

The effects of differing cultures on the Mormon Trail

Summary

This lesson will make the students aware of the hardships and trials that the pioneers faced, particularly those that were caused by the people coming from different countries. The students are in cooperative groups of approximately five students. The students will each have specific responsibilities in the group. They will be required to communicate in unconventional ways with people who do not understand their native language.

Time Frame

10 class periods of 45 minutes each

Group Size

Small Groups

Life Skills

Thinking & Reasoning, Communication, Social & Civic Responsibility

Materials

The teacher will need to have enough paper and materials for the students to trade items that the pioneers would have used, or items to represent them. For example you might give the groups white paper to represent flour and have that be their rations. They can trade for more but they still need to overcome the communication challenge.

Background for Teachers

The teacher will need to know some basic vocabulary (ie words that relate to the pioneers) in the languages of the countries that the students are going to be from. This will depend upon whether the students or the teacher is going to decide the countries. I chose France, England and Germany as examples for this lesson write-up. In a classroom you will probably have more groups. The students will need to know what type of things go into organizing a wagon train and what things the pioneers were able to take with them. They will need to organize their group or family in preparation for the journey. Basic vocabulary will include words such as wagon, horse, oxen, pioneer, family, water, food, bathroom, etc.

Intended Learning Outcomes

The students will be able to communicate in groups and they will understand how to solve problems without using language.

Instructional Procedures

This could be done by role playing situations or brainstorming ones in which people might have difficulty communicating. Some situations could be with handicaps and language differences. You might also have the students brainstorm many ways of communicating, such as morse code, etc. Please look at the essential questions for the Elementary section of The Gateway Heritage Project. Decide the number of groups and which country the groups will represent. Assign each person a role and responsibilities in the group. For example the 'father' is in charge of the trading, and the hired help could be in charge of making sure the animals are fed. The situations for each day and week would come from the actual wagon train that is traveling the trail. If this is not possible then situations

could be taken from the journal entries on the heritage project home page.

Assign each group a certain amount of money they will have to purchase items for their trek across the mormon trail. Some suggestions may be given for basic amounts every group will need. Research supply lists other groups have used. Students can then determine any extras they can afford to bring or purchase.

The students should be given enough time at the start to familiarize themselves with the words they will need to learn in order to communicate more effectively. The students should begin keeping a journal from the beginning of the experience. This will help them record their feelings and relate the pioneer journals to their own. This can also be used as an assessment method.

The students should be able to locate a map of the Mormon Trail to follow where they are at each step of the way. This can lead to some lessons on reading maps.

When the students encounter a situation that requires them to communicate with another group that does not speak their language they must find a way to communicate. These interactions will need to be supervised at first. After each encounter, have the students share their feelings and how they were able to eventually communicate with the other group. At the beginning, dicussions need to be frequent and progressively diminish. These sessions can also be used to evaluate the students ability to interact, communicate and think creatively.

During this unit many subjects can and should be incorporated. One idea is though journals. These entries should be coherent and complete entries. Read journal entries from real pioneers. These are usually detailed and give all the information necessary for a reader to understand the event being described.

To finish the unit each group will choose a product in order to share what happened to their group. These projects should include some of the journal entries as well as drawings that best represent their journey.

Extensions

Students could come every friday dressed in the costume of the time period.

Assessment Plan

Assessing this unit can be done through the journal entries that the students are writing and through the sharing time after the interactions with other groups. They wil also be assessed on the project they complete at the end of the unit.

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