

FROM INDEPENDENCE TO OREGON



Characters

Dad
Mom
Jimmy

Lucy
Uncle Mike
Aunt Jean

Setting

This reader's theater takes place on the modern Oregon Trail as the Dylan family recreates the trek made famous by emigrants in the mid-nineteenth century.



Dad



Mom



Uncle Mike



Aunt Jean



Jimmy



Lucy

Act 1

Dad: Jimmy! Lucy! Your mom and I have decided how we will all spend our summer vacation.

Mom: We're going to travel the Oregon Trail. We'll ride the open range, living the way the early pioneers did.

Dad: Get your boots and backpacks ready. We leave in one week.

Jimmy: You mean this is how we're going to spend our whole summer vacation? What happened to space camp?

Dad: We talked it over with Uncle Mike and Aunt Jean. We thought about the subjects we'll be teaching our students next year. The journey along the Oregon Trail is one of them. So, why not experience the life of emigrants for ourselves?

Mom: This is what history teachers do for fun.

Jimmy: I know, I know—they recreate history.

Lucy: Are we going in a covered wagon?

Mom: No, we can't totally recreate the exact journey of the emigrants.



Journeys & Quests

Lesson Plan

Objectives

- **Fluency:** Students will read passages fluently after practicing and monitoring fluency with repeated readings.
- **Content Area:** Students will learn important and interesting facts about the Oregon Trail and will apply that information to aspects of their lives.

Summary

From Independence to Oregon is the story of a family that travels the Oregon Trail and reenacts the efforts and experiences of the original emigrants who traveled the trail long ago. Members of the family learn about landmarks that still mark the Oregon Trail and other interesting facts. But, when disaster strikes, the family experiences the same real hardships that the emigrants faced. The family discovers how difficult this journey was for the emigrants and learns to appreciate the discoveries and sights along the Oregon Trail.



Materials

- *From Independence to Oregon* script booklets
- *Journeys and Quests Character Masks* copied on cardstock

Introduce the Literature

Ask students to close their eyes and read the following to them. “Sweat is pouring from your brow, and your stomach aches. The bumps along the trail are almost more than you can bear, and the dust from the wagon keeps clogging your throat. You knew that the journey west would be difficult, but you didn’t realize how painful it would be. You wonder to yourself how much more you can take.” Ask students to write down how they would feel if this had really happened to them. Would the trip west in search of a better life be worth the risk of the journey? Allow students to share thoughts and ideas. Read *Bound for Oregon* by Jean Van Leeuwen to the class. Discuss the main idea of the plot and in what ways this book helps the reader understand more about the Oregon Trail. Did Mary Ellen feel the reward of reaching Oregon was worth the hard journey west and the sacrifices she and her family had to make. Ask the class if they feel the reward was worth the sacrifices? Create a list of the things the class learned about the Oregon Trail while reading the book. Discuss the importance of learning from the past and how this knowledge can help us understand our own lives and plan for the future.

ELL Support



Encourage ELL students to share their experiences of living in distant places. Invite the students to bring photographs and mementos to share with the class. Discuss the different places in the world that others have traveled to and explored.

Involving All Students

Assign the main roles of the reader’s theater script to six students. Assign the remaining students to be coaches, advisors, and evaluators. Their job is to help make each reader’s part of the script be the best it can be. Encourage the coaches to help the actors use proper tone and vocal expression as they perform the script.