

TRAVELING WEST - HARDSHIPS AND CHALLENGES

SUMMARY: History comes alive! While traveling on foot along the historical Nobles Emigrant Trail in Lassen Volcanic National Park students will listen to excerpts from emigrants diaries. They will then experience some of the same hardships and challenges through teacher-led activities.

GOAL: For students to gain an appreciation for what life was like for the early emigrants who traveled the Nobles Emigrant Trail

OBJECTIVES: Students will be able to (1) list at least three hardships faced in daily emigrant life on the trail and (2) write a paragraph in first person depicting life on the trail through the eyes of an emigrant child.

GRADE LEVEL: Fourth through sixth

TIME REQUIRED: You have four options depending on where you go and the time available.

OPTION 1. (1 to 2 hours, 1 to 2 miles) From where the bus leaves you on the park road at the Emigrant Trailhead, take the class part way up the Emigrant Trail. When half your time is gone, return along the trail to where the bus dropped you off.

OPTION 2. (3 to 4 hours, 4 miles) Have the bus drop you off at the Emigrant Trailhead. Hike the four miles of Emigrant Trail west and have the bus pick you up at the Manzanita Entrance Station. You can picnic along the way.

OPTION 3. (1 to 2 hours, 1 to 2 miles) From the Butte Lake and the Cinder Cone trailhead, hike along the Nobles Emigrant Trail as far as desired, returning along same trail.

OPTION 4. (2 to 3 hours, 3 to 4 miles) Do Option 3, adding a hike up to the top of Cinder Cone. This is quite steep and is not advisable for all groups just as it was not climbed by all pioneers who came via this trail. However, some of the pioneers ventured to the top to get their bearings and admire the view. If you have a willing and able class, this is a great hike. PLEASE STAY ON THE TRAIL AND CARRY WATER.

LOCATION: See above options. If it is not possible for your class to go to Lassen Park, this activity can be done at any local state, county, or city park with trails.

MATERIALS: Student Worksheet (one per student), pencils (one per student), lined paper and hard surface to write on or journal, Team Leader Instruction Page (one per group), Pioneer Quotes (one set per team leader), extra pair of socks (and shoes in wet weather) to leave on bus, and extra clothing if weather dictates (leave on bus).

Each student should have a day pack with the following items brought from home: two bandannas or scarves large enough to tie on his/her feet, extra pair of lightweight shoes

which are either one size too large or small for that student, pioneer food (see background information), filled water bottle or canteen, and lunch (optional).

SUBJECTS: History, Social Science, Science, Language Arts

KEY WORDS: Emigrant, Pioneer, Hardship

BACKGROUND: Read any of the following books to gain a better understanding of what life on the trail was like: Nobles' Emigrant Trail by Robert Amesbury, Covered Wagon Days by Lucy Rutledge Cooke, The Overland Migrations by the National Park Service (Handbook 105), Oregon Trail, The Story Behind The Scenery by Dan Murphy, and The California Trail by George R. Stewart.

If you or your students have any diaries of ancestors coming to California, these would add personal interest!

Foods eaten along the trail were very limited. Considering the length of their journey, emigrants had very little space to carry food. No room for extra delights! Also, of course, they had no refrigeration or preservatives. Standard fare was usually salt pork or bacon, biscuits, dried beans (which could only be cooked on layover days where there was lots of fuel), dried apples, and coffee. If they were lucky enough to have a cow along, fresh butter or milk was available. Of course, they tried to supplement their rations with fresh meat such as buffalo, deer, rabbit, squirrel, or whatever they could get. Only a few emigrants learned about edible plants from the Indians or previous explorers. Most of them did not have this knowledge. Food could sometimes be replenished at the few trading posts and forts along the way but that could be costly.

INSTRUCTIONAL SEQUENCE: It is highly recommended that the teacher visit the site and walk the trail before bringing the students to the park.

Before the field trip, have the students prepare and pack an "emigrant snack." Each snack package should contain enough for a team of four students and one leader. Each package should consist of cooked dried beans, biscuits (preferably a day or two old), bacon, coffee or tea, and dried apples.

Before the field trip, divide your students and adult leaders into groups of four students per adult leader. Make a schedule showing when each team starts on the trail.

Before the field trip, meet with the adult team leaders and go over the Team Leader Instruction Page, their time to start on the trail, and any other information and expectations for the trip.

Onsite Nobles Emigrant Trail:

1. Enter the park at the Manzanita Lake Entrance. Stop at the Loomis Museum or Manzanita Lake picnic area to use the restrooms. After a quick stop, proceed on the park

road a few miles south to the Emigrant Historical Marker which is a large turnout on the right side of the road just south of Road Marker No. 60. Have the bus drop your class off. There is a large open area where you can gather your class together. Make sure the students have their day packs and all needed supplies (including lunch if you plan to have it on the trail). They should leave a change of socks, shoes, and any extra clothes not needed on the bus.

2. Divide the class into their teams. Make sure each team leader has the Team Leader Instruction Page. Groups should start out at a staggered rate of approximately two to five minutes apart so there is some feeling of isolation while walking along the trail.
3. The Emigrant Trail takes off from the other side of the road at Marker No. 60, approximately 100 yards back towards the Jumbles Area. Each leader should take their team across the road and start up the trail in their assigned order. The teams that are waiting to start can work on questions marked "Bus Stop." The first teams to start can do these questions while they are waiting at the end of the activity.
4. Each team will proceed down the trail following their Team Leader's directions. There are no specific spots for the stops. This gives each class leeway to adjust to its own time constraints. Try to stop where you cannot see another group. If your class will be doubling back on the trail to meet the bus at the Emigrant Historical Marker, do all the stops on your way out and walk quickly back being sure not to disturb the other teams that are still working. If your teams will be hiking the four miles to the entrance station, the stops should be spread out farther apart along the trail. (Use five minute interval for hikes doubling back, ten minute intervals for the longer one way hike.)
5. When all groups have completed the trail and their worksheets, gather the class together and discuss their experiences, how they felt about the activity, and how they would feel if they were actually emigrants on the trail.

Note: If your class is going to Butte Lake/Cinder Cone, follow the Team Leader Instruction Page and No. 5 from above.

EXTENSION/ENRICHMENT: (1) Have each student write a first person account of what life on the trail might have been like. (2) Read Patti Reed's Doll. (3) Read any appropriate excerpts from books listed in the background section above. (4) Research the different emigrant trails to California. (5) Research clothing and food eaten along the trail. (6) Have students play the computer game called Oregon Trail. (7) Make a replica of a wagon as a class project. (8) Have each student research how their own family came to California. (9) Get a guest speaker from the local historical society to share experiences of local emigrants.

ASSESSMENT: Each student will complete questions on the activity sheet along the trail and participate in a group discussion at the end of the onsite activity. List three hardships experienced by the emigrants on the Nobles Trail. Write a paragraph in the first person depicting life on the Nobles Trail through the eyes of an emigrant child.

TEAM LEADER INSTRUCTIONS

Each team leader will need to bring one set of quotes (A through F) on the trail.

Depending on when your group starts the trail (determined by teacher), you will have time at the beginning, end, or on both sides of this activity. While waiting, have the students in your group answer the two things under Bus Stop. If your group finishes them, pretend that you are a scouting group and explore the nearby vicinity, taking notes on anything that you think might be of importance (and why) to your wagon train.

When it is your turn to start, walk down the trail for approximately five minutes. Try to pick your stops so you cannot see another group. If that is not possible, try to orient yourself so that when the students are looking at you, they will not see the other group.

Stop 1: Read Quote A. Tell students that you would like them to use their imaginations and pretend they are emigrant children walking the trail in 1853. As a warm up activity, have the students do an "Emigrant Walk." The adult leader will start on the trail and walk approximately 30 feet. The first student will start, following the Team Leader and staying 30 feet behind him. When the first student has walked 30 feet, the next student will start. Repeat this procedure for each team member. This will make a single file line where each participant is 30 feet apart but within sight of the team member in front of him. There should be no talking along this section of the trail so that each student can experience the feeling of solitude.

Stop 2: After the Team Leader has walked for approximately five to ten minutes, stop and gather the group together. Have the students answer the questions listed under Stop 2. Walk for five to ten minutes.

Stop 3: Stop and read Quote B. Ask them the following questions. Do you think the trail looks the way it looked to the emigrants? How old do you think these trees are? Do you think the same type of trees grew here in 1853? Do you think there were this many trees then or could it have been more open? What might be the same now as then? Why? What might be different? Why? Walk quietly along the next stretch of trail (five to ten minutes) noticing things that might be the same or different.

Stop 4: Answer the questions listed under Stop 4. Walk for five to ten minutes.

Stop 5: Read Quote C. Ask each student to find a protected "sleeping" spot and lay down there. Without talking, students should stay in their spots about two minutes and imagine what it might have been like to sleep in a similar manner but in different spots along the 2,000-mile trail, for six months. They can then answer questions under Stop 5. Hike five to ten minutes.

Stop 6: Stop for a pioneer snack break and read Quote D. Answer questions listed under Stop 6. Walk for five to ten minutes.

Stop 7: Read Quote E. Have the students put on the extra pair of shoes they brought in their pack (these should be one size too big or too small). Walk down the trail for a few minutes.

Stop 8: Have students answer questions listed under Stop 8. When done, they can remove their shoes and tie the bandannas onto their feet. Read Quote F. Walk down the trail for a few minutes. Note: This should be done near the end of the hike, especially if the ground is wet or the weather cold, so students can immediately change into dry socks and shoes when they reach the bus.

Stop 9: Back at the bus. Students should answer the question listed under Stop 9 plus do the two things listed under "Bus Stop." Have students change into dry clothes if necessary.

STUDENT WORKSHEET

Bus Stop: Things to do while waiting at the beginning or end of this activity.

1. By the time the emigrants reached what is now Lassen Volcanic National Park, they were nearing the end of months of hardships and adventures. They had experienced excessive heat, extreme cold, wet weather, dry deserts, blowing winds, hunger, fear of the unknown, the loss of almost everything they knew or had, sickness and maybe even the death of loved ones. Put yourself in their shoes. Imagine that your wagon train has stopped here (where the future Lassen Park will be) and you are resting. As you look around, write a short paragraph on what you might have thought about as you approached what would be your new home.

2. If your family decided to emigrate across the country to a place that was wilderness and you could only take what fit into your family car, what would you take and why? List at least 20 items. Be specific!

Stop 1: Try to imagine what it was like leaving everything and everybody you knew behind and going along a virtually unknown trail to an unknown new home. Think about this as you do the "Emigrant Walk." Follow your Team Leader's directions.

Stop 2: Describe your feelings as you walked alone along the trail. Do you think that the emigrant children had the same feelings as you did today? Why or why not?

Stop 3: Discussion with Team Leader.

Stop 4: What do you think this spot looked like when the first emigrants came along? Name three things that might be different. Name three things that might be the same.

Stop 5: What sounds might you have heard at night? Do you think the pioneer children were ever afraid of the dark? Do you think they got used to sleeping outside?

Stop 6: Would you like to eat this food day after day? Do you think the pioneer children liked it?

Stop 7: No questions

Stop 8: Have you ever outgrown a pair of shoes and still had to wear them? What could you do to be more comfortable? What do you think the emigrants did? How would you like to walk 10 miles a day in shoes that don't fit?

Stop 9: Have you ever worn moccasins? How do you think they would compare to bandannas?

PIONEER QUOTES

Quote A: "On the trail and into the unknown. Aside from the thoughts of home (on which we do not dare to dwell too much for fear of that dread distemper homesickness) and what may wait us at the end of the road--our thought, our hopes, our fears, and our anxieties are all centered about the train--the health and spirits of the company, grass and water for the oxen, and in a limited way, fuel with which to cook our meals. Rumors of hostile Indians are floating in the air most of the time, and while we pay little attention to them, we cannot altogether dismiss them from our minds, so that you can see that the world in which we actually live scarcely extends beyond the dust of the train by day and the smoke of the campfires at night." John Benson

Quote B: "For some time now we have been traveling through very rough country, where there is very little level ground though the scenery in many places is inspiring and unusual. The forest is open making it easy to move our wagons. The open forest is dotted with big trees and there isn't much brush. We have traveled 15 miles and still haven't found water."

Quote C: "Getting use to sleeping in unknown places has been hard. You must cultivate the habit of sleeping in any kind of surroundings, on a board, in a wagon, or outside under the stars. I think the sounds or lack of sounds at night make for feeling uncomfortable. I'm not sure which is worse."

Quote D: After stopping for the winter Lucy Rutledge Cooke joined a wagon train headed west with her infant daughter and husband: "Our company now consists of six wagons, thirty-seven head of cattle and three horses. Mrs. Holly rides in a light horse wagon as we did last year. Directly we joined this company Holly put three yoke of fine cattle on our wagon, which is only lightly laden, having but five sacks of flour besides our bed and clothing. I assure you it is somewhat different to riding behind cows. Why, we travel right along, through mud, over mountains, snow, or anything that happens to come next. So, as I before said, so far as teams are concern (and surely that's the main thing) we have made a happy change. But we live very poorly. The bacon is awful--so musty--and no vegetables; nothing but bacon, bread, and dishcloth coffee. Oh, how I missed the milk and butter that Greeleys had. William has tried around the camp and has got a cow to milk and has the milk for his trouble, so as long as its owner travels with us I shall have plenty. And now I have five pounds of butter, which is choice as gold. I got it off Greeleys when we left them. I should not have been thus favored, but I happened to have a pair of new leather shoes I bought in the valley for three dollars, and as one of their women folks was near barefoot, they were glad to make the trade. So they paid the half in butter at 30 cents per pound, and the accommodation was mutual, for I did not need the shoes."

Quote E: "Shoes or a lack of them was a problem. To keep what's left of our kids shoes soft enough to wear through the day, it was necessary to soak them in water every night. With all this walking on such rough ground it's amazing that anyone even has any shoes left."

Quote F: "When weary travelers' shoes wore out they had to wrap their feet in any cloth they might have or be willing to tear apart. With all those sharp rocks it was easy to tear up your feet or worn out shoes. The lucky ones bartered for moccasins from Indians or trappers."