


Name _____ Date _____

All About the Oregon Trail


Directions: On the Social Studies links page, find and click "All About the Oregon Trail". (<http://www.isu.edu/~trinmich/Allabout.html>) Click each heading and then, click OK to run the ActiveX control. Answer the questions below as you read each section.

 **Introduction:** The Oregon Trail was more than a pathway to Oregon; it was the only


_____.

The difficult journey resulted in the death of one person in _____. Many walked the entire _____ miles barefoot. Native Americans, often thought of as a big problem, actually helped the emigrants. The real enemies of the pioneers were _____, _____, and even accidental gunshots.


Marcus and Narcissa Whitman made the first trip west by wagon the year _____. The big wave of western migration did not start until _____, when a wagon train took about 1,000 pioneers west. Over the next 25 years over a half million people went west on the Trail. Some went to Oregon's Willamette Valley to farm, while others headed to California to find gold. The Transcontinental Railroad, completed in 1869, reduced the Trail's importance.


 **Discoverers and Explorers:** Who really found the Oregon Trail? Match the people and the contribution they made to settle the West: **A. Lewis and Clark** **B. The Astorians** **C. Pike and Long** **D. Mountain Men** **E. Fur Trading Companies** **F. Fremont**


- _____ 1. The 2nd major expedition to find a way west was paid for by this group in **1810**.
The men had problems on the trip to the Pacific Ocean. In fact, a small group led by Robert Stuart had to return East for help. They found the South Pass--a 20-mile wide gap in the Rocky Mountains where wagons could get through the mountains.
- _____ 2. This expedition began in May of **1804**. Their trip was a success—not because they found a good way to travel West, but because they made detailed maps and brought back valuable scientific data about the western land.
- _____ 3. These men were fur-trappers. One man, Jedediah Smith, rediscovered the South Pass in **1825**. The pass, found years earlier, had been kept secret until then.
- _____ 4. Reports made in **1806** by one of these men called the great plains "the Great American desert". In **1819** that opinion was confirmed by the other man. These reports delayed westward migration several more decades.
- _____ 5. This man and his wife journeyed west along the Oregon Trail in 1842 and 1843. Their reports made the trip west seem easy and encouraged many pioneers to head west.
- _____ 6. These helped organize the fur trade resulting in increased knowledge about the west.


 **Jumping Off:** Emigrants went down the Missouri River 200 miles from St. Louis before unloading their wagons at a "jumping off" place. _____ was the first option. Other towns included Westport, St. Joseph, Omaha, and Council Bluffs. Agents hired by these towns went east to "badmouth", or lie about, the other towns so that more emigrants would buy supplies in their town. One emigrant, William Rothwell, wrote that people were being told to stay away from St. Joseph because 15 to 20 people were dying of _____ every day. These towns were thronged with men, horses and mules as emigrants camped until mid-April which was the best time to begin the journey.


Emigrants bought at least _____ pounds of flour, _____ pounds of bacon, _____ pounds of coffee, _____ pounds of sugar, and _____ pounds of salt per person. A family of four needed over _____ pounds of food. A _____ was the only way to haul that much food. A wagon box measured only _____ feet by _____ feet and was usually loaded to the brim with over a ton of food, farm implements, and furniture. Most emigrants began to throw things out of their wagons a few miles from Independence. Men rode out to collect these discarded items to resell to other pioneers.


 **The Route West:** Pioneers could have taken a boat west, but most preferred to go by wagon on the Oregon Trail instead because it cost a great deal to travel by boat. Also, traveling 4-6 months by wagon was faster than traveling almost a _____ by boat.

 **Power:** Pioneers could use horses, mules, or oxen to pull their wagons. Horses were rejected because they _____. Most emigrants chose oxen because they could live off grass or sage and they were _____. Speed was a problem for oxen. They only traveled about _____ miles-per-hour. Mules were faster and could live off prairie grass, but they did not have quite the staying power of oxen. They were also hard to handle—often kicking or running over people.

 **Hardships:** Pioneers faced many hardships on the journey west. These included facing death by drowning or being charged a huge price to ride a ferry when crossing rivers, having to walk the entire 2,000 miles, accidental death by being run over by a wagon, bad weather, and perhaps worst of all, _____, which might cause a wagon train to lose two-thirds of its people in a bad year.

 **Camping:** For nearly 6 months, emigrants traveled about _____ miles a day. They got up at _____ a.m., yoked the oxen, ate breakfast, and hit the trail. They took about an hour for lunch and stopped to set up camp for the night about _____ p.m. Their reason they circled the wagons was to provide a _____. It was hard to cook bread over a campfire and often _____ and _____ got in the mix. Because so many people traveled the Oregon Trail, wood became scarce and people had to collect _____ to use as fuel. Dry bread and bacon—sometimes eaten raw if there was no fuel for a fire—made up the menu for all three meals every day. The luckier people had tents to sleep in, but most just slept right on the ground.

 **Buffalo:** Emigrants had their first encounter with buffalo when they reached the _____. The herds immense and wagon trains sometimes had to wait for hours for stampeding buffalo to pass. So many buffalo were killed just for sport by the emigrants that the buffalo nearly became extinct.

 **Native Americans:** Instead of attacking emigrants, Native Americans often helped pull out stuck wagons, rescue drowning emigrants, and round up lost cattle. Emigrants traded clothes, tobacco and rifles with Native Americans for _____ or _____. Emigrants caused many problems for Native Americans because within a few years they had overgrazed the prairie grass, burned all the firewood, and worst of all they had _____. Because of these things many tribes along the Platte River were left impoverished.

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