

The Wild West



- Go to your public, school, and classroom libraries and check your home for any books about the frontier era of the United States. Collect all the different materials you can on this topic and bring them to school. Read and research all you can on life in the frontier. Keep a bibliography on all the books you read and record them on your "Going West" chart.
- Look at the back page of *Daily Life in a Covered Wagon* by Paul Erickson. Pick at least two places of interest and write letters asking for more information.
- The American frontier was really five different frontier areas. Research and identify the five frontiers then "map" the frontiers using a different color for each one.
- In 1851, John L.B. Soule wrote in the *Terre Haute (Indiana) Express*, "Go west, young man, go west." In the *New York Tribune*, Horace Greeley advised, "Go West, young man, and grow up with the country." Hundreds of people did. Why? Research why people went west and present your findings in a unique way.
- How did people get west? Research the trails used to by the settlers as they traveled west. Create a three-dimensional relief map of the United States with the major trails indicated in different colors (don't forget to include a key for your trails!).
- Play "Oregon Trail" on the computer to get a feel for the decisions and problems the pioneers faced. Write a fictional letter to relatives at home in the East describing your trip west.



The type of shelter that a pioneer built was dependent upon the location and the resources present. Make a poster showing the types of homes the early settlers built.

Pick at least 20 of these words/terms/names and make a PowerPoint slide show defining and illustrating each one.

Adobe	Anvil	Artifacts
Auger	Barter	Bellows
Blacksmith	Bloomers	Brave (Native American)
Breeches	Buckskin	Buffalo robe
Bullwhacker	Bustle	Calico
Chisel	Cholera	Cooper
Cut and wrought nails	Desolate	Dry goods
Dutch oven	Dysentery	Emigrant
Epidemic	Epitaphs	Erosion
Fort-niner	Frontier	Fording a river
Fur trade	Gaiters	Gingham
Gulch	Horde	Johnnycake
Keg	Knead	Knickers
Lewis and Clark	Louisiana Purchase	Manifest Destiny
Massacre	Merchandise	Merchant
Mormons	Mountain men	Pact
Pantaloons	Parasol	Pelt
Peril	Pilot bread (hard tack)	Pinafore
Post or fort	Prairie	Prairie schooner
Provisions	Rawhide	Ruts
Scurvy	Slough	Smallpox
Stagecoach	Stampede	Staple
Steep grade	Stockade fort	Swale
Switch (for beating)	Tallow	Tanner
Telegraph	Trading post	Tragedy
Transcontinental railroad	Tunic	Typhoid
Voyageur	Wagon axle	Waistcoat
Wheelwright	Whetstone	Yard goods
Yellow fever	Yeomen	Yoke



Read *The Way West, Journal of a Pioneer Woman* by Amelia Stewart Knight. Make a list of some of the problems and hardships her family experienced.

There are many sources of pioneer recipes. Pick a recipe and, with the help of your teacher, gather the ingredients and utensils needed to prepare your recipe for your class.

Read *Tools and Gadgets* by Bobbie Kalman. Make at least one of these pioneer "tools" (or another tool of your choice!).

- Butter churn
- Candles
- Lantern
- Quilt

Watch sections of the PBS special *Frontier House* to get a different perspective on life on the frontier. These are people from current times who were chosen to spend approximately six months of their lives living as the pioneers did. Talk with friends and adults about some of their experiences.



There are many places to visit to get a feel for pioneer times. Check with a local historical society or museum. Your community may have a thresher man's festival, a quilting shop or museum, or even an antique guild that specializes in tools, furniture and clothing from the nineteenth century. Try to arrange visits to several different places to learn more about life in pioneer times.

The Wild West had its share of adventurous and colorful figures: mountain men, lawmen, single pioneer women, Native Americans, soldiers and outlaws. Check out the book *Legends of the West* and pick one (you may do more) person to study carefully. Write a report about this person or write 10-15 questions you would ask this person if he/she were alive today. You might want to dress as this person and give a speech about this person to the class.



Read *Children's Clothing of the 1800s* by David Schimpky and Bobbie Kalman. Draw a boy's and girl's outfit for every daywear. You might want to label any items that have unusual or unfamiliar names.

Make a list of your daily schedule for a typical day. Do the same for a pioneer child. Display these schedules and write a paragraph analyzing the similarities and differences.

Make a similar schedule for your mother and father. Compare their schedules with the daily routine of a pioneer man and woman. Include a paragraph analyzing the similarities and differences.

Construct a diorama showing one of the following:

- A prairie schooner on the trail
- A wagon train
- A western fort
- An Indian village
- A Pony Express rider or station
- An idea of your own



In 1848, gold was discovered in California. Many people rushed west to seek their fortune. A few became rich, but most lost everything they owned. Dress as a "forty-niner" and give an oral report about the real story of the gold rush.

Pick one moral dilemma and write your answer in a paragraph.

Dilemma #1—A covered wagon has broken a wheel during its trip west. The owner doesn't have an extra one. You have an extra wheel, but still have a great distance to travel. Do you give up your wheel so the other wagon can continue on its way west? Why or why not?

Dilemma #2—You and your family have been very careful to bring extra wagon parts instead of your prized possessions. One of your fellow travelers whose wagon is loaded with personal furnishings breaks a wheel. You have to decide to give up your only extra wheel or not tell that you have one. What do you do?

Dilemma #3—Your wagon is running low on meat. You have an adequate supply of other food. You spot a mother buffalo and her calf. Do you kill the mother buffalo, the calf, both or neither?

Dilemma #4—The settlers are preparing for the winter. Everyone knows that one family has not adequately put enough food and wood away for their use for the winter. During a blizzard this family comes to you for supplies. This family has not heeded the advice of their neighbors. What will you do?

There were many hardships and hazards on the trail west. Create a way to show and explain the many problems the pioneers faced.

