

2003 National Teacher Training Institute

Grade 4

Riding the Pony Express

Master Teacher

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Time Allotment

Two 45-minute classes

Overview

Through this media-enhanced lesson, students will accompany riders on the Pony Express from the banks of the Missouri River in St. Joseph to its end in Sacramento, California with stops along the way at the several relay stations. In the 25-minute closed-captioned video, students get a historical perspective of the important part the Pony Express played in the Westward expansion of the United States. They meet the men who invented the Pony Express and a few of the daring riders. Students are also exposed to the major events that molded the need for more efficient correspondence across the continent, such as the California Gold Rush and the Civil War.

Through interactive viewing, suggested activities, and Web sites that explore the aspects of Pony Express, students will meet the major players and events that molded this invention so crucial to the expansion of the Old West. This lesson can be used with deaf students with an interpreter for the teacher's dialogue. The captioned video allows the student to "hear" the information for the assigned tasks. The reading level of the Web site is appropriate for the grade level stated.

Subject Matter

Social Studies

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

- ✎ List the 4 W's of the Pony Express (Who, What, When, Where);
- ✎ Write an article about the famous Pony Express Rider Buffalo Bill Cody;
- ✎ List and discuss important and interesting facts about the Pony Express;
- ✎ Compare opinions with a group.

South Carolina Standards

(These Standards are available online at [http://www.myschools.com/Offices/CSO/.](http://www.myschools.com/Offices/CSO/))

Social Studies (Grade 4)

- 4.1.11 Discuss the key people who contributed to the westward movement;
- 4.1.12 Discuss the development of key technological innovations and inventions throughout the world and their social and economic effects on the United States during this period;

Media Components

Video

The Pony Express is a 25-minute video designed as an integrated unit of study on this Old West innovation. The video is divided into four sections with questions at the end of each section.

Section I introduces students to the major players in the development of the Pony Express. Section II discusses the events leading to the development of the Pony Express and illustrates the routes used to deliver the mail. Section III illustrates the challenges faced by riders and the role of the Indians in the life of a pony rider. Section IV

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profiles some of the famous pony riders and states why the Pony Express was so important in American History.

Web Site

Pony Express

(<http://www.cart.carroll.k12.ky.us/What%20has%20your%20class%20done%20at/Pony%20Express%20webquest.htm>) This site is a Web Quest designed specifically for fourth graders to research and explore the Pony Express.

Materials

bulletin board paper to create silhouettes
paper and pencil
colored markers

Equipment

projector
VCR
TV

Adapting NTTI Strategies for Deaf/Hard of Hearing and/or Visually-Impaired Students

Adapting Video

- ✎ Closed captioned and total communication for deaf students
 - Interpret (sign) closed-captioned video to provide total communication for deaf students.
 - Use visual communication to enhance understanding of the video scenes for students not reading at the vocabulary level of the captions.
 - Signing over narration helps students focus when an emphasis on certain information is needed.
- ✎ PAUSE strategy and closed captioned
 - When using closed captioned, pausing the video can cause the

loss of 1-3 sentences of closed captioned as the pause is released and the video begins to play at the pause point. Suggestions for modifying the PAUSE strategy:

- The teacher may need to rewind after the pause and then begin to play the video.
- Play closed captioned in longer segments and provide a video guide sheet with the **Focus for Media Interaction**.
- Play the video segments through from the beginning point to the ending point. The **Focus for Media Interaction** would be given at the beginning. Tell the students that they will watch the entire segment, and then watch it again, pausing for them to answer the focus task for each segment. Tell them some of the caption is lost at pause points, read carefully the first time.
- ✎ Non-captioned video
 - Prepare to interpret (sign) the video for deaf students.
 - Arrange for a qualified interpreter to sign the video. Plan the lesson in advance to allow time for this arrangement.
- ✎ Screen size for visually-impaired students
 - Use a projection device with the VCR to project the video to a large screen.
 - Allow students to sit close to TV or large screen.
 - Determine how the students can touch the TV screen, if not by hand, then with a pointer (yardstick). Provide an opportunity for the visually-impaired student to touch or trace images if touch would enhance the learning.

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Adapting Web Sites

- ✎ Web sites with audio
 - Provide an interpreter for each hearing-impaired student.
 - Use with small groups with teacher interpreting and guiding the activity.
 - Direct students to alternate text files for the video/audio if available.
- ✎ Screen size for visually-impaired students
 - Use a projection device with the computer to project to a large screen.
 - Allow students to sit close to computer screen or projector screen.
 - Determine how the students can touch the screen, if not by hand, then with a pointer (yardstick). Provide an opportunity for the visually-impaired student to touch or trace images if touch would enhance the learning.
- ✎ Web sites with total communication for the blind
 - Use sites encoded with Braille.
 - Use sites with audio.
 - Use sites that are easily read by text reader software. (Page is formatted from left to right allowing tab or arrow keys to move the reader through the text and images. Images have alternate text that identifies the image in relation to the text on the page.)

Prep for Teachers

- ✎ Create cooperative groups of four or five students for assignments.
- ✎ Preview entire video.
- ✎ Cue video for lesson.

- ✎ Download and print one copy per student of the map entitled “United States—Physical” located at <http://www.eduplace.com/ss/maps/pdf/usphys.pdf>. Each student will need a copy of this before beginning the video.
- ✎ Bookmark the Web site used in this lesson on all computers that students will use.
- ✎ Use the projector and bulletin board paper to trace and cut out a silhouette of each student’s profile. Distribute these to students before you begin the video.
- ✎ When using media, provide students with a **Focus for Media Interaction**, a specific task to complete and/or information to identify during or after viewing of video segments, Web sites or other multimedia elements.

Introductory Activity

Step 1: Distribute the physical map of the United States found on the activity sheet.

Step 2: Ask students to discuss in their groups what travel was like between East and West before cars, highways and airplanes. Have students hypothesize how mail was sent from the East Coast to the West Coast and how long would that take?

Step 3: Explain that during the mid-1800s mail was sent on ships from East Coast ports. The trip took weeks or months. Tell students that the Pony Express delivered news and mail over land to California in record time. It lasted only about a year and a half, but the legend of the Pony Express still captivates people. Tell students they will learn more about this means of communication and write a news article

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about one of the most daring and famous pony riders, Buffalo Bill Cody.

Learning Activities

Step 1: Ask each group to share their previous discussions with the class. Explain to students that in the mid-1800s, mail was sent via ships from the East Coast to the West Coast. Have students look at the physical maps to contemplate the long routes that ships were forced to take. Ask students how important getting mail, e-mail, newspapers and watching the news on television are to us today? Explain that people in the mid-1800s had newsworthy events just as we have wars and national events taking place today. Ask students why it would be important in the case of wars or discovery of new things, to be able to spread the word quickly and efficiently.

Step 2: Tell students that three men thought of the idea of a Pony Express for delivering mail and correspondence. Ask students to hypothesize in their groups as to how they believe the Pony Express might have operated. How did the invention get its name? Ask students to predict problems that pony riders might have encountered. (*Some responses may include weather, rough terrain, Indians*)

Step 3: Explain to students that they will be watching four segments of a video describing the Pony Express. Tell students that after each segment, they will use their silhouette and colored markers to write what they have learned.

Step 4: Insert the video, *The Pony Express*, into the VCR. Provide your students with a **Focus for Media Interaction** by telling them that they will write the following things in the designated parts of their silhouette (write this on the board):

In the brain portion: Write one thing that will stick in your brain about this segment.

In the ear portion: Write one thing you heard that you thought was interesting.

In the eye portion: Write one thing you saw that caught your attention.

In the mouth portion: Write one thing you would tell a friend about the Pony Express

Step 5: START the tape at the beginning and STOP the video when the black screen appears that says, "Please Pause Tape." Cue the video for Section II.

Step 6: Check for comprehension by discussing the questions posed on the tape (They are listed on the screen.) at the very end of the first segment. Give students adequate time to write the four responses in their silhouettes.

Step 7: START the tape at the beginning of Section II where the man is sitting on a barrel beside a stagecoach. After he gives the answers to the questions from Segment I, PAUSE the tape to discuss the answers with students.

Step 8: Tell the students they will now watch Segment II. Provide your students with a **Focus for Media Interaction** by telling them that they will write the following things in designated parts of their head:

In the brain portion: Write one thing that will stick in your brain about this segment.

In the ear portion: Write one thing you heard that you thought was interesting.

In the eye portion: Write one thing you saw that caught your attention.

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In the mouth portion: Write one thing you would tell a friend about the Pony Express.

Step 9: STOP the tape when the black screen appears that states, “Please Pause Tape.” Check for comprehension by discussing the questions posed on the tape (on the screen) at the very end of the second segment. Give students adequate time to write the four responses in their silhouettes.

Step 10: START the tape at the beginning of Section III where the man is sitting on a barrel beside a stagecoach. After he gives the answers to the questions from Segment II, PAUSE the tape to discuss the answers with students.

Step 11: START the tape after the question/answer segment. Provide your students with a **Focus for Media Interaction** by telling them that they will write the following things in designated parts of their head:

In the brain portion: Write one thing that will stick in your brain about this segment.

In the ear portion: Write one thing you heard that you thought was interesting.

In the eye portion: Write one thing you saw that caught your attention.

In the mouth portion: Write one thing you would tell a friend about the Pony Express.

Step 12: STOP the video when the black screen appears that says “Please Pause Tape.” Cue the video for Section IV. Check for comprehension by discussing the questions posed on the tape at the very end of the third segment. Give students adequate time to write the four responses in their silhouettes.

Step 13: START the tape at the beginning of Section IV where the man is sitting on a barrel beside a stagecoach. After he gives the answers to the questions from Segment III, PAUSE the tape to discuss the answers with students.

Step 14: START the tape after the question/answer segment. Provide your students with a **Focus for Media Interaction** by telling them that they will write the following things in designated parts of their head:

In the brain portion: Write one thing that will stick in your brain about this segment.

In the ear portion: Write one thing you heard that you thought was interesting.

In the eye portion: Write one thing you saw that caught your attention.

In the mouth portion: Write one thing you would tell a friend about the Pony Express.

Step 15: STOP the video when the black screen appears that says, “Please Pause Tape.” Check for comprehension by discussing the questions posed on the tape at the very end of the fourth segment. Give students adequate time to write the four responses in their silhouettes.

Step 16: Ask students to discuss the statements written on their silhouettes with their small group. Tell them to compare the various things that each student thought was important and interesting. Later, these silhouettes can be placed on a “Thoughts about the Pony Express” bulletin board.

Culminating Activity

Step 1: Ask your students to go to The Pony Express Web Quest bookmarked on the computers. (**Note to Teacher:** This site

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should be bookmarked prior to the lesson:
<http://www.cart.carroll.k12.ky.us/What%20has%20your%20class%20done%20lately/Pony%20Express%20webquest.htm>)

Step 2: Provide your students with a **Focus for Media Interaction** by asking them to complete Task 1—Research the 4 W’s of the Pony Express and Task 2—Write a Feature Article about Buffalo Bill Cody.

Step 3: Have students share their research with small groups and publish their articles on the word processor to display in the classroom. Check these two activities upon completion for comprehension.

Step 4: Tasks 3 and 4 of the Web Quest may be done at home for extra credit.

Cross-Curricular Extensions


Language Arts: Students can write tall tales about the pony riders such as Buffalo Bill Cody.

Geography: Students can trace the various Pony Express routes on a map of the U.S.

Students can label states and territories of the U.S. in the 1860s using a blank map of the U.S.

Math: Math problems focusing on the Pony Express can be found at the following URL:
<http://www.mkn.org/ponyexpress/tguide/math.html>

Community Connections

 Invite a postal worker to speak to the class on modern mail delivery methods. Have students compare and contrast these methods to methods of the mid-1800s.

Student Materials

Activity Sheets printed from Web site