

**Fact Card 1**

In the 1800s, many people used the Gila River as a trail across Arizona. This trail became known as the Gila Trail. The Gila River starts in the mountains of western New Mexico. The Gila River cuts through Arizona from the eastern border (edge) with New Mexico to the western border with California. It ends its journey when it joins the Colorado River near Yuma.

The Gila River has many rivers that join it. They are called tributaries. The main tributaries are the San Francisco River, San Pedro River, Santa Cruz River, Salt/Verde River, Aqua Fria River, and the Hassayampa River.

**Tasks:**

1. Label the major cities along the rivers. (Phoenix, Tucson, Yuma, Safford, and Kearny)

**Fact Card 2**

In the early 1500s, a Spaniard named Cabeza de Vaca was lost and wandering in the Southwest. The Native Americans told him about Cibola, or the Seven Cities of Gold. When he was rescued, he told the Spaniards about the cities. This was the beginning of the Spanish exploration of the area now known as Arizona.

Later in the 1500s, another Spaniard to explore the area was a priest named Fray Marcos de Niza. He journeyed from Mexico north along the path of the San Pedro River near today's city of Benson. He traveled farther north (perhaps to the city of Zuni in present day New Mexico) and returned to Mexico and reported that he had seen the cities but had not entered them.

Soon after de Niza came Francisco Vazquez de Coronado. It is believed that he traveled north up the San Pedro River to the area near Benson and then cut across the mountains to the Gila River near today's city of Safford. He then continued his search northward. He never found Seven Cities of Gold.

**Tasks:**

1. On the map trace Fray Marcos De Niza's trail in red.
2. Trace Coronado's trip to Safford in blue.
3. Complete the map key by indicating the color of each route.

### **Fact Card 3**

Other explorers were Christian missionaries. In the 1680s, Father Eusebio Kino traveled north following the riverbed of the Santa Cruz River. He started missions at Guevavi near Nogales, Tumacacori near Tubac, and San Xavier near Tucson. He then traveled north along the river to one of the Pima villages near the town known today as Coolidge. From there he went west across the desert to what is now Gila Bend and on to the Colorado River. In the 1770s, Father Francisco Garces was ordered to look for an overland route to California. He followed the same route as Father Kino to the Colorado River and then into California.

#### **Tasks:**

1. Trace Father Kino's route starting in Mexico traveling north along the Santa Cruz River to the Gila River and over to the Colorado River in green.
2. Locate and label the missions that Father Kino started along his route. (Guevavi, Tumacacori and San Xavier)

### **Fact Card 4**

In the 1800s, mountain men also used the Gila River. Mountain men were mostly trappers. They were given permission by the Mexican government to trap beavers along the Gila River. They went down the Rio Grande and then cut over to the Gila River. They trapped all along the Gila River and its tributaries. The Mountain men explored and trapped most of what is now the state of Arizona.

One of the most famous Mountain men was Bill Williams. He has a mountain, river, and town named after him.

#### **Task:**

1. Locate Bill Williams Mountain and the town of Williams. Label them on your map.

### **Fact Card 5**

When war broke out between Mexico and the United States in 1846, the army needed to find a faster route to California. They followed the Santa Fe Trail to Santa Fe, then down the Rio Grande River, then westward to the Gila Trail, and finally to California. General Stephen W. Kearny marched his army and mule train along the Gila River to California. The town of Kearny on the Gila River was named after General Kearny.

The Mormon Battalion was sent by the U.S. Government during the war to build a road through Arizona to California. The road was no more than a dirt trail. Their path took them further south. They traveled along the Rio Grande River into what is now the state of New Mexico south into Mexico. Then they traveled north along the San Pedro River to the area near today's city of Benson and then west to Tucson. They traveled from Tucson to the Pima villages near Sacaton (near Coolidge) and then went west taking a short cut across the desert. They bypassed the large northward bend of the Gila River, arriving at what is today the town of Gila Bend. From there they followed the Gila River to the Colorado River and then on to San Diego. The trail was known as the Cooke's Wagon Road.

In 1849, many people rushed to California in hopes of finding gold. These people were known as the '49ers. Many used the road built by the Mormon Battalion to cross through Arizona into California.

#### **Tasks:**

1. Trace the route that General Kearny took his army and mule train in brown.
2. Trace Cooke's Wagon Road in purple.

### **Fact Card 6**

In the 1850s, three more ways to travel in Arizona were developed. J.B. Leach built a road through southern Arizona. The road ran from El Paso, Texas, to Yuma. The road followed the San Pedro River north to the Gila River. The trail then followed the Gila River to Yuma. The road was cleared of brush, trees, and rocks. Water wells and tanks were built along the road. One of the main stops was Maricopa Wells, which is north of the present-day town of Maricopa.

The Butterfield Overland Mail was the first stage line to serve Arizona. It ran from St. Louis, Missouri, to San Francisco, California. It ran through the mountain passes east of Benson, through Benson, Tucson, Maricopa Wells, to Gila Bend, and then followed the Gila River to Yuma. The Southern Pacific Railroad would follow the same path through Arizona.

Lieutenant Edward Beale built the first wagon road across northern Arizona. He also built some bridges through the mountain passes. Many travelers from the eastern states to California used this road.

#### **Tasks:**

1. Trace the road that Leach built through Arizona.
2. Locate the town of Maricopa and label it on your map.
3. Trace the route the Butterfield Overland Mail and the Southern Pacific Railroad followed.

# Question Sheet

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Directions: Answer the questions in the space provided. Explain how you got your answers.

1. Measure the approximate distance of the following routes and roads through Arizona. Start at the border of Arizona and New Mexico and end at the Colorado River by Yuma. Only measure the routes through Arizona.

Trail or Route	Approximate distance in miles
General Kearny's Route	
Cooke's Wagon Road	
Coronado's Route to Safford	
Father Kino's Route to Yuma	
J. B. Leach's Wagon Road to Yuma	

2. General Kearny used mules to carry the heavy military equipment along the Gila Trail. If he could travel a distance of 12 miles a day, how long would it take him to cross Arizona on General Kearny's Route?
3. The 49ers used Cooke's Wagon Road through Arizona. It took them 15 days to cross Arizona. Which route was quicker, General Kearny's or the 49ers'? Why do you think it took less time?
4. Which route is today's Interstate 10 to Interstate 8 through Arizona to California?
  - A. Cooke's Wagon Road,
  - B. Father Kino's Route
  - C. General Kearny's Route
  - D. J. B. Leach's Wagon Road
5. The 49ers were traveling to California to
  - A. Play football.
  - B. Fight in the war with Mexico.
  - C. Find gold.
  - D. Trap beaver

## Question Sheet **Answer Key**

Directions: Answer the questions in the space provided.

1. Measure the approximate distance of the following routes and roads through Arizona. Start at the border of Arizona and New Mexico and end at the Colorado River by Yuma. Only measure the routes through Arizona.

Trail or Route	Approximate distance in miles
General Kearny's Route	400-500
Cooke's Wagon Road	310-410
Coronado's Route to Safford	75-175
Father Kino's Route to Yuma	300-400
James B. Leach's Wagon Road to Yuma	350-450

2. General Kearny used mules to carry the heavy military equipment along the Gila Trail. If he could travel a distance of 12 miles a day, how long would it take him to cross Arizona?

*The approximate distance is 450 miles.  $450 / 12 = 38$  days*

3. The 49ers used Cooke's Wagon Road through Arizona. It took them 15 days to cross Arizona. Which route was quicker, General Kearny's or the 49ers'? Why do you think it took less time?

*The 49ers route was shorter. Any reasonable answer is acceptable.*

4. Which route is today's Interstate 10 to Interstate 8 through Arizona to California?

- a. **Cooke's Wagon Road.**
- b. Father Kino's Route
- c. General Kearny's Route
- d. J.B. Leach's Wagon Road

5. The 49ers were traveling to California to

- a. Play football.
- b. Fight in the war with Mexico.
- c. **Find gold.**
- d. Trap beaver.