



Lesson Five

Map It Up

Goal: The students will construct maps to locate and derive information about people, places, and environments.

Objectives:

- identify and label major land features on a U.S. map
- compare and contrast the Santa Fe Trail and the Oregon Trail
- label and color the Louisiana Purchase area and discuss its impact on the Westward Movement
- discuss the importance of the Mississippi, Missouri and Arkansas Rivers
- draw and relate to a compass rose

Colorado Model Content Standards Addressed:

Geography: K-8 (1.1, 1.2, 1.3)

Materials Needed:

- blank U.S. map for labeling: the Oregon Trail, Santa Fe Trail, the Louisiana Purchase area, and major U.S. natural features (rivers & mountains)
- black labeling pen and colored wooden pencils
- blank overhead map of United States (needs to match the students)

Background Information:

The Oregon Trail was an overland migration route, a people trail. It was 2,170 miles long which included passing through Indian territory and traversing the Rocky Mountains. Wagons, called prairie schooners, moved people and all their belongings from east of the Mississippi River across the Great Plains to settle the West. Building a great nation that spanned from the east coast to the west coast was the goal of the Manifest Destiny. Free land encouraged people to relocate and move permanently. People were looking for a piece of free land, a better life, and less crowded conditions. The Oregon Trail was busiest from about 1841 to 1869. The First Continental Railroad opened in 1869 and slowly replaced the trail because it was faster and safer way to travel.

The Santa Fe Trail was an economic trade route that spanned over 900 miles. Giant Conestoga Wagons packed to the top with trade goods traveled from Missouri to the Great Plains down into Taos and Santa Fe, and back again. William Becknell, who was later known as the Father of the Santa Fe Trail, made a trading trip in 1821 which forever changed the face of the Southwest. Prior to this time, Spain controlled Mexico and were not allowed to trade with other nations. When Mexico gained its independence from Spain and trade with other nations was welcomed. Trappers of the mountains, the people of the Rio Grande Valley and the Indians of the Plains received goods from the wagons which travelled Santa Fe Trail.

Bent's Fort, located on the Santa Fe Trail, was the most important trade company in the Southern Great Plains and brought people of many cultures together. What began as a trade route, developed into a road use by military, miners, settlers and others who began

moving farther west towards the Pacific Coast.

Activity:

This activity is designed to help the students visualize the area that they will be studying. Each student should receive a blank U.S. map. The teacher needs a transparency of the same map the students are using. Model what you want them to do and draw. Discuss as you draw and label.

- Draw a compass rose on the map page so you can refer to the directions while labeling.
- Draw, label and discuss the importance of the Mississippi River, the Missouri River and the Arkansas River.
- Draw and label the Rocky Mountains using brown ^^^ marks. Talk about the mountains being “home” to the trappers. Discuss the difficulty of crossing the mountains with wagons.
- Draw blue wavy lines to represent the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, and the Gulf of Mexico.
- Add little boats to these waters to represent means of travel.
- Talk about the location of present day Canada and Mexico, but explain that in the 1800’s the boundaries were different. Mexico’s boundary was the Arkansas River until 1849.
- In green and brown, draw palm trees where present day California and Florida are located.
- Draw green cacti in the southwest. Talk about climate and its impact on living and traveling.
- Draw in and label the Oregon Trail and the Santa Fe Trail. Add little wagons on the trail, tepees and buffalon on the plains. Discuss the different time periods and each trail’s purpose. (see background information)
- Color the Louisiana Purchase section of the U.S. map so the students can get a visual feel for the size and impact of the region.