

Heritage: What if the Mormons had not come to Utah?

Summary

If the Mormons had not come to the valley of the Great Salt Lake, what other place(s) might they have settled that would have met their criteria, including that of being isolated from other non-Mormon settlements?

Time Frame

3 class periods of 45 minutes each

Group Size

Small Groups

Life Skills

Thinking & Reasoning

Materials

Detailed maps of several western states. Atlas or encyclopedia with maps showing average precipitation, temperature, soil, elevation of the various states. Paper, poster board, crayons and colored pencils should also be provided.

Background for Teachers

In 1846 there were only a few established trails in the west: Oregon, Santa Fe, or a river route, such as up the Missouri River as done by Lewis and Clark. Locations for settlement would probably have been established somewhere off of one of these mapped and explored trails. Students should consider these trails in their inquiry. Locations for settlement would need water (lakes and rivers), timber, suitable locations for year round roads (many roads that have to cross high mountain passes would not be acceptable), and suitable locations for agriculture. The climate of the area would also be important. A growing season long enough for grains, vegetables and fruits would be important. The Mormons wanted to be as self-sufficient as possible in as many areas as possible. A location rich in the resources above would be preferable. The Mormons were farmers and were not interested in mineral wealth or mining.

Intended Learning Outcomes

Students will use critical thinking, evaluation, and geography skills to find alternative locations that Brigham Young could have taken the Mormons to settle.

Instructional Procedures

Instruct groups (3-4 students per group) that they are to present a plan to Brigham Young (the teacher) for settling some place out west other than present day Utah. Their reports should be as detailed as possible, including data on climate, suitability for farming, water resources, timber, possibility for roads, and the proximity to other non-Mormon settlements and Indian groups. Groups should be provided with maps, access to atlases or encyclopedias for research. Additionally, groups should be provided paper and poster board to create a visual presentation of their plan. After a suitable time of research and preparation of the visual presentation on the poster board, have the groups present their findings to Brigham Young and the class with a short oral presentation arguing for the preference of their location.

Extensions

Students could be assigned to go further and name the new territory, valleys and rivers in the area as the Mormons might have named them. Additionally, the students could pick out locations for settlements and name them. A map could be drawn of the new territory complete with the names of all of the items listed above.

Assessment Plan

Have the groups evaluate the data from the other groups' locations for suitability of water, climate, timber, access, etc.

Authors

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