

Heritage: An Orderly Wagon Train Migration

Summary

Students work in small groups to organize a wagon train for a trek westward. They determine leadership responsibilities and rules needed to make a successful trek.

Time Frame

2 class periods of 45 minutes each

Group Size

Small Groups

Life Skills

Social & Civic Responsibility

Materials

Chart paper, markers.

Background for Teachers

Moving a large group of people with very limited resources and experience, over hundreds of miles of wilderness area could prove to be an extremely difficult task. Some will be traveling by horse, some by wagon or handcart and some will be on foot. Lack of sufficient food, water, and shelter can cause the best of people to become discontented and short tempered. Many will suffer illness and maybe even death. There will be a need for sanitation and cleanliness. There will be disagreement over many things such as the order of the procession, how far to travel, where to stop, who is in charge, which way to go, and how to share resources. There will be some people who act selfishly. There will be a need for relaxation and entertainment. Children must be cared for and educated. Livestock must be protected and cared for. Repairs will need to be made on broken equipment.

Intended Learning Outcomes

Students will demonstrate an understanding of the basic rights of individuals by creating an organizational chart of authority, a list of rules and regulations to protect freedoms, and written procedures for handling violations.

Instructional Procedures

Class members could share stories of ancestors who faced trials coming to the west.

Go to essential questions in this unit. Organize into cooperative groups of 4 or 5.

Discuss and record in cooperative groups, the problems to be faced by the pioneers moving west during the period of 1845-1860.

Determine how the pioneer trek will be organized. Who will be in charge of the different areas of responsibility. Give them titles such as captain, herd boss, judge etc.

Make a chart showing the rules to be followed by all members of the group. Consider individuals, families, and the whole group. Consider the organization of the wagons and carts and the procedure for moving and camping. Decide what will be the consequences for breaking the rules. Who will decide if rules have been broken? Will you allow a person to appeal? What will be the process?

Groups share their organizational decisions.

Extensions

Justice is not always black or white. You have made a rule stating that those who steal will be punished. Discuss how you would handle the following:

A 36 year old man refused to take his turn herding the livestock while the camp was stationed at a grassy area. When the others refused to allow his livestock to feed with theirs, he broke into a wagon and stole grain for his horses. According to your rules what would be his punishment.

A 36 year old woman whose husband had died of cholera two weeks into the journey, had lost her supplies when they were washed away during a river crossing. She stole some bread and beans from another wagon because her children were hungry. What would be her punishment? Discuss other situations that might arise.

Authors

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