

I Saw the Elephant...
CALIFORNIA TRAIL INTERPRETIVE CENTER
Elko, Nevada

Theme: In different decades, children participate in different activities, however, their lives are generally similar.

Goals: Students will understand that while the actual activities that modern and historical children participate in are different, the ideas of the activities (work, fun, school etc.) are the same.

Objectives: Students will be able to

1. Name one or more things children would do for fun on the trail
2. Name one or more chores children performed on the trail

Standards:

- H3.4.1 Compare and/or contrast their daily lives with children in Nevada's past.
- 3.4.9 I/L Make connections to self, other text, and/or the world.

Resources:

Kimball, Violet T. *Stories of Young Pioneers: In Their Own Words*. Missoula: Mountain Press Publishing Company, 2000.

Name:

Date:

Children, Past and Present

Read the following quotes taken from journals or people on the California Trail. While reading, reflect on the similarities and differences of the life of these children on the trail with your own. Note: The text is the original writing of the emigrants and has not been corrected for spelling and/or grammatical errors.

“Through all the winter preceding the April when the final start was made, the fingers of the women and girls were busy providing additional stores of bedding and blankets, or stockings and sunbonnets, of hickory shirts and gingham aprons that the family might be equipped for the trip...Ah! The tears that fell upon these garments, fashioned with trembling fingers by the flaring light of tallow candles, the heartaches that were stitched and knitted and woven into them, through the brief winter afternoons, as relatives...dropped in to lend a hand in the awesome undertaking of getting ready for a journey that promised no return.” – Katherine Scott, 13

“I think I shall never forget that long lonely day, waiting on that vast undulating prairie that stretched as far as the eye could reach, covered with grass and flowers...It must have been a lovely scene that bright spring morning, but I hardly think it was appreciated by the little band who were so bravely leaving home, friends, country, and kindred, to take their toilsome march across the Rocky Mountains.” – Mary Jane Mount, 9

“A nice picture I looked, I can assure you: an old sunbonnet on my head all torn, an old jacket, and my petticoat tattered, and my feet dressed in rags...I went the entire trip without shoes.” – Fanny Fry, 16

“All is life and activity when cooking, washing, watching, singing, talking, laughing, and little girls and boys running, jumping, and skipping about camp. It is truly a great work and a wonder.” – James Brown

“I can still visualize our family wagon [and] the smell of the smoke of our campfire [and] the delicious odor of frying antelope steak mingled with the fragrant aroma of coffee or sizzling bacon.” – William M. Colvig, 6

“As day dawned...the boys went out in all directions to collect the teams and heards, which often detailed them for several hours, as the cattle would sometimes wander off for miles.” Dr. Elijah White

“The sport consisted in running and butting the head against the paunch [of the dead ox] and being bounced back, the recoil being in proportion to the force of the contact. One of the boys [misjudged the target and] charged the paunch at the top of his speed, and within a couple of yards of the target came down like a pile driver against the paunch, but did not bound back...we took hold of his legs and pulled him out. – Jesse Applegate, 7

“We had a great dance tonight. Ag [her sister, Agnes] and I went up on the hill and talked over old times...and then we came down and danced until nearly one o'clock. It done very well for want of better fun. It is a beautiful evening the stars shine bright. – Helen Stewart, 17

“I neither like to put the grass hopper on, nor take the fish [off], poor things. We all went fishing this evening there was 11 in number of us I believe they all caught some think, me I got two little wee things that was not worth ceaping and threw them in to the water again.” – Helen Stewart, 17

“The cattle [are] wading in wild oats up to their eyes while we have fun making pop corn candy. Margaret is baking cookies, but the boys steal them as fast as she can bake them.” – Eliza Ann McAuley

“Everyone would go out to gather buffalo chips and some of the daintier sex, instead of picking them up with their hands, used tongs but soon very bravely got over this and would almost fight over a dry one.” – Rachel Emma Woolley, 12

“After we arrived [at St. Joseph] and went into camp, father found us cooking supper. I was cutting meat, another boy was making bread, and another was making coffee.” – John McWilliams, 17

“Mother had reduced the library to just a few books-the Bible, a hymn book, Pilgrim’s Progress, Frost’s Pictorial History of the United States, Webster’s Elementary Spelling Book, and McGuffey’s First and Second Readers. During the six months or more we were on the plains, Mother had me recite to her, so that by the end of the trip I was reading in the Second Reader.” – William M. Colvig

Name:

Date:

Create a Venn Diagram, comparing and contrasting your life to emigrants.

