

Overview

This lesson focuses on life and hardships on the Oregon-California and the Santa Fe Trails. Students will read two *Read Kansas* cards that are reminiscences by trail travelers. Students will complete a vocabulary worksheet to help define new words used in the primary source documents. Students will use the *Read Kansas* cards to complete a worksheet about the costs and benefits of traveling on the trails. This lesson is designed to take three class periods but can be adjusted to meet individual classroom needs.

Standards

Current standards can be found on kshs.org.

Objectives

Content:

- The students will describe hardships encountered on the trails.

Skills:

- The students will identify the costs and benefits of using both trails.
- The students will define the meaning of words in primary source documents using context clues.

Essential Questions

- What is a hardship?
- What were some hardships of living in the 1800s?
- What was a goal that you set for yourself? What were the hardships you faced?

Activities

This activity uses the following *Read Kansas* cards:

- **Harriet Palmer's Journey on the Oregon-California Trail**
- **Marion Sloan's Journey on the Santa Fe Trail**

Day 1

1. Introduce the topic of the Oregon-California and Santa Fe Trails. If your class has done the *Read Kansas* lesson I-6, your students will have background knowledge about the trails. If you have not used this lesson, begin by identifying the routes of the two trails on a map and establish the time period (the 1800s) that these trails were in use.
2. The students will be learning about hardships on both trails by reading primary source documents. A primary source document, such as reminiscence, is a source that was created at the time of an event or by a person who was present at the event. They can be difficult to read because they often contain unfamiliar or archaic words. Vocabulary worksheets are included in this lesson to help your students read these materials.
3. Read the **Harriet Palmer's Journey on the Oregon-California Trail** *Read Kansas* card aloud to the class.
4. Provide each student with a copy of the **Harriet Palmer's Journey on the Oregon-California Trail** *Read Kansas* card and the **Harriet Palmer's Journey Vocabulary Words** worksheet.
 - Have students read the **Harriet Palmer's Journey on the Oregon-California Trail** *Read Kansas* card aloud again. This time, stop at the first highlighted word.
 - Ask the students to write down their definition in the "What I think the word means" box beside that word.
 - Continue having the students define the highlighted words until you have finished reading the **Harriet Palmer's Journey on the Oregon-California Trail** *Read Kansas* card for the second time.
 - A blank box is provided on the worksheet for an additional vocabulary word, if needed.
5. Working in pairs, allow students time to use a dictionary to check their definitions. When they are finished, use an overhead transparency to review the definitions students gave based on context clues and the dictionary definition. Students can self-correct their worksheets.
6. Have the students keep the **Harriet Palmer's Journey on the Oregon Trail** *Read Kansas* card and the **Harriet Palmer's Journey Vocabulary Words** worksheet for use on Day 2.

Day 2

1. Distribute the **Marion Sloan's Journey on the Santa Fe Trail** *Read Kansas* card to every student. Follow the same procedure as Day 1.
2. Have the students keep both *Read Kansas* cards and worksheets for use on Day 3. They will be used to teach the economic concept of cost-benefit.

Day 3

1. As a review, have students share some of the things they have learned about the two trails in the previous two days.
2. Using the *Read Kansas* cards, students will now learn about the hardships of the trail through the economic concept of cost-benefit. There were costs and benefits to using both of these trails. A cost is what you give up when you decide to do something. In the case of traveling on the trail the cost is that you give up the safety of home to face the hardships of the trail. A benefit is a choice that satisfies your needs or wants. The benefit of traveling on the trail is being able to go to a place where you can be more successful. Some examples of cost-benefit include:
 - You want to become a good softball player. If you practice pitching every day, the time you spend to do that is the cost. The benefit is that you will be a good softball player.
 - You want to earn an allowance, and to do that you must have a clean room. If you clean your room, the cost is the time you give up to do that task. The benefit is that you earn an allowance because your room is clean.
 - For an Oregon-California Trail traveler, one cost is that they may become sick on the trail. The benefit is that they will get a new home out West.
 - For a Santa Fe Trail traveler, they may be without water; that is the cost. The benefit is that they are going to sell their goods and make money in Santa Fe.
3. Distribute the **Costs and Benefits of Trail Travel** worksheet to every student.
 - Begin with the **Harriet Palmer's Journey on the Oregon Trail** *Read Kansas* card.
 - As a class ask students to answer the "Cost" questions on the worksheet (upper right-hand box). Record their answers on an overhead transparency. Have the students copy the answers on their worksheets.
 - As a class ask students to answer the "Benefit" questions on the worksheet (lower right-hand box). Record their answers on an overhead transparency. Have the students copy the answers on their worksheets.
4. Working in pairs, have students complete the "Costs" and "Benefits" section of the worksheet for **Marion Sloan's Journey on the Santa Fe Trail**.
5. Bring the class back together and ask the students to share their answers. Record their answers on an overhead transparency. Have the students self-correct their worksheets.

Assessment

1. Evaluate how students complete the vocabulary worksheets.
2. Evaluate how students complete **The Cost and Benefits of Trail Travel** worksheet.

For the Teacher

For more information about the Oregon-California Trail and Santa Fe Trail see the Kansas State Historical Society's website at www.kshs.org. Also available is *Adventures on the Santa Fe Trail* by Dave Webb, published by the Kansas Heritage Center.

Both Harriet Palmer and Marion Sloan wrote about their travels years after those events took place. This is called a **reminiscence**. It is the act or process of recollecting past experiences or events. Sometimes these are not as accurate as diaries since memories fade or change over time. They are still, however, valuable primary source documents.

Marion Sloan's reminiscence is published in Along the Santa Fe Trail: Marion Russell's Own Story by Ginger Wadsworth and Marion Sloan, published by Albert Whitman and Co., copyright 1993, for readers ages 9-11. A section of Harriett Palmer's diary is available through Idaho State University (online at <http://www.isu.edu>) from historians Mike Trinklein and Steve Boettcher.

NOTE: The **Marion Sloan's Journey on the Santa Fe Trail** *Read Kansas* card contains a reference to the travelers being "alarmed by Indians." At times there were confrontations between American Indians and traders on the trail. If you feel uncomfortable with this phrase, you may wish to explain to students why there were conflicts (i.e., traders were crossing "Indian" land and were disturbing the buffalo on their hunting grounds) or choose not to use this *Read Kansas* card.

Suggested answers for the **Costs and Benefits of Trail Travel** worksheet:

Oregon-California Trail

Costs: What hardships did Harriet Palmer and her family face?

- *Sadness of leaving friends*
- *Sale of family farm*
- *Dealing with unruly oxen*
- *Flooded streams*
- *Flooded roads*
- *Walking on cactus, sagebrush, and hot sand made shoes wear out*
- *Steep mountain trails*
- *Tired from all the hard work of trail travel*

Benefits: What did Harriet Palmer and her family hope to gain by going out West?

- *Possibly get rich in the gold fields of California*
- *Start a successful farm in Oregon Territory*

Santa Fe Trail

Costs: What hardships did Marion Sloan, her family, and traders face?

- *Disease, cholera*
- *Fear of Indians*
- *Violent storms*
- *Lack of water*
- *Cold lunches*
- *Coyotes*
- *Having to gather buffalo chips for fuel*

Benefits: What did Marion Sloan and her family hope to gain by going to Santa Fe?

- *Start a new life where they would be better off*

What did Santa Fe Trail traders hope to gain by going to Santa Fe?

- *Make money from selling merchandise in Santa Fe*

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Resources for this lesson are from:

- Kansas State Historical Society collections
- Kansas Heritage Center, Dave Webb (Marion Sloan's Journey on the Santa Fe Trail)

Name: _____

Harriet Palmer's Journey Vocabulary Words

Vocabulary Word

What I think the word means

Dictionary Definition

Fertile

Ushered

Remembrances

Unruly

Vocabulary Word

What I think the word means

Dictionary Definition

Homestead

Impassable

Sagebrush

Name: _____

Marion Sloan's Journey Vocabulary Words

Vocabulary Word

What I think the word means

Dictionary Definition

Enroute

Cholera

Raging

Caravan

Vocabulary Word

What I think the word means

Dictionary Definition

Merchandise

Eerie

Shambles

Name: _____

Costs and Benefits of Trail Travel

Oregon-California Trail

Costs: What hardships did Harriet Palmer and her family face?

Santa Fe Trail

Costs: What hardships did Marion Sloan, her family, and traders face?

Oregon-California Trail

Benefits: What did Harriet Palmer and her family hope to gain by going out West?

Santa Fe Trail

Benefits: What did Marion Sloan and her family hope to gain by going to Santa Fe?

What did Santa Fe Trail traders hope to gain by going to Santa Fe?