Oregon Rivers as Guides

Overview:
In this lesson, students work in groups to discover how explorers used Oregon Rivers to navigate the land and to create the best routes. Students take on the role of these early explorers and use maps to hypothesize the best routes for traveling across Oregon from East to West. They will create a map of early explorers’ routes. Students will compare their routes to the following maps: *The Lewis and Clark Expedition, 1804-1806; Oregon Trail; and Ports.*

Geographic Question:
How did the rivers help guide the Lewis and Clark Expedition and the immigrants traveling on the Oregon Trail?

Connection with Curriculum:
Learning level (4-5) Geography and History

Objectives:
Students will:
- Analyze maps showing *Topography, Rivers, and Lakes.*
- Use the *Topography* map to locate physical features such as rivers, mountains, valleys, and mountain ranges.
- Identify a suitable route early explorers could have taken across Oregon from East to West.
- Create a map identifying their selected routes.

National Geography Standards
#2 - How to use mental maps to organize information about people places, and environments in a spatial context.
#17 - How to apply geography to interpret the past.

Oregon Geography Standards
4.8. Use geographical tools (e.g. maps, GIS, Google Earth) to identify absolute and relative locations and physical characteristics of places.
4.9. Explain the influence of Oregon and the Northwest’s physical systems on humans, including Native Americans.
5.10. Describe how physical and political features influence events, movements, and adaptation to the environment.

English Language Proficiency Standards for ELD:
*Comparing* – Students will use adjectives and conjunctions in comparative responses.

Language Objectives:
*Function:* Comparing
*Form:* Adjectives and Conjunctions
**Beginning:** Responses can be single words or phrases to concrete comparison questions.

**Intermediate:** ___________ was ____________ than ____________.

**Advanced:** ________ was________than_________, but ________ was _________ than __________.

**Targeted Language Skills:**

**Reading:** The students will be able to read the *Lewis and Clark Expedition* map to determine the best route for explorers.

**Writing:** Students will write a rationale explaining their reasons for choosing their route.

**Listening:** Students will actively listen to peers when performing the assigned group tasks.

**Speaking:** Students will actively participate in a classroom discussion.

**Vocabulary:**

topography  
exploration  
valleys  
route  
expedition  
mountain ranges  
navigate  
rivers  
explorers  
mountains

**Materials:**
- Blank transparencies (one for each group and one for the teacher)
- Dry eraser markers
- Document camera or projector
- Blank outline map of Oregon (*map is available at [www.geog.pdx.edu/oga](http://www.geog.pdx.edu/oga)*)
- Students will need copies of the following maps from the *Student Atlas of Oregon* [www.studentatlasoforegon.pdx.edu](http://www.studentatlasoforegon.pdx.edu):
  - Topography
  - *Lewis and Clark*
  - *Oregon Trail*
  - *Port*
  - *Rivers and Lakes*

**Presentation Steps:**
- **Anticipatory Set:**
  - Tell the students, “Today we are going to use our imaginations. We are all going to be early explorers traveling unknown territory.”
  - Hand out hard copies of the *Rivers and Lakes* map. In reference to the map, make the following statement, “The only thing we know about this territory is the locations of the rivers and lakes. Based on this information, what area would you want to explore and where might you want to live?”
- Divide students into partners or small groups.
Address the following concepts with the students, making sure to write down suggested ideas for everyone to see on the board.

- What are rivers?
- Why are they important?
- How did the early explorers use them?
  Possible answers:
  - Water source
  - Transportation
  - Food

Introduce Topography map and the concept of elevation

- What observations can you make about this map?
- “What area of Oregon has the highest/lowest elevation?” Point out that the majority of the region east of the Cascade Mountains has a higher elevation than the region on the west side.

Using a blank outline of Oregon, a transparency, and a dry erase marker, students will complete the following tasks:

- Draw the outline of Oregon onto the transparency
- Use the Topography and Rivers and Lakes maps to select the best route to travel from the east of Oregon to the west. Draw the route on the transparency.
- In groups, students will compare their routes to the following maps: The Lewis and Clark Expedition, 1804-1806, Oregon Trail, and Ports.
- Each group shares a brief explanation of their route.

Closure:

- Have a class discussion about their findings and return to the original question:
  - Why were rivers important to early explorers?

Assessment:
Students will be assessed using the maps they created.

Adaptations:
This lesson could be incorporated with a history lesson about the Oregon Trail or the Lewis and Clark expedition.

Extensions:
Students can make comparisons to the Transportation map and how people still follow routes similar to those used by the early explorers.

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The final editing and adaptations for an ELL classroom were completed by the OGA Spanish Student Atlas of Oregon Task Force 2011.