

Long ago, when people settled the United States, most lived in the East, and it was hard to travel west. There were no planes, trains, or automobiles. People traveled by wagon or boat, and it took many days to reach a destination.

Although it was difficult, in the 1840s, many people traveled far across the United States from the East to the West. They were pioneers. They would settle in the western part of the country after a challenging journey to a new life.

Getting to the West was very difficult because there were no roads and there were many obstacles to travel. People traveled in groups, and each family would buy a covered wagon, which is a big wooden wagon with a kind of tent on it. It was small, about the size of an automobile, but it would be home for the whole family while they traveled to their new home. Each family would pack the tools and supplies they needed to build a new life in the West. They would have to fit all they took in their wagon, so they would bring only the items that were essential.

It was dangerous to try to travel west without protection, so families would travel together, combining their wagons into what was called a wagon train. It was a group of wagons all going the same way. To prepare, they would meet with other families to plan their trip, choosing a route based on the travels of others.

When the families started the trip, they did not know each other, they only had in common that they were leaving the East to start a new life in the West. They met when the trip began, and they would spend more than a year together, so they got to know each other well. Sometimes they would borrow tools from each other, and sometimes they shared food. When the wagons encountered a problem, such as a storm that caused wagons to stick in muddy holes, they would solve it together.

It would take more than a year to reach the West, and many things happened along the route. The families sometimes had babies along the way, which delayed the progress as the wagon train would stop for a few days to help the mother with the baby. Then they would keep going, persisting whatever the weather, because they knew they had a long way to travel and could not delay long.

When the wagon train got to the West, the families would settle there, building homes, starting farms. They would create communities, and instead of being partners in a trip they were collaborators in community. Those communities would grow into towns, and then some would expand into cities, from a wagon train to a metropolis.

In the next century, people built a railroad that crossed the United States. By 1900, there were many more people in the West, and thousands of people came west by train. A trip that had taken months now took passengers a few days of comfortable transit. The railroad brought many changes, and the pioneers became legends as the country developed into the nation of today.

## Identify/Classify Sequence – Nonfiction

Questions developed by Center for Urban Education for use by Chicago Public Schools 2008-2007.

*Choose the best answer for each question.*

1. What did pioneers do before they traveled?

- a. Became friends with other pioneers.
- b. Packed what they needed.
- c. Built a wagon.
- d. Grew food.

3. What did the families do when they got to the West?

- a. They built railroads.
- b. They bought supplies in stores.
- c. They kept traveling.
- d. They built homes.

2. What did the pioneers do after they decided to travel west?

- a. Planned where they would travel.
- b. Settled in the West.
- c. Took a train.
- d. Built homes.

4. What happened after the railroad was built?

- a. People left the West.
- b. More people moved West.
- c. The pioneers built homes.
- d. The wagon trains kept coming.

5. *Write your own answer to this question. What were some problems families had along the way?*

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### TEACHER NOTES: Develop Students' Skills: Exercise Thinking

These questions have not been validated, so decisions about student's achievement should not be made based on their responses. They are intended to exercise skills. Recommended activities include: students work in pairs to choose the best response; give students the questions without the responses so they generate their own answers; students make up additional questions; students make up questions like these for another passage.

**Answers:** *You can remove this answer key and then give it to students and ask them to figure out the basis for the correct response.*

|        |   |   |   |   |
|--------|---|---|---|---|
| Item   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Answer | c | a | b | c |

Question 5 is open-ended. Here is a suggested response.  
They needed food; they needed tools; they had to travel in bad weather.