

Theme 3: Transportation in Frontier Iowa

Learning Goals:

- Students will understand that Iowa's frontier settlers used many different types of transportation.
- Students will recognize that various modes of transportation had advantages and disadvantages.
- Students will understand that the development of reliable transportation systems and particularly the railroad greatly facilitated the development of a complex economic system that tied Iowa economically to the rest of the nation.

Iowa History Benchmarks:

1. Transportation
 - a. Transportation was very important for Iowa's early pioneers. Not only was it important for people coming to Iowa, but after arriving, people relied on transportation for their livelihoods.
 - b. The major means of commercial transportation - steamboat, stagecoach, and railroad - developed significantly during the 19th century.
 - c. Each of these means of transportation had positive and negative aspects, and each helped Iowa develop economically.
 - d. The railroad was the most important form of transportation for 19th-century Iowa. It was faster and more dependable than any other form of transportation. It greatly assisted new settlers coming to the state and also aided in the development of new industry.

Materials:

Journal of William Buxton

Diary of a Young Girl

Pioneering at Bonaparte and Near Pella

Journal of Archer Walters

Travel Guides:

Helpful Hints to Steamboat Passengers

Tips for Stagecoach Travelers

Iowa Railroad Guide

Teamster's Guide to Iowa

Current Road Maps of Iowa

Activities:

1. Place students in four groups. To each group assign one of the following primary source documents found in the Frontier Life section of the Explorations in Iowa History Project materials:
 - Journal of William Buxton
 - Diary of a Young Girl
 - Pioneering at Bonaparte and Near Pella
 - Journal of Archer Walters

2. Have students complete the activities for each of these documents as described below:

JOURNAL OF WILLIAM BUXTON

- Have students go to the Journal of William Buxton found in the Frontier Life in Iowa section of the Explorations in Iowa History site. William Buxton, settled in Carlisle, Iowa in 1851. In 1853, he traveled back to England to claim an inheritance. While on his return trip to Iowa he kept a journal telling of his travels. The Journal of William Buxton gives specific details about how he traveled from England back to Iowa.
- Using a globe or world map, have students find the approximate starting and ending points for his journey.
- Then have students skim the journal looking for terms that indicate the means by which he traveled from November 7 through December 25 of 1853. Students will discover that he traveled by the following means: ocean steamer, railroad, river steamboat, stagecoach and walking.
- Have students create a chart comparing travel in 1851 with travel today.
Example:

	Travel in 1851	Travel Today
Length of time		
Modes of transportation		
Route		
Hazards		

DIARY OF A YOUNG GIRL

- Direct students to the Diary of a Young Girl found in the Frontier Life in Iowa section of the Explorations in Iowa History site. Have them read from Saturday, November 1 through Monday, November 10. This section describes the trip of Ellen Strang and her family as they traveled from Grundy County to a location near Correctionville, Iowa in 1853.
- Have students locate a county map of Iowa by going to the Iowa Maps section of the Explorations in Iowa History Project site. Using the county map, and a current road map of Iowa, have students trace the route Ellen and her family took as they traveled from Grundy County to Correctionville.
- They should locate the following on their county map:
 - Story City
 - Sac City
 - Jefferson
 - Ida Grove

- Lake City
- Correctionville
- Next have students calculate the distance from Grundy Center to Correctionville using a road map of Iowa. Students can then develop a chart comparing travel in 1853 to current travel. Example:

	Travel in 1853	Travel Today
Length of time		
Route		
Hazards		

PIONEERING AT BONAPARTE AND NEAR PELLA

- Direct students to Pioneering at Bonaparte and Near Pella found in the Frontier Life in Iowa section of the Explorations in Iowa History site.
- Have students read paragraphs 11 and 12 of Pioneering at Bonaparte and Near Pella. Using a current road map of Iowa, have students locate the area of their claim four miles south of Pella and Fairfield, Iowa.
- Next have students calculate the distance from Pella to Fairfield using the road map of Iowa. Students can then develop a chart comparing travel in 1843 to current travel. Example:

	Travel in 1843	Travel Today
Length of time		
Route		
Hazards		

JOURNAL OF ARCHER WALTERS

- Direct students to the Journal of Archer Walters found in the Frontier Life in Iowa section of the Explorations in Iowa History site.
- Have students read the background information section related to the Mormon Migrations from England through the Midwest to Utah in 1856.
- Using a current road map of Iowa, have students locate the Iowa section of Archer Walter's travels from Iowa City to Salt Lake City, Utah. Then have students calculate the distance from Iowa City to the Missouri River. Students can then develop a chart comparing travel with the handcart expedition in 1856 to current travel.

	Travel in 1856	Travel Today
Length of time		
Route		
Hazards		

3. Bring groups back together to share their results comparing and contrasting transportation in pioneer Iowa with travel today.
4. Next have each group select one of the four modes of transportation for which a simulated travel guide is included in the Explorations in Iowa History Project— Railroad, Steamboat, Covered Wagon, and Stagecoach.
5. Using the materials found in each travel guide, have students develop a promotional display highlighting the advantages of their mode of transportation to the pioneer Iowan. They should take into consideration aspects of travel including:
 - Sleeping accommodations
 - Weather restrictions
 - Provision for meals
 - Safety
 - Cost
6. When groups have completed their displays provide time for group presentations.
7. To summarize and review information gained from the group investigations of transportation in frontier Iowa, have students identify which modes of transportation correspond to each of the following statements as they are read aloud by student volunteers:

A passenger:

- could buy a meal while on board the vehicle.
 - might leave vehicle while enroute due to lack of rain
 - could buy a meal at a restaurant in the depot or the stage station.
 - might change travel plans due to washed out bridge
 - could buy fruits and vegetables from farmers along the route of travel.
 - might sleep on the floor of a vehicle
 - would take food to prepare and cook on board the vehicle.
 - might sleep in a seat on the vehicle
 - would get wet in a rainstorm
 - might sleep on the ground
 - would get themselves and their clothes covered with dust.
 - would pay higher fare due to lack of rain
 - might stay overnight in a hotel
 - would wear heavy clothing to keep warm in winter
 - might help move vehicles stalled in mud
 - would change travel plans due to early winter freeze
 - might sleep in a bed in the vehicle
8. Conclude the transportation theme activities by highlighting the general advantages and disadvantages of each means of transportation by creating a comparison chart:

Examples:

	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Railroad	Railroad cars were generally warmer in winter than stagecoaches or covered wagons.	Railroads were restricted by the amount of track laid.
Steamboat	Traveling by steamboat was less expensive than by rail.	Steamboats could not travel when river was iced over or during periods of extremely low water levels.
Covered Wagon	Covered could carry more personal belongings than other modes of transportation.	Covered wagons were slower
Stagecoach	Provided quick transportation between termination points.	Stagecoaches made no provision for sleeping.

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