

Adventures on the Oregon Trail

What's Inside the Trunk?

The Willamette Heritage Center's *Adventures on the Oregon Trail* traveling trunk brings an important period in America's history to life for students in a unique way. Students work in teams in a *choose your own adventure* format, solving problems, creating strategies, and engaging in the risks, drama and excitement of the trail experience. Hands on activities, artifacts, games, photographs, prints, books and primary source documents are included as well as a four-part activity plan. A digital copy of the lesson plan, student worksheets, and relevant maps, paintings, and photos will be emailed to you by WHC staff.

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What's in the trunk?

- Instructions and ideas for using Adventures on the Oregon Trail in the classroom.
- Hands on replicas and artifacts for students to explore. Each of these objects comes with background information for teachers.
- Objects include a sunbonnet, wooden toys, tin cups and plates, and aprons and vests for students.
- A four-day activity plan designed to add experience and information as students progress along the trail.
- Recommended readings and excerpts from primary sources such as period diaries and literature.
- Reproducible maps of the Oregon Trail.
- Photographs and period paintings of landscapes and life on the trail.
- Fiction and non-fiction books to further explore the trail experience.
- Period games and toys

Curriculum Connections

For grades 4 and up

Theme:

The Oregon Trail is among the most famous and well-documented migrations in American and world history. Thousands crossed the North American continent to escape political turmoil, unhealthy conditions, and economic hardship for a better future. In the mid-1800s, with technology, communications, and society much different from today, the 2,000-mile journey was a daunting endeavor and iconic of the challenges found in all human migrations.

Learning Objectives:

- Students will be able to explain at least one reason why pioneers traveled to the frontier.
- Students will be able to list three dangers to pioneers as they traveled along the trail.
- Students will be able to name five necessities for the trip west.
- Students will be able to list two emotions felt by the pioneers who left their homes to find a new life on the western frontier.
- Students will be able to write notes, plans, or thoughts in a simple journal.

These activities will help develop:

- critical thinking, ability to develop and express reasoned decisions and competing arguments
- using dialog to develop and express a particular point of view
- understanding how technology, scarcity and emotions affect decisions
- Comparing past to present, especially family life and technology
- Analyzing purchases and supply choices, and the differences between needs and wants
- An understanding of co-operation versus conflict in solving a dilemma
- Simple math skills in calculating, estimating and adjusting
- Understanding primary sources in researching history

Common Core State Standards for Grade 4 (adopted by Oregon in 2021)

English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies:

Reading: Key Ideas and Details, Craft & Structure, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas,
Writing, Speaking & Listening, Text Types & Purposes, Comprehension & Collaboration

4.RI.1; 4.RI.2; 4.RI.3; 4.RI.6; 4.RI.7; 4.W.1; 4.W.3; 4.SL.1

Oregon History:

Historical Knowledge, Historical Thinking, Geography, Economics, Social Science Analysis

4.11; 4.12; 4.17; 4.18; 4.17; 4.19; 4.21

Math:

Operations and Algebraic Thinking, Number and Operations in Base Ten, Number and
Operations—Fractions, Measurement and Data, Mathematical Practices 1-8.

4.OA.A.1; 4.OA.A.3; 4.NBT.B.4; 4.NBT.B.5; 4.NF.C.6; 4.GM.B.5; 4.DR.A.1

Treating the contents with care

While the objects and books included in the trunk are replicas, please treat them with care.

Articles are cleaned between each use.

We make every effort to have our trunk contents complete and in good condition. We also understand that there will be normal amounts of wear associated with use.

Care should be taken when unpacking and repacking the trunk.

The handling of the objects and use of books must always be with a teacher's supervision.

Students should not have free access to the trunk and its contents.

Objects and books must be kept from anything that might damage them such as pens, paint, water, food, etc.

If an object or book is damaged or missing-don't panic! Most items can be repaired or replaced.

You must record any loss or damage on **the incident report form** included in the Teacher's Guide.

Thank you for treating our treasures kindly and with the care they deserve.

Incident Report Please use additional pages as necessary

Describe items missing or damaged

Describe damage (water damaged photograph, ripped apron, book missing etc.)

School or organization

Person responsible

Signature

Date

For Willamette Heritage Center Staff

Artifacts and Replicas Included

Sunbonnet

Sunbonnets were a common and practical solution to some of the problems of the trail. Women kept the sun and heat off their faces with the wide brim and kept most of the dust out of their hair and clothing with the back piece and ruffle. Cloth ties kept them firmly in place.

Women and girls were encouraged to reduce sun exposure on their faces. A tanned face was seen to be common and unladylike. Keeping clean was difficult to impossible on the trail and the irritating, itchy dust stirred up by animals, wagons and wind got into everything. Having a sunbonnet was a great help with this problem. They were easy to make and could be made more attractive with bows or ruffles.

Tin Cups and Plates

Most kitchenware items that are made of aluminum and plastic in the 20th and 21st century were made of tin ware in the 18th and 19th century. Its uses range from cups and coffee pots to cookie cutters and boxes. Tin ware is strong, easily shaped, and non-toxic. In addition, it has a good appearance and is resistant to corrosion and attack by insects. Cheap, easily available, sturdy and lightweight, tin ware was a practical choice for the Oregon Trail.

Aprons

Women and girls wore aprons to keep their dresses clean. It was much more practical to wash an apron than an entire dress. Very young girls usually wore a pinafore that covered more than an apron tied at the waist. Aprons were made of easily washed material, usually cotton. Having a clean dress every day was not possible on the trail but a clean apron made you look and feel better.

Vests

Men and boys seldom went without a jacket, coat or vest over their shirt. Traveling on the trail was hard and dirty work and required practical and sturdy clothing. The vest was a common garment that provided another layer to keep a shirt clean. Dark colors meant it needed washing less often.

Button on a String Toy

This simple toy could be made with common household items- a button and some string. Place two fingers in each side of the string loop with the button in the middle. Swing the button up and around until you feel it start to tighten on your fingers. Pull and relax your hands holding the string and the button should whizz around. The button will continue to whiz as long as you supply the energy by pulling and relaxing the string.

Game parts

Bandanas, craft sticks, buttons and wooden tops are all part of the activities suggested in the lesson plan.

Toys were not included in the basic necessities pioneers packed in their wagons. Children have always found a way to have fun and pioneers were no different. Most children were accustomed to making their own toys or games and the supplies included show that the materials required for play were very simple.

Additional Reading

Books included:

The Emigrant's Guide to Oregon and California by Lansford W. Hastings
Originally published in 1845

West Along the Wagon Road: 1852 by Laurie Lawlor
Published in 1998

The Oregon Trail by Francis Parkman
Originally published in 1846

The Oregon Trail by Mel Friedman
Published 2010

How I Survived the Oregon Trail by Laura Wilson
Published 1999

If You Traveled West in a Covered Wagon by Ellen Levine
Published 1992

Don't Know Much About the Pioneers by Kenneth C. Davis
Published 2003

Apples to Oregon by Deborah Hopkinson and Nancy Carpenter
Published 2004