

Oregon Trail Lesson Plan

Title: Life On the Oregon Trail

Subject: Social Studies

Grade Level: 3rd –4th Grade

Description:

Because this lesson will be taught towards the end of the school year the students will already be familiar with the concept of cooperative learning. They will demonstrate their understanding of the 5 essential components through daily interaction and activities. I will have taught them the importance of information literacy through direct instruction and they will be able to identify and locate appropriate information sources, evaluate the information and organize it. They will have been shown the importance of citing sources of information to avoid plagiarism and why plagiarism is wrong. They will also have a working knowledge of PowerPoint and Inspiration and know how to use it to create a presentation. With this background of information already in place they will participate in a project based learning experience. Each group of students will contain four members. Each member will be given cooperative learning role. They will be researching on the Internet, watching video presentations, and using a trade book to find out what life would have been like in the 1840's and the problems that the pioneers would have encountered along the way. They will also do a variety of projects and activities using multiple intelligences. The purpose of their project and research into the life of the pioneers will be to present a program to their parents and student body as to what life was like on the Oregon Trail.

An Overview of Activities Using Multiple Intelligences

Intrapersonal: Reflecting on what they know about the Oregon Trail

Interpersonal: Sharing ideas in cooperative groups and through jigsaw with other groups.

Musical: Singing "Skip to My Lou"

Mathematical/: Ordering and sequencing their reports in a logical/organized way.

Logical

Kinesthetic: Stealing sticks game

Verbal: The sharing of ideas and vocabulary related to the Oregon Trail.

Curriculum Benchmarks:

- Discuss and evaluate ways in which people should view cultures and customs different from their own.
- Discuss and evaluate the contributions of various groups in establishing a community.
- Understand the importance and lasting influence of individuals, issues, events, people and developments in U.S. history.
- Understand how the physical environment affects peoples' lives.

Materials:

- Worksheets: journal sheet consisting of two sheets in the shape of a covered wagon, recipes, stealing sticks game, instructions for making wagon, and music by: NAD Teacher Bulletin, Apr./May/June
- Knowledge Construction worksheet by: S Freed 1995
- Planning/evaluating, and rubrics forms for writing/projects: 40 Rubrics and Checklists to Assess Reading and Writing written by Adele Fiderer, Published by Scholastic
- Trade book (one per group): Dear America, Across the Wide and Lonesome Prairie, The Oregon Trail Diary of Hattie Campbell 1847, written by Kristiana Campbell, Published by Scholastic
- Computer and components with Internet access and printer
- PowerPoint/Inspiration programs
- Food items: large bag of apples (red or green), lemon juice, bowl, string, thumbtacks, flour, baking powder, salt, butter, milk, fork, measuring cup, rolling pin, baking sheet, oven
- 12 sticks for game
- Oregon Trail video/classroom activities from PBS at:
<http://www.pbs.org/opb/oregontrail/>
- Web sites: <http://endoftheoregontrail.org>,
<http://www.isu.edu/~trinmich/Sites.html>,
<http://www.americanwest.com/trails/pages/oretrail.htm>

Activities/Procedures:

Teacher Preparation:

1. Research to find suitable web sites that deal with the Oregon Trail that the students can use for research.
2. Read the trade book that the students will read in their group
3. Understand and be familiar with PowerPoint/Inspiration programs
4. Copy off all necessary worksheets for groups
5. Collect food/game items
6. Order video about the Oregon Trail from PBS

Prerequisite Student Skills:

1. Students will understand how to use PowerPoint/Inspiration for their presentation
2. Students will be able to search the internet for information about the Oregon Trail
3. Students will have a working knowledge of the 5 essential components of cooperative learning (positive interdependence, individual accountability, group processing, social skills development, and face to face interaction)
4. Students will be able to write a book report in an organized manner.

Activities/Procedures:

1. The students are divided into groups of four. Each member in a group is assigned a cooperative learning role. The cooperative learning roles are Checker/Time Keeper, Encourager, Tech Expert, and Recorder.
2. The students will be told that the purpose for the group is to learn about life on the Oregon Trail and to create a report based on the lives of the people on the Oregon Trail. They will also produce projects related to the theme that will be shared with their parents and student body.
3. The students will write down what they know about the Oregon Trail so far. They will fill in the "What I Know and Questions I Have" sections of the Knowledge Construction Worksheet. When they are done doing it individually they will share their answers with the group. They will then fill in more information that they learned after sharing.
4. They will view a video clip about the Oregon Trail (Myth, Image and Symbol, Hollywood myth vs. the realities of the Oregon Trail) after viewing the clip two of the members in each group will imagine they are Native Americans and two will imagine that they are pioneers. They will discuss the statement made in the video "You have Europeans coming by...and shooting at Indian people in their own land". They will first write down how they feel about the statement individually, and then they will do a Pair/Share activity in which they will share their ideas. Afterwards they will share within the whole group. And then spokespersons from each group will share with the whole class. Following this activity they will fill in the "What I Learned" section of the Knowledge Construction worksheet.
5. Before the students view the video clip entitled "Jumping Off" which is about the pioneer's decision to leave home they will fill in the "What I Know and Questions I Have" section of the Knowledge Construction Worksheet. After watching the video clip they will be to fill in the "What I Learned" section of the worksheet which will be shared with the members in their group. For their assignment the students will be asked to research how their family arrived in Wisconsin. They will create a family tree graphic organizer using Inspiration on the computer. They will list their family members and their journeys to finally arrive in Wisconsin. They will then compare their travel with that of the pioneers to find out what was similar or different as that of the pioneers in 1840. They will also find out any interesting stories or problems that occurred when their family members were moving from place to place. They will write these as diary excerpts on the covered wagon journal worksheets, which will be posted for others to see on a bulletin board.
6. The groups will round-robin read *Across the Wide and Lonesome Prairie*, *The Oregon Trail Diary of Hattie Campbell*. Following the reading of the book they will write a group book reports using the "My Writing Plan" planning form to get them organized and then they will use "My Writing Organization and Development" form to check over their writing. After all groups have written their report they will exchange reports and evaluate them looking for ways that

they could improve the story and making comments where changes could be made. I will evaluate final drafts and facilitate in the writing and in the evaluation process in the groups.

7. Each cooperative group will be assigned four research topics:
 - 1) Indian/Pioneer Roles on the Oregon Trail (How did they affect each others lives)
 - 2) What was daily life like for the pioneers (what kind of food did they eat, where did they sleep, how did they travel, what did they do for recreation)
 - 3) What were the reasons that the pioneers had for going to Oregon and what kind of sacrifices did they have to make to get there?
 - 4) What did the pioneers do once they got to Oregon (did the start their own businesses, farm, etc.)?
8. The students will be able to decide which topic they would like to research on the Internet within their group.
9. Before starting research they will fill out the “What I know and Questions I Have” sections of the knowledge construction worksheet. They will research their information on pre-approved web sites. After acquiring their information they will jigsaw with members of other groups who have the same topic. After they have filled out the “What I Know” section in sharing they will go back to their original groups and share their information.
10. After all information is compiled they will start to write their report. They will use the “My Writing Plan” form and upon completion of the report “My Writing Organization and Development” self-assessment checklist. When the groups are done writing their reports they will exchange reports and critique them. I will be the facilitator in the process and the final evaluator of the work.
11. Once the report is done they will be ready to convert it into a PowerPoint presentation with graphics.
12. Additional activities include: Making a Shoebox Prairie Schooner, making recipes of the pioneers such as homemade crackers, and dried apples which will be served at the presentation of the report to their families and the student body. They will also participate in the game entitled “Stealing Sticks”. The parents will be able to participate in this game also after the presentations. They will practice the song “Skip to My Lou” which they will perform for their families and student body.

Assessment/Evaluation:

The final PowerPoint and family tree presentation are evaluated using a rubric for projects and presentations. The reports are student evaluated through self assessment forms and by their classmates and teacher evaluated using a rubric entitled “Key Elements of Proficient Writing”.

Carmen Magray
Green Bay Seventh-day Adventist Junior Academy
1422 Shawano Ave., Green Bay, WI 54303