

# An Education Resource Guide

## 2016 Edition

This Education Resource Guide was made possible through the cooperative efforts of:

- Bureau of Land Management, Vale District
- National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center
- Trail Tenders, Inc.
- Eastern Oregon University



**NATIONAL  
CONSERVATION  
LANDS**

NATIONAL HISTORIC  
**OREGON TRAIL**  
INTERPRETIVE CENTER

BAKER CITY, OREGON

## Dear Teachers - A Guide to this Guide

This Education Resource Guide is for use by educators teaching Oregon Trail history. Activities are designed for the classroom, but will also help prepare students for a field trip to the site. This guide is designed for use by fourth grade teachers who typically teach Oregon history, but activities can easily be adapted for younger or older students, subjects related to recognizing how historical events shaped the Pacific Northwest, and how we can use historical resources to better understand our current world.

The guide is entirely in Public Domain, and you may make copies of any portion for classroom use. Our staff at the National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center in Baker City also offer virtual classroom visits when staff is available. We have many more resources available on our websites or at our facility. Please visit [www.blm.gov/site-page/nhotic](http://www.blm.gov/site-page/nhotic) or [www.trailtenders.org](http://www.trailtenders.org), or you can contact us at 541-523-1843 or [BLM\\_OR\\_NH\\_Mail@blm.gov](mailto:BLM_OR_NH_Mail@blm.gov).



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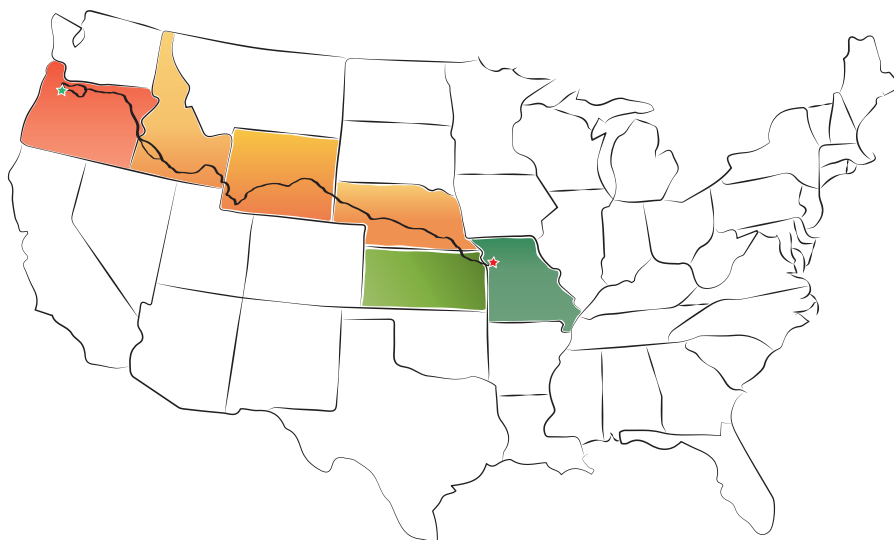
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# Curriculum Connections

## Theme:

The Oregon Trail is among the most famous and well-documented migrations in American and world history. Thousands crossed the North American continent to escape political turmoil, unhealthy conditions, and economic hardship for a better future. In the mid-1800s, with technology, communications, and society much different from today, the 2,000 mile journey was a daunting endeavor and iconic of the challenges found in all human migrations.



## Objectives:

- Students will be able to explain at least one reason why pioneers traveled to the frontier.
- Students will be able to list three dangers to pioneers as they traveled along the trail.
- Students will be able to name five necessities for the trip west.
- Students will be able to list two emotions felt by the pioneers who left their homes to find a new life on the western frontier.
- Students will be able to write notes, plans, or thoughts in a simple journal.

## These activities will help develop:

- critical thinking, ability to develop and express reasoned decisions and competing arguments
- using dialog to develop and express a particular point of view
- understanding how technology, scarcity and emotions affect decisions
- comparing past to present, especially family life and technology
- analyzing purchases and supply choices, and the differences between needs and wants
- an understanding of co-operation versus conflict in solving a dilemma
- simple math skills in calculating, estimating and adjusting
- understanding primary sources in researching history

# Common Core State Standards for Grade 4

(adopted by Oregon in 2010)

See separate Teacher Resource for Specific Benchmarks for individual questions & activities.

## English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies:

Reading: Key Ideas and Details, Craft & Structure, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas,  
Writing, Speaking & Listening, Text Types & Purposes, Comprehension & Collaboration  
4.RI.1, 4.RI.2, 4.RI.3, 4.RI.6, 4.RI.7, 4.W.1, 4.W.3, 4.SL.1

## Oregon History:

Historical Knowledge, Historical Thinking, Geography, Economics, Social Science Analysis  
4.2, 4.7, 4.8, 4.10, 4.17, 4.19, 4.21

## Math:

Operations and Algebraic Thinking, Number and Operations in Base Ten, Number and  
Operations—Fractions, Measurement and Data, Mathematical Practices 1-8.  
4.OA.1; 4.OA.3; 4.NBT.3; 4.NBT.4; 4.NBT.5; 4.NF.3b, 4.NF.3d; 4.MD.2; MP 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

## Physical Education:

Motor skills and Movement patterns, knowledge and skills of physical activity and fitness.  
PE.1.4.1, 1.4.3, 1.4.4, 1.4.9, 3.4.1, 3.4.2



## **About the National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center**

The National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center in Baker City, Oregon is a 500 acre historic site with a modern facility and professional staff offering interpretive programs, exhibits, special events, and four miles of hiking trails. The site is designed for all age levels, and to accommodate a variety of physical abilities.

Permanent exhibits use full scale dioramas, sound effects, films, artifacts and interpretive displays to convey the pioneer experience of preparing for the journey, life on the trail, interaction between emigrants and natives, settlement and homesteading in Oregon. Special exhibits are presented in the Flagstaff Gallery exploring topics related to the Oregon Trail, westward migration, and natural history.

In the Leo Adler Theater, interpreters present a variety of programs. Living history presentations, musicians, and guest interpreters bring stories of exploration, emigration, and settlement of the west to life. Programs are offered most days during the summer months. A variety of films related to overland migration and exploration of the West are also offered daily in the Theater. An outdoor lode mine exhibit features a full-scale replica of a five-stamp gold mill and gold panning demonstrations (seasonally). From the top of Flagstaff Hill, visitors enjoy panoramic views of the Elkhorn Mountain range and can explore our outdoor replica wagon encampment. Visitors learn about the sagebrush ecosystem and geology of eastern Oregon on ranger guided hikes or self-guided hikes. Special activities for groups are offered by staff and by the Trail Tenders volunteer group. A variety of activity books for younger visitors are available. An on-site gift shop sells history books, educational materials, and thematically appropriate souvenirs.

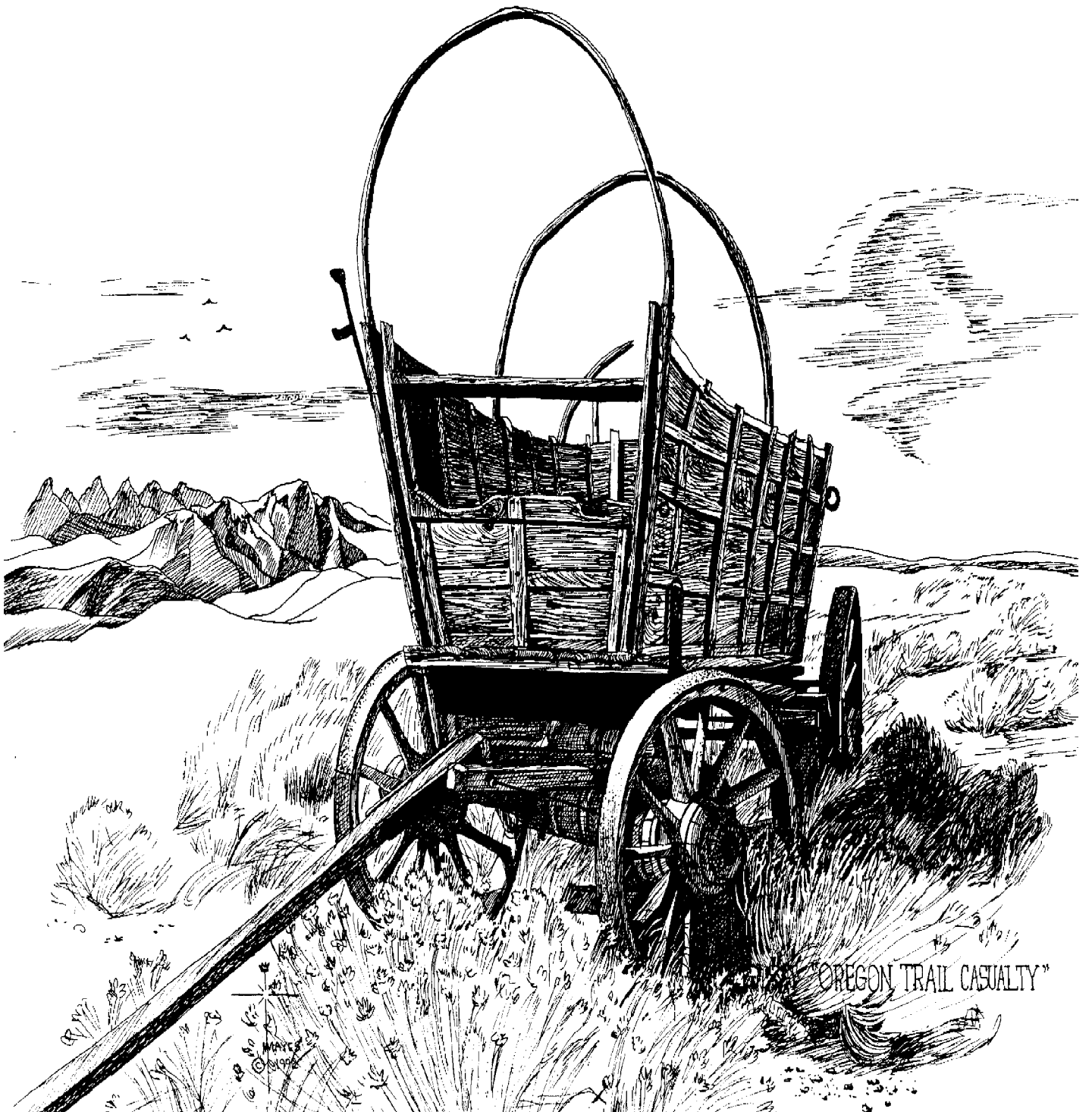
From the top of Flagstaff Hill one can see nearly 13 miles of the historic Oregon Trail route where it crosses Virtue Flat and Baker Valley. One mile of well-preserved ruts lie on the Interpretive Center grounds, and are accessible by the trails or from a turnout on Highway 86 near the Center's entrance. Standing along tracks left by emigrant wagons gives visitors a glimpse at the monumental effort it took to make the journey.

## **About the Bureau of Land Management**

The BLM cares for about 245 million acres of federal public lands, mainly in the Western United States, including Alaska. These lands, representing about one-eighth of our nation's land area, belong to all Americans. In addition, the BLM administers 700 million acres of mineral estate across the entire country.

Public lands are used for many purposes. They support local economies, providing Americans with coal, oil and gas, forest products, livestock forage, and other commodities. As a haven for fish and wildlife, they play a critical role in habitat and resource conservation efforts. They embrace some of our country's most important historical, archaeological, and paleontological sites. Open spaces on public lands offer places for people to play, learn, and explore. In recent years, some BLM lands have been designated as part of the National Conservation Lands, a network of lands afforded special status and managed for their scientific, cultural, educational, ecological and other values.

The BLM is responsible for managing public lands under the principles of multiple use and sustained yield in a manner that best meets the current and future needs of the public. With so many resources and uses, the BLM's job is challenging. Countless partners, volunteers, and communities provide invaluable support, helping the agency carry out its stewardship mission. To learn more about your public lands and how you can get involved, visit [www.blm.gov](http://www.blm.gov).



"OREGON TRAIL CASUALTY"

## A Brief History of...



The Oregon Trail was a major migration across North America in the mid-1800s. It was a 2,000-mile journey that became a passage to the "Land of Plenty" for many of the emigrants who traveled it. They hoped it would lead them to more freedom, good farm land, better health, or to escape poverty. Dreams drove their journey, but for some the dream died.

During this era, nearly 1 of every 20 Americans relocated west of the Missouri River. Though many found adventure and success on their journey, the trail was full of tragic encounters and testing times. The road to the West, known as the Oregon Trail, began as a series of trails used by Native Americans and fur traders. Its first real emigrant traffic came in 1843 when a wagon train of about 1,000 people left Independence, Missouri bound for Oregon. From that time on, the Oregon Trail saw hundreds of thousands of travelers until the late 1860's, when a transcontinental railroad offered new ways to reach the West.

The start of the journey basically followed the Platte River through present-day Nebraska. To the northwest loomed the great Rocky Mountains, and to the south lay the desert. The Platte River offered a central corridor to those heading West. Much of this land was already occupied by Native Americans. Pawnee, Kansas, Cheyenne, Arapaho, Lakota-Sioux, Shoshone, Bannock, Nez Perce, Cayuse, Walla Walla, Umatilla, and Chinook were some of the nations populating this vast area.



Pioneers were called emigrants, as they were relocating out of the United States into frontier territory. They journeyed up the Platte, to the North Platte, then to the Sweetwater River which led them to South Pass. From South Pass, their routes went either along the Snake and Columbia Rivers to Oregon, or the Humboldt River toward California.

Independence and St. Joseph, Missouri were common “jumping off” places. Large numbers of emigrants gathered there before heading towards the West. This was the place to make sure your “outfit” was fully assembled and equipped. A wagon, draft animals, food, tools and clothing were gathered together to sustain a family for up to five or six months of trail travel and camping out.

### ***Draft Animals***

The Oregon Trail migrations happened before the invention of automobiles, or the existence of railroad lines in the west. Draft animals provided the power. Oxen were the number-one draft animal of the migrations. About 80% of the wagons in 1850 were hauled by these beasts of burden. Why oxen instead of horses? Horses were expensive and their upkeep was demanding. Horses needed grain to supplement their diet, and were bothered by insects and bad water. Mules were a popular choice as they were strong, tough, could move at a fairly fast pace, and were able to survive on grass available along the trail. But mules were expensive, in short supply, and sometimes had a contrary nature that made them difficult to control. Plains Indians and rustlers sometimes stole

horses and mules. Oxen were not so tempting to thieves. Oxen were slow, but very strong, adaptable and calm. They survived on the dry prairie grasses. Oxen were much cheaper. And, if things got bad on the trail, an ox could be slaughtered for beef to feed hungry pioneers.

It was best to have at least four oxen to pull each wagon, and if possible, a spare pair would be taken along. Oxen hooves required attention, and shoes were applied to their feet to protect them. If iron shoes were not available, emigrants nailed sole leather on the bottoms of the oxen feet or smeared the hooves with tar or grease and fastened on boots made of buffalo hide. Families had great affection for their oxen, often giving them names. When oxen died, the whole family grieved as though a family member had been lost.

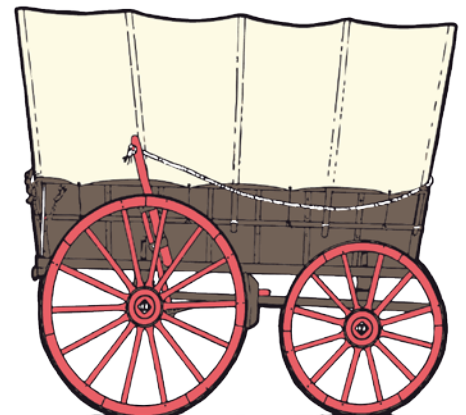


### ***Wagons***

Wagons used on the Oregon Trail were not the huge, boat-shaped Conestoga, but more of a reinforced farm wagon, capable of hauling anywhere from 1,600 to 2,500 pounds. Cargos were protected with bows reaching about five feet above the wagon bed and covered with some type of heavy, canvas-like material. Spare parts, tongues, spokes, and axles were carried, and were often slung underneath the wagon bed. Grease buckets, heavy rope (at least 100 feet was recommended), and chains completed the running gear accessories. When store-bought grease (necessary for wheels) was exhausted, boiled buffalo or wolf grease served the purpose.

### ***Supplies***

In preparing supplies, a delicate balance was necessary. Hauling too much would wear down the animals. Too little could result in starvation or deprivation. Food was the most important supply.



Wild berries, roots, greens, and fish might supplement the diet, but it was risky to depend on these. Hunting or foraging on the dry plains was good some days, but yielded nothing on other days. In some places along the trail, emigrants bartered with Indians for game, salmon, and vegetables in exchange for tools and clothing. Prior to 1849, there were few stores or trading posts along the route. Even after establishment of trading posts at Scott's Bluff, Ft. Bridger, Fort Kearny and Fort Laramie, supplies were meager and extremely high priced.

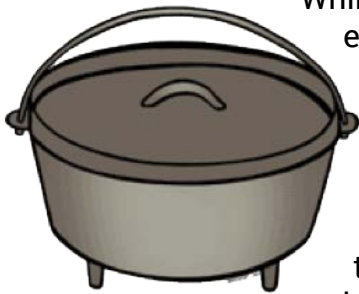


Early guide books recommended that each emigrant be supplied with 200 pounds of flour, 150 pounds of bacon, ten pounds of coffee, 20 pounds of sugar and ten pounds of salt. Basic kitchen equipment consisted of a cooking kettle (Dutch oven), fry pan, coffee pot, tin plates, cups, knives and forks.

Provisions were of vital importance to the emigrant. Food had to be preserved so it would not spoil along the trail. Preserved food included drying, smoking or pickling. Bread, bacon and coffee were the staple diet during the entire trip west. Dried beans, rice, dried fruit, tea, vinegar, pickles, and saleratus (baking soda) were frequent supplies.

Camping supplies such as tents, rain tarps, blankets and bedrolls were included. Each emigrant needed some sturdy clothing and a hat to shield themselves from harsh weather and burning sun. Many carried a firearm for hunting and protection, and basic tools for cutting wood and making minor repairs. There was only a little room for non-essential supplies. Favorite books, a musical instrument, art supplies, fancy clothes, or tools for setting up a new home in the west had to be squeezed in any available space. Many goods were discarded along the trail when heavy wagons needed to be lightened to save exhausted draft animals.

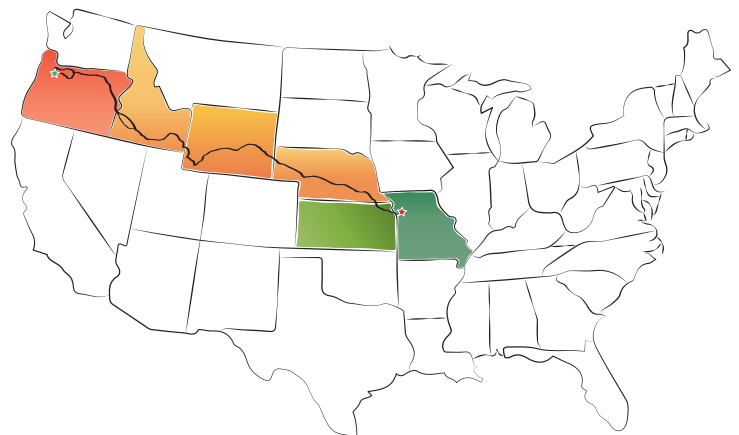
While pioneer women were used to baking bread at home, it took some experimenting to bake bread in a Dutch oven outdoors with a buffalo chip fire, blowing ashes, dust, insects, rain and wind. Dried hardtack biscuits were also a common provision to last the five-month journey. The food supply was the heaviest and most essential part of the covered wagon cargo. Some pioneers brought a few chickens along in cages tied to the side of the wagon, but otherwise, there were no eggs. Many, especially those with small children, brought milk cows. Milk and butter were a health-giving supplement to a family diet of mainly meat and bread.



### ***Traveling Along the Trail***

The standard date for departure from the jumping-off towns was April 15, give or take a week or two. Any earlier, and the trail was too muddy; later the prairie grasses would be over-grazed and pioneers risked meeting winter weather at the end of their trip.

Expected arrival in Oregon or California was mid-September to early October. An ideal crossing was 120 days for the 2,000 mile trip with a daily average of 15 miles per day. A more realistic crossing took two to four weeks longer than this estimate. On a good day, more than



15 miles could be covered at top oxen-speed of about two miles per hour. On a bad day with river crossings or rough weather, much less distance was made.

In many wide open places, wagon trains broke up into two or more columns, spreading out to relieve the pressure on the road. In many other places, it was “once in line, stay in line.” Large herds of cattle often times accompanied the wagon trains, causing further crowding on the trail and raising huge clouds of choking dust.



The day usually started at sunrise and lasted until early evening with a one hour rest at noon. This “nooning” was essential because it gave man, woman and beast a much needed rest. The oxen were not unyoked, but they were allowed to graze if forage was available.

Emigrants were always on the lookout for the perfect campsite with water, firewood, and grass for grazing their animals. Good campsites were well known and well used. The first order of business at the end of the day was forming a corral by pulling the wagons into a circle. It was normally a circular or oblong shape with the tongue of one wagon chained to the rear of a neighbor’s to form a fence. Originally designed to form a corral for some of the livestock, it became an institution, as much for companionship as anything else. An opening or two was left for passage of livestock and could be closed with the tongue of a wagon.



The evening campfire provided comforting warmth, a place to dry wet clothes, and to cook a hot supper. While river bottoms along the trail are thick with trees today, 150 years ago frequent prairie fires kept the trees from maturing. How did the emigrants keep warm, fry their bacon, or bake their bread? This was accomplished by burning drift wood, breaking up the occasional abandoned wagon box, or twisting dry grass into tight bundles. When crossing buffalo country, the pioneers burned dry “buffalo chips,” the dried bison dung sometimes called ‘prairie coal.’

### ***Traveling Conditions***

Water was important along the entire length of the trail, and the route followed rivers as much as possible. Along the Platte River, travelers described the muddy water as “too thick to drink and too thin to plow.” Some tried to filter out sand and other particles found in river water by straining the water through fabric. Some boiled their water, not so much to ensure its safety, but to “kill the wiggle-tails”. Drinking untreated water caused a lot of sickness and death on the trail. Springs also provided watering spots, but alkali springs were poisonous to man and animals, and were marked with warning signs. In some stretches of trail – especially through Idaho, eastern Oregon, or the Nevada desert –emigrants had to haul water for long stretches between rivers and springs.

The Oregon migrations were a family affair, sometimes with at least 50 percent women and children. There were courting and marriages among the young and unmarried members of numerous wagon trains. Babies were born on the journey. Interestingly, those who kept diaries made no mention of an impending birth until a short entry announced the arrival of a new member of the family. Tragically, the chance of death for both mother and infant during childbirth was high.

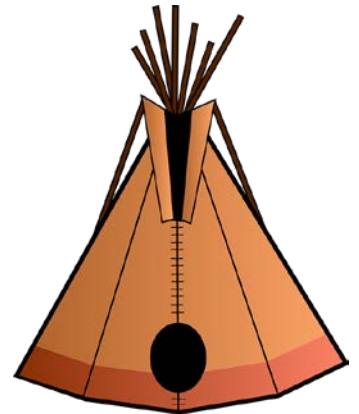


Sleeping arrangements were elementary and primitive. Sick persons or small children might sleep in the wagon, but the most common bed was a blanket, a piece of canvas or India rubber cloth or a buffalo robe on

the ground. Some had tents, but they often blew away in the wind, or were so cumbersome to deal with that they were discarded along the way. Emigrants had no trouble falling asleep—fatigue and exhaustion made the ground seem soft and quite welcome to lay down upon after a long day on the trail.

Given the extremes which tested the emigrants to the limit of their endurance and fortitude, the evidence of crime among the travelers was low. Under the circumstances, the vast majority of folks behaved admirably. There were no civil laws, no marshals, sheriffs, or courts of law to protect those who crossed the plains. The military offered some protection near the forts, but that was limited. Wagon trains carried out their own justice and made their own laws.

Native Americans living along the route were wary of the travelers crossing their territory. Many of the pioneers had read propaganda that depicted Native Americans as hostile and dangerous, and so were fearful. Most of the interactions with pioneers and Native Americans were peaceful trading, or exchanging information or offering guide services. But some hostile incidents did occur over the thirty or more years of the migration, which eventually led to more fear and suspicion. This increased as pioneers became settlers, and conflicts for land and resources led to problems and difficult relations.



Religion played a large role in the westward migration, for a majority of these pioneers were devout Christian churchgoers. While it was not practical to lay over every Sunday while traveling the trail, some sort of Sabbath observance was usually held. If the train rested on the Sabbath, the women washed clothes or did some extra cooking. The men repaired wagons, harnesses, etc.



Many pioneers recorded their experiences in diaries or journals, which were later shared with friends and relatives. These personal writings indicate pioneers experienced many tedious days and hardships, but also enjoyed taking short walks and exploring the new land. They express wonderment at huge herds of bison, and unfamiliar wildlife like pronghorn, prairie dogs and coyotes. The vast open landscapes were different from their homes in the east. They wrote of prairie entertainment like playing music, games and cards, and celebrating holidays such as the 4th of July. Children might play games such as tag or blind man's bluff, but many had to leave toys behind. Songs such as "Oh, Susannah" and "Home, Sweet Home" were popular during the pioneer days, and especially among pioneers feeling homesick or trying to keep up their spirits.

### ***Hardships***

While some people seemed to thrive on the excitement and adventure of the journey across the plains, for others it was simply an ongoing ordeal. After surviving untold hardships, there arose the threat of disease and death. Statistics on the number of emigrants, and the number of deaths on the trail vary widely. Different historians have estimated between 200,000 and 500,000 people crossed the overland trail, and 20,000 to 30,000 deaths occurred along the 2,000 mile trail, averaging ten or more graves per mile.

Often the deaths occurred from poor sanitation practices in cooking and food storage, bad water, and bad living conditions. Some people suffering from "consumption" or tuberculosis, tried to make the trip because it was believed that outdoor exercise would overcome



the disease. What better exercise than walking across the prairie! Pneumonia, whooping cough, measles, smallpox and various other sicknesses also caused many deaths. Cholera, a contagious bacterial disease, was the greatest killer on the trail.

Accidents associated with wagon travel also took their toll. Drowning, being run over by a wagon, accidental shootings and accidents from handling animals caused injuries, maiming, and deaths. Fatigue often resulted in carelessness and led to accidents.

The weather played a key role in trail life, and was one which simply had to be endured. April and May could be cold and wet, and since the emigrants traveled with a meager supply of clothes and bedding, many were uncomfortable. Later, heat and dust became the enemy. When it rained, low places became bogs where wagons could mire down, and rivers that had to be crossed became raging torrents.

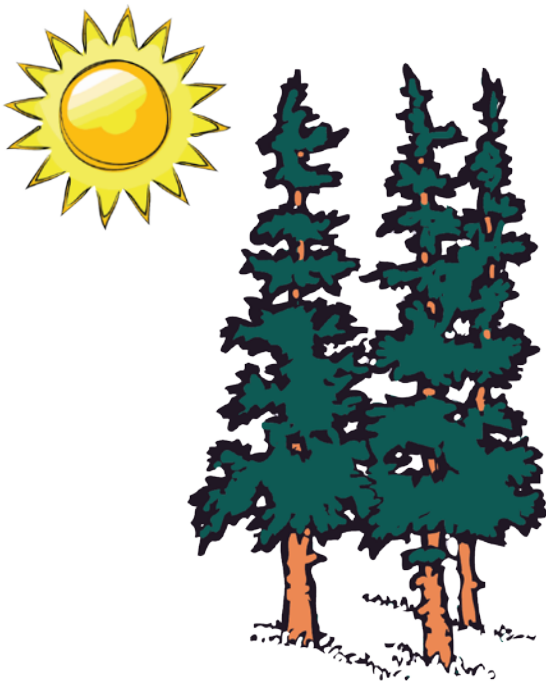


It was tiring to walk ten to fifteen miles per day. Children were constantly foraging and looking for firewood along the way.

Men drove the animals, did heavy work of repairing wagons and managing river crossings, and were always on the look-out for a chance to hunt for fresh meat. Women set up camp and prepared food at morning, noon and night, and broke camp to reload wagons when it was time to get back on the road.

After surviving the great prairies and Rocky Mountains, making their way along the Sweetwater and Snake Rivers, the Blue Mountains still had to be crossed. Many found the road through the Blues more difficult than crossing the Rockies. Travelers then journeyed across Northeastern Oregon to the Columbia. Some historians say the Oregon Trail ended at The Dalles, but most believe its true end is at Oregon City. After reaching The Dalles, wagons floated down the Columbia on rafts. In 1846 the Barlow Road was built around Mount Hood, giving travelers an alternative to river travel.

Finally, the Valley of the Willamette!! Located here was the land office where you could file your land claim. Here, hopes and dreams either blossomed and bore fruit—or died. Those who had endured the incredible hardships of the journey, now behind them, came to this valley to seize the land, settle it, come to terms with it, and to call it home. Arriving exhausted from the journey, and with few supplies, many struggled through their first years. But many also found the new life and opportunities that inspired their journey.



# Oregon Trail Vocabulary

**Abandonment** – leaving possessions along the trail when necessitated by a weakening team; a common occurrence on the Oregon Trail.

**Bison** – North American Bison, also called buffalo, were one of the most iconic animals emigrants encountered on the Great Plains.

**Buffalo Chips** – dried buffalo dung was gathered in treeless terrain and sometimes used for fuel by Oregon Trail emigrants.

**Cholera** – a deadly infectious disease which ravaged the Oregon Trail during the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. It spread by contaminated water, caused severe diarrhea, and sometimes death within a few hours. The years 1849, 1850 & 1853 were hard hit; some trains lost two thirds of their party to this disease.

**Constitution** – a document drawn prior to the departure of a party which regulated conduct and set laws the party would abide by in the wilderness.

**Corral** – circling of the wagons at night to provide an enclosure for protection and to prevent stock from scattering. Ropes or chains were often tied between wagons to complete the enclosure.

**Cut** – a shortcut or branch of a trail, often named after the first person who used it.

**Dutch Oven** – a deep cast iron vessel on legs with a lipped lid, used primarily for cooking & baking by placing coals under the base and on top of the lid.

**Emigrant** – a person leaving one area to move to another, such as emigrants on the Oregon Trail leaving the Midwest for the West coast.

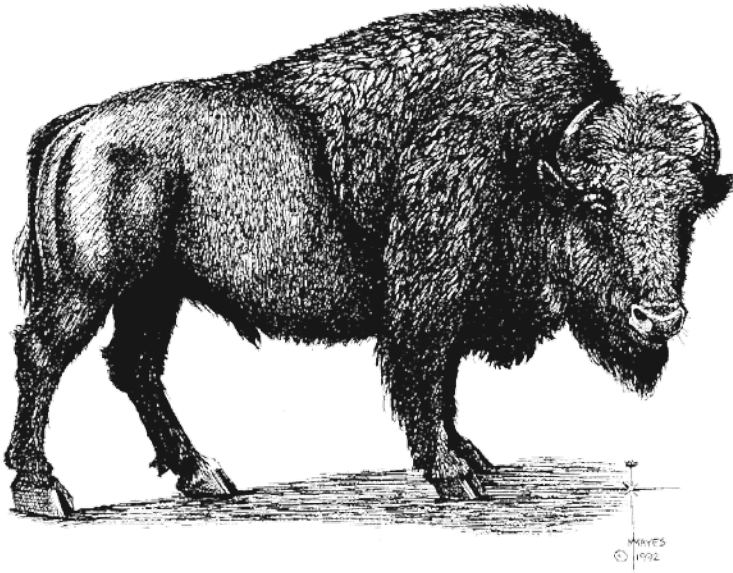
**Frontier** – the part of a settled country that lies next to a region that is unsettled.

**Great Basin** – the region between the Sierra Nevada and Wasatch Mountains including most of Nevada and parts of California, Idaho, and Utah.

**Gold Fever** – a blind desire to discover gold. When gold was discovered out West, this craze caused the 1849 rush of emigrants to Oregon and California.

**Gold Rush** – large scale migration of prospectors to gold fields. The California Gold Rush is the most famous, but there were also gold rushes in Oregon, Colorado, Nevada, and South Dakota.

**Guidebook** – publications which gave advice to Oregon Trail emigrants as to provisions and equipment needed for journey and routes to follow. Some guidebooks gave bad advice.



# Oregon Trail Vocabulary

**Jumping off** – to leave the civilized world on a 2,000 mile journey through the western wilderness. The Missouri River towns from which emigrants departed were known as “jumping off towns.” These were important supply points.

**Laying over**– to remain in camp for a day; sometimes because of deaths or births, some parties laid over on Sundays. When laying over, emigrants tended to do jobs which required them to remain stationary, such as laundry.

**Nooning** – to stop for a noon meal which was almost always cold. Parties stopped for about an hour and rested before the afternoon stretch.

**Manifest Destiny** – the belief that expansion of the United States was justifiable and inevitable.

**Migration** – the act of moving from one region or country to another.

**Oregon Fever** – a desire to migrate to Oregon Territory during the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, for its rich soil and healthful climate.

**Outfit** – the wagon and the animals that pulled it; the single most important element to the success of a trip on the Oregon Trail.

**Oxen** – common domestic cattle used especially for hauling loads. An ox (or oxen, the plural) is an adult, castrated male of any breed of cattle. They are trained to pull vehicles and plows, and in North America they were the most widely used draft animal up to about the 1850s.

**Party** – The group of people traveling together on a westward migration, often held together by a constitution.

**Pioneer** – a person who goes into unknown areas, opening up the way for others to follow.

**Propaganda** – an organized spreading of ideas to promote a cause.

**Provisions** – the food and food preparation equipment carried in the wagon: the most important part of the cargo.

**Stampede** – a sudden, frenzied rush of frightened animals often caused by lightning. Stampedes of emigrants’ stock or buffalo herds could be disastrous to parties.

**Team** – two draft animals hitched together form a team. Most emigrant wagons required two teams or four animals, usually oxen.

**Train** – the group of wagons traveling together on a westward migration.

**Turnarounds** – emigrants who “turned around” for one reason or another to return home.

**Viameter** – a crude odometer using gears to count wheel revolutions and estimate mileage.



# Activity 1: Discussion Questions & Decision-Making

## Teacher Instructions:

1. Have students read the Oregon Trail History background information on pages 8-13, and review the vocabulary words from pages 14-15.
2. Lead a discussion with your class about some of the issues faced by the emigrants, using these suggested questions (A) as a guide.
3. Have students read the following pages of editorials showing the pros and cons for going to the Oregon Country. Discuss these pros and cons. Have students complete the worksheet (B) to articulate their feelings about moving across the country.

## A) Discussion Questions

- Discuss the importance of planning for a trip. What preparation do students make before going to school? Before going on vacation? Planning was extremely important if emigrants were to be successful.
- Discuss the difference between the words **emigrate** (to leave one's home or country for residence elsewhere) and **immigrate** (to come into an area of which one is not native for permanent residence). **Why do we refer to the people on the Oregon Trail, on their way to a new home, as "emigrants"?**
- Discuss other periods in history when many people have emigrated. Does the desire to move have anything to do with human nature?
- Discuss some of the things we take for granted today that the emigrants on the Oregon Trail did not enjoy. Ask students to list some. Add your own. (Suspension bridges, cars, electricity, flashlights, television, cell phones, air conditioning)
- Discuss the similarities of emigrating to the west coast on the Oregon Trail to space travel. What is different?



# Editorials saying "Go to Oregon!"

## ST. LOUIS GAZETTE

The Rocky Mountains can be crossed by wagons and families. There is no obstruction the whole route that any person would dare call a mountain. Even delicate missionary women have crossed the mountains with no ill effects.

## Missouri Gazette

The Indians are hostile, true, but overlanders traveling together in large wagon trains are safe. In all probability they would not meet with an Indian to interrupt their progress. The army has forts and soldiers to protect travelers and more will be provided.

## New Orleans Daily Picayune

Those bound for Oregon are Pioneers, like those of Israel that followed Moses through the wilderness. Going to Oregon is also patriotic. It is our manifest destiny to settle the west.

## ST. LOUIS GAZETTE

In Oregon, there are spacious, fertile valleys where good crops can be grown, and free land is available. Although there is still land to be had back east, prices are rising and economic conditions are poor. No one need starve on the overland journey if they plan carefully. Provisions can be taken to last for months and game is plentiful. In fact, the health of overlanders should improve in the great outdoors.

# Editorials saying "Don't Go to Oregon!"

## **NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW**

Why go to Oregon to get land? An Illinois farm of the finest land would be far superior.

## **Daily Missouri Republican**

Families with wagons will never be able to cross the mountains. Men should not subject their wives and children to all degrees of suffering.

## **New Orleans Weekly Bulletin**

The Indians in the west are hostile. The wagon trains would be in constant jeopardy.

## **THE NEW YORK AURORA**

Most of the overlanders and their animals will die of starvation and exposure in the vast desert areas of the west. It is madness and a folly to attempt a trip to Oregon.

## **LIVERPOOL TIMES**

The country is expanding too fast. Besides, the Oregon Country is claimed by the British. If war comes it would be impossible to defend it.

## B) Decision-Making

### Instructions:

1. Read the previous two pages of editorials showing the pros and cons for going to the Oregon Country.
2. Discuss these pros and cons. Where do you feel your family would stand on going to the Oregon Country? Would they go? Why or why not? What would your reaction be to their decisions?

I think my family \_\_\_ *would* \_\_\_ *would not* have gone to Oregon because:

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My reaction to this decision would be:

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## Activity 2: Journaling



Journals or diaries can be introduced to students by having them keep journals of daily and weekly happenings in their own lives. Comparisons can also be made with modern-day travel blogs found online and the common desire to document momentous travel experiences.

Samples can be read from actual journals to help expose students to a “diary” experience. There are many journals from the Oregon Trail era that have been transcribed and can be found online.

The teacher can write with the students to model a proper journal entry for the students to refer to when they are doing their own writing.

### Teacher Instructions:

Post a large map of the Oregon Trail route. It should include some points of interest.

- Platte River
- Chimney Rock
- Independence Rock
- Register Cliff
- Devil's Gate
- Snake River
- Farewell Bend
- Lone Pine Valley
- Whitman Mission
- The Dalles
- Fort Vancouver
- Willamette Valley

Many families might like to get involved in this project. It can be assigned as a home project that involves the family with. Encourage illustrations, as students can draw their thoughts in very unique portrayals.

Each student can make a cover for his/her book. Construction paper, leather, wood, cloth, canvas, burlap or any kind of material that might have been used during pioneer times.

# Oregon Trail Diary Quotes

These quotes have been printed as the diarists originally wrote them, with odd spelling, an occasional non-capitalization of some words, and sometimes no punctuation.

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## *James W. Nesmith, 1843*

Sunday, September 24 - Trailed ten miles over the roughest county I ever saw, Burnt River being hemmed in by hills on both sides. Encamped in the bottom.

Monday, September 25 - Trailed eight miles. Passed the forks of Burnt River. The roads rough and the country rougher still. Encamped near the head of the lefthand fork of Burnt River. In the forenoon passed a fine grove of large timber, principally Balm of Gilead, close by a patch of the fine black haws, which we devoured most voraciously.

Tuesday, September 26 - Trailed ten miles. Passed another fork of Burnt River, with an Indian village close by. Encamped at a place where the trail leaves Burnt River near the spring.

Wednesday, September 27 - Looney's wagon turned over this morning soon after leaving camp. We crossed the divide and encamped at the lone pine tree. Trailed twelve miles. Snow, that fell the night before last on the mountains, in sight all day. Weather drizzly and rainy.

Thursday, September 28 - Left the pine tree this morning. Trailed fourteen miles. Encamped on the third fork of Powder River. Had a fine view of the snow-topped mountains through the clouds. Raining below them.

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## *Esther Hanna, 1852*

Wed. 18 (August) Came 19 miles over a rough, dusty road. Came to Powder River Valley. This is a delightful valley, fine grass and good water. Saw the Blue Mtns. in the distance covered with pine.

This evening we had a severe hail storm just before we came to our encampment it had been raining, in the mountains all evening and as we neared them we got our share in ice. It is so cold since that we are all shivering with our thick clothes on. Have nothing for fire but green willow branches.

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## *David Walker McDannald, 1865*

Tuesday, October 3, 1865. After a short drive this morning, we come to the Big Powder River, where we rested until after dinner. This is a fine stream and was a nice place to camp. Had we not all been so over-anxious to get to the end of our journey, it would have been a great joy for us to have camped right here for several days, but as it was, soon after dinner we were on our way and drove on down to the Little Powder River, where we camped for the night.

# Oregon Trail Diary Quotes

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## *John Wood, 1850*

June 14, 1850: Today we met a large company, homeward bound. Some of our company purchased two milch cows from them. They say we never can get through, because there is no grass ahead, and the cholera is getting worse. Their wagons are crowded with sick men. Now our hearts began to fail us again and when we reflect that we have hardly made an introduction to our journey, the task becomes harder and we almost get weary of life.

June 18, 1850: We have been in sight of what is called the Court House rock for several days; tomorrow we expect to pass it and then I will tell you all about it. It is something very tall "certain and sure."

June 20, 1850: Today we passed what is called the Chimney Rock; it stands in the open plain and is also an isolated bluff, in the shape of a pyramid and about 350 feet high. It is composed of sandstone, and thousands of names are written on it or rather cut with knives. Several of us climbed high as we could and cut our names. I suppose for the last time 'Tis said that when Col. Fremont came to this rock he stopped his company for several days trying to ascend to the top but could not. It is fast mouldering to ruin and if you dont look sharp, my friends you will never see it.

July 11, 1850: From 8 oclock in the morning until 4 in the evening there is a strong wind, blowing every day. From the west; this blows the sand and dust in our eyes so bad that we are forced to wear a scarf over our eyes all day.

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## *Susan Amelia Cranston, 1851*

May 31st: started early... We drove out into the bottom and encamped near the river grass short We took along a quantity of wood from the hollow as we learned there was no more for 60 miles. We were soon visited by a number of Indians squaws and papooses there was a large encampment of them across the river opposite to us they were the Shions [Cheyennes] and Sioux who marry and live together yet have each their separate chiefs The Shions a very intelligent looking nation are said to be wealthy A little papoose attracted the attention of the whole company it was dressed in a wild cat skin taken off whole and lined with red flannel and trimmed with beads There was a Frenchman living with them said he had been there 32 years

June 4th: Drove 24 miles stopped an hour at noon and encamped at night 5 miles beyond Chimney rock on the river The tower is 5 miles from the road from which it appears very much like a ruined, deserted tower or strong hold but on approaching nearer it looks more rough and irregular it is composed of a kind of cement or very soft sandstone which can be cut or crumbled of[f] easily it stands alone overlooking the surrounding country those that visited it judged it to be 300 feet high 200 long 50 wide when we first come in sight of Chimney rock it had the appearance of a chimney or stove pipe. As you approach it looks like a haystack with a pipe on it... Had very good roads in some places the ground was covered with alkaline salts so thick that we could pick up hands full of it good grass Passed 8 graves

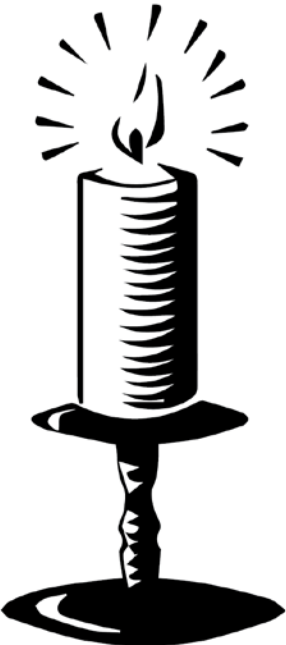
# Journal

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*date*

*location*

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## Activity 3: Trail Travel Math

### Instructions:

Use the map of page 26 to find solutions to the following Oregon Trail problems. Write an equation for each problem and support your thinking with mathematical models and words.

Independence, Missouri was the jumping off point for the Oregon Trail. Outfitters set up shop there to supply the emigrants with tools, supplies, wagons and draft animals they would need in order to make the approximately 2,000 mile trip to the Oregon territory. Pioneers had to prepare for at least 5 to 6 months of difficult travel over prairie, desert, mountains, and rivers. They needed to plan every detail carefully in order to be ready for the challenges they faced on the trail.

1. Pioneers traveling in wagon trains generally made about 15 miles each day. On the stretch of trail between Independence (Missouri) and Courthouse Rock (Nebraska), emigrants would begin to see this large sandstone feature about 3 days before they actually got to it. From their first sighting of Courthouse Rock, about how many miles would they still have to travel?

2. How many miles did the pioneers travel from their starting point in Independence to the first landmark, Courthouse Rock? They covered about 15 miles each day and rested one day each week on Sunday. About how many days did it take them to travel from Independence to Courthouse Rock?

a) \_\_\_\_\_

b) \_\_\_\_\_

Along the banks of the North Platte River is a profusion of massive sandstone features rising majestically from the plain. Chimney Rock was one of the best-known landmarks on the Oregon Trail, towering some 320 feet above the North Platte River valley.

3. Approximately 450,000 pioneers passed by the landmark called Chimney Rock during the peak years of The Oregon Trail, from 1843 to 1878. On average, about how many pioneers would have passed by that landmark each year?





4. Fort Laramie (Wyoming) was one of the places on the Oregon Trail where emigrants could purchase supplies that were running low. Many pioneers were surprised at how expensive these items were as compared with the cost in Independence. If sugar cost 5 cents per pound in Independence and \$1.50 for a quarter of a pound at Fort Laramie, how much more did it cost for 5 pounds of sugar at Fort Laramie than in Independence?

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5. Use the map to help determine the half-way point on the Oregon Trail. Between what two landmarks is the half-way point? Consider the two landmarks on either side of the halfway point. How far is the first of those landmarks from Independence, MO? How far is the second of those landmarks they come to from Oregon City, OR? Draw a model to support your thinking.

a) ----- b) ----- c) -----

6. Prior to 1843, early emigrants had to leave their wagons at Soda Springs and continue on foot with their animals to the end of the trail. Use the map to help you figure out how many miles they had to travel without their wagons from Soda Springs to Oregon City:

Fort Boise, about 40 miles from the present day city of Boise, was established as a fur-trading post. Although it failed in the fur-trading industry it was an important rest and re-supply stop for travelers on the Oregon Trail.

7. Fort Boise (Idaho) was another trading post on the Oregon Trail where emigrants might re-supply if their provisions were low or used up. But like at Fort Laramie, everything was very expensive. 100 pounds of flour that cost \$2.00 in Independence (Missouri) cost \$20.00 here.

How many times more did flour cost at Fort Boise than at Independence?

a) -----

If a family of 6 had consumed almost all of their 600 pounds of flour between the beginning of the trail at Independence, MO and Fort Boise, about how much flour would you recommend they purchase at Fort Boise?

b) -----

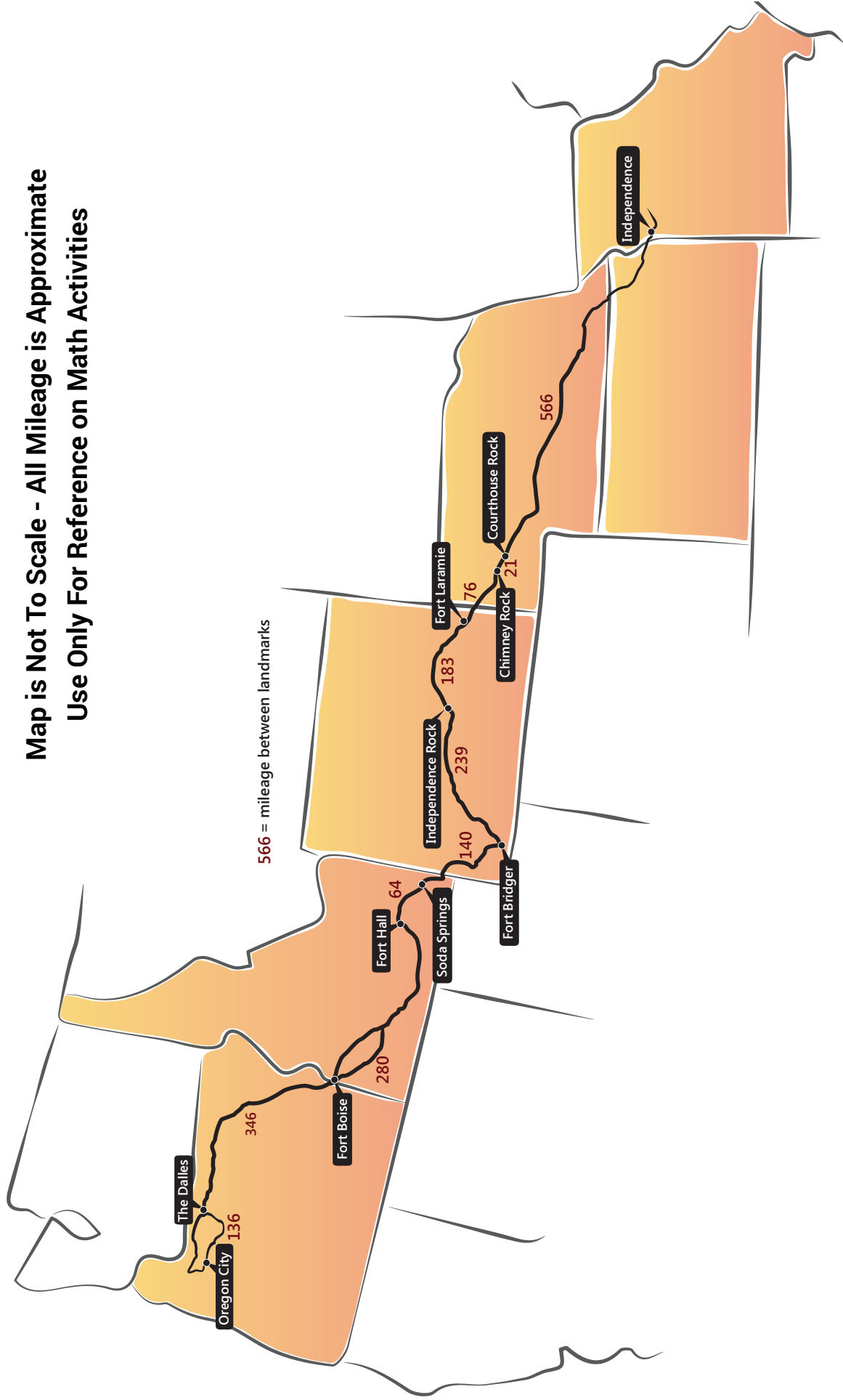
Justify your answer. Flour is sold by the 100 pounds. How much will it cost them? Why do you think it cost so much more?

c) -----

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# Landmarks Along The Oregon Trail

Map is Not To Scale - All Mileage is Approximate  
Use Only For Reference on Math Activities

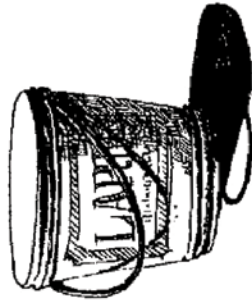


# Wares Guide to Emigrants

## SIX MONTH'S SUPPLIES NEEDED FOR OREGON TRAIL JOURNEY

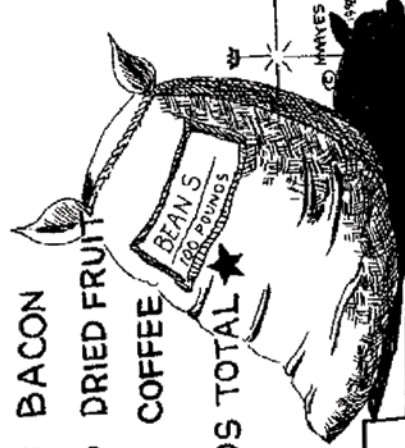
### Recommended Supplies for Family of Four:

800 POUNDS FLOUR  
 200 POUNDS LARD  
 25 POUNDS SALT <sup>and</sup> PEPPER  
 200 POUNDS BEANS



700 POUNDS BACON  
 100 POUNDS DRIED FRUIT  
 75 POUNDS COFFEE

2,100 POUNDS TOTAL ★

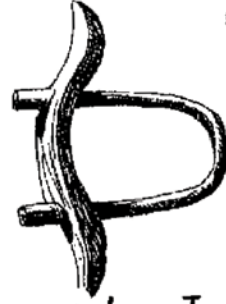


★ No more than 2400 pounds should be taken in one wagon.  
 [THIS CAUSED MANY FAMILIES TO TAKE MORE THAN ONE WAGON]

COOKING UTENSILS  
 GUNS <sup>and</sup> AMMO  
 EATING UTENSILS  
 CLOTHING & PERSONAL ITEMS  
 \* FURNITURE (IF WEIGHT AND ROOM ALLOWED)

### ANIMALS NEEDED

4 to 6 OXEN AT \$25.00 EACH,  
 3 YOKES OR 6 OXEN WERE TYPICAL  
 OR:  
 8 to 10 MULES AT \$75.00 EACH



[ OXEN WERE PREFERRED SINCE THEY WERE MUCH GENTLER, STEADIER AND IN CASE OF DIRE NEED COULD BE EATEN. ]

\* NOTE: MOST FURNITURE ITEMS WERE EVENTUALLY DISCARDED TO LIGHTEN THE HEAVY LOAD AS THE ANIMALS WORE OUT AND DIED.

# Activity 4: Planning & Packing for a Wagon Journey

## Teacher Instructions:

1. Have students read through the information in this section. Then have students work in groups of two to four to complete the "Pack Your Wagon" worksheet and to develop answers to the questions on p.32-33.
2. Lead a discussion with your class about some of the decisions they made in their groups.

## A) Discussion Questions

1. Use your map skills and mathematical thinking skills to determine the question every pioneer asked, "How long will this journey take?" Assuming pioneers traveled 15 miles per day and rested one day each week on Sunday, about how long did it take them to complete the Oregon Trail from Independence, MO to Oregon City, OR?

-----

2. How will you pack your wagon? The wagons were pulled by mules or oxen, and if you loaded your wagon too heavily, it would injure or kill your animals. Each wagon can carry at most 2,400 pounds and has to carry everything a family will need for their journey. Use the worksheet to plan what you will take for a family of four. Be ready to justify why you chose the items and supplies you would have packed in your wagon.
3. What would be the most important things you would take, and why do you consider them the most important?

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4. Which of these would bother you the most? Why?

- *Being hungry*
- *Not feeling safe*
- *Being cold and wet*
- *Being stranded*
- *Not having favorite and meaningful personal belongings*

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# Pack Your Wagon

## FOOD SUPPLY:

Item	Weight (in Lbs.)	Lbs. Packed
Apple Vinegar	25	_____
Bacon	400	_____
Beans	200	_____
Coffee	80	_____
Dried Apples	80	_____
Flour	500	_____
Hardtack	200	_____
Lard	200	_____
Salt	50	_____
Sugar	40	_____
Rice	200	_____
Water	100	_____
Whiskey	40	_____
<b>Subtotal:</b>		_____

## DRY GOODS AND SUNDRIES:

Item	Weight (in Lbs.)	Lbs. Packed
Bedroll	15	_____
Blacksmithing Tools	200	_____
Books	75	_____
Medicine	10	_____
Cast Iron Stove	300	_____
Chair	20	_____
Cookware & Eating Utensils	75	_____
Granny's Clock	15	_____
Gun Making Tools	200	_____
Keepsakes	40	_____
Lead Shot	25	_____
Mirror	15	_____
Gunpowder	80	_____
Tent & Gear	150	_____
Tools	50	_____
Toys	15	_____
<b>Subtotal:</b>		_____

**TOTAL WEIGHT OF YOUR  
PACKED WAGON:**

(must be 2,400 lbs. or less)

*If you packed all of these items in your wagon, it would weigh 3,400 pounds!*

# More Oregon Trail Diary Quotes

These quotes have been printed as the diarists originally wrote them, with odd spelling, an occasional non-capitalization of some words, and sometimes no punctuation.

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"Father built a large box in the home-made wagon and put in a lot of dried buffalo meat and pickled pork. He had made over a hundred pounds of maple sugar which we took along instead of loaf sugar. He also took along plenty of corn meal....He laid in a plentiful supply of home twist tobacco. Father chewed it and Mother smoked it...in an old corn-cob pipe."

*Benjamin Bonney, who traveled the trail at age 7 in 1845, and wrote this memory of the trip years later when he had grown up.*

---

"our outfit consisted of two yoke of oxen costing \$117.50, a wagon costing about \$80.00, our bedding consisting of buffalo robes and blankets, about 600 pounds of provisions, consisting of sacks of flour, one barrel of hardtack, a few boxes of Boston biscuit, some bacon, coffee, sugar, dried apples, etc. cooking utensils, two revolvers and a rifle."

*William Smedley, a pioneer to Oregon in 1862 who traveled with companions David Culp and James Hall. James had made the trip across the plains about a decade earlier, and lived in California for many years. Smedley wrote this in 1911.*

---

Mr. Sawyer bought his wagon and two mules and some of the supplies which we would need on our long and tedious journey across the western plains, in Louisville. He bought two more mules, and the steamer stopped at his father's farm in Hancock county, Ky., to take these animals aboard. At St. Louis we changed on to a small Missouri-river steamboat, and came up that river to St. Joseph. Here it was necessary to lay in the remainder of our supplies, so Mr. Sawyer bought a single-horse carriage for my use and one more mule...

This is not the first trip for Mr. Sawyer. He was in the great California rush of '49, and went over with a large pack train. In this train was one wagon loaded with medicine, to be used in case of sickness. He drove this wagon all the way himself,... He knows just what we will need on this trip and has made his purchases accordingly.

*Diary of Francis Sawyer, 21 when she crossed the plains with her husband Thomas Sawyer. They started for Oregon, but changed their minds while on the trip and went to California*

# Missouri Gazette

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St. Joseph, Missouri

March 19, 1847

Mr. Editor; Subjoined you will find a list of the principle articles necessary for an outfit to Oregon or California, which may be useful to some of your readers. It has been carefully prepared from correct information derived from intelligent persons who have made the trip.

The wagons should be new, made of thoroughly seasoned timber, and well ironed and not too heavy; with good tight beds, strong bows, and large double sheets. There should be at least four yoke of good oxen to each wagon - one yoke to be considered as extra, and to be used only in cases of emergency. Every family should have at least two good milk cows, as milk is a great luxury on the road.

The amount of provisions should be as follows; to each person except infants:

200 pounds of bread stuff (flour and crackers)

100 pounds of bacon

12 pounds of coffee

12 pounds of sugar

Each family should also take the following articles in proportions to the number as follows:

From 1 to 5 pounds tea

From 10 to 50 pounds rice

From 1/2 to 2 bushels beans

From 1/2 to 2 bushels dried fruit

From 1/2 to 5 pounds saleratus

From 5 to 50 pounds soap

Cheese, dried pumpkins, onions and a small portion of corn meal may be taken by those who desire them. The latter article, however, does not keep well.

No furniture should be taken, and as few cooking utensils as are indispensably needed. Every family ought to have a sufficient supply of clothing for at least one year after their arrival, as everything of that kind is high in those countries. Some few cattle should be driven for beef, but much loose stock will be a great annoyance. Some medicines should also be found in every family, the kind and quantity may be determined by consulting the family physician.

I would suggest to each family the propriety of taking a small sheet-iron cooking stove with fixtures, as the wind and rain often times renders it almost impossible to cook without them, they are light and cost but little. All the foregoing articles may be purchased on good terms in this place.

# *Pack Your Vehicle Today*

## **B) Discussion Questions**

**Consider how you might do things differently today than you would have in the 1850s.**

**If you and your friends, or family, plan a trip of two weeks or more in a car, how might these choices affect what you take along?**

**Will you be camping each night, or staying in a hotel or in a home? How does this affect what you take along?**

**Will you be eating in restaurants or take your own meals? What do you need to take along for these choices?**

**What do you know about where you are going? If you don't know anything, are you more likely to find out by researching or by asking others for their advice? How do you find the best information?**

**If someone tries to sell or give you something to take along on your trip, what is most likely to make you decide to take it along?**



# Then and Now

## C) Compare & Contrast

The Oregon Trail pioneers had to deal with very different circumstances than modern day travelers...

Which of the following do you think makes a big difference in planning a big venture such as a trip?

Put an **X** by the ones you think are a big difference, and an **O** by the ones your think are not so different. Make a note of what travelers today do differently that makes it easier or more difficult than the Oregon Trail pioneers.

\_\_\_ There were not good ways to preserve or refrigerate food, and few places to purchase food, so pioneers had to carry food that wouldn't spoil and always think about the next meal. Why is this different today?

\_\_\_ If the mules or oxen got injured or don't have enough to eat, the pioneers would have to stop and would be stranded. What would you do if you are stranded while traveling?

\_\_\_ There were not many doctors or medical services along the Oregon Trail, so if a pioneer or a member of their family got sick or injured, they would have to take care of it themselves. What happens if you get sick while away from home?

\_\_\_ The pioneers were a long way from anywhere, and about the only way to communicate long distances was to ask others to take a message back to the nearest fort, to the next wagon train, or to a town back east. How do we communicate long distances today?

\_\_\_ The pioneers' clothing, tools and wagons were mostly handmade and could be very expensive. If something was lost or damaged, it might be difficult to replace. How do we repair items that are lost or broken now?

## Activity 5: Entertainment on the Trail

### Teacher Instructions:

1. View some of the demonstration videos and then have class participate in the Virginia Reel, using the attached calls.
  2. At the end of the dance, here are some questions to ask the students:
    - How did your heart and breathing feel at the end of the dance compared to when you started?
    - What was the most difficult move for you?
- 

How to teach that life is not all work and no play? Humans find many ways to have fun and socialize. For pioneers in the 1800s, it was mainly small, light games such as cards or checkers that could be packed in the wagon, or contests, dancing, and music. Children played games like tag, or blind man's bluff. Music was provided by the occasional wagon train members who brought a fiddle, flute, or concertina, or by using their voices and anything that could be turned into a rhythm instrument. Popular songs of the time were "Oh Susannah," "Home Sweet Home," "Buffalo Gals," "Old Dan Tucker," "Blue Tail Fly," "Pop Goes the Weasel." Many of these songs were used for dances. "Play Party" games were also popular, and similar to dances with a group activity while singing.

One of the most typical frontier era dances that work well for a class-room activity to encourage developing physical skills and exploring movement is the "Virginia Reel." It is a contra dance with lines facing each other; just complicated enough to require learning patterns and how to move in rhythm, and repetitive enough to learn the simple steps with just a few tries. Use the reel with four beat music.

It also does not necessarily require pairing up by gender specific roles. Although traditionally there was a line of "gents" and "ladies", the dance will work with any combination of people in facing lines. So, when working with an uneven number of boys and girls, or with students who are not socially comfortable officially "pairing up" with a member of the opposite sex for a dance, this one can work.

It's best for eight-ten dancers at a time, but can accommodate larger numbers. It requires forming equal lines facing each other, and occasionally the "caller" needs to designate which line, but this is rare, and instead of using ladies and gents or boys and girls, lines can be called "stars and moons" "dogs and cats" "stars and stripes" or some similar appellation.

You can find demonstration videos in several places on the internet. Some suggestions:

- <http://geslisongroberg.com/music-downloads/hoedownpioneer-trek-music-and-dance-instruction-free-download/>
- <https://www.dancingmasters.com/store/books-cds-dvds>
- <http://www.scottish-country-dancing-dictionary.com/video/virginia-reel.html>

Although there are slight variations, we have provided the basic "calls" on the following page.

# Basic Dance “Calls”

## **“Take your Places for the Virginia Reel”**

Dancers line up facing each other, about four to five feet apart.

## **“Forward and Back , Take a bow”**

Each line advances to each other about two steps and makes a little bow or slightly bends knee, and then steps backwards back to their original place. (depending on beat of music, this move can be done twice).

## **“Right hands around”**

Dancers step towards each other clasping right hands as in a handshake, turn around once, then return to their places.

## **“Left hands around”**

Same, clasping left hands.

## **“Both hands around”**

Dancers advance towards each other, join both hands, and turn clockwise once before returning to their places.

## **“Dos-Si-Dos”**

...this is French for “back to back”, and indicates dancers pass each other right shoulder to right shoulder , one step to the right, back to back, and then without turning go past each other left shoulder to left shoulder and back to their places. (Depending on beat of music, this can be repeated.)

## **“Top pair, sashay the line”**

The pair at the head of the line approach each other, clasp hands, and skip sidewise down the center of the group to the other end of the line and back. Other dancers clap in rhythm.

## **“Top pair, reel the line”**

....this is the trickiest move of the whole dance. The first pair moves toward each other, link right arms and turn one and a half times, then release and using left elbow swings the next person in the opposite line, then return to the center to swing each other with right arm, continuing until they swing with each person down the line.

## **“Sashay back to the top”**

– when the head pair has reeled the entire line, they clasp hands and skip sidewise back to the top of the line.

## **“Split the willow” or “down the outside”**

– the head pair drops hands and all the dancers turn to face the head pair. They then lead these lines by turning to the outside and towards the bottom of the line where they form an arch with their hands. The other dancers pass under the arch and re-form the line with a new top pair.

The caller then repeats until all dancers have been the top pair.

# Popular Music of the Oregon Trail Era

This is a partial list of songs popular during the era of primary westward emigration (1835-1870). Listed dates are years of publication or copyright, or year the song is documented as having come into popular use by having been mentioned in newspapers or other printed literature. Some are popular tunes without lyrics. All are likely to have been known by emigrants and sung around wagon camps, as publication and distribution of sheet music and performances by traveling entertainers usually spread the knowledge of new songs throughout the country within a few months.

Popular music of the time included many church hymns and revival songs, numerous songs by composer Stephen Foster (1826-1864), songs introduced on tours by Jenny Lind, the Christy Minstrels, the Hutchinson Family and other famous singers, and songs related to political issues and to the Civil War.

Many of these songs, because of the era in which they were written, contain lyrics demeaning to various racial groups, especially African-Americans. Slavery and the tradition of “blackface” minstrels are reflected in lyrics, and in some cases –especially Stephen Foster classics– altered lyrics have been accepted by the modern public (ex: substituting “people” for “darkies”). If using traditional, historic lyrics, it is advisable to include an introduction explaining the historical context that brought about popular usage of negative slang terms.

Some traditional folk songs and songs written prior to 1835 were still popular in mid-19th century:

“My Country 'Tis of Thee”(1832) | “Home, Sweet Home”(1823), “Yankee Doodle” (1750) | “Go Tell Aunt Rhody the Old Gray Goose is Dead” | “Skip to My Lou” | “London Bridge” | “The Wayfaring Stranger” | “Wondrous Love”(hymn) | “The Riddle Song (I bought my love...)” | “The Cambric Shirt (parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme)”



<i>Year</i>	<i>Songs written that year</i>
1835	“Long, Long Ago”   “Kathleen Mavoureen”   “Old Rosin the Beau”
1837	“Woodman, Spare that Tree”
1838	“Vive la Compagnie”   “Annie Laurie”   “Flow Gently Sweet Afton”   “A Life on the Ocean Wave”
1840	“The Two Grenadiers”   “Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep”   “The Old Arm Chair”   “Tippecanoe and Tyler Too” <i>The saxophone was also invented this year.</i>
1841	“Niagara Falls”
1843	“Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean”   “Stop Dat Knockin’ at my Door”   “The Old Granite State ( <i>tune of the hymn “The Old Church Yard”</i> )   “Old Dan Tucker”   “Excelsior”
1844	“The Blue Juanita”
1846	“Jim Crack Corn, or the Blue Tail Fly”   “The Bridge of Sighs”   “The Rose of Alabama”
1847	“The Last Rose of Summer”   “Liebestraum”

## The Oregon Trail Folk Music Project

Visit our YouTube channel at [youtube.com/NHOTICTrailTender](https://www.youtube.com/NHOTICTrailTender) to view our playlist of Oregon Trail Folk Music videos, including renditions of "Sweet Betsy from Pike" and "Shenandoah."

<i>Year</i>	<i>Songs written that year</i>
1848	"Oh! Susanna!"   "Ben Bolt, or Oh! Don't You Remember"   "Old Uncle Ned"
1849	"Happy Farmer"   "Santa Lucia"   "Nelly was A Lady"   "It Came upon the Midnight Clear"   "Nelly Bly"
1850	"Camptown Races"   "Cheer, Boys, Cheer"
1851	"Old Folks at Home"   "Wait for the Wagon"
1852	"Massa's in de Cold, Cold Ground"   "Lily Dale"
1853	"My Old Kentucky Home, Good Night"   "Old Dog Tray"   "The Hazel Dell"
1854	"Jeanie with the Light Brown Hair"   "What is Home Without Mother"
1855	"Listen to the Mockingbird"   "Star of the Evening"   "Come Where My Love Lies Dreaming"   "Rosalie, the Prairie Flower"
1856	"Darling Nelly Gray"   "Gentle Annie"   "Root, Hog, or Die"
1857	"We Three Kings of Orient"   "Jingle Bells"   "Mrs. Lofty and I"
1858	"The Yellow Rose of Texas"   "The Old Grey Mare (Get Out of the Wilderness)"
1859	"Ave Maria"   "Nearer My God to Thee"   "Dixie"   "La Paloma"
1860	"Old Black Joe"   "The Glendy Burk"   "Annie Lisle"   "Tis but a Little Faded Flower"
1861	"Aura Lea"   "Maryland, My Maryland"   "The Vacant Chair"   "John Brown's Body"
1862	"Battle Hymn of the Republic"   "We've a Million in the Field"   "We are Coming, Father Abraham, 300,000 More"   "The Bonnie Blue Flag"   "The Irish Jaunting Cart"   "Drafted into the Army" <i>The Taps bugle call was composed and first used in this year.</i>
1863	"When Johnny Comes Marching Home"   "Clementine"   "The Rock Island Line"   "The Battle Cry of Freedom"   "Just Before the Battle, Mother"   "Babylon is Fallen"   "Weeping, Sad and Lonely, or When This Cruel War is Over"
1864	"Beautiful Dreamer"   "All Quiet Along the Potomac Tonight"   "Tenting on the Old Camp Ground"   "Tramp!Tramp!Tramp!"   "When the War is Over, Mary"   "Come Home, Father"   "Wake Nicodemus!"   "Der Deitcher's Dog (Where, Oh Where Has My Little Dog Gone)"
1865	"Ich Liebe Dich"   "Marching Through Georgia"   "Ellie Rhee"
1866	"We Parted by the River"   "When You and I Were Young, Maggie"
1868	"The Flying Trapeze"   "Sweet By and By"   "O Little Town of Bethlehem"
1869	"The Little Brown Jug"   "Shoo Fly, Don't Bother Me"   "Sweet Genevieve"

# SWEET BETSY FROM PIKE

HAVE YOU HEARD THE TALE OF SWEET BET-SY FROM PIKE? SHE  
 CROSSED THE WIDE PRAIRIE WITH HER LOV-ER IKE? WITH TWO YOKE OF  
 OX-EN, A BIG YEL-LOW DOG, A TALL SHANG-HAI ROO-STER AND  
 ONE SPOT-TED DOG. SING-IN DANG DOD-DLE DANG DOD-DLE DANG DOD-DLE DAY

Out on the prairie one bright starry night,  
 They broke out the whisky and Betsy got tight;  
 She sang and she shouted, danced over the plain,  
 Made a great show for the whole wagon train.  
 Singin' Dang doodle, dang doodle, dang doodle-day.

When they reached the desert, Sweet Betsy gave out,  
 Down in the sand she lay rolling about;  
 Ike looked at her, with great fear and surprise,  
 He said "Betsy, get up, you'll get sand in your eyes."  
 Singin' Dang doodle, dang doodle, dang doodle-day.

The Shanghai ran off and the cattle all died,  
 The last piece of bacon that morning was fried;  
 Poor Ike got discouraged, and Betsy got mad,  
 The dog wagged his tail and looked wonderful' sad.  
 Singin' Dang doodle, dang doodle, dang doodle-day.

They swam the wide rivers and crossed the tall peaks,  
 Camped on the prairie for weeks upon weeks.  
 Starvation and cholera, hard work and slaughter,  
 They reached the Far West in spite of hell and high water.  
 Singin' Dang doodle, dang doodle, dang doodle-day.

# BUFFALO GALS

As I was walking down the street, down the street,  
Down the street, a pret-ty girl I chanced to meet, And  
she was fair to me. Oh Buf-fa-lo gals will you  
come out to-night, will you come out, to-night, will you come out to-night?  
Buf-fa-lo gals, will you come out to-night and dance by the light of the moon?

I asked her if she'd stop and talk,  
stop and talk, stop and talk,  
Her feet took up the whole sidewalk  
As she stood close by me.

Chorus

I asked her if she'd be my wife,  
be my wife, be my wife,  
I could be happy all my life,  
If she would marry me.

Chorus

# OH! SUSANNA

The image shows a handwritten musical score for the song "Oh! Susanna". It consists of six staves of music, each with a treble clef and a common time signature (C). The lyrics are written below the notes. The first five staves contain the main verses, and the sixth staff is labeled "Chorus". The handwriting is in black ink on a white background.

I come from A-la - ba - ma with my ban-jo on my knee, I'm -  
goin' to Lou-si - an - a, my — true love for to see. It —  
rained all night, the day I left, the wea-ther it was dry, The -  
sun so hot I froze to death, Su-san-na don't you cry.  
**Chorus** Oh! Su - san-na, Oh don't you cry for me, I've  
come from A-la - ba - ma with my ban-jo on my knee.

I had a dream the other night, When everything was still;  
I thought I saw Susanna, A coming down the hill.  
The buckwheat cake was in her mouth, A tear was in her eye,  
Says I "I'm coming for you now, Susanna don't you cry."

Chorus

I soon will be in New Orleans, And then I'll look around;  
And when I find Susanna, I'll fall upon the ground.  
And if I do not find her, this man will surely die;  
And when I'm dead and buried, Susanna don't you cry.

Chorus



# OLD ROSIN THE BEAU

Handwritten musical score for "Old Rosin the Beau". The score is in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. It consists of six staves of music with lyrics and guitar chords. The lyrics are: "I live for the good of my nation And my sons are all growing low, But I hope the next generation will re-semble old Ros-in, the Beau. Re-semble old Ros-in, the Beau. Re-semble old Ros-in the Beau. I hope that the next generation will re-semble old Ros-in the Beau." The chords are: D, Bm, G, A7, D, F#m, G, D, A7, D, E7, G, A7, D, Bm, F#, G, D, A7, D.

I've traveled this country all over,  
 And now to the next I will go;  
 For I know that good quarters await me,  
 To welcome old Rosin, the Beau  
 To welcome old Rosin, the Beau, (etc.)

In the gay round of pleasure I've traveled,  
 Nor will I behind leave a foe;  
 And when my companions are jovial  
 They will drink to old Rosin, the Beau.

But my life is now drawn to a closing,  
 As all will at last be so.  
 So we'll take a full bumper at parting  
 To the name of old Rosin, the Beau.

When I'm dead and laid out on the counter,  
 The people all making a show,  
 Just sprinkle plain whiskey and water  
 On the corpse of old Rosin, the Beau.

Oh when to my grave I am going,  
 The children will all want to go;  
 They'll run to the doors and the windows,  
 Saying "There goes old Rosin, the Beau."

I'll have to be buried I reckon,  
 And the ladies will all want to know,  
 They'll lift up the lid of my coffin,  
 Saying "Here lies old Rosin, the Beau."

Then pick me out six trusty fellows,  
 And let them all stand in a row,  
 And dig a big hole in a circle,  
 And in it toss Rosin, the Beau.

Then bring out two little brown jugs;  
 Place one at my head and my toe;  
 And do not forget to scratch on them  
 The name of old Rosin, the Beau.

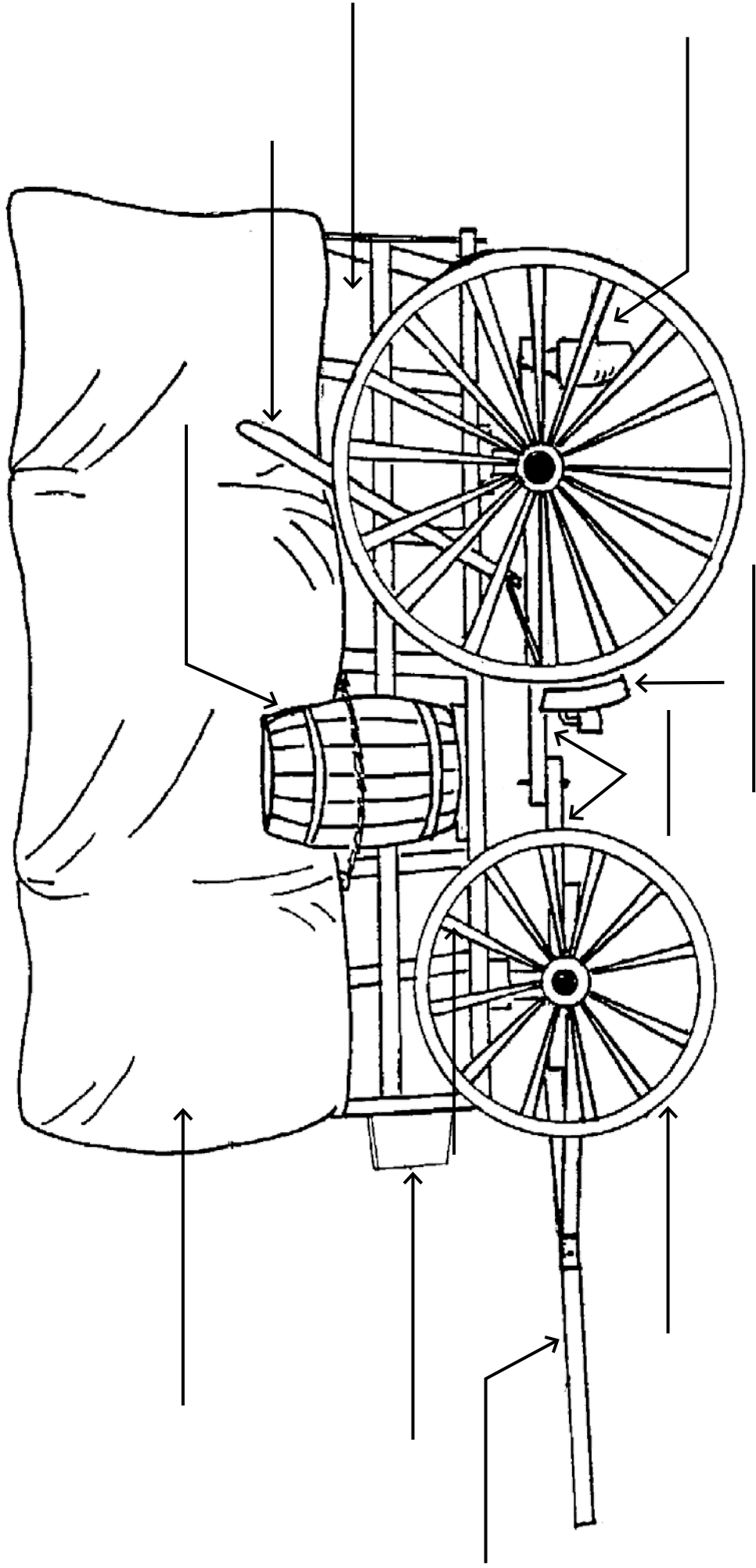
# Supplemental Activities



# Label the Wagon Parts

Can you identify these parts of a wagon?

- |        |               |              |           |            |
|--------|---------------|--------------|-----------|------------|
| Cover  | Hand Brake    | Brake Pad    | Hounds    | Wagon Bed  |
| Tongue | Grease Bucket | Water Barrel | Iron Tire | Jockey Box |



# Oregon Trail Bingo

Can you fill your Bingo Sheet with the correct answers?

Name one fort on the Oregon Trail.	The Oregon Trail went through which six states?	Name four animals that the pioneers might have seen on the Oregon Trail.	What did the pioneers use for fuel for their fires?	About how many people crossed the Oregon Trail the mid-1800s?
Name an animal used to pull wagons.	Name a type of book that a pioneer recorded their travels in.	Name one of the "jumping off" points for the Oregon Trail.	Name two parts of a covered wagon.	Where did pioneers sleep on the trail?
Name an emotion felt by travelers on the Oregon Trail	Name four dangers for the pioneers.	Where did the Oregon Trail end?	Name three types of food that would have been eaten on the trip west.	Name three reasons the pioneers traveled to Oregon.
Name three supplies needed on the wagon trip.	Name one landmark along the Oregon Trail.	In which month did the pioneers usually start their trek?	Name a game that children could play on the trail.	What is another name for 'settler'?
How long is the Oregon Trail?	In which state did the Oregon Trail begin?	About how many days did it take to travel the Oregon Trail?	Name one disease that killed pioneers on the Oregon Trail.	Name a song that the pioneers might have sung on the trek West.

# Vocabulary Quiz

Match the appropriate word to its definition below, using the numbers.

- |              |                  |                  |
|--------------|------------------|------------------|
| 1. ferry     | 5. propaganda    | 9. Congress      |
| 2. migration | 6. oasis         | 10. pioneer      |
| 3. patriotic | 7. blaze a trail | 11. settler      |
| 4. abandon   | 8. exaggerate    | 12. Oregon Fever |

\_\_\_\_\_ a person who lives on the frontier.

\_\_\_\_\_ the group of people who make laws.

\_\_\_\_\_ to expand a story beyond truth.

\_\_\_\_\_ a boat for carrying people and goods across water.

\_\_\_\_\_ a great eagerness to come to the Oregon Country to live.

\_\_\_\_\_ feeling of love and support for one's country.

\_\_\_\_\_ to leave, especially because of trouble or danger.

\_\_\_\_\_ a person who is among the first to settle a place.

\_\_\_\_\_ movement from one place to another.

\_\_\_\_\_ an organized spreading of ideas to promote a cause.

\_\_\_\_\_ mark a new trail by cutting notches in the bark of trees.

\_\_\_\_\_ areas of food, water, and shelter in the middle of desert.

# Pioneer Word Search

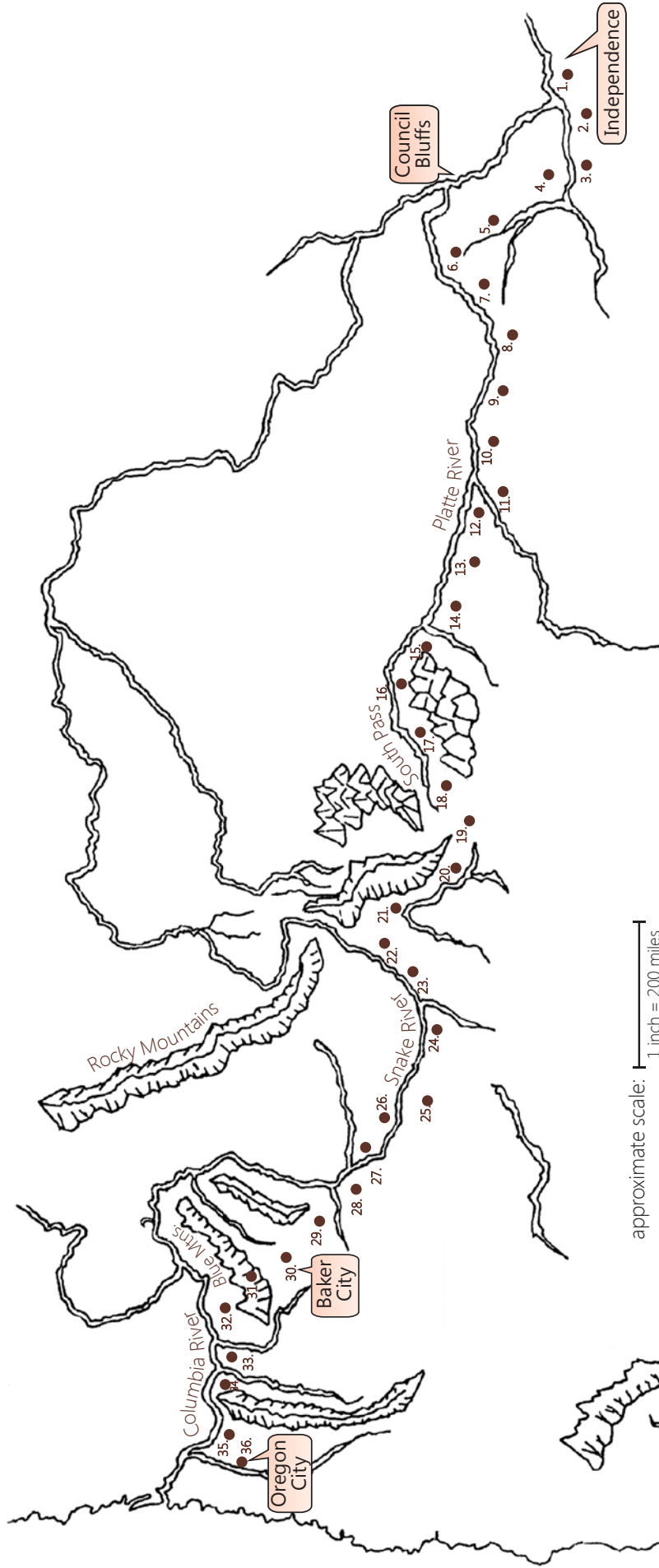
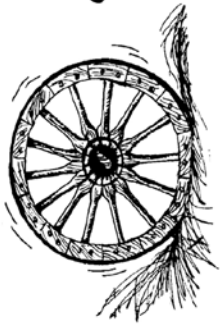


Beans  
Bison  
Cholera  
Constitution  
Corral  
Dust  
Dutch Oven  
Emigrant  
Farms  
Frontier

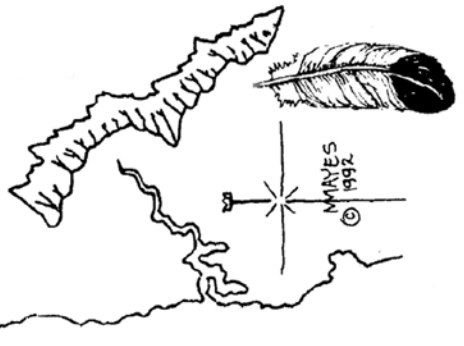
Fur  
Gold Rush  
Great Basin  
Guidebook  
Homestead  
Migration  
Mule  
Oxen  
Pioneer  
Plains

Prairie Schooner  
Provisions  
Salmon  
Stampede  
Team  
Trade  
Train  
Viameter  
Wagon  
Wilderness

# The Oregon Trail



approximate scale: 1 inch = 200 miles



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