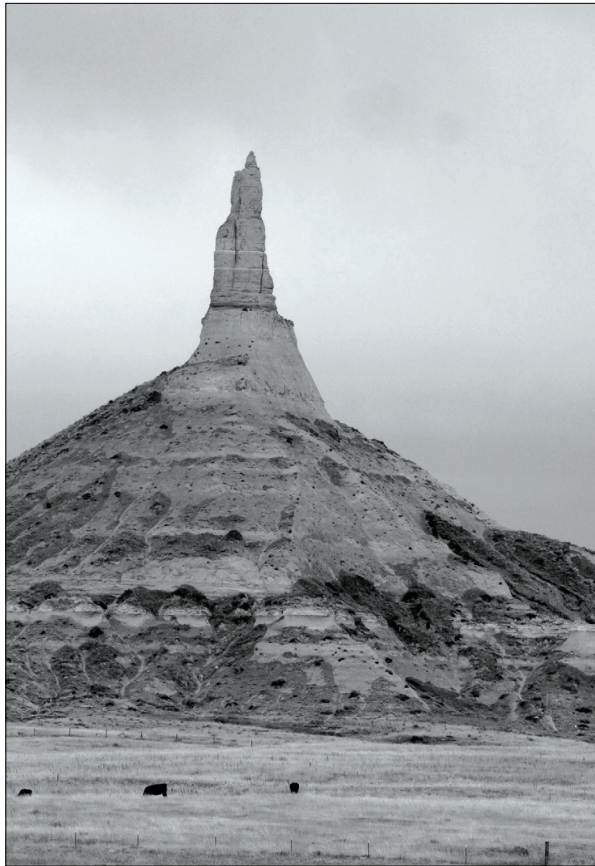
From the journal of William Marshall Anderson, 1834:

We have breakfasted this morning at the base of Rock Independence. There are few places better known or more interesting to the mountaineer than this huge boulder. . . . On the side of the rock names, dates and messages, written in buffalo grease and powder, are read and re-read with as much eagerness as if they were letters . . . It is a large, egg-shaped mass of granite, entirely separate and apart from all . . . ranges of hills. One mile in circumference, about six or seven hundred feet high, without a particle of vegetation.

► Slide 3



Independence Rock



► Slide 3

More emigrants' diaries comment on Chimney Rock than on any other landmark. The Indians, who had never seen a chimney, called this "The Teepee."

Bottom, Right: Courtesy of Mike Tigas under the Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic license
From Anderson, William Marshall. "Diary of a Horseback Ride to the Rocky Mountains." AD 371 A & B.
This item is reproduced by permission of The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.



Questions:

1. Why was cholera so dangerous to the emigrants? (*scanning*)
2. What other dangers did pioneers face? (*main idea/supporting details*)
3. What precautions could the emigrants take to avoid dangers on the journey? (*making inferences*)

Slide 1

What dangers did pioneers face?

In addition to unusual terrain and climate conditions, accidental injuries and deaths were also common along the trail. Diaries tell stories of accidental shootings and of people falling out of wagons and being run over by the wheels or trampled by the animals. People drowned trying to cross raging rivers.



With no time to mourn their dead and no place to bury them, emigrants dug shallow graves along the trail.

Wagons broke while traveling over rough terrain or toppled under the great weight of their contents. Emigrants often threw away important supplies and keepsakes that they could no longer carry. And they always had to be on their guard for wild animals, such as deadly rattlesnakes in the plains and bears in the mountains.

Medical knowledge was limited and vaccinations nonexistent, so disease was one of the major killers of those traveling west. Settlers suffered from smallpox and dysentery and were poisoned by contaminated water, but cholera was by far the most vicious and common illness on the trail. In 1849, 1850, and 1852, the years of the heaviest traffic along the trail, cholera claimed about 2,000 emigrant lives each year.

In such trying times, members of the wagon train had to work together to survive. Without the generosity of other members of their wagon train, many emigrants might not have reached their destinations.



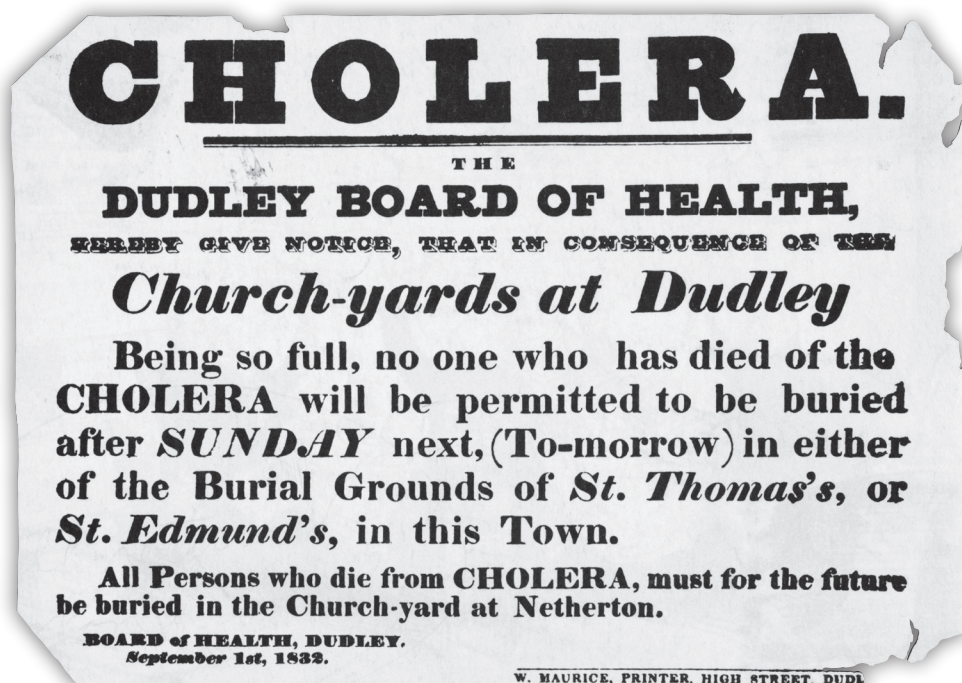
Cholera

Cholera is an infection that causes diarrhea, vomiting, and cramps. It can lead to dehydration, which means the body doesn't have enough water. Dehydration is very serious and sometimes deadly. Cholera is most dangerous for the very young, the very old, and those with other health problems. Hunger and bad nutrition make cholera more dangerous, too. But generally, people are likely to recover if they can stay hydrated.

We now know that cholera is caused by a bacteria, usually contracted through drinking dirty water. Boiling water can kill the bacteria, but unsanitary conditions that allow the bacteria to get into the water supply can cause an illness across a whole group of people. The disease is spread more quickly when people do not have good washing facilities. In the 1800s, though, people did not know what caused cholera or how to prevent it.

Today we generally have clean water and sewer systems, so cholera rarely occurs in the United States. But it was a deadly disease in the 1800s. It was first reported in the 1830s and soon became rampant. Many emigrants thought that they could escape the disease by going west, but cholera was the leading cause of death along the Oregon Trail. As one emigrant put it: "The road from Independence to Fort Laramie is a graveyard."

► Slide 2



This 1832 graveyard notice shows how widespread and deadly cholera was.

► Slide 2



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Slide 3

Primary Source

From the journal of Adriette Appelgate Hixon, 1852:

As we drew nearer to where this dread disease [cholera] was prevailing we saw more fresh graves and we met returning emigrants having many tales of woe. But it was of the terrible disease raging beyond that they now told. They said, "It is terrible, and is sweeping whole families away. So we are just going back home, we are!" and cracking their whips, they moved on. It surely was a terrible disease! Sadly we discussed this new kind of obstacle that we were now facing. But there was nothing else for us to do but go ahead. It seemed that this epidemic had been prevailing in this locality for several summers. As we tried to keep going we passed wagons that were detained with their sick ones, while others, in their eagerness to get on, were traveling right along with their sick. But the silent reaper was claiming its victims and everyone felt the depression.

Slide 4



If a wheel broke, emigrants had to choose between losing valuable supplies or risking a dangerous delay.

Adriette Applegate Hixon, 1853 as cited in Oregon Trail by Ingvald Henry Eide. Chicago: Rand McNally & Company, 1972.



Questions:

1. Looking at the chart below, how were the Plains Indians and the Plateau Indians similar? How were they different? (*comparing and contrasting*)
2. When and why did the Plains Indians use teepees? (*scanning*)

Who were American Indians along the Oregon Trail?

► Slide 1

The regions through which the Oregon Trail passed were home to two groups of American Indians: the Plains Indians and the Plateau Indians. These Indians developed different lifestyles based on the region they lived in. However, many aspects of their cultures were similar because they traded with each other. Generally, the Indians lived in temporary shelters during the summer, near a good food source, where they would collect and preserve enough food to last them through the winter. In the winter they moved back into permanent villages, where they were protected from the harsh weather. The Indians believed that everything contributed to the well-being of the universe, including the land, trees, and animals. The land could not be owned by an individual but instead was sacred to the whole tribe. The Indians' reverence for nature was in direct conflict with the goals of the emigrants, who sought to conquer the land where the Indians lived.

► Slide 1



a young Flathead Indian girl

American Indians Along the Oregon Trail			
	Region	Major Tribes	Important Foods
Plains Indians	Mississippi River west to the Rockies	Crow Blackfoot Sioux Assiniboine Mandan	buffalo maize
Plateau Indians	Rockies west to the Columbia River	Nez Percé Kalispel Flathead Coeur d'Alène	salmon roots berries



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Slide 2



In the summer months, Plateau Indians, like the Nez Percé, lived in teepees. The teepees were made from poles tied together and covered with bison skins. Teepees were easy to pack and move as the Indians hunted animals in the mountains.

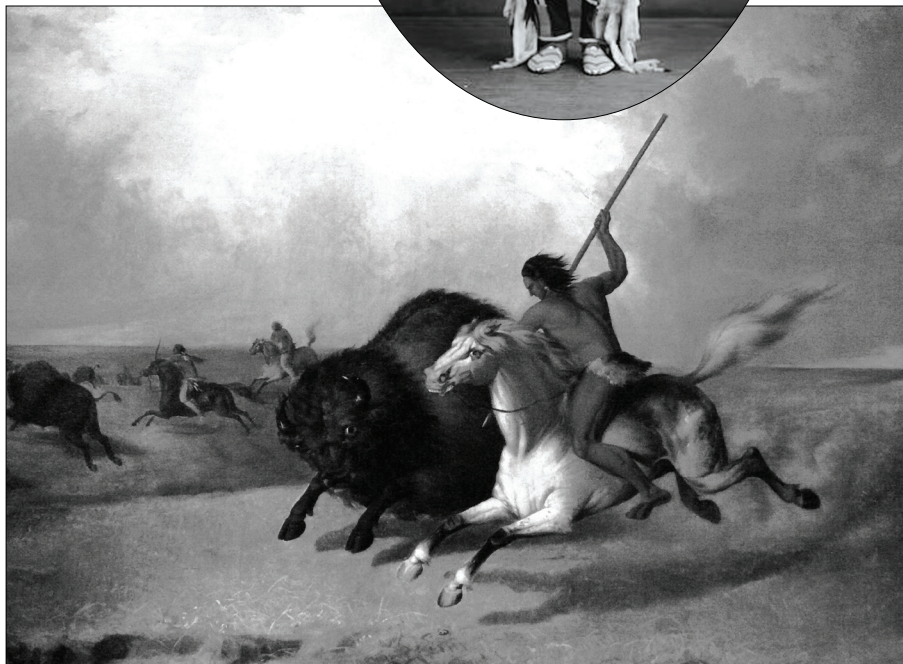
Slide 3

a Crow Indian man



Slide 3

Plains Indian society revolved around the buffalo. In the summer, the nomadic tribes would follow the buffalo on great hunts. Every part of the buffalo was used. Meat was eaten fresh or jerked (dried) to keep for the winter. Skins were sewn together to form teepee covers, clothing, and blankets. Tools were made from the bones. When the buffalo died out in the region, the Plains Indians' way of life was threatened.





Questions:

1. Looking at the images on page 24, how are the Indians portrayed differently in the two pictures? Give examples. (*comparing and contrasting*)
2. What attitudes are expressed in the three primary sources found on page 25? (*making inferences*)

Why did emigrants fear American Indians?

► Slide 1

In the 1840s and 1850s there were many horror stories about brutal American Indians in guidebooks and newspapers. These stories originated on the East Coast or in Europe, where most people had never had any contact with Indians. Stories about encounters with Indians, usually exaggerated as they were carried by word of mouth, caused emigrants to fear the Indians. Many emigrants were so frightened by these stories that they kept their guns ready and shot at any noise they heard. Unfortunately, these nervous emigrants often injured or killed fellow settlers.

In reality, before 1860 less than 4% of emigrant deaths—about 350 deaths out of an estimated 10,000—were attributed to battles with Indians. Violence between Indians and settlers along the Oregon Trail seldom occurred. When it did, it was usually the result of language barriers and misunderstandings between these very different cultures. Most Indians approached settlers to trade, not fight. Indians also provided valuable services, guiding, ferrying, and even rescuing emigrants. Indians often gave pioneers food in times of need and taught them how to use the resources of the land. Many emigrants changed their opinions of the Indians after meeting them and came to respect these cultures so different from their own.



SET 10

Student Handout

Slide 1



This 1856 painting illustrates an Indian attack, the greatest fear of most emigrants. In reality, though, it was very uncommon for Indians to attack emigrants.

Slide 1



Indians often guided emigrants through unfamiliar areas and gave them or traded with them for food and other items needed for survival.



Primary Source

Misconceptions and overactive imaginations caused emigrants to hate and fear the Indians even before they ever met or saw them.

► Slide 2

From the journal of Loren Hastings, 1847:

Some boys and girls went to the Bluffs a little before sunset but did not return until after dark; some other boys put on Blankets, went around them, gave an Indian hoop & ran them into camp badly frightened. We saw signs of Indians, put out our guard; before nine o'clock some of the guards shot at what they supposed to be an Indian. After all our caution this night, the Indians crept into our camp & cut two horses loose & rode them off. The Pawnee Indians are the greatest thieves I ever saw—the best way I think to civilize or Christianize Indians is with powder & lead, & this is the way we shall do hereafter. . . .

Primary Source

American emigrant and American Indian views of the land were very different. American settlers believed that land was something one could own, but the Indians believed land was to be shared. Here two Oglala Sioux chiefs express their feelings about emigrants coming into their homelands.

► Slide 3

We did not ask you white men to come here. The Great Spirit gave us this country as a home. You had yours. We did not interfere with you. The Great Spirit gave us plenty of land to live on, and buffalo, deer, antelope and other game. But you have come here; you are taking my land from me; you are killing off our game, so it is hard for us to live. Now, you tell us to work for a living, but the Great Spirit did not make us to work, but to live by hunting. . . We do not want your civilization! We would live as our fathers did, and their fathers before them.

Chief Crazy Horse

We did not think of the great open plains, the beautiful rolling hills, and winding streams with tangled growth, as “wild.” Only to the white man was nature a “wilderness” and only to him was the land “infested” with “wild” animals and “savage” people. To us it was tame. Earth was bountiful and we were surrounded with the blessings of the Great Mystery. Not until the hairy man from the east came and with brutal frenzy heaped injustices upon us and the families we loved was it “wild” for us. When the very animals of the forest began fleeing from his approach, then it was for us that the “Wild West” began.

Chief Luther Standing Bear

From Loren Hastings, Journal Written While Traveling from LaHarpe, Hancock County, Illinois, to Portland, Oregon Territory, in the Summer of 1847 (unpublished journal, 1847), Pacific Northwest Collection. Reprinted by permission of the University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections. Sioux chiefs' accounts excerpted from T.C. McLuhan, Touch the Earth: A Self-Portrait of Indian Existence (New York: Outerbridge and Dienstrey, 1971), pp. 45 and 67.



Questions:

1. Summarize the story being told in the illustration below. Do you think the painter had more sympathy for the Indians or for the U.S. government? Give reasons for your answer. (*understanding visuals*)
2. Look at the dateline on page 27. How do you think western expansion affected the government's policies toward Indians? (*making inferences*)

Slide 1

◀ What happened when settlers and Indians met?

Early relations between settlers in the West and the American Indians who lived there were generally positive. Lewis and Clark made contact with many tribes during their explorations between 1804 and 1806. Their journals describe the Indians as hospitable, intelligent, and generous. Mountain men lived peacefully among the Indians for years, and despite their original fears, most settlers describe interactions with the Indians favorably. But things changed quickly in the early 1850s when settlers began arriving in the West in greater numbers. Although Indians did not farm the land, their lifestyle depended on its natural resources. Many of these resources disappeared as settlers cleared the land to build their farms and towns. As the Indians saw their way of life disappearing, they became wary of the settlers. Hostilities increased between both groups—the settlers wanted the land while the Indians did not want to lose the land. By 1890, after a series of wars, most American Indians had been confined to reservations, smaller areas “reserved” for their use from the vast homelands where they once lived.

Slide 1



The United States Army removed many American Indians from their homelands, forcing them to march long distances and to settle on reservations.



Dateline

► **Slides
2–5**

15,000–35,000 years ago

In the Beginning

The people who will later be called American Indians cross a land bridge from Asia and discover America.

1700s

Russians Trade with Indians

Russians make contact with Northwest Coast Indians and trade tools for art and furs.

1804

Sacagawea Acts as a Guide

Lewis and Clark meet Sacagawea, a Shoshone Indian woman, who acts as a guide and interpreter on their travels.

1830

Indian Removal Act

This act is passed by Congress, allowing President Jackson to remove eastern Indians from their homelands and relocate them to Indian Territory west of the Mississippi River.

1843

Westward Migration Begins

Emigrants travel over the Oregon and California Trails.

1850s

Western Conflicts

In the West, a series of wars between Indians and settlers begins that will last for the next 30 years.

1871

Indian Appropriation Act

This act is passed by the House of Representatives, ending recognition of any Indian tribe as an independent nation.

1880s

Reservations

By the mid-1880s, most of the Indians left in America have been confined to 187 reservations. These Indians lose vast areas of their land and are pressured to give up their traditions.

1889

Reduction of Indian Territory

The U.S. government opens previously protected Indian Territory, in present-day Oklahoma, home to 75,000 Indians, to emigrant settlement.

1890

Battle of Wounded Knee

One hundred twenty Sioux warriors surrender to 500 U.S. troops at Wounded Knee Creek. The Indians, including women and children, are massacred. This is the last major conflict between soldiers and American Indians in the United States.



Slide 5 ◀



Thousands of Indians died from diseases which were new to them, such as smallpox, brought to their villages by white settlers.



Primary Source

Many Indian tribes had legends foretelling the future, which included the coming of the whites and the effects of their arrival. This Blackfoot prophecy occurred sometime after 1700 and is very similar to legends of other tribes.

One morning the people were awakened by the shouts of an old man who was greatly respected... To the chiefs he related what had been said to him in his vision:

"Our way of living, our customs, and our freedom will die in this generation. After all who now live have died, another generation will come that will wear clothing different from ours. Half of their clothing will be buckskin, and half will be made from the hair of sheep and goats. The men's fingers will explode, and all our wild game will be killed... Then there will come a new group of our people who will have no chiefs. All the men will want to be chiefs, but there will be no one with authority. Our people will think strange things, the old will wander away, and our tipis will be destroyed. Our children will live in square-like structures and will sit on the branches of trees... In time, they will no longer need our horses, for large black beetles will carry them wherever they wish to go...they will cut the earth into small pieces for each one... They will be able to watch the chief geese flying across the sky."

The prophecy has come true. The early traders and trappers changed the style of clothing. Our manner of living changed from tipis to houses. The firearms brought by the white man killed off the buffaloes and the smaller game animals. Soon the Indians' form of government broke down. The black beetles are the automobiles, and the chief geese flying across the sky are the airplanes.

"The Prophecy of the Old Blackfoot" from Indian Legends from the Northern Rockies, by Ella E. Clark. Copyright ©1966 by the University of Oklahoma Press, Norman. Reprinted by permission of the publisher. All rights reserved.



Questions:

1. What did the emigrants do to begin their new lives in Oregon?
(*main idea/supporting details*)
2. Compare life on the trail to life in Oregon Country. How was it the same and how was it different? (*comparing and contrasting*)

Slide 1

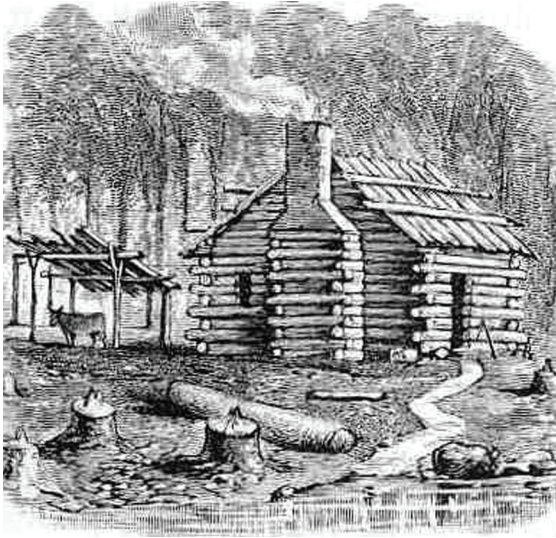
◀ What happened when emigrants reached Oregon?

If the trip went well, the emigrants would reach The Dalles, Oregon, in October. There, members of the wagon trains parted company and headed off to their final destinations. For many, this meant traveling down the dangerous Columbia River to the Willamette River by raft to settle in the fertile Willamette Valley. When they arrived, they did not find a “land of milk and honey,” as they had been promised. But land was cheap and fertile, and the opportunities did seem endless. Although their worst struggles were over, the weary travelers had no time to relax and enjoy their new surroundings. Winter was around the corner, and they needed to build houses. By the 1870s, the flow of wagons on the trail dwindled as the new transcontinental railroad made cross-country travel faster and easier, and soon the Oregon Trail was nothing more than a memory.

Slide 1

◀ This log cabin is similar to the cabins built by emigrants upon arrival in the Oregon Country in the 1800s.





The emigrants' first task was to clear the land, plant crops, and build a home before winter set in. Emigrants would make do with whatever supplies and furnishings remained in their wagons until spring, when their first crops would appear.

► Slide 2

Primary Source

From the journal of Adriette Applegate Hixon, 1853:

About noon of the tenth day, after leaving the Dalles, we began to see, through the timber, on ahead a vision of an open valley. Peering out, I saw that it was sprinkled over with spreading oaks, while it seemed to be surrounded by a fringe of evergreens reaching up onto those mountains, and on into the blue sky above, I thought, "Yes, this is the Oregon I have been hoping to get to."

► Slide 2

Primary Source

From the writing of Rev. George H. Atkinson, 1847:

An immigrant will come in during the Autumn, put himself up a log house with a mud and stick chimney, split boards and shingles, break eight or ten or twenty acres of prairie and saw it with wheat. You call upon him the next year & he will have a fine field ripe for the sickle. His large field will be well fenced with newly split fir rails. There will be a patch of corn, another of potatoes, & another of garden vegetables. Outside a large piece will be broken for the present year's sowing. His cattle & horse & hogs will be on the prairie, thriving and increasing without care. A few sheep may be around the house. He has a spring near... The farmer wears buckskin pants. His family has few cooking utensils, few chairs. No additions since they came into the Territory.

► Slide 3