

Name _____

Date _____

The Oregon Trail - Answer Key

Use the text to answer each question below.

1. The Oregon Trail was the route between Independence, Missouri, and Oregon City, Oregon. Hundreds of thousands of pioneers took this trail from the 1840s to the 1860s. Westward migration really got going with the Great Emigration of 1843. The pioneers had several reasons for moving west. Missionaries wanted to spread their religion to Native Americans living in western territories. Mormons wanted to escape religious persecution. Some people were tempted by the promise of gold in California. Others wanted to take advantage of cheap, fertile farmland out west. Many Americans embraced Manifest Destiny. This was the belief that it was the United States' divine right to extend its territory west to the Pacific Ocean.

With which of the following statements would a believer of Manifest Destiny most likely agree?

- A. Native Americans have just as much of a right to live in this country as white Americans do.
- B. The United States is big enough. We don't need to get more territory.
- C. People should take care of the less fortunate in their communities.



D.

God supports Americans who want to settle out west.

The passage states that Manifest Destiny "was the belief that it was the United States' divine right to extend its territory west to the Pacific Ocean."

2. Most of the travelers on the Oregon Trail were families, including women and children. Following the trail usually took four to six months. Planning for the journey could take a year or more. Families had to save money and crops. They had to buy a covered wagon and oxen or mules to pull the wagon. Including food and supplies, the journey could cost up to \$1,000 for a single family. That's over \$32,000 in today's money.

The main food supplies taken by most families were flour, crackers, bacon, sugar, coffee, rice, beans, dried fruit, salt and pepper. Other supplies included a cast iron skillet, coffee pot, buckets, candles, soap and weapons for defense. Each family member packed two or three sets of warm clothes for the entire six-month journey. It was important to pack enough, but not so much that the wagon would be too heavy for the oxen to pull.

Which of the following is true about preparing for the journey on the Oregon Trail?

- A. Travelers packed as much as possible so they wouldn't run out of supplies on the trail.
- B. Families could decide on a whim to move out west and start the trip the next day.
- ☒ C. Families had to balance between packing too little and packing too much.
- D. Most of the travelers were single men who bought a wagon together.

According to the passage, "It was important to pack enough, but not so much that the wagon would be too heavy for the oxen to pull."

3. Travelers had to leave Missouri in April or May if they hoped to reach Oregon before the cold, snowy winter. They could travel about 15 miles per day. Leaving in spring ensured there would be plenty of grass for the oxen to eat along the way. Even with this precaution, the journey was difficult. For one thing, the Oregon Trail was never officially defined. It changed with the effects of weather and use, so travelers had to be flexible. They also dealt with bad weather with only a canvas tent for cover. Many pioneers died from diseases like dysentery, cholera, smallpox and flu. Some drowned at river crossings or were run over by wagon wheels. All in all, about one in 10 people who traveled the Oregon Trail died along the way.

Why did most pioneers leave Missouri in the spring?

- A. to harvest grass and wheat along the way
- B. to be the first to settle in Oregon Territory
- ☒ C. to get to Oregon before it got too cold
- D. to avoid faulty river bridges

The passage states, "Travelers had to leave Missouri in April or May if they hoped to reach Oregon before the cold, snowy winter."

4. Natural and manmade landmarks were essential for travelers to gauge their progress on the Oregon Trail. Travelers usually crossed the Great Plains until they reached the first trading post at Fort Kearney. Then they followed the Platte River for over 600 miles to Fort Laramie. Next, they began climbing the Rocky Mountains. Independence Rock, a huge granite rock, marked the halfway point of the journey. Travelers hoped to reach Independence Rock by July 4 because it meant they were on schedule to reach Oregon before winter. Many people carved their names into the rock as they passed. After leaving Independence Rock, travelers continued to climb the Rocky Mountains to the South Pass. Then they crossed the desert to Fort Hall, the second trading post. Next, they crossed Snake River Canyon, climbed the steep Blue Mountains, and traveled along the Columbia River. Finally, they reached Oregon City.

Why did travelers want to reach Independence Rock by July 4?

A. because it meant they were almost at their destination



B.

because it meant their schedule was on track

According to the passage, "Travelers hoped to reach Independence Rock by July 4 because it meant they were on schedule to reach Oregon before winter."

C. because they would earn money if they did

D. because granite was a sign of good luck

5. As white pioneers traveled and settled along the Oregon Trail, they often met Native Americans who were living in the western territories. The pioneers sometimes traded peacefully with the Native Americans as they passed through. Other times, they attacked and killed the Native Americans. As more and more settlers arrived, some Native Americans, including members of the Cayuse tribe, became resentful. Many Cayuse died in a measles epidemic in Washington in 1847. They blamed Marcus Whitman, a missionary, for bringing the disease to them. Cayuse tribesmen killed Whitman, his wife and 12 other settlers. This conflict led to a seven-year war between the Cayuse and the federal government. Eventually the Cayuse's tribal lands were taken away, and they were placed on a reservation. Many other Native Americans were displaced as westward expansion continued.

Which of these best describes the relationship between white pioneers and Native Americans during the time of the Oregon Trail?



- A.** Mixed: some pioneers and Native Americans traded with each other, but others were hostile.
- According to the passage, white pioneers "sometimes traded peacefully with the Native Americans as they passed through. Other times, they attacked and killed the Native Americans." Plus, the Cayuse tribe blamed a missionary and killed him and his family, leading to a war.*
- B.** Nonexistent: pioneers and Native Americans rarely encountered each other in the West.
- C.** Positive: pioneers and Native Americans traded peacefully with each other.
- D.** Negative: pioneers and Native Americans always fought when they met.