



All Aboard! The Orphan Trains

Students learn how even America's smallest citizens played a role in Western Expansion

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Grade Level	5
Duration	2 Class Periods

National Geography Standards

ELEMENT ONE: THE WORLD IN SPATIAL TERMS

1. How to use maps and other geographic representations, tools, and technologies to acquire, process, and report information from a spatial perspective.

ELEMENT FOUR: HUMAN SYSTEMS

9. The characteristics, the distribution, and migration of human populations on Earth's surface

ELEMENT SIX: THE USES OF GEOGRAPHY

17. How to apply geography to interpret the past

Arizona Geography Strand

Concept 1 The World in Spatial Terms

PO 6 Construct maps, charts, and graphs to display geographic information.

Concept 4 Human Systems

PO2 Explain the effects (e.g., economic, cultural, environmental, political) of human migration on places.

Other Arizona Standards

Social Studies

Strand 1 American History

Concept 5 Westward Expansion

PO 2 Describe the different perspectives of Manifest Destiny

PO 3 Identify major westward migration routes of the 19th Century.

ELA Common Core Standards

Reading

Key Ideas and Details

5.RI.1 Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

5.RI.9 Integrate information from several texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably.

Writing

Text Types and Purposes

5.W.1 Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.

- Introduce a topic or text clearly, state an opinion, and create an organizational structure in which ideas are logically grouped to support the writer's purpose.
- Provide logically ordered reasons that are supported by facts and details.
- Link opinion and reasons using words, phrases, and clauses (e.g., consequently, specifically).
- Provide a concluding statement or section related to the opinion presented.

Production and Distribution of Writing

5.W.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and

organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Overview

Orphaned or neglected children played apart in western expansion and settlement of the United States from 1853 to 1929. Understanding western expansion through the eyes of a child unaware of his/her future helps students relate differently to relocation and Westward Expansion.

Purpose

In this lesson, students will understand the role orphan children played in the settlement of the West by exploring personal stories and their railroad routes across the United States to start a new life with a new family.

Materials

- StudentPowerpointOT of maps, images, and poem.
- New York Times article,
- “Orphans Return to a City They Left on Sad Trains”
- Was it Worth it? Advantages and Disadvantages of Establishing the Orphan Trains
- PLACEMENT OF ORPHAN TRAIN RIDERS and The Arizona story
- Letter to New York City
- US Railroad Map
- Atlases
- 6 Trait Writing Rubric

Objectives

The student will be able to:

1. locate orphan train destination cities on a map
2. draw train routes for different orphan train travelers.
3. compare and contrast rural and urban life as an orphan.
4. list advantages and disadvantages of the Orphan Train Movement.
5. write a letter to a child’s case worker taking on the role of an orphan train child.

Procedures

Prior Knowledge: Students have been studying Westward Expansion in the 1800s and understand what life was like in rural America during this time period.

SESSION ONE

1. Use the student PowerPoint to help with directions. Tell the students that they are going on a long journey. Explain that they are to list items they would pack if they were to go on a long trip. Have the students work in partners to list the items—one item per turn (passing the paper back and forth) without talking. After 2 minutes, have them stop. Now tell them the trip has changed. They are moving to a new location, we don’t know where it will be or what the climate will be. Let them circle items they have already written or they can add new ones. Share with the class.

2. Give the background information of the Orphan Train Movement from the PowerPoint. Explain that these children sometimes traveled with only a change of underwear.

3. Give the definition of a “waif” to the class (a child who has no home or friends). Read “Only a Waif” together as a class. Discuss what it meant to be a poor, orphaned child.

4. Explain that they are going to read “Orphans Return to a City They Left on Sad Trains” with assigned partner. It is about some of the orphans who rode the trains and what happened to them. Explain that while reading, they are to compare and contrast urban life in New York compared with life in rural U.S.

5. Closure: Have partners share with the class similarities and differences of rural and urban life. Students should add to their answers as other ideas are shared.

SESSION TWO

5. Remind students of the newspaper article. Ask them to complete the advantages/disadvantages worksheet. They can then share with a partner or you can choose to do this as a class discussion only.

6. Hand out the “And the Arizona Story” paper with the names of orphans and their destination. Read through the explanation as a class and discuss. Read through the Placement of Orphan Train Riders Directions and hand out railroad map. Explain that they will use an atlas to locate the cities listed and identify them on the Railroad map of the US. Next, have the students create a legend on the railroad map with a different colored box for each person. The students will then trace/draw the best route from NYC to their new

location using the color codes. Discuss the similarities and differences of the routes.

7. Explain that they will now take on the role of one of the orphans to write a letter to his/her case worker. Display criteria.

8. Closure: Ask the students how the Arizona orphans' situation differed from the Children's Aid Society orphans.

Assessment

Students will get 80% or higher correctly of the map locations, legend, and railroad route for a geography grade.

Students will get a score of 4 or higher on the 6 Traits Writing rubric in the areas of Ideas and Organization.

Extensions

Visit Orphan train websites to gather more stories of the children

www.orphantraindepot.com
<http://www.kancoll.org/articles/orphans/>
<http://www.nebraskahistory.org/sites/mnh/orphans/>

Watch/Purchase The American Experience: The Orphan Trains, along with Teacher's Guide on their website.

www.pbs.org
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/orphan/index.html>

Sources

Gordon, L. (1990). *The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction*. 1990 Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

"Orphans Return to a City They Left on Sad Trains" www.nytimes.com

Library of Congress www.loc.gov

University of Oregon <http://www.uoregon.edu/>