

Wagon Trains West

School Name _____

Student Name _____

Teacher Name _____

Date ____ / ____ /20 ____

Per. ____

Fill in the blanks with the following terms:

1850

mountains and rivers

prairie schooners

manifest destiny

natural resources

Texas

In the early years of European settlement of North America, uninhabited land that lay to the west was “there for the taking.” The first settlers to leave the East Coast did so alone or in small groups, clearing trails through wild forests and building inland settlements along the way.

By the mid-eighteenth century there was regular movement of freight and people – often whole families – going from east to west. The trip was arduous. There were _____ to cross, and often the route went through lands inhabited by Indians, who sometimes attacked the intruders.

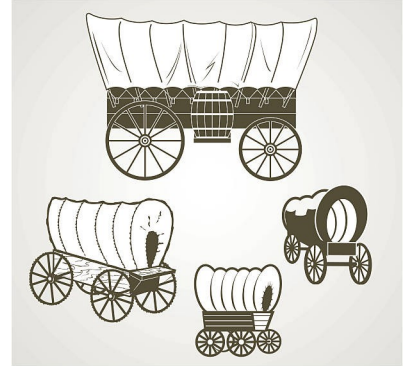


These perils, as well as the dangers of disease, hunger, and exhaustion, made it a good idea for people to travel in groups. They often used simple farm wagons with white canvas covers known as _____

because they recalled seagoing ships as they moved over the expanse of the prairies and plains. The “wagon train” offered some protection, and the organizers were usually skilled fighters as well as skilled guides. The travelers were most vulnerable to surprise attack when they stopped for the night, so they would pull their wagons into a circle for defense and had guards stand watch.

Wagon Trains West

By the 1850s, large numbers of folks were moving west. Many hoped to get rich from the _____ (gold especially) of the western territories. Traders realized that they needed access to Pacific ports. American nationalists wanted to take over land still controlled by foreign empires. _____ had won its territory from Mexico and joined the United States in 1845. California became a state in _____. The nation had tripled its territory in only half a century, and Americans began to believe that they had a God-given right to populate the continent ocean to ocean, an idea known as _____.



Covered Wagons

More ...

- 1) Write a paragraph about what motivated Americans to cross the continent in a covered wagon.
- 2) Write a paragraph to explain why Americans were considered intruders by the Indians.
- 3) Why would the trek across the continent endanger migrants with hunger and exhaustion.
- 4) Define the term "schooner."
- 5) Make a list of natural resources that allowed settlers to prosper in the west.
- 6) Who was the foreign power that claimed the Oregon territory?