Inquiry Lesson
Encounters Between
Native Americans and Oregon-California Trail Pioneers
by Cathy Sato [for non-profit use only © Oregon-California Trails Association]

Many sources show Indians as a constant danger to the early Trail pioneers and emphasize violence and thievery by the Indians. Other sources say that the majority of encounters between Indians and Trail pioneers were friendly and mostly involved trading. What is the truth and how can we find out what the truth is?

Answer the following questions based on logic and what you know now. Also write down where and how you could find more information and what sources you think would be most likely to help you know what really happened. Discuss and share ideas with other people and write down everything that you think would help you answer the questions.

1. If you want to know what really happened long ago, how can you find out?

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2. Which tribes did Oregon-California Trail pioneers encounter? How will you find out the answer?

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3. What did the Trail pioneers think about Indians before and after they met any? Did every pioneer encounter Indians? What would be the best way to know what pioneers thought about Indians and what they really experienced when they actually met Indians?

4. What did Indians think about the Trail pioneers before and after they met any? Did every Indian encounter pioneers? What would be the best way to know what Indians thought about pioneers and what they experienced when they actually met pioneers?
5. Look at the encounter between the Indians and the Trail travelers in the OCTA movie "In Pursuit of a Dream," both in the main film and in the bonus materials DVD. Describe that encounter. What did you expect? What surprised you? Do you think the portrayal was accurate? Why or why not?

6. Look at portrayals of encounters between Indians and Oregon-Trail pioneers in movies, TV, real and imaginary Trail diaries and journals, school textbooks, and in
fiction and non-fiction books and on-line sources. You should have at least 10 samples. Be sure to note the year that a particular portrayal was created.

Portrayal #1

Year Created: ___________ Fiction or Non-Fiction?: _______________________

Type of media (TV, movie, web site, book, etc.?): ______________________________

Describe how Indians are portrayed.

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Describe how Trail pioneers are portrayed.

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Portrayal #2

Year Created: ___________ Fiction or Non-Fiction?: _______________________

Type of media (TV, movie, web site, book, etc.?): ______________________________

Describe how Indians are portrayed.

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Describe how Trail pioneers are portrayed.

Portrayal #3

Year Created: ___________ Fiction or Non-Fiction?: __________________

Type of media (TV, movie, web site, book, etc.?): __________________________

Describe how Indians are portrayed.

Describe how Trail pioneers are portrayed.
Portrayal #4

Year Created: ___________ Fiction or Non-Fiction?: ___________________

Type of media (TV, movie, web site, book, etc.?): __________________________

Describe how Indians are portrayed.

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Describe how Trail pioneers are portrayed.

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Portrayal #5

Year Created: ___________ Fiction or Non-Fiction?: __________________________
Type of media (TV, movie, web site, book, etc.?): ____________________________

Describe how Indians are portrayed.

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Describe how Trail pioneers are portrayed.

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Portrayal #6

Year Created: ___________ Fiction or Non-Fiction?: ____________________________

Type of media (TV, movie, web site, book, etc.?): ____________________________

Describe how Indians are portrayed.

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Describe how Trail pioneers are portrayed.

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Portrayal #7

Year Created: _______________ Fiction or Non-Fiction?: _______________________

Type of media (TV, movie, web site, book, etc.?): ______________________________

Describe how Indians are portrayed.

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Describe how Trail pioneers are portrayed.

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Portrayal #8

Year Created: ___________ Fiction or Non-Fiction?: _______________________

Type of media (TV, movie, web site, book, etc.?): __________________________

Describe how Indians are portrayed.

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Describe how Trail pioneers are portrayed.

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Portrayal #9

Year Created: ___________ Fiction or Non-Fiction?: _______________________

Type of media (TV, movie, web site, book, etc.?): __________________________

Describe how Indians are portrayed.

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Describe how Trail pioneers are portrayed.

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Portrayal #10

Year Created: ___________ Fiction or Non-Fiction?: _________________________

Type of media (TV, movie, web site, book, etc.?): ____________________________

Describe how Indians are portrayed.

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Describe how Trail pioneers are portrayed.

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The worksheets you have just completed should serve as your notes to conduct research into the question "What is the truth about encounters between Native Americans and Oregon-California Trail pioneers?" Now spend some time using your notes to find the answer to that question. Create a presentation of your findings to share with others. Part of your presentation should be to tell how you conducted your research and how you evaluated the accuracy of your sources. Write a summary of your findings here and attach a bibliography of your sources.
Bibliography Format

Meaning of Bibliography: A list of resource materials that were used or consulted in the preparation of a work or that are referred to in the work.

Book

Author (Last Name, First Name). Name of Book. City of Publication: Publisher's Name, Copyright Date.


Encyclopedia (print)

"Article Title". Name of Encyclopedia. Copyright Date.


World Wide Web

Author. "Title". Group Title. Institution. Date created or revised. Viewed (Date you saw it). <URL>


Images or Video Clips

Title of image, Title of source, Date Created, digital image. Holder of image. Downloaded (date downloaded). <URL>


Films


Resources

within a web page use "find" to highlight "Indians" or "Native Americans"

  http://www.landmarkmedia.com/videos_detail.asp?videokey=1557-see also bonus materials disk re Shoshone tribe
- Oregon-California Trails Association web site at http://www.octa-trails.org- in the search box top left of main page enter "Indians" to find many resources; also enter "Native Americans"
- Frontier Trails of the Old West
  http://www.frontiertrails.com/oldwest/oregontrail.htm
- The Oregon Trail http://www.america101.us/trail/Native.html
- Fold3*, a historical web site with many original documents has information about "Native & African Americans on the Oregon Trail" at http://www.fold3.com/page/1221_native_african_americans_on_the/ *pay site, check availability at a library or genealogical society
- http://thehistoryprofessor.us/bin/history/oregontrail.html
- http://gypsyjournal.net/oregon_trail_museum.htm
- Bureau of Land Management FAQs http://www.blm.gov/or/oregontrail/history-faqs.php#question9
- The Oregon Historic Trails Fund "Klamath Trail, 19th Century"
  http://www.oregonhistorictrailsfund.org/trails/showtrail.php?id=10
- See this for how to find out which Indian tribes were encountered on the Oregon-California Trail routes
  http://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20080410175230AAcX5FP
- http://www.3rd1000.com/history3/events/indian_encounters.htm
- https://sites.google.com/site/oregontrailcnc/indian-encounters
  Book Review of Michael L. Tate. *Indians and Emigrants: Encounters on the Overland Trails*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press. 2006 "Tate uses a topical approach to examine various "encounters" between Indians and emigrants. Each chapter draws on examples from the 1840s through the 1860s. Based on extensive research in published trail guides, newspaper accounts, novels, word-of-mouth trail stories, and other

- http://overlandtrails.lib.byu.edu/ Trails of Hope: Overland Diaries and Letters, 1846–1869 - put "Indians" in the search box, then click on the resulting diaries
- Tribal Websites - contact for information-scroll to find contact information - Send your question by mail or e-mail or phone to find out if someone can answer the question "What did Indians think about the Trail pioneers before and after they met any?"
  1. http://www.meskwaki.org/ at bottom of page click "Historical Preservation"
 11. http://www.poncatribe-ne.org/start.php Ponca Tribe of Nebraska
 17. http://www.fpst.org/ Fallon Paiute Shoshone Tribe
 31. http://www.shoshonebannocktribes.com/index.cfm - at top click "home" in drop down box click "contact us"