

Roads of the Past and Present

Summary

This unit focuses on the effects the pioneer trails had on the paths of today's freeways. The students will have the opportunity to compare the paths taken by the pioneers with those taken today.

Time Frame

1 class periods of 45 minutes each

Group Size

Small Groups

Materials

This lesson requires maps of the Oregon, Mormon, and Santa Fe trails, and a road map of the areas covered by those trails. The maps of the trails can be found in most social studies text books. These maps can be made into handouts for the students to use and into overlapping overheads. Outline the trails in a bright color before using so that when the two are placed on top of each other the trails will easily be seen.

Background for Teachers

This unit can be taught by itself but would be much more useful as part of a unit on pioneers. The students will benefit from having previous knowledge of at least one of the three trails (Mormon, Santa Fe, or Oregon).

Intended Learning Outcomes

The students will be able to compare maps and see the effects of history on the present.

Instructional Procedures

Start off with asking the students if any of them have ever seen or been on a pioneer trail. Most of them say no. Then you can explain that they probably have at one time because the trails became the roads that we still use today.

Give the students the maps of the three trails and have them discuss in their groups if they think the roads would have followed the trail exactly. Then talk as a class to decide what factors could have made the roads take a different course.

Give the students the copies of the road maps and have them compare the two paths, and check their predictions of where the roads would differ from the trails. If their predictions were erroneous then discuss why things didn't change.

Now ask the students if any of them have ever been on a pioneer trail. This should lead to a discussion of other surviving influences of the pioneers.

Extensions

An extension activity would be to find old maps of the town or area that you are in. Maps of when it was beginning to be a town. Then compare those to a current map to see if the streets are still in the same place. It would also be interesting to see if the names of the streets are the same. The maps may have to be acquired from historical books or possibly city hall may have maps.

Students may also be asked to choose one of the trails and do research about a city that is along the original trail. From the research they should be able to determine some influences of the pioneers on that area.

Assessment Plan

Assessment on the lesson would be minimal. Simply checking for understanding would be appropriate. The students could write down their predictions and then tell if they were right or wrong and describe why. If the extension activities were done then they would be assessed on the completeness of the research and the presentation to the class.

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