

Oregon Trail Landforms

By: Dawn L. Wildfang

Overview: This lesson answers the question: *What significance did landforms play along The Oregon Trail?* Therefore, it should be taught near the end of a unit on the Oregon Trail. The general purpose of this lesson is to examine how landforms affected the pioneers on their great migration westward, allowing students to discover some of the obstacles pioneers faced as they traveled west.

Background information, that the students should be familiar with before teaching this lesson, should include knowing what and where the Oregon Trail is, the reasons for its existence, and the different types of landforms that make up the trail. Through background knowledge of these topics, students will have a better time relating to the lesson and analyzing its components.

Connection with Curriculum: Listed below are connections this lesson has to the Oregon standards and benchmarks.

- O.D.E. Grade 5 Geography Benchmark: Examine and prepare maps, charts, and other visual representations to locate places and interpret geographic information.
- O.D.E. Grade 5 Geography Benchmark: Identify physical and human characteristics of regions in the United States and the processes that have shaped them.
- Links to other content areas: This lesson can be integrated and connected to reading, writing, science, and art.

National Geography Standards Addressed:

- Standard #4: The physical and human characteristics of places.
- Standard #15: How physical systems affect human systems.

Grade Level: 4

Objectives:

- Given a landform identification sheet, students will (in groups of four or five) label 8 out of 10 landforms on a blank map of the Oregon Trail.
- Students will (individually, in the same groups) answer at least 3 questions that reports the significance of at least five of the landforms they labeled. (Worksheet is provided).

Materials:

- Labeled map of the Oregon Trail
- Blank maps of the Oregon Trail
- Landform identification sheet
- Pencils
- Landform worksheet
- Colored pencils, crayons, etc...

Procedures:

- Ask students if they remember the conditions (weather, landforms, etc...) that pioneers faced while traveling along the Oregon Trail.
- Ask students if they remember why so many people wanted to migrate westward.
- Tell the students about the lesson on which they are going to embark. Show them a map of the Oregon Trail (that is labeled and posted in the front of the room), and show them the blank map with which they will be working. (The labeled map should be posted in the front of the room if any students get stuck on a particular landform, as well as for extra visual representation.)
- Discuss the names of landforms that students will find listed on their sheet. For instance, Three Buttes is a landform the students will encounter. Therefore, one should explain the definition of the word butte and how they are formed.
- Let the students know that they will need to identify and label at least 8 landforms throughout their map of the trail and that they will be working in groups. (Remember to give the students a landform example – preferably with one that is not on their list.)
- Let students know that they will have to recall why their landforms were crucial to the Oregon Trail. Therefore, they answer questions about them (groups will be given a worksheet that specifies what to discuss and answer).
- Have the students get out writing utensils, then pass out their maps to be labeled and landform identification sheet. When they are finished with their maps, pass out the worksheet. (They may color their maps when they have finished labeling it and answering their questions.)

Vocabulary:

- Landforms
- Rivers
- Buttes

Assessment:

- Students will be assessed formally based upon the objectives of the lesson and informally through observation.
- Formal assessment includes a scoring guide that determines whether or not the students met the objectives for the lesson (scored by the teacher).
- Informal assessment includes active participation, questions, and suggestions.

Extensions:

- This idea of this lesson can be used for younger grade levels. Instead of using the Oregon Trail, give students a map of their community or school and include any factors that identify it (parks,

stores, trees, signs, etc...). This lesson could also be adapted to the higher grades to include the entire United States, or other countries.

- At this grade level, students could pretend to be a retailer at one of the stops along the way and try to persuade pioneers to stay in his or her town (or place where the landform is located) in a role-modeling activity.
- Students at this grade level could also keep diaries of their travels along the trail that includes their favorite landform, thoughts, feelings, ideas, and/or why they decided not to continue the entire trip.

Bibliography:

Hill, W.E. (1993). Reading, Writing, and Riding Along The Oregon – California Trails. Oregon – California Trails Association: Independence, Missouri.

Scoring Guide for Oregon Trail Landforms

Students receive one point per correct item answered on the map and landform answer sheet. The activities should be assessed separately in order to assure an accurate score.

The Oregon Trail Map Activity

- 10-10** Student clearly labels 8 to 10 landforms on the map with absolute accuracy.
7-7 Student clearly labels 5 to 7 landforms on the map with absolute accuracy.
4-4 Student clearly labels 2 to 4 landforms on the map with absolute accuracy.
1-1 Student clearly labels 0 to 1 landform on the map with absolute accuracy.

10 points possible – 8 needed for an A.

The Landforms Activity

- 15-15** Student correctly answers the questions stated on landforms sheet.
12-12 Student correctly answers the questions stated on landforms sheet.
9-9 Student correctly answers the questions stated on landforms sheet.
6-6 Student correctly answers the questions stated on landforms sheet.
3-3 Student correctly answers the questions stated on landforms sheet.

25 points possible, 15 points needed for an A.

<u>Map Activity</u>	<u>Grade</u>	<u>Landforms Activity</u>	<u>Grade</u>
8-10	A	13-15	A
5-7	B	10-12	B
2-4	C	7-9	C
0-1	D	4-6	D
0	F	1-3	F

