

Oregon Trail Education Trunk

Curriculum Overview

The Wyoming State Museum is extremely excited for you to try out this exciting Oregon Trail curriculum. This overview tells you what to expect within each section of the curriculum. The following pages will dive deeper into each activity. Most of these sections can even be completed before you receive the trunk or after you send it back.

- **Section 1: The Five Big Questions of the Oregon Trail**
This section consists of a video, produced by the Wyoming State Museum, that teaches students the five big questions of the Oregon Trail. Afterwards, your students will complete a crossword puzzle to reinforce the information from the video.
- **Section 2: Why Would You Travel the Trails?**
This section puts students in the shoes of an immigrant traveling west. They will pick one of the nine main reasons why immigrants traveled west (discussed in the “Five Big Questions” video) and write an opinion piece about why they (personally) would take this dangerous journey.
- **Section 3: Exploring History Through Artifacts**
This section allows students to get hands-on with one artifact from the education trunk. They will do small group work, handle artifacts, draw pictures, and use critical thinking to hypothesize about what their artifact was used for.
- **Section 4: Reading an Oregon Trail Guidebook**
In this section, students will read a guidebook telling them what to pack on their journey to Oregon. This guidebook was written by compiling the advice of three original sources from the 1840s. Students will also fill out a vocabulary sheet to learn some of the more unique words included within the guide.
- **Section 5: Packing Your Wagon**
To prepare for their journey, your students will work in small groups to pack everything they’ll need for the long trip west. First, they will watch a short video from the museum to give them tips and hints for packing their wagons. Then, they’ll go through the general store to decide what they’re bringing with them. They’ll use mathematics to fill out their worksheet.
- **Section 6: Field Trip and Game with the Wyoming State Museum**
Now that your students have packed their wagons, we’re ready to head west! The museum has created a very special field trip to accompany this education trunk. Your students will play a live action version of the Oregon Trail video game. We will see many of the important landmarks along the trail, talk about how the immigrants lived on their journey, and discuss the dangers of the trail. Your students will also see amazing historical artifacts from this time period. How well your students packed their wagons will influence whether they survive this deadly expedition.

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Exploring History through Artifacts

Section 3: Exploring History through Artifacts

This section allows students to get hands-on with one artifact from the education trunk. They will do small group work, handle artifacts, draw pictures, and use critical thinking to hypothesize about what their artifact was used for.

This activity requires the trunk to be in your classroom.

- Activity 1: “Exploring History through Artifacts” Worksheet

Place students in small groups and give each student a copy of the worksheet. You can print this document from any “Oregon Trail” page of the Wyoming State Museum website or photocopy it from the “Student Worksheets” section of this book. Then, give each group one artifact from the trunk. Make sure you pick a fun, unusual, or interesting artifact. They will then use their worksheet to answer questions, discuss with their partners, draw pictures, and think about this time period.

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Exploring History through Artifacts

Definition of Artifact:

An object that was made or used by humans, and is of cultural or historical interest.

Description of the Artifact:

1. What material(s) is the artifact made from?

- | | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bone | <input type="checkbox"/> Stone | <input type="checkbox"/> Cardboard |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pottery | <input type="checkbox"/> Leather | <input type="checkbox"/> Fabric |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Metal | <input type="checkbox"/> Glass | <input type="checkbox"/> Plastic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wood | <input type="checkbox"/> Paper | <input type="checkbox"/> Other Material |

2. Measure the artifact. What is its length, width, and height?

3. Describe how the artifact looks and feels. For example: What is its shape? What does its texture feel like? What color is it? What does it smell like? How heavy does it feel? Does it have any moving parts? What else is interesting about the artifact?

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4. Is there anything written, printed, or stamped on the artifact?

5. Draw and color three pictures of the artifact, one picture for the top, one for the bottom, and one for a side.



Picture of Top of Artifact



Picture of Bottom of Artifact



Picture of Side of Artifact

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Uses of the Artifact:

1. How do you think the artifact was used?

2. Who do you think might have used the artifact?

3. When do you think the artifact was used?

4. Can you name a similar item that is used today?

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5. What does the artifact tell you about technology at this point in time?

6. What does the artifact tell you about the lives of the people who made or used it?

7. What are some questions you have about the artifact or things you want to learn about it?
