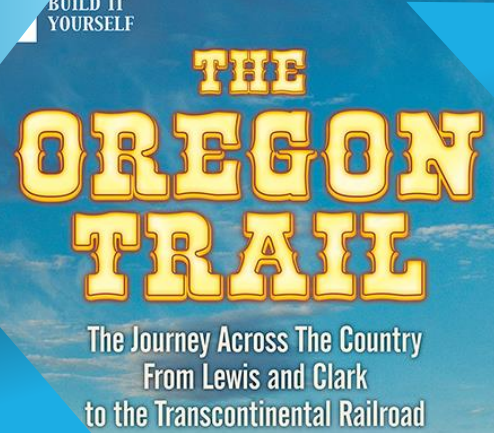


# THE OREGON TRAIL

THE JOURNEY ACROSS THE COUNTRY FROM  
LEWIS AND CLARK TO THE TRANSCONTINENTAL RAILROAD

## DISCUSSION GUIDE



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### About This Book

If you travel across certain parts of the United States, you can still see wagon wheel ruts where people crossed the West in search of better opportunities over 150 years ago. *The Oregon Trail: The Journey Across the Country from Lewis and Clark to the Transcontinental Railroad* offers readers ages 9 to 12 a fascinating look at the explorers and settlers who traveled this route during Westward Expansion of the United States.

### Pre-Reading Activity

What do you know about how the West was settled? The best known of the settlement routes was the Oregon Trail. But the Oregon Trail was more than an ordinary trail or even a video game. At the end was the hope of a better life, as long as you survived the journey. Think about what you know as you read *The Oregon Trail*.

### Discussion Questions

- What is primary source material? What role does it play when reading or studying about things in the past?
- Trace the route of the Oregon Trail. Did the trail stay the same over time?
- Why do you think almost half a million people agreed to travel over 2,000 miles in covered wagons, horseback, and on foot in the 1800s?
- Read more of Harriet Scott Palmer's memoir about the Oregon Trail (page 5). What do diaries, journals, letters, and memoir tell us that can't be found in history books or encyclopedias?
- Compare the Lewis and Clark route with the one taken by the Astorians (links on page 42). Compare and contrast the two routes. What do you think would have been the best route in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century?
- From the Louisiana Purchase to the War of 1812, there was a lot of discussion about boundaries. Why were boundaries so important?
- Is the Monroe Doctrine the same as Manifest Destiny? Summarize both while explaining your answer.
- Describe the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Would Westward Expansion have happened if Lewis and Clark did not make their historic trip?
- What do we know about Sacagawea? How do we know the sources of information are reliable?
- Describe Robert Stuart's role in the development of the Oregon Trail.
- Read the last paragraph on page 55. Do you know what 'stalwart' means? If so, give a definition. If not, see if you can decipher the meaning from how it's used in the sentence.
- Why do you suppose fur trappers and missionaries were the first to travel to the Northwest?
- In *The Oregon Trail*, you read about various African American pioneers on the Oregon Trail. Why are their accounts not commonly found in standard history books? Should we hear from a variety of people?
- What was traveling on the Oregon Trail like? What hazards did they face? The main cause of death?
- What effects did the Oregon Trail and Westward Expansion have on Native Americans?
- What effect did the Transcontinental Railroad have on Westward Expansion? On the Oregon Trail?
- Summarize what you believe was the main significance of the Oregon Trail.