

Trail Trouble

Identify the challenges settlers faced on western overland trails.

SS.5.A.6.9 "Describe the hardships of settlers along the overland trails to the west."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each hardship settlers faced. Circle the words that tell how each hardship affected the travelers or their journey.

The Long Trip West

- ① During the 1840s and 1850s, many settlers traveled west on the Oregon and California Trails. A trip from Missouri often lasted four to six months. Families packed food, tools, clothing, and bedding into covered wagons, but space was limited. Oxen pulled many wagons slowly. If an animal became weak or died, a family might have to leave supplies behind or walk.
- ② Trail travel brought dangerous weather and land. Heavy rain turned paths into mud and made wagon wheels sink. At river crossings, fast water could sweep away people, animals, or wagons. On dry stretches, dust and heat made travelers thirsty. In mountain areas, steep climbs tired the oxen, while early snow could block a pass before a family reached its destination.
- ③ Illness was another serious danger. Cholera spread quickly in some crowded trail camps, and people with the disease could become badly dehydrated. Accidents also injured travelers, including falls from wagons and mishaps with animals. Families mourned people who died and sometimes buried them beside the trail. These hardships slowed the journey and forced settlers to make difficult choices about safety, supplies, and travel.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 What problem could a family face if one of its oxen became weak or died?

2 Describe two ways weather or land made travel difficult on the trails.

3 Why was cholera especially dangerous to settlers on the trail?

4 How did hardships affect the settlers' journey as a whole?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write a five-sentence trail guide for a family about to travel west. Describe at least three different hardships from the passage and explain one practical way travelers could respond to each hardship.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline each hardship settlers faced. Circle the words that tell how each hardship affected the travelers or their journey. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What problem could a family face if one of its oxen became weak or died?	The family might have to leave supplies behind or walk.
2	Describe two ways weather or land made travel difficult on the trails.	Heavy rain made paths muddy and caused wagon wheels to sink. Fast rivers could sweep away people, animals, or wagons. Other acceptable details include heat and dust causing thirst, steep climbs tiring oxen, or snow blocking a pass.
3	Why was cholera especially dangerous to settlers on the trail?	It could spread quickly in crowded trail camps and make people badly dehydrated.
4	How did hardships affect the settlers' journey as a whole?	Hardships slowed the journey and forced settlers to make difficult choices about safety, supplies, and travel.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Pack only needed supplies so the wagon is not too heavy if an ox becomes weak. At a river crossing, wait for safer conditions and keep people and animals from being swept away. Carry water for hot, dry stretches to lessen thirst. In the mountains, travel before early snow blocks a pass. These steps cannot remove every danger, but they may make the trip safer.

Accept answers that accurately identify hardships and explain their effects using passage details. For the trail guide, accept sensible, historically plausible responses to at least three different hardships.