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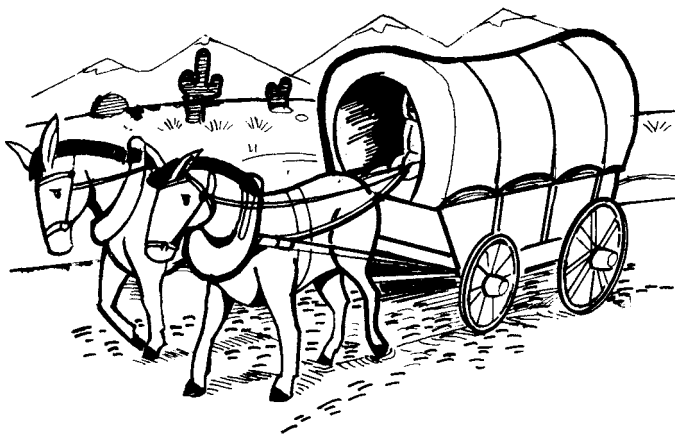
History Standard: Understands the causes and nature of movements of large groups of people into and within the United States, now and long ago

Benchmark: Understands the various movements of large groups of people in the history of the U.S.

To Oregon or Bust!

Between 1800 and 1860 many people moved west. Farmers had heard of the rich soil and open land for animals to graze. The West also had supplies of gold, silver, coal, iron, copper, and timber.

The people usually followed trails that fur trappers or Native Americans had made. The Oregon Trail was one of the most well traveled. It went from Missouri to Oregon. It took about five months to travel its 2,000 miles. Some settlers followed the bumpy dirt path on horses. Others rode in wagons pulled by mules or oxen. These wagons had wooden boxes covered by a canvas tarp. The people packed bedding, guns, tools, and food in the wagons. To keep the weight down, they left behind anything that wasn't necessary. Still, when an animal died or got too weak to keep pulling the heavy wagon, they had to drop things beside the trail.



Families formed wagon trains. Each train had 30 to 70 wagons. The group hired a man as a guide and leader. Usually he had been a fur trapper who knew the trail well. Even in a big group, people faced **jeopardy** on the Oregon Trail. The settlers had to face heat, dust storms, and tornadoes. They entered a land that the Native Americans had lived in for thousands of years. Native Americans attacked the pioneers. So did thieves and wolves. Illnesses and a lack of medicine and proper food killed many people. Graves along the trail marked those who didn't make it.

The pioneers had to cross the Great Plains. Then they had to get through the Rocky Mountains before winter. Otherwise, they'd get stuck in the mountains. Snow would block the narrow passages. They could starve or freeze to death.

In spite of all of these hardships, thousands of people reached Oregon. Then they faced new challenges as they tried to build a life in the wilderness.

To Oregon or Bust!

Comprehension Questions

Fill in the bubble next to the best answer. You may look back at the story.

1. Each wagon train wanted to get beyond the Rocky Mountains before

- (a) fall. (c) spring.
(b) winter. (d) summer.

2. What happened first?

- (a) The group found a leader.
(b) The people loaded their wagons.
(c) The people followed the Oregon Trail.
(d) People got together who wanted to go west.

3. What caused so many people to travel west in the 1800s?

- (a) Diamonds were found.
(b) Free cattle were given to anyone who went.
(c) There was lots of land for growing crops and livestock.
(d) The West was a place of great natural beauty.

4. Jeopardy means

- (a) danger. (c) games.
(b) sadness. (d) noise.

5. If a family had to lighten their load along the Trail, what would they probably drop beside the path?

- (a) guns.
(b) furniture.
(c) food.
(d) tools.

6. Picture yourself on the Oregon Trail long ago. What don't you see?

- (a) fields of grass waving in the wind
(b) tall mountains
(c) wide rivers
(d) farms

7. What do you think was the biggest danger on the Oregon Trail? Explain.
