



# Section 1: Introduction to the Oregon Trail

- Five Big Questions of the Oregon Trail Video
- Five Big Questions Crossword Puzzle
- Introduction to the Oregon Trail Reading and Small Group Discussion
- Why You Would Travel West Opinion Writing

# Section Guide: Introduction to the Oregon Trail



Hey Teachers!

Thanks for making the Wyoming State Museum a part of your classroom! This guide will describe the activities in this section and how to use them with your students!

## Introduction:

The period of overland migration that occurred in the mid-1800s was an important moment in the history of the United States. This era includes the trails we know as the Oregon Trail, California Trail, and the Mormon Trail.

This introductory section is how the Wyoming State Museum suggests you begin your discussion of the trails. Your students will watch an introductory video (produced by the Wyoming State Museum) to learn about the “Five Big Questions” of the Oregon Trail and then reinforces their learnings with short activities.

## Preparation:

The only preparation you need for this section is to pull up the *Five Big Questions of the Oregon Trail* video from the museum’s website and to print out the student worksheets – one for each student. You can also follow the QR code at the bottom of this section guide to pull up the video.

## Activities:

### *Five Big Questions of the Oregon Trail Video:*

The first part of this section is to have your students watch this 10-minute video. It is a great introduction to the trails, and serves as the foundation for this section.

While the rest of this section is optional, this video must be watched if you plan on attending the museum’s *Travel the Oregon Trail* field trip – either at the museum or virtually.

### Five Big Questions Crossword Puzzle:

After your students watch the video, you may choose to have them complete the crossword puzzle, in order to reinforce what they learned.

# Section Guide: Introduction to the Oregon Trail

## Activities (Continued):

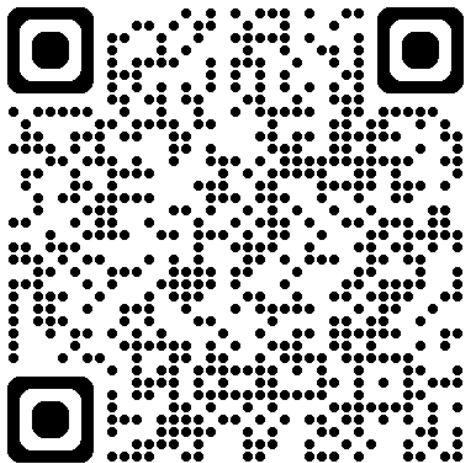
### Introduction to the Oregon Trail Reading Activity and Small Group Discussion:

Your students will begin this short activity by reading about some of the facts of the trail. This will let them dive a bit deeper into the subject and start to imagine how difficult of a journey the trail was.

After they are done reading, put them into small groups and have them talk about the group discussion questions on the second page of their worksheet.

### Why You Would Travel West Opinion Writing Activity:

The final activity in this section is an opinion writing activity. To begin, the museum recommends that you go back through the nine major reasons (covered in the video) that people chose to go to the West. Afterwards, your students will write about which of these reasons – or one of their own – would make them choose to make this long, difficult journey.



Title: *The Five Big Questions of the Oregon Trail*

Format: YouTube Video

Note: This educational video talks about what the Oregon Trail was, where it went, when it was traveled, why it was traveled, and who the emigrants were.

# The “Five Big Questions” Crossword Puzzle



Hey Kids!

You are about to learn all about the five big questions of the Oregon Trail. We’re going to focus on the questioning words – What, Where, When, Why, and Who.

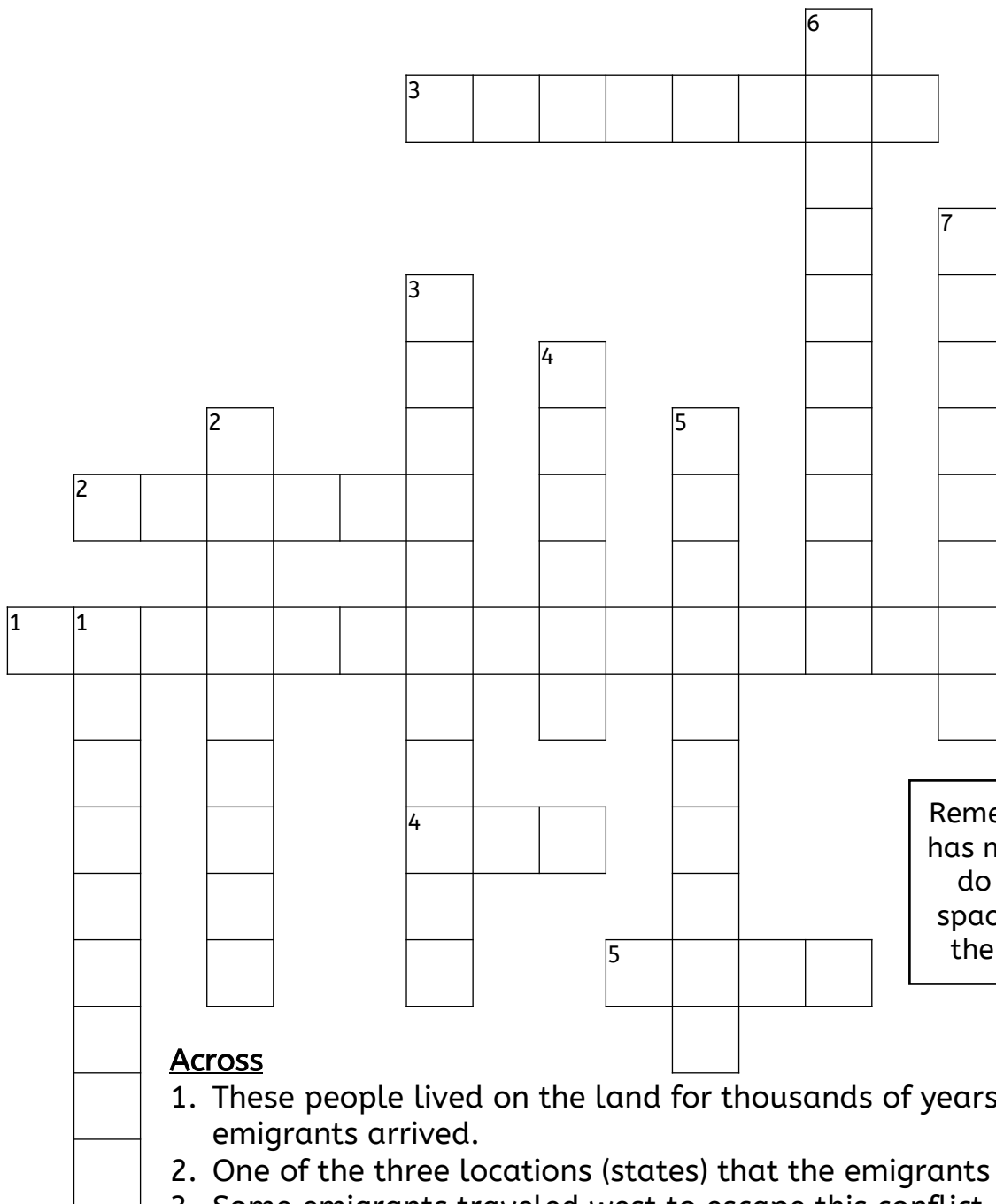
## The Five Big Questions of the Oregon Trail

Before we learn all about what it was like to travel the Oregon Trail and other historic trails, it’s important to answer the “five big questions” about the trails.

- What was the Oregon Trail?
- Where did the Oregon Trail and other historic trails go?
- When did emigrants travel the Oregon Trail?
- Why did they travel the trails?
- Who were these emigrants that risked their lives on this journey?

Your teacher will play you a video to learn more about these five big questions. Afterwards, use the knowledge you gained to complete the crossword puzzle on the back of this page.

If a crossword answer has more than one word (like “Oregon Trail”), do not leave a blank space between the two words on the crossword puzzle. Instead put them together (like “OregonTrail”).



Remember, if the answer has more than one word, do not leave a blank space between them on the crossword puzzle.

**Across**

1. These people lived on the land for thousands of years before the emigrants arrived.
2. One of the three locations (states) that the emigrants traveled to.
3. Some emigrants traveled west to escape this conflict, which would soon affect most of the country.
4. Land out west was only given to this people of this gender.
5. One of the three locations (states) that the emigrants traveled to.

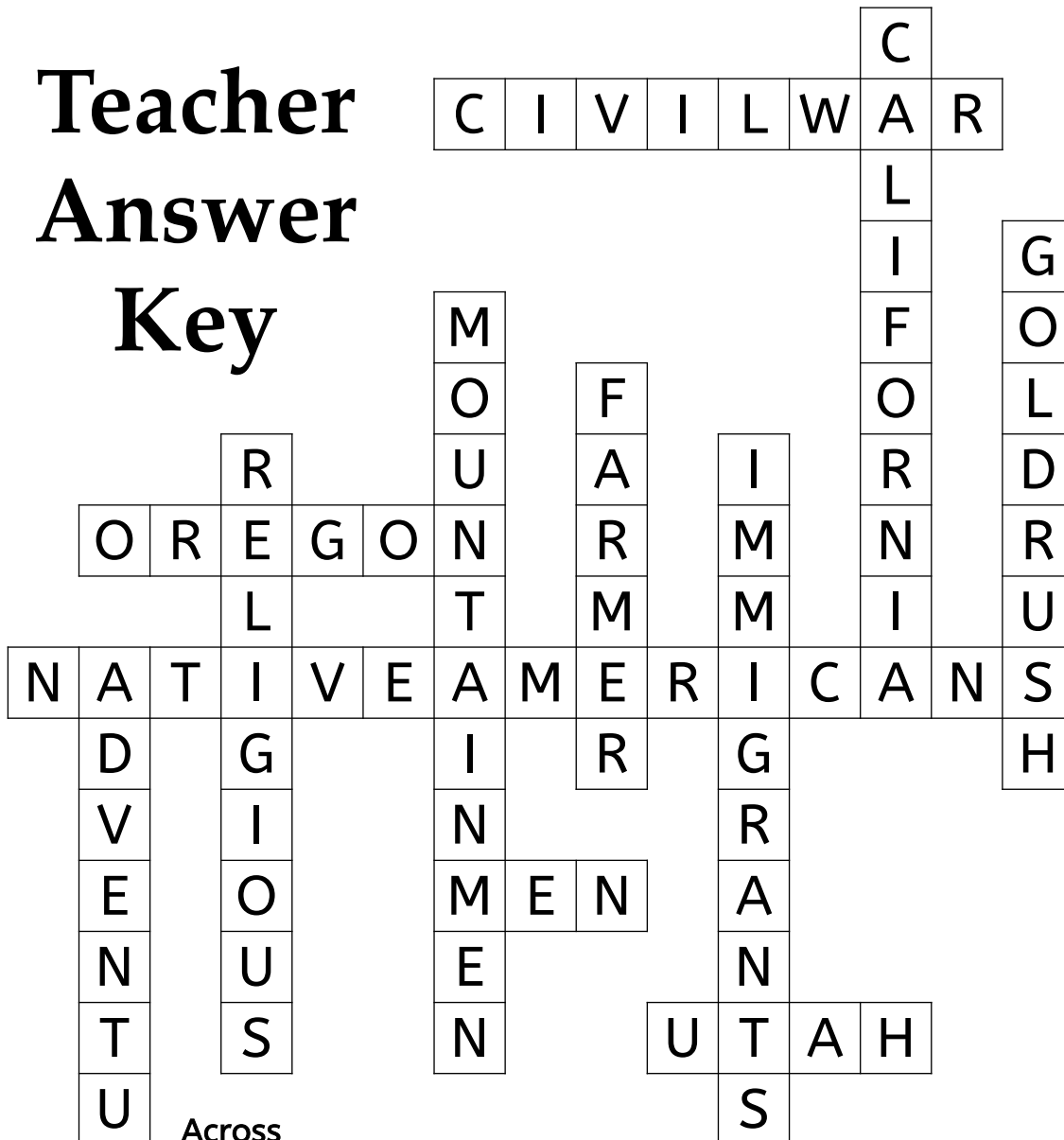
**Down**

1. Some young men traveled west to find \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Many Mormon emigrants traveled west to find \_\_\_\_\_ freedom.
3. These people learned the routes to the West while trapping beavers in the early 1800s.
4. Many emigrants traveled to Oregon to become a \_\_\_\_\_.
5. The people who traveled west in search of a new life were called this.
6. One of the three locations (states) that the emigrants traveled to.
7. This was the main reason that emigrants traveled to California.

# Teacher

# Answer

# Key



### Across

1. These people lived on the land that was being given away for thousands of years before the emigrants arrived.
2. One of the three locations (states) that the emigrants traveled to.
3. Some emigrants traveled west to escape this conflict, which would soon affect most of the country.
4. Land out west was only given to people of this gender.
5. One of the three locations (states) that the emigrants traveled to.

### Down

1. Some young men traveled west to find \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Many Mormon emigrants traveled west to find \_\_\_\_\_ freedom.
3. These people learned the routes to the West while trapping beavers in the early 1800s.
4. Many emigrants traveled to Oregon to become a \_\_\_\_\_.
5. The people who traveled west in search of a new life were called this.
6. One of the three locations (states) that the emigrants traveled to.
7. This was the main reason that emigrants traveled to California.

# Introduction to the Oregon Trail



Hey Kids!

Welcome to the Oregon Trail! You are about to start the adventure of your lives, as you walk for more than 2,000 miles – all the way from Independence, Missouri to Oregon City, Oregon!

## Life on the Oregon Trail

- About 300,000 emigrants traveled the trail from 1840s-1860s.
- They left their homes behind and sold nearly everything they owned to afford the trip to Oregon, California, or Utah.
- Most of them would never see the friends and family that they left behind, ever again.
- Travelers started in Independence, Missouri or other nearby cities.
- The trip could take anywhere from four to six months, depending on how prepared they were and how lucky they got.
- The pioneers rarely rode in the wagons, due to the brutal bumps. Almost everyone had to walk beside the wagon – up to fifteen miles per day.
- There were no hotels along the trail, so the emigrants camped outside the entire way.
- There were no grocery stores along the trail, either. They did pass a very small number of trading posts and forts. They also had a few opportunities to trade with Native Americans. But the emigrants had to bring most of their supplies with them.
- The pioneers had to be outside during extreme cold, intense heat, severe thunderstorms, and all other weather.
- When the emigrants arrived, there would be no home waiting for them. They would have to build their house with whatever tools they brought with them.



# Why You Would Travel West



Hey Kids!

Now that you know a little about why the emigrants chose to leave their old lives behind and venture west on the Oregon Trail, you can decide what would have motivated you to make that dangerous trip.

## Why You Would Travel West

As you've learned, the journey west was incredibly long and extremely dangerous. But people from across the United States decided to make the journey – either by themselves or with their families.



For this activity, you're going to think about what would make you decide to sell almost everything you owned, leave most of your friends and family behind, and walk 2,000 miles to Oregon. Some of the reasons that were discussed in the video you watched are below. Use the following blank pages to write about why you would choose to travel the Oregon Trail.

**To Farm the Fertile Land**

**To Find Adventure**

**To Find Gold**

**To Become Merchants**

**To Find Religious Freedom**

**To Secure the Oregon Territory**

**To Escape Debt**

**To Perform Missionary Service**

**To Escape the Civil War**





