

SCHOOL PRESENTATION – OREGON TRAIL

Object: present life on the Oregon Trail from a child's perspective

OPENING QUESTION: HOW MANY OF YOU THINK YOU WOULD HAVE WANTED TO GO ON THE OREGON TRAIL? (take a count and record on white board)

How long do you think the trail was?

- How many miles? (2,000)
 - How far per day (15 miles)
 - Like walking to airport from here
 - Who would want to do that every day?
 - How long to travel that far? All day (8 – 12 hours)
 - How many steps would it take to go that far? (select two students for next step)
 - (count their # of steps in length of rope x 200 = 1 mile
 - (x 15 = steps in a good day)
 - Number of days/months for the entire trip? (4 to 6 months)
 - leaving now you would arrive when school starts next year
 - **Now, who would want to do that?**

What to take and how much the wagon could carry

- **What would your family need to take?**
 - Wagon & team (oxen, mules or horses?) oxen preferred as they were calmer and could graze on grasses and didn't need any supplemental feed
 - Need to carry 5 months of food
 - How much is that?
 - Select food items from displayed supplies
 - Flour 600 lbs (6 bags)
 - Sugar 200 lbs (2 bags)
 - Rice 50 lbs (1 bag)
 - Salt 50 lbs (1 bag)
 - Coffee 100 lbs (1 bag)
 - Hardtack 100 lbs (2 bags)
 - Beans 200 lbs (2 bags)
 - Bacon 400 lbs (barrel)
 - Water 10 gallons (barrel)
 - Will it fit in the wagon?
 - Have students move items into wagon box on ground
 - Now how much room is left in the wagon for other items
 - Clothes – 2 changes
 - Medicines
 - Firearms/gunpowder
 - Sewing materials
 - Shoes
 - Other items
 - Now how much room in the wagon for people to ride
- Typical day for children

- Walking not riding
- How did they know how far they had traveled
 - Counting wheel rotation
- What did they use for cooking fires
 - Collecting firewood or buffalo chips
- Fetching water
 - Weight of water pail when full (each gallon weighs a little over 8 lbs)
 - Other than cooking what was water used for
 - Cleaning
 - Soaking wagon wheels
- Tending livestock
- Sleeping under wagon or in tent or under the stars
- Same meals nearly every day for 5 months
 - Johnny cakes for breakfast (no syrup – just brown sugar or molasses while it lasted)
 - Cold meat or beans for lunch with hardtack
 - Meat and beans and biscuits for dinner

- How often in a week do you wear clean clothes?
 - Could only take two sets of clothes for entire trip
 - Doing laundry only when near water source and layover day

FINAL QUESTION: NOW HOW MANY WOULD LIKE TO HAVE TRAVELED ON THE OREGON TRAIL?
(COUNT AND COMPARE TO NUMBER FROM THE BEGINNING)