



Companion Teaching Activities

***To the historical fiction
serialized story for young readers***

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Produced by the Missouri Press Foundation

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Literature for Literacy Program

Companion Teacher Guide

Friend on the Trail

A historical fiction serialized story for young readers

Written by Kay Hively

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Learning Extensions written by Kathy Metallo, NIE Coordinator, The Sun News, Myrtle Beach, SC - The Sun News' Literature for Literacy Program

Chapter One

1. Write a news article (a summary of facts, news-style) about chapter one. Limit yourself to one or two paragraphs. Include the main facts of who?, what?, where?, when?, why?, and how?
2. In chapter one, underline five nouns in singular form. Underline five in plural form. Using the newspaper, find five singular and plural nouns.
3. Write down clues in the story that indicate the time of year these families are traveling. Hold a class discussion to agree upon the season. FACT: The pioneers would have to start out in the spring to beat the long cold winters. Using the weather page of The Sun News (on the back of SPORTS), find today's temperature for a city in Missouri, Oregon, and your city.
4. Draw a picture of the scenery in chapter one. Can you find a picture in The Sun News that represents where you live? Compare the two.

Chapter Two

1. Write the names of Martha's family across the top of your page. Make columns for each. In each column, list the chores of the family members from the story. How do these chores differ from today's? Looking in the newspaper, find tools and equipment that Martha's family could use if they traveled the Oregon trail today to do these chores while on their trip. Discuss how they would use them and the difficulties they would have faced on the trail without them.
2. Draw a picture of what Martha saw in the night sky, as she went to sleep. How many stars did you draw on your paper? Using the newspaper, cut or tear out five numbers greater than your number of stars, and five less than your number. Arrange the ten numbers in numerical order.
3. In the story, find five action verbs and draw boxes around them. In the newspaper, draw circles around five action verbs.

4. As the sun was setting in the story, the temperature began to cool. Find the cool, blue numbers on the weather page of the newspaper. The numbers represent the lowest temperature expected for that day. Plot these temperatures on a graph, for each day of the week. (Older students could plot both the red "highs" with a red pencil and "lows" in blue.)

EXTRA: If you have the grocery ads from Wednesday's newspaper, go through the food ads and tear out fruits and vegetables representing foods on Martha's dream farm. Glue them to your paper.

Chapter Three

1. Martha makes a friend. What is a friend? In your own words, write what this word means to you. Find a photograph in The Sun News of two or more friends together. Write a dialogue/conversation between them. Watch your punctuation.

2. In Chapter 3 there are several situations dealing with safety. Hold a class discussion about being safe. From the newspaper, cut out pictures of places. Beside each, write down one fact about being safe there.

3. In chronological order, write down the times of day as they occur in Chapter 3. What was taking place at each of these times of day. In the newspaper, find words that represent time. Ie. Now, Then, Tomorrow, etc. Create a time-line of the events in this chapter and/or throughout the story.

4. Martha's family will need supplies soon. Martha's dad may have to barter for goods instead of paying money. Discuss the word "barter." How is this different from the way we spend today? Looking in the newspaper, find items they would want to barter for. Make two lists: necessary items and luxury items. Create a Venn diagram comparing and contrasting ways people purchase goods then and now.

Chapter Four

1. What emotions are mentioned in Chapter 4? Why are the people feeling this way? Find photos in the newspaper that depict these different emotions. Highlight words and phrases in this chapter that help you infer the characters' emotions.

2. What do you expect to happen in Chapter 5? Underline clues that influence your opinion. In the local section of the newspaper, find a story about someone your age. Read the first sentence in the article and predict what will follow. Read the article. Were you right?

3. You have read chapters one, two, three, and four now. Go through the newspaper and find sets of 1, 2, 3, and 4 items.

4. Underline three possessive nouns in the story. Write them on your paper and include the noun they are modifying. For example: mother's - arms

Activities for Chapters Five through Eight

1. During the pioneer days, it was not uncommon for people to record their thoughts into journals or diaries. Imagine that you are a young pioneer. Using today's newspaper, find events you would want to write about in your journal. Write about today's weather, family activities (Hint: look in KICKS) and your thoughts and feelings about making the 2000-mile journey.

2. In the mid 1800s more than 350,000 pioneers made the journey from eastern United States to western territories. They had different reasons for making the trip.

- a. The east coast was overcrowded, and people were dying from various diseases.
- b. The Gold Rush lured fortune-seekers (forty-niners= because they rushed out in 1849) to California to pan for gold.
- c. Some planned to start a new business venture to make money selling trade goods.
- d. Some sought religious freedom.

Choose a city mentioned in today's newspaper. Write three reasons why you would be willing to sell your possessions, pack up your family, and travel through dangerous territory to start a new life.

3. The pioneers sold most of their belongings and packed only what they needed for their travels. They brought along clothes, food, seeds, tools, horseshoes, guns, plows, shovels, and axes. You are ready to pack your own wagon....station wagon, that is. What items would you include on your 5-month journey? Be sure to remember your cash or check book--the trading posts charge high premiums on goods. From the newspaper, tear out pictures of items you would take on your trip. Explain why.

4. In the early 1800s, the east coast residents suffered from typhoid, tuberculosis, scarlet fever, malaria, and yellow fever. Cholera was the disease that plagued the pioneers as they traveled west. The people took baths and washed their livestock in the same rivers and streams; this water often was the only drinking water available. Cholera victims often died within hours of catching the disease. In 1849, more than 1,500 pioneers died. Scan through today's newspaper for articles about medical research. Discuss how these findings improve our health. (We have doctors for almost every ailment now. Notice the number of advertisements from health professionals.)

5. One Indian tribe the pioneers confronted was the Pawnee tribe. Their name means "horn," for the hair style of the tribal men. Many wagon-train travelers were afraid of the Pawnee because of their reputation as fierce warriors against the Sioux and Cheyenne. Fortunately though, the Pawnee never went to war against the United States. In fact, they helped the U.S. soldiers stop other tribes from attacking settlers.

Write the word FRIEND or DIVERSITY down the side of your notebook paper. Find words in today's newspaper that define the Life skills of tolerance and friendship.

Ie. V=value, we should value our classmates.

6. Many wagon trains consisted of fifty or more wagons. The adults traveling in the train would agree on the journey's rules before they would embark. Swearing, drinking and traveling on Sundays were often banned. The wagon master, the person elected for his familiarity of the trek, controlled the group's travel direction, stops, and other important issues, similar to the boss in your home. He also decided punishment for those who broke the rules. Why do we have rules? Find articles in today's paper about abiding and breaking rules. Hold a class discussion. OR conduct a mock trial with the class.

7. One responsible of good journalism is to tell the truth, and not embellish the facts. Peter Burnett, a Missouri lawyer of the 1800s, told prospective travelers that the land in Oregon was a sort of paradise where "the pigs are running about under the great acorn trees, round and fat, and already cooked, with knives and forks sticking in them so that you can cut off a slice whenever you are hungry." How exaggerated this tale is! Here is a fun exercise. Find a short feature story in today's newspaper. Circle the main facts (5Ws and 1H). Using these facts, write a silly story that may be slightly believable. Share with the class.

8. In the early 1800s very few informative guidebooks were available to the pioneers. Emigrants had to rely on "word of mouth" from those who had traveled west before them. Oftentimes, these accounts conflicted. Some of the books available would not have the complete journey logged (stop halfway there!) or would have an incorrect travel route that may never had been explored, the writer just filled it in!! These facts could lead the wagon trains into very dangerous territory and against ominous, merciless foes.

Have you ever played telephone? Your teacher will find a sentence from today's newspaper. (Underline it and hide it!) Whisper it to the nearest student. Share it from student to student. As the sentence makes its way around the room, it will change. As you can see, rumors can start very small but..... Is word of mouth always reliable?

9. When the wagon trains stopped to pitch camp for the night, they would take several steps to prepare for the night. They would arrange their wagons into a circle and herd their cattle to the center. Families placed feather mattresses over their wagon supplies and slept in the wagons, under the wagon bed upon a canvas, or in a pitched tent. Follow these steps:

Step 1- Cut out ten words from today's newspaper.

Step 2- Arrange them in alphabetical order.

Step 3- Glue them onto your paper.

10. Pretend you are a reporter for the Oregon Country Journal. What questions would you ask Martha and her family as they rolled in from their long journey? Yes! They had completed their trip. Here is an exercise about newspaper articles.

a. Write the story as a news story, with just the basic facts. No more than two paragraphs.

b. Write the story as a feature article. Include more descriptive details about the travelers and their journey. Include any tragedies and successes.

c. Write the story as an editorial. Include the emotions of the travelers, conditions on the trip, and any problems or solutions that you are concerned about. Now create a classroom newspaper from each of your classmates' work.

CRAFTS:

Roll up newspaper sheets into logs. Glue together four walls. Lay construct paper over the top for roof, cut out a window for your log cabin.

Create a desk-sized teepee from newspapers.

Oregon Trail Terms -to learn more:

"expansionists"

emigrants

"greenhorns"

migration

squatters rights (1842)

"Jumping-Off" places

Pony Express (1860) Mail Service

Technology:

End of the Oregon Trail Interpretive Center

www.teleport.com/~eotic/index.html

National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center

www.or.blm.gov/NHOTIC/

The Oregon Trail

www.isu.edu/~trinmich/oregontrail.html

Oregon Trail Information Center

www.gsn.org/~jmeckel/oregon.html

Bibliography:

Facts and Ideas taken from A Covered Wagon Girl: The Diary of Sallie Hester, 1849-1850, edited by Christy Steele with Ann Hodgson, Blue Earth Books, Capstone Press, c.2000.