

Handcarts-A Unique Form of Transportation

Summary

Students will learn the purpose of the handcart and its benefits to the Mormon pioneers. They will use mathematical skills to develop problem solving activities.

Time Frame

1 class periods of 45 minutes each

Group Size

Large Groups

Materials

paper; pencil; calculators

Background for Teachers

Handcarts had a uniform pattern, though they varied in size and construction. Basically, they were an open box with two wheels and a front bar for pulling. Some had coverings. They were usually made of hickory or oak with little or no iron. The family handcart was made stronger with an iron axle. The handcart was as wide as a regular covered wagon and therefore could follow the same trails.

Intended Learning Outcomes

Using math skills and problem solving skills, the students will learn the unique characteristics of the handcart, a fast inexpensive mode of travel used by the Mormon pioneers from 1856-1860.

Instructional Procedures

Review Essential Questions in the Link below. Discuss what the words of the song mean. Discuss the circumstances that led the European emigrants to choose the handcart as their means of travel westward. Write down important 'Handcart Facts & Figures' on the board or distribute a worksheet with the following facts:

- Companies were organized with about five persons to a handcart and 25 individuals to a tent for sleeping.

- Each handcart carries 400-500 pounds of flour, bedding, extra clothing, cooking utensils, and some carried small children.

- Handcarts were used from 1856-1860.

- Nearly 3,000 migrants used this unusual mode of transportation.

- The smallest company included 124 people, the largest 576.

- 662 handcarts were made during this period.

- The journey covered 1300 miles from Iowa City to Salt Lake City.

- The journey varied, from 81 to 126 days.

- The total time for the journey varied from 81 to 126 days.

- About 25-30 miles were travelled each day (wagons made 10-15 miles per day).

- 8 of 10 companies were successful. Two met with tragedy because of a late start and early winter.

Pair students up and have them create several math story problems using these facts. Share story problems with the class and solve.

Assessment Plan

Story problems were solved successfully by class members. Students can answer questions about the handcarts using the information they have learned creating their story problems.

Authors

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