

Fall 2021

Oregon Trail, Heading Out West

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Recommended Citation

Moran, Freddy Enrique, "Oregon Trail, Heading Out West" (2021). *Lesson Plans*. Paper 3.
<https://jdc.jefferson.edu/historylessonplans/3>

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Thomas Jefferson University Archives – 2021 Cultural Fieldwork Internship Lesson Plan

Lesson Plan: Oregon Trail. Students will use a primary source journal and maps to build a picture of the hardships many individuals and groups faced on their trek out west and what are some push and pull factors that led to the decision to go.

Grade 7th – 8th

Standard - 8.1.7.B

Identify and use primary and secondary sources to analyze multiple points of view for historical events.

Standard - 8.3.8.C

Summarize how continuity and change have impacted U.S. history.

- Belief systems and religions
- Commerce and industry
- Technology
- Politics and government
- Physical and human geography
- Social organizations

Purpose: Students will explore migration and be able to identify push and pull factors that applied to those embarking out west by using primary source documents from the Oregon Trail.

Materials:

- Access to Padlet.com (or another group text sharing site that all students can work on together simultaneously)
- Pencil
- Lined paper
- iPad or equivalent electronic device
- Access to internet (The Oregon Trail [the game])
- Work Sheet 1 (attached below)

- Smith, Harmony A., "The Journal of Harmony A. Smith: 1850 Oregon Trail Journal and Jefferson Medical College Lecture Notes ca.1838" (1850). Manuscripts and Journals. 1. https://jdc.jefferson.edu/manuscripts_journals/1
 - Excerpt from Friday, June 21st (Transcript page 12)
 - Transcript – [SmithJefferson.pdf](#)

- [Original Journal –
https://jdc.jefferson.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1000&context=manuscripts_journals](https://jdc.jefferson.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1000&context=manuscripts_journals)
- Map showing westward expansion and use of the Oregon trail
 - [U.S. Westward Expansion 1790-1850 \(d3tt741pwxqwm0.cloudfront.net\)](https://d3tt741pwxqwm0.cloudfront.net)
 - [oregon-trail-map.jpg \(950×487\) \(simonandschusterpublishing.com\)](https://simonandschusterpublishing.com)
- Oregon Trail Game
 - [DOSBox SVN, CPU speed: 3000 cycles, Frameskip 0, Program: OREGON \(archive.org\)](https://archive.org)

Lesson

Desired Learning Outcomes

- i. Students will be able to list specific push and pull factors that led to people heading out west.
- ii. Students can use textual evidence to identify difficulties when using the Oregon Trail with the aid of primary and secondary sources.
- iii. Students will be able to infer historical context from maps and journal entries related to the Oregon Trail.
- iv. The students will be able to interpret and analyze both a primary and secondary documents related to the Oregon Trail.

Intro: 5 minutes

Students will begin the lesson by answering a guided question to prime the learners for the coming lesson.

- Students will answer the following question and then conduct a Think – Pair – Share: “What are some reasons why someone would want to immigrate?”
 - Once students have had time to “think” and answer the question instruct the class to “Pair up and Share your answers to the guided question.”
 - Answers and conversations to the question and between students will vary. Students should be writing and expressing examples that can include money, work, religious freedom, and/or cheap land.
 - Open and prepare Padlet, name the Padlet “Push & Pull” and project it to the board, while students are conducting their Think – Pair – Share. The Padlet will act as community classroom notes that the students will be able to access any time they need to, filled in with ideas given by the class and filled in by the teacher.

Instruction: 15 minutes

Once the Think – Pair – Share has been conducted have the students bring their attention back to the front of the room. At this point hand out Worksheet #1 (attached at the bottom).

- Ask the students if “anyone wants to share what they discussed during their Think – Pair – Share?” wait for volunteers or call on students to answer.

- Guide the students' as they share what they wrote down for their guided question answer. This will be done by asking them if a particular reason given was "pushing individuals away from a place" or "pulling them to a particular place"
- students should be making the connections between what they discussed as reasons for immigrating/migration and how they would be categorized within a push and pull chart (worksheet #1)
- answers given will be added to Padlet and you will ask the class "which side of the chart/Padlet would I place 'strike it rich!' as a reason for immigration, does it belong in push or pull?"
 - Striking it rich is a "Pull" factor that draws individuals towards a specific location.
 - Unemployment would be an example of a "push" factor. (5 minutes)
- Once a few examples have been written on Padlet have students copy what was written in the Padlet by the teacher onto their individual Push & Pull worksheet and release them to their pairs to keep brainstorming push and pull factors for heading out west. Allow students to work in pairs.
 - Tell students that their Push & Pull worksheet is going to act as their "Exit Ticket"
 - Students will be filling in their worksheet while the teacher circulates the room and, periodically, keeps adding very appropriate examples into the Padlet that is projected on the board for all students to see. (10 minutes)

Application: 20 minutes

At this point as students are finishing up worksheet #1, pass out the excerpt from Harmony Smith (Friday, June 21st [Transcript page 12]) and ask the students to turn to their partners and discuss the following question "what could be some potential dangers an individual on the Oregon trail had to deal with?"

- Walk around the room listening to the discussion. The teacher's capacity is that of facilitator at this point. Give students a few minutes to discuss dangers that migrants can face on the Oregon Trail.
 - Students should be discussing the difficulties that come with traveling during the 19th century (terrain, weather, food, security).
- Instruct students to read the excerpt from Harmony Smith. Either provided as a hard copy or linked (provided in the materials section).

- Instruct the students to look for specific examples given within the excerpt that would support findings of hardships.
 - Terrain and difficulty of travel is what should be stressed from this one excerpt. Bring attention to the fact that they traveled all day and made it 18 miles. Put 18 miles into perspective for the students “from here to Main Street” and allow them to discuss why that was.

- At this point display the two maps depicting westward expansion and The Oregon Trail (either as hard copies printed previously or supply link)
 - Discuss and stress the massive distance and point to the terrain features that stand in their way. Inquire with the students “what could some of these terrain features be and why could they cause problems?”
 - Encourage students to cite the journal as proof of difficult terrain and how that could impact people.
 - Let the students look and discuss the map and the journal excerpt by conducting a Think – Pair – Share with their partners.
 - Walk amongst the students as they discuss the maps and journal point to the distance from Philadelphia to Portland

- Instruct the students that they will write a one (1) paragraph response in a google doc to the essential question “What are some challenges a family could face while migrating?” and turn it in to be graded (remind the students to use textual evidence to support answers).

Conclusion: 15 minutes

Provide the link to “The Oregon Trail” emulator game and allow students to play the game for twelve (12) minutes and with the final 3 minutes ask the students to “write down two examples of dangers that those on the Oregon Trail may have faced on a strip of paper.” Let the students know that their two examples on their strip of paper are going to be collected as an exit ticket.

- The answers could come from the readings, discussions, or game.

Name:

Worksheet #1

Section:

Push and Pull: Push and pull are reasons that either, push an individual away from a particular region or/and pull an individual towards a particular region.

PUSH

PULL