



Westward on the Oregon Trail

6A

Note: Introducing the Read-Aloud may have activity options that exceed the time allocated for this part of the lesson. To remain within the time periods allocated for this portion of the lesson, you will need to make conscious choices about which activities to include based on the needs of your students.

Introducing the Read-Aloud

10 minutes

What Have We Already Learned?

5 minutes

Remind students that they learned about the Trail of Tears in the previous lesson. Ask students to share what the phrase *Trail of Tears* describes. (the forced removal of the Cherokee from their homes in Georgia) Ask students to share why the Cherokee were forced from their homes. As students share who wanted the Cherokee to leave Georgia and what happened to the Cherokee as they traveled west to Indian Territory, encourage them to use any domain vocabulary learned thus far.

Remind students that the Cherokee were *forced* to leave their homes on the East Coast and move farther west, and that they did not want or choose to move. Then remind students that other settlers *chose* to move west on their own because they were looking for a better life. Remind students that in the first lesson, a family moved to the West by choice. Have students share what they remember about that family's moving westward.

Essential Background Information or Terms

5 minutes



← Show image 6A-1: Map of the Oregon Trail

Remind students that some of the settlers who chose to leave their homes and move farther and farther west followed a route called the Oregon Trail because it led to the Oregon Territory. Explain that a territory is an area of land that belongs to a country's government but isn't yet a state or province. So the

Oregon Territory belonged to the U.S. government but wasn't yet an official state. Point to the territories and states on image 6A-1 and explain that California, Iowa, and Missouri were states at this time, but the other sections of land shown were territories.

Share with students that the Oregon Trail was a path through the wilderness beginning in the state of Missouri and ending in the Oregon Territory. As you share this information with students, point to Missouri in image 6A-1, tracing the Oregon Trail all the way to the Oregon Territory. Remind students that this trail covered about two thousand miles and took about six months to complete.

Vocabulary Preview

5 minutes

Prairie



← Show image 6A-8: Setting up camp for the night

1. In today's read-aloud, you will hear, "Beyond a grove of trees, they found the missing animals calmly chewing the wet *prairie* grass as if nothing had happened."
2. Say the word *prairie* with me three times.
3. A prairie is a large, open area of mostly flat land covered with grass. [If available, show additional images of prairie.]
4. As our wagon train went along the trail, we saw many buffalo wandering on the prairie.
5. Tell your partner what these settlers are doing on the prairie.

Scout



← Show image 6A-6: Mr. Lawrence and Captain Ward discussing the trail

1. In today's read-aloud, you will hear about a man named Thomas Lawrence, who was the wagon train's *scout*.
2. Say the word *scout* with me three times.
3. A scout is someone who is sent ahead of a group of travelers to see what is in front of them.
4. The scout rode ahead of the wagon train to find the best way to cross the river.

5. Talk with your partner about different ways a scout could be helpful to people traveling in the mountains or across the prairie. Try to use the word *scout* when you talk about it.

Purpose for Listening

Tell students to listen carefully to determine the main topic of the read-aloud and to learn more about how pioneers traveled, and what it was like to travel, on the Oregon Trail.



Westward on the Oregon Trail

← Show image 6A-2: Wagon train

- 1 In what direction are they traveling?
- 2 What kinds of things do you think the families took with them? Do you remember the kinds of things the Morgans took in "Going West"?

The wagon train was moving westward along the Oregon Trail. The families walked beside or rode in large, covered wagons pulled by oxen. ¹ Each family had only one wagon, but that wagon was able to hold almost everything the family owned. ²



← Show image 6A-3: Family packing the wagon

- 3 That's why most families walked alongside their covered wagons.

Each family packed food: things like flour, potatoes, and beans. They took clothes, blankets, soap, candles, furniture, pots and pans, china, and rifles. They even had to take barrels of water with them because they weren't sure where they might find clean water along the way. By the time everything was packed in the wagon, there wasn't a whole lot of room for much else! ³

- 4 Why would families want to bring animals like horses, sheep, and cows?

In addition to the oxen that pulled the wagons, some families brought other animals, such as horses, sheep, and cows. These animals didn't go inside the covered wagons. Instead, they were tied to the wagons with rope and walked behind or beside the wagons. ⁴

- 5 People traveling to the Oregon Territory traveled on the Oregon Trail.

Many of these families were headed to the Oregon **Territory** where they planned to settle and make new homes. ⁵ Back in the East, it had become too expensive for the settlers to be able to own their own land. They hoped that by traveling west, they might find a place to build their own homes. Others chose to go for the adventure of starting a new life. ⁶

- 6 Would you be excited to start such an adventure? Or nervous? Or both?



← Show image 6A-4: Family headed west, another going back east

The road west had been challenging already. The wagon train had been traveling for three long months. The settlers were following a rough, or uneven, trail of wagon **ruts** to the Oregon

7 [Point to the ruts in the image.]
Wagon ruts are deep grooves that the wagon wheels make in the earth.



8 What is Indian Territory?

9 So how did the Native Americans feel about the settlers moving west?



10 Degree is a unit of measuring temperature. A degree is also an official document given to someone who successfully completed a series of classes at a college or university.

11 A scout is a person sent ahead of a traveling group to gather information about what lies ahead. Why do you think it was important to have a scout?



Territory.⁷ After many wagons followed one path, the ruts became so deep that it was very difficult or even impossible for wagons to travel without getting stuck.

← **Show image 6A-5: Abigail looking at Native Americans in the distance**

As much of the Oregon Trail went through what was known as “Indian Territory,” the travelers encountered Native American tribes along the way.⁸ Sometimes the Native Americans were fearful that the settlers would decide to stop traveling and just make farms right there on their lands.⁹

← **Show image 6A-6: Mr. Lawrence and Captain Ward discussing the trail**

On this particular day, the wagon train moved slowly in one-hundred-degree heat.¹⁰ Thomas Lawrence, a settler and the wagon train’s **scout**, rode quickly over to the leader of the wagon train, Captain Jeremiah Ward, to report on the trail ahead.¹¹

“There’s water half a mile ahead, but it’s not fit for drinking,” Mr. Lawrence reported. “We ought to reach Sweetwater River by noon, though, and that water is safe.”

Captain Ward nodded his thanks, “Good work, Thomas.”

← **Show image 6A-7: Preparing to cross the river**

When the wagons reached the Sweetwater River, everyone enjoyed a long, cool drink. Captain Ward ordered, “First we’ll take the wagons and the oxen across the river. Then we’ll swim the extra horses over. The cattle will go last.”

To lighten their loads for the crossing, families removed any heavy objects from their wagons. The settlers brought many of these items to have in their new homes to remind them of their homes back in the East. Now, many of those items they’d hoped to have in their new homes had to be left behind.



← **Show image 6A-8: Setting up camp for the night**

Fortunately, everyone crossed safely. Once everyone was across and settled, they refilled their water barrels and canteens. They would need the fresh water for the next portion of their trip. Then they set up camp for the night. They made small campfires over which they cooked their food: beans and bacon.



← **Show image 6A-9: Mr. Lawrence keeping watch**

Less than an hour after darkness fell, when most of the travelers were sleeping in their tents or wagons, the wind began to rise, whooshing across the plains. Thomas Lawrence, who was watching the cattle, could hear rumbling off in the distance.



← **Show image 6A-10: Lightning illuminating the camp**

Suddenly a flash of lightning split the night sky. The next instant, a blinding rain fell on the sleeping pioneers.¹² Then, out of nowhere, the wind blew so hard that half the tents blew over. Those who had been in tents ran to their wagons, squeezing into any space they could find amid the furniture and supplies. Still, everyone was already soaking wet, and even tying the canvas flaps shut could not keep some rain from blowing in.¹³

12 Remember, pioneers are the first people to enter into and settle a region.

13 The storm is another difficulty that the pioneers faced on the Oregon Trail.



← **Show image 6A-11: Mama and the children huddled in the wagon**

Inside the Lawrence family’s wagon, everyone huddled together shivering.¹⁴ Nine-year-old Barbara said, “Folks call these wagons ‘prairie schooners’, Mama, as if they were schooner ships sailing the wide open land instead of the sea. I didn’t really think the schooner ships and our prairie schooner were that much alike. But, with the wind rocking the wagon back and forth, I feel as if we really are at sea.”

14 Show me how they were shivering.

15 How do you think Abigail and her family are feeling?

Six-year-old Abigail whispered, “I wish we were home.”¹⁵

At that moment the canvas flaps opened and Thomas Lawrence joined his family inside the wagon.

Abigail asked, “Papa, why aren’t you with the cattle?”

16 The lightning scared the cattle. Will the pioneers find their cattle?

He explained, “That first lightning bolt spooked them so much that they ran off. We’ll have to round them up after the storm.”¹⁶



17 If the night was miserable, was it a good night or a bad night?

← **Show image 6A-12: Abigail greeting Snowbell**

After a cold, miserable night, the morning dawned cool and gray.¹⁷ Abigail awoke to the sound of a bell. Peering out, she exclaimed, “Why, it’s Snowbell! She’s found her way back!” Sure enough, the Lawrence’s milk cow was standing outside the wagon, ready to be milked.

Mr. Lawrence told his wife, “Patricia, have one of the boys milk her. I have an idea.”



← **Show image 6A-13: Tracking down the cattle**

Mr. Lawrence trudged, or walked heavily, through thick mud to Captain Ward’s wagon. Captain Ward was already up helping other people. “Our milk cow came home,” Mr. Lawrence reported. “If we can follow her tracks, maybe we’ll find some of the other animals.”

Captain Ward agreed and so on horseback, Thomas Lawrence and some other men followed the cow’s tracks back to where she had been. Beyond a grove of trees, they found the missing animals calmly chewing the wet prairie grass as if nothing had happened.¹⁸

18 What is a prairie?

Mr. Lawrence rode back over to his wife near the family wagon and joked, “Well, that certainly was fun.”

She replied, “Let’s hope we’ve seen the worst of the Oregon Trail.”¹⁹

19 Do you think they have seen the last of their difficulties on the Oregon Trail?

But two months later, the trail presented one last challenge to the pioneers. They were crossing the high mountains of the eastern part of the Oregon Territory on their way to the green valley beyond. That day, Captain Jeremiah Ward and Thomas Lawrence stood together and looked down at the **steep** mountain trail ahead.²⁰

20 [Point to the steep mountain path.] Describe the path in the picture. What do you think the word *steep* means?



← **Show image 6A-14: Mr. Lawrence and Captain Ward looking down the treacherous mountain path**

The captain said, “We have to take this steep path down. There’s no other way. If we turn back to take the southern trail, we’d lose too much time. Then we’d never make it out of these mountains before the winter snow hits us.”²¹

21 What group of people was forced to travel through the snow without even having the protection of wagons?

Mr. Lawrence agreed. “It is the only way, but it will be difficult. When I scouted ahead,” he said, “I found that the forest crowds in too closely for a wagon to travel on either side of the trail, so we must take the trail itself. At least this extremely steep stretch is fairly short, only about one hundred sixty feet. Then the trail levels out and is in good condition again. Once we make it down the hill, the trail will be much easier.”

Fortunately Captain Ward had a plan. “Tell everyone to unhitch the oxen from the front of the wagons and reconnect them to the back. We’ll walk with them on the paths on either side of the trail, and the oxen will be able to hold the weight of each wagon so that it doesn’t slide down.²² After the wagons are down, our families can follow on foot. We’ll bring the herds down last.”

22 Remember, oxen were also sometimes used to tow the flatboats on the Erie Canal.



← **Show image 6A-15: Oxen hitched to the back of the wagon**

Half an hour later, the first wagon started down the steep trail. Six oxen, attached to the wagon by ropes or chains, strained to keep the Lawrence’s wagon under control on the bumpy, uneven surface. Watching from the top of the hill was Mrs. Lawrence and the children. As they watched the wagon descend, Mrs. Lawrence said, “It will be a miracle if my china doesn’t shatter to pieces with all that bouncing and banging.”²³

After what seemed like a lifetime, there came a cry from the bottom of the incline: “We’re down! And everything’s in one piece!”

Everyone cheered²⁴ and Captain Ward ordered the men to move the rest of the wagons.

By the end of the day, everyone had made it down to the bottom. That night, camping beside a clean, flowing stream, Captain Ward announced, “Tomorrow we’ll be out of these mountains. And then, we’re almost . . . home.”²⁵

23 China is a very delicate type of pottery often shaped into plates and cups. It is called china because it was first made in ancient China.

24 Show me how everyone might have cheered.

25 Where will home be for these pioneers?



← **Show image 6A-16: The Lawrences and the Wards admiring the valley**

Ten days later, Captain Ward led his wagon train out of a forest and into a lush, green valley spread out as far as the eye could see.

As each wagon emerged from the trees and each family saw the valley ahead, everyone fell silent. This was the place that the travelers had dreamed about and worked to reach through six months of **hardships**, or difficulties, and laughter, rain and hail, wind and heat.

Discussing the Read-Aloud

15 minutes

Comprehension Questions

10 minutes

1. *Evaluative* What was the main topic of the read-aloud? (The Oregon Trail)
2. *Literal* What was the Oregon Trail? (a trail used by pioneers to travel from Missouri to the Oregon Territory)
3. *Literal* How did pioneer families travel on the Oregon Trail? (in covered wagons) About how long did it take a pioneer family to travel the Oregon Trail? (six months)
4. *Inferential* Why did some families decide to pack all of their belongings in covered wagons and move to the Oregon Territory? (They wanted to own their own land; it was too expensive to own land in the East; they wanted the adventure of a new life.)
5. *Inferential* Did families usually travel by themselves on the Oregon Trail or in groups? (in groups or in wagon trains) Why do you think families traveled in wagon trains with a scout riding ahead of them rather than by themselves? (The trail was dangerous; they didn't know the way very well; the scout could warn them of upcoming dangers; etc.)
6. *Inferential* Who already lived in the territory, or area, through which the Oregon Trail passed? (Native Americans) How did they feel about the settlers on the Oregon Trail? (worried, angry, etc.)
7. *Inferential* What difficulties did families face as they traveled on the Oregon Trail? (dangers of their wagons getting stuck in the wagon ruts; dangers of having to cross rivers; leaving behind their possessions; weariness from walking and from the heat; encounters with Native Americans; etc.)

8. *Evaluative* What are some of the animals that the pioneers took with them on the Oregon Trail? (horses, cows, sheep, oxen, etc.) How do you think they were helpful to the pioneers? (The oxen pulled the wagons; the horses carried people and freight; the cows provided milk; etc.)
9. *Evaluative* How was the Oregon Trail different from the roads and highways we have today? (The Oregon Trail was rougher; families followed wagon ruts instead of paved roads; there were no gas stations or rest areas; they had to cross rivers; etc.)

[Please continue to model the *Think Pair Share* process for students, as necessary, and scaffold students in their use of the process.]

I am going to ask a question. I will give you a minute to think about the question, and then I will ask you to turn to your neighbor and discuss the question. Finally, I will call on several of you to share what you discussed with your partner.

10. *Evaluative Think Pair Share:* The read-aloud said that sometimes throughout the journey on the Oregon Trail, families had to leave personal items behind to lighten their wagon loads. How do you think families decided what to keep and what to leave behind? (Answers may vary.)
11. After hearing today’s read-aloud and questions and answers, do you have any remaining questions? [If time permits, you may wish to allow for individual, group, or class research of the text and/or other resources to answer these questions.]

Word Work: Territory

5 minutes

1. In the read-aloud you heard, “Many of these families were headed to the Oregon *Territory* where they planned to settle and make new homes.”
2. Say the word *territory* with me.
3. A territory is a region or area of land. It can also be an area of land that belongs to a country’s government but isn’t yet a state or province, for example.
4. The land in the Louisiana Territory later became the states of Colorado, Arkansas, and Montana, to name a few.

5. Think of something you remember about the Louisiana Territory or something you learned about the Oregon Territory from today's read-aloud. Try to use the word *territory* when you tell about it. [Ask two or three students. If necessary, guide and/or rephrase students' responses: "One thing I remember about the Louisiana Territory . . ." or "One thing I learned about the Oregon Territory . . ."]
6. What's the word we've been talking about? What part of speech is the word *territory*?

Use a *Questioning* activity for follow-up. Have students generate questions they have about the Oregon Territory. Remind them to use the word *territory* when asking their questions. Record students' questions on chart paper, a chalkboard, or a whiteboard.

Some sample questions might be:

1. How did people travel to the Oregon Territory?
2. Why did people want to go to the Oregon Territory?
3. What were some difficulties people had while traveling to the Oregon Territory?
4. What sights did settlers see in the Oregon Territory?
5. How many people settled in the Oregon Territory?
6. What Native American tribes lived in the Oregon Territory?
7. Did the Oregon Territory later become a state?

Explain to students that they will be doing research to answer their questions later in the day.



Complete Remainder of the Lesson Later in the Day



Westward on the Oregon Trail

6_B

Extensions

20 minutes

Note: Extensions may have activity options that exceed the time allocated for this part of the lesson. To remain within the time periods allocated for this portion of the lesson, you will need to make conscious choices about which activities to include based on the needs of your students.

↔ Multiple Meaning Word Activity

5 minutes

Associated Phrase: Degree

Note: You may choose to have students hold up one or two fingers to indicate which image shows the meaning being described, or have a student walk up to the poster and point to the image being described.

1. [Show Poster 3M (Degree).] In today's read-aloud, you heard, "On this particular day, the wagon train moved slowly in one hundred-*degree* heat." Here *degree* means a unit for measuring temperature. Which picture shows this?
2. *Degree* also means something else. A degree is an official document and title that is given to someone who has successfully completed a series of classes at a college or university. Which picture shows this meaning of *degree*?
3. [Point to the thermometer.] With your partner, talk about what you think of when you see this kind of degree. I will call on a few of you to share your response. Remember to be as descriptive as possible and use complete sentences. (*When I see this kind of degree, I think of thermometer, temperature, hot, cold, summer, winter, weather, etc.*)
4. [Point to the college graduate.] With your partner, talk about what you think of when you see this kind of degree. I will call on a few of you to share your responses. Remember to be as descriptive a possible and use complete sentences.

(When I think of this kind of degree, I think of school, studying, accomplishment, graduation, etc.)

↔ Syntactic Awareness Activity

Prefix: Inter-

Note: The purpose of these syntactic activities is to help students understand the direct connection between grammatical structures and the meaning of text. These syntactic activities should be used in conjunction with the complex text presented in the read-alouds. There may be variations in the sentences created by your class. Allow for these variations, and restate students' sentences so that they are grammatically correct.

Teacher Reference Chart		
<i>inter-</i> = between or involving two or more things		
Word	Definition	Example
intermediate	describing something that is in the middle of two extremes	an intermediate level of reading is between a beginning level and an advanced level
interstate	existing between two or more states	an interstate highway is a highway that you can travel on from one state to another
interchange	to put each of two things in the place of the other	a toy doll that has interchangeable parts; a tool, such as a drill with interchangeable bits
interfere	when one thing or person gets in the way of another	one person blocks the way of another person trying to pass by
intersect	to divide by passing through or across	two intersecting lines
interrupt	to stop something by breaking in	interrupting a conversation or silence
international	involving two or more countries	a business that operates in more than one country



← **Show image 4A-2**

1. In the read-aloud about Sequoyah and his Cherokee writing system, you heard, "...Sequoyah...spent a lot of time *interacting* with the white settlers who were living near Cherokee lands."
2. Say the word *interacting* with me.
3. The word *interacting* begins with the prefix *inter-*.
4. A prefix is a word part added to the beginning of a word to give it a new meaning.
The prefix *inter-* means between or involving two or more things or people.
5. Interacting means talking or doing things with other people.
6. [Choose two to three words on the chart. Say the words, putting emphasis on *inter-*, and have students guess what the meaning of the word might be. Tell students the definition. Then provide an example of the word.]
7. With your partner, make a sentence using a word that has the prefix *inter-*.
[If time allows, you may wish to have students act out the word.]

↔ **Vocabulary Instructional Activity**

5 minutes

Word Work: Hardships

1. In today's read-aloud, you heard, "This was the place that the travelers had dreamed about and worked to reach through six months of *hardships*...and laughter, rain and hail, wind and heat."
2. Say the word *hardships* with me three times.
3. A hardship is something that makes your life difficult or unpleasant.
4. During the war, the soldiers suffered the hardships of not enough sleep and not enough food that was safe to eat.
5. With your partner, discuss some of the hardships that the pioneers suffered while traveling along the Oregon Trail. Try to use the word *hardships* when you talk about it. [Ask two or

three students. If necessary, guide and/or rephrase students' responses: "Some hardships the pioneers had were . . ."] (Possible responses include *cold temperatures, bad storms, little food, sickness, lost animals, walking many miles, etc.*)

6. What's the word we've been talking about? What part of speech is *hardships*?

Use a *Making Choices* activity for follow up. Directions: I am going to name some situations. If what I say sounds like a hardship, you should say, "That is a hardship." If what I say does not sound like a hardship, you should say, "That is not a hardship." (Answers may vary.)

1. You must walk home from school in stormy weather.
That is a hardship.
2. Someone does all of your chores for you.
That is not a hardship.
3. You go to the movies and eat popcorn.
That is not a hardship.
4. You have to do four hours of homework after school.
That is a hardship.
5. You must clean your whole house all by yourself.
That is a hardship.

Westward Expansion Timeline

5 minutes

Briefly review what was placed on the Westward Expansion Timeline in the previous lessons. Show students Image Card 10 (Oregon Trail). Explain that the Oregon Trail was used mainly in the 1840s and 1850s, which was a few years after the Cherokee were forced to relocate to present-day Oklahoma. Ask students where the Image Card should be placed on the Timeline, and then add it to the right of the image of the Trail of Tears. (Refer to the Answer Key on Instructional Master 1A-1.)

Have students add the Oregon Trail to their individual Timelines. Students should include the years (1840s–1850s) and a depiction of the event in writing and/or pictures.

Researching the Oregon Territory

20+ minutes

Read aloud the questions that the class generated about the Oregon Territory. Tell students that they are going to have the opportunity to do research to try to find the answers to their questions. Talk with students about the various resources you are making available to them. [See the list of Recommended Resources in the Introduction.] Give students time to read and discuss their findings in small groups, and then come back together as a class to share answers and information students found.

On Stage

20 minutes

Note: Possible scenes for students to act out are a long, bumpy wagon ride; maneuvering the descent down a steep mountainside; crossing a river or creek; rounding up cattle; cooking and chewing on tough buffalo meat; huddling around a campfire; riding out a storm; getting stuck in the mud; following animal tracks in the mud; encountering Native Americans; and arriving at their destination.

Tell students that they are going to work in groups to act out the important parts of the read-aloud. Have students identify the various settings: the family's old home in the East; traveling in the covered wagon on the Oregon Trail; their new home in Oregon. (You may want to record this information on chart paper, a chalkboard, or a whiteboard.)

Next, have students identify the characters needed: Papa, Mama, Abigail, and Barbara; also Captain Ward, Native Americans, and the scout. Ask students what they think happened before and after the trip. As a class, brainstorm parts of the plot that may be acted out: packing for the trip, crossing the river, etc.

Talk about portraying the hardships, or difficulties, but also the pleasant times. Also, brainstorm the kinds of things the actors/actresses may say using the vocabulary heard in the read-aloud, e.g., "There's water up ahead, but it's not suitable for drinking"; "If we can follow her tracks, maybe we can find the other animals"; "I feel as if we really are at sea"; or "I wish we were home."

Divide the class into groups, and give them time to plan what they will do and say. Then, have everyone come back together for each group to perform.