Wagon Trails Fictional Diary Weblog Lesson Plan

1. Title
Wagon Trails Fictional Diary Weblog
Vincent Genovese

2. Overview
This inquiry-based project focuses on the experiences of individuals migrating into California, Oregon, New Mexico, and other western points from 1820-1860. Students will research primary sources and then construct their own fictional weblog.

3. Goal
The lesson will allow students to investigate and envision the daily lives of migrants along the westward wagon trails from 1820-1860.

4. Objectives
SWBAT create an historically-based weblog using 5 primary sources from the Library of Congress collections.
SWBAT analyze the hardships and experiences of westward migrants from 1820-1860.
SWBAT list 8 items essential for the survival of a migrant family.
SWBAT state the reasons for migrant expansion into the American west from 1820-1860.
SWBAT explain why western territories were added to the United States from 1820-1860.

5. Investigative Question
After viewing an image of a typical migrant family, what essential items do you suppose the family should take with them? How does that compare with the items you would take?

6. Time Required
6 Class Periods (45 minutes each) and 2 days of independent work outside of the class. 45 minutes will be used for introducing, explaining and modeling the lesson for students. 45 minutes will be used by students to begin their project. 90 minutes or more will be allotted for student research. All remaining time will be devoted to the completion of the fictional weblog entries.

7. Recommended Grade Range
Grades 9-12.

8. Subject/Sub-Subject
Social Studies – U.S. History

9. Standards
1.8.11.B. 7.3.9.A.
3.7.10.D. 7.3.12.C.
3.7.12.E. 8.1.12.B.
6.4.9.D. 8.3.9.B.
6.4.9.G. 8.3.9.C.

10. Credits
11. Materials Used
Promethean Board
Mobile Laptop Cart
Internet – for use of the Library of Congress and construction of the weblog
Project Assignment Sheet and Rubric (x115)
Pens/Pencils
Teacher Laptop
Projector

12. Resources Used


*Photograph of a Family with Their Covered Wagon During the Great Western Migration, 1866. 1866. Records of the Works Projects Administration, 1922-1944. Special Media Archives Services Division*. National Archives. 25 June 2009.

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### 13. Description of Procedure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inquiry-based Model</th>
<th>Procedures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Access Prior Knowledge/Discussion/Investigative Question</strong></td>
<td>1. Reflection and discussion of an image of an emigrant family and comparison to modern cross-country travel. We will use the image of a family with their covered wagon available through the National Archives. This will allow the students to think of the items that would be essential to people traveling west during the first half of the 19th century. (Investigative Question and Goal introduced.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Modeling</strong></td>
<td>2. Introduction to the inquiry-based weblog project. I will discuss with students the requirements for the lesson, the procedures, the grading rubric, and the due date for the project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research</strong></td>
<td>3. Modeling of Library of Congress search tools and construction of a weblog. I will then show the students how to use the Library of Congress to access items like the William Grantham and Edward Jackson diaries, the map of the New Mexico Territory in 1847, and an image of ruts left by covered wagons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Creating/Action</strong></td>
<td>4. Students begin project by (for each of these items, students will be guided towards the websites provided on the assignment sheet):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. picking a wagon trail,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. selecting a reason why you would be traveling west on this trail,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. identifying a destination and a starting point, and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d. identifying when you will be traveling (year and season).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Discussion/Review/Revision</strong></td>
<td>5. Student research using the Library of Congress and other provided class and web materials. They will need to find 2 or more diaries/letters to support their project, as well as travel maps, guides, and images of those travelling west at that time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reflection/Assessment</strong></td>
<td>6. Creation of student fictional diary weblogs. They must incorporate the information gained through the use of the primary sources they have found using the Library of Congress and other provided resources.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Teacher review of student weblog entries with redirecting comments.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>8. Revision, if needed, of student weblogs.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
14. Extensions
The diary weblog project will be extended into the following lesson when the class discusses and analyzes the evolution of travel from covered wagons to rail and, eventually, automobile travel. We will pay particular attention to the time required for travel, the costs, types of individual/groups that are travelling, and the technology that made the transformation possible.

Assignment
Complete a 5 (five) entry fictional diary of a western traveler in the U.S. from 1820-1860. (Must be a weblog.)

To Begin (Using Class Notes)
1. Pick a wagon trail.
2. Select a reason why you would be traveling west on this trail.
3. Identify a destination and a starting point for yourself.
4. For numbers 2 and 3, you can also use the links for The West listed in Online Sources.
5. Identify when you will be traveling (year and season).
6. Make sure your reason for traveling makes sense given when you will be traveling.
   a. Right Way: person traveling to California for the Gold Rush would be on the trail in 1848 or 1849.
   b. Wrong Way: person traveling to Texas to take part in the Mexican War in 1832.

Research (Using Online Sources)
1. See sources to further research the time period.
2. Find at least 2 images to put in your blog.
3. Find at least 2 historical diaries and/or letters to provide background for your fictional entries (Trails of Hope or Trails to Utah and the Pacific)
4. Find at least 1 historical map that could have been used during this fictional journey.

Project
1. Create 5 typed entries of this fictional western traveler.
2. Incorporate images into your blog using the Gallery of the Open Frontier or the images contained at Trails to Utah and the Pacific.
3. Check to make sure content of entries makes sense and accurately portrays the experiences of travelers from 1820-1860.

Online Sources
Wagon Trails Fictional Diary Weblog Lesson Plan

In addition to using your notes, you will need to visit the following websites for information that will help you complete this project. First, visit the National Park Service website for wagon trail you have chosen. Second, to place your fictional diary in historical context, use websites #2 & 3 for The West. Also pay close attention to the 5 sources you are required to use. They will be found by searching websites #4 & 5.

1. National Park Service Websites for Wagon Trails (General Information)
   - Oregon [http://www.nps.gov/oreg/](http://www.nps.gov/oreg/)
   - Santa Fe [http://www.nps.gov/safe/](http://www.nps.gov/safe/)

2. The West - Events from 1840 to 1850 (Events from the time period)
   [http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/events/1840_1850.htm](http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/events/1840_1850.htm)


4. Trails of Hope: Overland Diaries and Letters, 1846-1869
   [http://overlandtrails.lib.byu.edu/index.html](http://overlandtrails.lib.byu.edu/index.html)

   OR
   5. Trails to Utah and the Pacific: Diaries and Letters, 1846-1869

6. Gallery of the Open Frontier (Additional Images)
   [http://gallery.unl.edu](http://gallery.unl.edu)
**Due Date**

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**Diary Rubric**

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**Student Name:** ________________________________  
**Topic:** ___________________________  
**Period:** _____________  
**Date:** __________________

**Is it a blog?: YES  NO**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>20</th>
<th>15</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Historical Accuracy</td>
<td>All historical content appeared to be accurate, relevant to time period, and portrayed properly.</td>
<td>1 Entry contains information that did not appear to be accurate, relevant, or portrayed properly.</td>
<td>2 Entries contain information that did not appear to be accurate, relevant, or portrayed properly.</td>
<td>More than 2 Entries contained content that appeared to be accurate, relevant, or portrayed properly.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative Use of Content</td>
<td>Content is presented in a unique and interesting way. Shows a great deal of creativity, inventiveness, and originality.</td>
<td>Content is presented in an interesting way. It is able to hold students’ attention. Signs of creativity and originality.</td>
<td>Content is presented competently. Some attempt is made to hold the interest of the students.</td>
<td>Content is not presented in an interesting manner. Does not hold the attention of the students. No signs of creativity, originality, or inventiveness.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Entries</td>
<td>Project contains all 5 required entries.</td>
<td>Project is missing 1 entry.</td>
<td>Project is missing 2 entries.</td>
<td>Project is missing 3 or more entries.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sequence of Information</td>
<td>Information is organized in a clear, logical way. A narrative seems to exist throughout the diary.</td>
<td>Most information is organized in a clear, logical way. 1 Entry seems out of sequence.</td>
<td>2 or more Entries are not in sequence with the rest of the Entries.</td>
<td>No clear organizational plan exists. Entries appeared to be thrown together without thought of sequence.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical Sources</td>
<td>Student used all 5 required historical sources (2 images, 2 diaries/letters, 1 map).</td>
<td>Student failed to use 1 of the required historical sources (2 images, 2 diaries/letters, 1 map).</td>
<td>Student failed to use 2 of the required historical sources (2 images, 2 diaries/letters, 1 map).</td>
<td>Student failed to use more than 2 required historical sources (2 images, 2 diaries/letters, 1 map).</td>
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Vincent C Genovese

U.S. History March 31, 2010

Wagon Trails Fictional Diary Weblog Grade 11

1. What worked best according to your plan?

Students were able to analyze the day-to-day life of an individual traveling west from 1830-1850 while using primary sources to inform them of people’s specific experiences. They were also highly engaged in the creation of historical fiction, relying on the primary source materials to guide them in an accurate depiction of the past.

2. Did any aspect of the lesson go worse than expected?

Unfortunately, I had more incomplete projects than I had hoped. In all, eight students did not complete any diary entries. Also, students had a difficult time melding the historical map into their diaries. Very few used them in a way that would have added to their project.

3. Was there any unexpected learning that occurred for your students?

My students were surprised to discover the amount of material required for a cross-country trip in the 1830s and 1840s. They were also intrigued to read the personal experiences of individual travelers expressed in letters and diaries.

4. What could be improved?

To ensure a more efficient project, I would limit the amount of primary source material available to students. I may give them a select group of diaries, letters, travel guides, photographs/pictures, and maps so that students can spend more time examining the primary sources than looking for them.
5. Was there any professional development impact on you, as the teacher? Did this lesson alter your approach in teaching?

Yes. I have come to the realization that many of my students lack the inquisitive nature necessary to do historical research. Because of that, I have to find more interesting ways to present the students with the research (make it a game, competition, etc.) and demonstrate to the students how exactly to act as an historical researcher.

6. Quantifiable Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>0% (Project Not Done)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
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