

Skill: Identify/Classify Sequence 6th Grade Assessment

NONFICTION: Traveling West

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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.

Directions: 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.

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.

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.

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?

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.

5. They needed food; they needed tools; they had to travel in bad weather.

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FICTION: Stopping in Denver

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The wagon train left this morning, and I told my friends goodbye. I would be staying here in Denver, because I had abandoned the journey. We had been traveling for months on a quest for a new life. It was June when we left St. Louis, and it was October now. I would not stay with the wagon train, as I was exhausted and frustrated.

When we left St. Louis, we were very excited because we were going to be pioneers. We were going all the way to the ocean, and at the completion of our journey, we would be in California, a place everyone said was wonderful.

Then we had our first problem. The first day a wheel came off our wagon. It was cracked. We could not fix it. It was not far from St. Louis. So John rode back there on his horse. He came back with another wheel. But that took a day. The other families waited.

Then we had another problem. There was a big rainstorm. There was so much mud the oxen that were pulling our wagons could not get them to move. We had to wait for the rain to stop and the mud to dry. We lost two more days; I was discouraged, and so were the other travelers.

We were tired and it had been just two weeks. We kept on traveling. Then we had to stop because the Brown family got sick. We waited a few days for their recovery. They gave up, feeling that they could not continue to meet the constant challenges. They turned back. Mrs. Brown said, "Back to civilization."

It was hard work every day, and each day brought challenges. We persisted and kept going, but by the time we arrived at Denver it was too much. We were going to leave the wagon train. That night we told the wagon master.

He asked us to change our minds. He said, "The worst is over now." But I knew it would not be easier. The mountains we had just crossed were just the beginning. It had been such hard work to get where we were now. We had been determined to stay the course, but now we were determined to leave the group. It would be even harder to reach the ocean, so I decided that we would stay here in Denver.

Today I have gone to look for a job. There are many jobs in the mines, and I will take one of them. We will get a permanent home here. Living in a tent next to the covered wagon is over. We will have a place where we can live securely without concern about the weather and other obstacles. I will miss my friends, but I will not miss all the troubles.

Directions: Choose the best answer for each question

6. What happened the night the family decided to stay in Denver?

- a. They got jobs.
- b. They found a home.
- c. They told the wagon master.
- d. They changed their mind.

7. What was the first difficulty the family had on the trip?

- a. The wheel fell off the wagon.
- b. They got sick.
- c. They had to cross the mountains.
- d. They were lonely.

8. What did the family do the day they stayed in Denver?

- a. Built a home.
- b. Looked for work.
- c. Lived in a new house.
- d. Crossed the mountains.

9. What happened after the big rainfall?

- a. They kept going.
- b. They got new wheels.
- c. They got stuck.
- d. They chose to stay.

10. *Write your own answer to this question.*

What were some problems the family had during the trip?

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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	6	7	8	9
Answer	c	a	b	c

Question 10 is open-ended. Here is a suggested response.

10. They had to get a new wheel; people got sick; they had to work very hard.