

The Madonnas of the Trail Project

In 1909, a group of women in Missouri formed a committee to have marked the route of the Santa Fe Trail in Missouri with plaques or boulders. The idea was well received and funding obtained. Thus was born the Madonnas of the Trail Project. Congress built on this idea in 1911 by passing an act creating the National Old Trails Road to commemorate the westward migration of pioneers. That same year, the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) formed a committee to mark sites of historical significance along this road across the country. It would be the responsibility of local DAR chapters to pick the site and inscriptions. In 1912, under the leadership of future president Harry S. Truman, the National Old Trails Association was formed. Its goal was to assist the DAR in creating markers and provide funding for them. Twelve years later, in 1924, it was decided to use statues instead of plaques. The DAR accepted the final design in 1927.



There are twelve identical Madonnas of the Trail statues placed in the states the National Old Trails Road (later called US 40) passed. A sculptor named August Leimbach designed them. The statue is of a pioneer woman holding her baby with her young son clinging to her skirt. Each is 20 feet high, weighs 5 tons, and faces west. The pedestal it rests on is 6 feet high and weighs 12 tons. On each side of it are inscriptions. Two sides are the same on each pedestal: “Madonna of the Trail, N.S.D.A.R. Memorial To The Pioneer Mothers Of The Covered Wagon Days” and “The National Old Trails

Road”. The other two sides have inscriptions describing the historical significance of the location in the westward movement. Both of these rest on a foundation standing 2 feet high. In all, the entire monument stands 28 feet. The composition of the material made to make the monument is a poured rock mixture made mostly of Missouri granite. This gives them a pink color.

The first ten monuments were erected and dedicated from July to December of 1928. The remaining two were done in early 1929. After the initial fanfare, the Madonnas of the Trail statues were largely forgotten. The modern interstate highway system bypassed them. Some were moved due to construction projects. Others fell into disrepair. Today, however, renewed interest and civic pride have seen these statues restored and protected. They have become a symbol not only of pioneer women and the Westward Movement, but of how the idea of one local group became a national project.

Madonnas of the Trail Assessment

Name _____

Directions: Circle the letter of the answer you think is correct for each of the multiple choice questions below.

1. The idea for the Madonnas of the Trail came from:
 - A. Harry Truman
 - B. The Daughters of the American Revolution
 - C. A group of women in Missouri
 - D. Congress
2. The Madonnas of the Trail:
 - A. Honors pioneer women
 - B. Marks the routes of historic trails
 - C. Commemorates events in local history
 - D. All of the above
3. The statues of the Madonnas of the Trail:
 - A. Are identical
 - B. Represent various famous women
 - C. Vary from state to state
 - D. None of the above
4. The pedestal the statues sit on:
 - A. Are blank
 - B. Have inscriptions commemorating an event
 - C. Have inscriptions honoring famous women
 - D. Have the cardinal directions on them
5. How many statues are there?
 - A. 50
 - B. 12
 - C. 48
 - D. 25

- 6. Most of the statues were dedicated in what year?**
- A. 1909**
 - B. 1929**
 - C. 1912**
 - D. 1928**
- 7. Which future president played a key role in this project?**
- A. Harry Truman**
 - B. George Bush**
 - C. Franklin Roosevelt**
 - D. John Kennedy**
- 8. Who designed the statues?**
- A. Harry Truman**
 - B. August Leimbach**
 - C. Mrs. John Trigg Moss**
 - D. Varies by state**

Short Answer: If there were a Madonnas of the Trail statue in your community, what would the inscription say?

Answer Key-Madonnas of the Trail Assessment

Award one point for each correct answer.

- 1. C**
- 2. D**
- 3. A**
- 4. B**
- 5. B**
- 6. D**
- 7. A**
- 8. B**

Short Answer: Grade with using the Six Traits Writing Rubric with emphasis on content and ideas. A score of 4 or higher would be considered mastery. Add this score to the score for the multiple choice answers for a final score.

A final score of 12 or higher would be considered mastery for this assessment.

Teacher Information Sheet for the Inscriptions on the 12 Madonnas of the Trail Pedestals

Albuquerque, New Mexico

To the pioneer mother of America through whose courage and sacrifice the desert has bloomed. The camp became a home, the blazed trail the thoroughfare.

Into the primitive West, face upswung toward the sun, bravely she came, her children beside her. Here she made a home, beautiful pioneer mother!

Bethesda, Maryland

This, the first military road in America beginning at Rock Creek and Potomac River, Georgetown, Maryland leading our pioneers across this continent to the Pacific.

Over this highway marched the army of Major General Edward Braddock, April 14, 1755 on its way to Ft. Duquesne.

Beallsville, Pennsylvania

On this historic spot the hunting ground of the friendly Indian Nemacolin, this monument is erected and dedicated to the memory of our pioneer mothers.

Erected in Nineteen Hundred Twenty-Eight in Washington County, Pennsylvania, the oldest county west of the Allegheny Mountains named for the Father of our Country.

Council Grove, Kansas

Here, “East meets West” when the ‘Old Santa Fe Trail’ was established August 10, 1825 at a council between the United States commissioners and Osage Indians.

1825-1866 Trailsmen camped on this spot

1847-Kaw Indians lived here

1847-First White Settle Seth Says

1847-Council Grove Trading Post

Lamar, Colorado

A place of historical lore noted for Indian lodges; shelter from storm and hear; bivouac for expeditions; scene of many councils.

In commemoration of “Big Timbers” extending eastward and westward along Arkansas River approximately twenty miles and of Bent’s new fort, later Fort Wise, 1852-1866.

Lexington, Missouri

Lexington, settled 1820 by Virginia and Kentucky pioneers, early terminus of river transportation, starting point on the western trail of the pack pony and ox cart.

John, James, and Robert Aull, Russell Majors, and Waddel Doniphan, pioneers-traders-soldiers-citizens of Lexington who gave valiant service to the winning of the West.

Richmond, Indiana

The first toll gate in Indiana stood near this site on the National Road.

A nation's highway! Once a wilderness trail over which hardy pioneers made their perilous way seeking new homes in the dense forest of the great Northwest.

Springerville, Arizona

A tribute to the pioneers of Arizona and the Southwest who trod this ground and braved the dangers of the Apache and other warrior tribes.

Coronado passed here in 1540. He came to seek gold, but found fame.

Springfield, Ohio

Three miles southwest of here General George Rogers Clark commanding Kentucky frontiersmen vanquished the Shawnee Confederacy August 8, 1780 resulting in opening the Northwest Territory.

The National Road completed by the federal government to this point in 1839. From this point westward, built by the states through which it passes.

Upland, California

The trail, trod by padres in Spanish days, became under Mexican Rule the road connecting Los Angeles, later the American Post Road.

Over this trail, November, 1826, Jedediah Smith, seeking a river flowing westward, led a band of sixteen trappers, the first Americans to enter California overland.

Vandalia, Illinois

The Cumberland Road built by the federal government was authorized by Congress and approved by Thomas Jefferson in 1806, Vandalia marks the western terminus.

At Vandalia, Abraham Lincoln, member of the Illinois legislature, first formulated those basic high principles of freedom and justice which gave the slave a liberator, the Union a savior.

Wheeling, West Virginia

To the pioneer mothers of our mountain state who courage, optimism, love, and sacrifice made possible the National Highway that united the East and West.

By the authority of the United States government and chiefly through the statesmanship of Henry Clay, this road was made possible in 1806.

Madonnas of the Trail Information Chart

Name _____

Location	Dedication Date	Significance

Answer Key for Madonnas of the Trail Information Chart

Location	Dedication Date	Significance (answers here will vary depending on student power points)
Albuquerque, New Mexico	September 27, 1928	
Bethesda, Maryland	April 19, 1929	
Beallsville, Pennsylvania	December 8, 1928	
Council Grove, Kansas	September 7, 1928	
Lamar, Colorado	September 24, 1928	
Lexington, Missouri	September 17, 1928	
Richmond, Indiana	October 28, 1928	
Springerville, Arizona	September 29, 1928	
Springfield, Ohio	July 4, 1928	
Upland, California	February 1, 1929	
Vandalia, Illinois	October 26, 1928	
Wheeling, West Virginia	July 7, 1928	

Power Point Rubric for Students

Directions: Use the checklist below to guide you in creating a six slide power point about the Madonnas of the Trail monument you have been assigned to research.

1. ____ I have a title slide that includes the names of the people in my group. (1 pt.)
2. ____ I have a slide that includes a picture of the monument and its dedication date. (1 pt.)
3. ____ I have a slide that either shows (map) or describes (address, latitude/longitude) of the monument. (1 pt.)
4. ____ I have a slide that has the inscription from one side of the pedestal that talks about its importance. (1 pt.)
5. ____ I have a slide that has the inscription from the other side of the pedestal that talks about its importance. (1 pt.)
6. ____ I have a slide stating the significance of the site where the monument is located in my own words. (1 pt.)

Power Point Rubric for Teachers

Names of Group Members: _____

1. ____ Has title slide with group members' names. (1 pt.)
2. ____ Has a slide with a picture of the monument and dedication date. (1 pt.)
3. ____ Has a slide showing or describing the location of the monument. (1 pt.)
4. ____ Has a slide with the inscription from one side on the significance. (1 pt.)
5. ____ Has a slide with the inscription from other side on the significance. (1pt.)
6. ____ Has a slide stating the importance in their own words. (1 pt.)

____ Total Points

____ Grade