

Cycles of Change and Growth in the Mormon Trek: Comparing the 1847 Trek to the 1997 Reenactment Trek

Summary

Does the Reenactment Trek of 1997 parallel the attitudes and challenges of the 1847 Trek? Comparing journals shows similar cycles of experiences.

Time Frame

4 class periods of 45 minutes each

Group Size

Small Groups

Life Skills

Thinking & Reasoning, Communication

Background for Teachers

Extensive journals exist for both the 1847 Mormon trek and the 1997 Mormon Wagon Train Re-enactment trek. Using the internet, students can read these side by side. Both accounts go through cycles of feelings about the trip, even though each trip faced different challenges.

Intended Learning Outcomes

Students should be able to:

- a) use the internet to find examples of pioneer challenges
- b) compare and contrast the challenges and attitudes of the 1800's pioneer with today's reenactment pioneers
- c) apply group dynamics and cooperative learning roles to successfully search and report information.

Instructional Procedures

The Mormon trail is a good symbol of the cycles of growth and change any problem-solving situation presents. When the Mormon Wagon Train Re-enactment group had to travel over twenty miles in the dust and mosquitoes of Wyoming, for instance, or walk through the rain for days on end, or go to bed with their shoes on for fear of finding bloody socks, how are their attitudes and reactions different from the original pioneers?

Refer to the list of essential questions and themes for the Heritage Gateways project.

Give direct instruction to the entire group about how the trek itself created attitude changes. Just like any long trip, we plan, anticipate, begin with enthusiasm, then learn to adjust, endure, and finally look forward to the journey's end. What attitudes and expectations did the pioneers have? What same feelings did the re-enactment participants feel? Have the students brainstorm these attitudes and feelings they are likely to find in the pioneer journals.

Give some background of the trek if the students may not know the places and chronology, the challenges and happenings along the trek. Then model how to read and infer a journal entry. Use a specific story of a place or incident along the trail, then have the students label the feelings and attitudes they may hear. Then get them on the Internet comparing journal entries. Note the other sites for journal entries besides the Heritage Gateway Re-enactment section. Refer to the links in the General Information section.

Make a compare/contrast chart to compare the 1847 trek with the 1997 re-enactment trek.

In cooperative groups, have students find examples using specific places or incidents along the trail of the differences and similarities between the 1847 and 1997 treks. Look for cycles of growth and change in both. Have each group report the information they have found. Compile this on a large classwide chart.

Extensions

Possible adaptations: Have students map the trek as an archetypal journey: the 'call to adventure' is the beginning organization and excitement. The guide or mentor could be Brigham Young, the maps, or even Indian help along the way. 'Crossing the threshold' could be points along the trail when the pioneers realize there is no turning back (loss of a loved one?). The 'nadir' could be the worst parts of the trail, or the personal challenges that dramatically change their outlook or commitment (Rocky Ridge, for example, with the Willey Handcart Company). The tests, flight, and return could be several different challenges along the trail. The 'boon' or reward of the journey could be seeing the valley, and settling in peace.

Assessment Plan

On-going assessments of group work and cooperative learning skills could be done by observation. The classwide charting of comparisons and contrasts also give a method of assessing understanding.

Bibliography

Church stories archive search engine, Stegner, Wallace The Gathering of Zion, The Story of the Mormon Trail (University of Nebraska Press,) Madsen, Susan Arrington I Walked to Zion (Deseret Book Company,) Proctor, Maurine & Scot The Gathering: Mormon Pioneers on the Trail to Zion, Glazier, Stewart Journal of the Trail (Stewart Glazier and Robert S. Cl,)

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