



## Pioneers of the Wild West by Laurel Rhoads

**Grade Level:** Grade 4

**Subject Area:** English Language Arts

**Lesson Length:** 1 hour 30 minutes

**Lesson Keywords:** Reading, Writing, Vocabulary

**Lesson Description:** The purpose of this lesson is to teach students how to read literature about travel in the west. Students will practice reading comprehension skills in areas that provide higher order thinking. Focus will be reading to locate information and details from the text to help make inferences. Writing includes a chance for the students to develop their own opinions with the support of the text.

### Common Core Standards Covered with This Lesson

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.1: Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

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CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.1: Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.

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CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.1b: Provide reasons that are supported by facts and details.

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CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.4.4a: Use context (e.g., definitions, examples, or restatements in text) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.

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CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.4.6: Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, including those that signal precise actions, emotions, or states of being (e.g., quizzed, whined, stammered) and that are basic to a particular topic (e.g., wildlife, conservation, and endangered when discussing animal preservation).

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## Lesson Content: Book/Story/Reading Passage

**Instructions:** Please read the following reading passage as many times as needed (aloud and silent) before starting to go through other lesson pages. Understanding the content of this passage is very important since the lesson activities will be all about this content. Feel free to print the passage if needed.

### Traveling West by

**Content:** Long ago, when people settled the United States, most people lived in the East. It was hard to travel west. There were no planes, trains, or automobiles. People traveled by wagon or boat.

In the 1840s, many people traveled far across the United States. They were traveling to the West. They were pioneers. They would settle in the western part of the country.

Getting to the west was very difficult. There were no roads. People traveled in groups. Each family would buy a covered wagon. That is a big wagon with a kind of tent on it.

Each family would pack the tools and supplies they needed to build a new home. They would have to fit all they took in their wagon. Then they would travel together. They made what was called a wagon train. It was a group of wagons all going the same way. They would meet with other families to plan their trip. They would choose a route.

When the families started the trip, they did not know each other. They met when the trip began. But they would spend more than a year together. So they got to know each other well. Sometimes they would borrow tools from each other. Sometimes they shared food. They had to travel in bad weather. It was a long trip.

It would take more than a year to reach the West. The families sometimes had babies along the way. The wagon train would stop for a few days to help the mother with the baby. Then they would keep going. They knew they had a long way to travel. They could not stay long.

When the wagon train got to the West, the families would settle there. They would build homes. They would start farms. They would build communities. Those communities would grow into towns and cities.

It was hard to get to the West in the pioneer days. Then people built roads. People built a railroad that crossed the United States. By 1900, there were many more people in the West. People came west by train. A trip that had taken months now took a few days. The railroad brought many changes.

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## Task 1: Vocabulary

**Instructions:** Please complete the following vocabulary activity by choosing the correct meaning of each word selected from the passage and use of each word correctly in a sentence.

**Q: 1 WordPhrase:** community **WordPhraseTier:** 2

**Question:** The author describes how, "communities would grow into cities and towns." What does the word communities mean?

- A:** A mountainous area
- B:** A group of people who call or text one another
- C:** A group of people who live together in the same area
- D:** An elected group of people

**Question:** Which one the sentences below uses the word communities correctly?

- A:** Most communities have schools, libraries, parks, grocery stores and people who live in neighborhoods.
  - B:** No communities came to the school today.
  - C:** We found gas station communities on our trip to Florida.
  - D:** We camped outside in communities the forest.
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**Q: 2 WordPhrase:** route **WordPhraseTier:** 2

**Question:** The author writes how, "They would meet with other families to plan their trip. They would choose a route." What does the word route mean?

- A:** Map of the country
- B:** Bike ride in the park
- C:** River to follow through the country
- D:** A way to get from one place to another

**Question:** Which one of the sentences below uses the word route correctly.

- A:** Families planned a travel route by locating the best path for their wagon wheels,
  - B:** The GPS gave the dog a route to the ocean.
  - C:** The computer route was not working an I could not go online.
  - D:** When we are traveling to our grandparents, we like to stay at Route 44 hotel.
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**Q: 3 WordPhrase:** settled **WordPhraseTier:** 2

**Question:** The author begins the story by writing, "Long ago when people settled the United States, most people lived in the East." What does the word settled mean in the sentence?

- A:** Solved a problem in
- B:** Stayed in
- C:** Moved to live
- D:** Divided

**Question:** Which one of the sentences below used the word settled correctly?

- A:** The students settled down after they played soccer outside.
  - B:** The baseball game was not settled that night with a score of 2 to 5.
  - C:** Our road trip from Florida to North Carolina took 12 hours by car and we settled in our new mountain home.
  - D:** No one settled the drink on the table and it fell on the floor.
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**Q: 4 WordPhrase:** pioneer **WordPhraseTier:** 3

**Question:** The author writes how, "people traveled far across the United States. They were traveling West. They were pioneers." What does the word pioneers mean in this sentence?

- A:** A person who digs for gold.
- B:** Visitors in a foreign land
- C:** Scientists that study land.
- D:** First people to develop a new area

**Question:** Which one of the sentences below uses the word pioneer correctly from the reading?

- A:** Barack Obama is a pioneer.
  - B:** A pioneer came to our school today to discuss lab experiments.
  - C:** A pioneer discovered new areas of land to develop in America.
  - D:** That pioneer tells funny jokes.
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**Q: 5 WordPhrase:** wagon-wheel **WordPhraseTier:** 3

**Question:** The author writes that each family would travel by, "a covered wagon" and "a big wagon with a kind of tent on

it." Choose the best meaning of "wagon wheel" in the story.

**A:** Small wagon that kids pull each other in

**B:** Large wagon with a thin mesh covering to keep out the bugs

**C:** Large wagon, at least the size of a van, with a strong waterproof protective cover around it

**D:** Place for a family to live in once they have traveled to the west

**Question:** Which one of the sentences below uses the word "wagon wheel" correctly based on the story?

**A:** We took our wagon wheel to the park today.

**B:** Our wagon wheel has so much power that we can drive 20 miles on the dirt roads for fun.

**C:** We have been eating, sleeping and traveling across the country in our wagon wheel.

**D:** We played on the wagon wheel at the park.

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## Task 2: Forum Discussion

**Instructions:** This discussion forum will have questions for students to respond. Read the posted questions, and respond to each. Students are responsible for posting one initial and two peer responses for each topic.

### 1 - Why did pioneer families "meet up together" as stated in the story?

In the story the author writes about pioneer families that meet up together to travel to the West. Why would these families find this important when they didn't even know each other? Use details from the story to help support the reasons why pioneer families joined a group. Give specific examples from the story and provide some of your own reasons based on the other examples.

### 2 - What was travel like during the 1840's in the United States?

In the story the author describes travel as very difficult. Use examples from the text to describe travel conditions and modes of travel.

### 3 - What was important to the pioneers of the United States during the 1840's?

The author writes about the people and families that travel west. He tells about the people sharing tools, planning trips, getting to know each other well and forming communities. Use the information from the story to describe what was important to them. For example, describe what qualities a pioneer would have to make the journey west.

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Task 3: Writing Activity

**Instructions:** The author states that pioneers are traveling to the west and that it takes a year . He provides many details about the conditions of travel and some of the families hardships. He never states why groups of family pioneers would want to leave the east and travel to the west. Review the last two paragraphs that talk about what the pioneers accomplished once they began building their communities out west. Form an opinion as to why the pioneers headed west. Remember you are using the story and specifically the last two paragraphs to support your point of view. Cite specific examples from the text that support your opinion. Write two paragraphs 4 to 5 sentences in each.

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