

# Trails West Lesson Plan

Mr. Kost's 8<sup>th</sup> Grade US History Class

Content: United States History – Westward Expansion

Grade Level: 8<sup>th</sup> Grade

Materials Needed: questions for review, bell, ping-pong balls, cups, notes from previous class, LEGO robotics, colored markers, & paper

Period Length: 90 Minutes

**Standards:** North Dakota Department of Public Instruction Standard 8.2.1, 8.2.9, & 8.2.11:

“Analyze the transformation of the nation (e.g., Imperialism, industrialization, immigration, political/social reformers, urbanization, mechanization of agriculture, changing business environment)”

“Analyze the impact of immigration on the United States (e.g., labor pools, ghettos)”

“Analyze the rationale for western expansion and how it affected minorities (e.g. reservations, Indian Removal Act, treaties, Chinese Exclusion Act, Dawes Act, Manifest Destiny, Homestead Act)”

**Objectives:** Students should be able to do the following after the lesson:

- \*TLW know the 5 major trails West and how they were used by pioneers
- \*TLW construct a path and code the LEGO robot to follow it, connecting the actions of the robots to trials the pioneers faced on the trails west.
- \*TLW be able to state different difficulties on the trails west

**Learning Activities:** The following activities will be used to help the students gain knowledge of the subject while fostering learning by having movement, group work, and hopefully some laughter.

1. The students will review their note-catcher from last class period in which they filled in already from a previous class period to make sure they have all of the notes. *(15 Minutes)*
2. The students will divide themselves into groups of 2 or 3. *(2 Minutes)*
3. They create 5 different paths (To represent the 5 major trails West) for the LEGO robots to follow based on codebooks. *(20 Minutes)*

- a. The students will also create a “story” for each of the trails, explaining what the different actions of the robots represent. What kind of dangers are the “pioneer” LEGO robots facing on trails?
4. The students will present their different trials and explain what the different robots are supposed to do, connecting the actions of the robots back to trails/dangers of going west. *(10 Minutes)*
5. The 2 best trails will be then be selected and then face off to see which is the most creative and effective, judged by the teachers. *(3 Minutes)*
6. After the LEGO robotics activity, the room will be split into groups for a review game. *(30 Minutes)*
  - a. The students will have to answer questions against each other. The first student to ring the bell gets a chance to answer the question correctly until either of them answers it correctly.
  - b. Then whichever student gets the question correct first, gets to play in the bonus round and attempt to win points.
  - c. The bonus round will consist of them tossing ping pong balls into cups for different point values.
  - d. The team with the most points at the end is the winning team.
8. Dismiss class, go over announcements if there are any. *(5 Minutes, plus 5 minutes for transitions)*

**Assessment:** The informal assessment will be done based on the presentation of the student’s trails, if they applied the robot’s actions to the trials on the way west, and how effective/creative they are. Also, an informal assessment will take place as the students play the review game.

FORMAL: The formal assessment will be a short rubric for each of the student’s mini projects with their LEGO robotics. The rubric will simply be the checklist below:

- There are 5 trails created and constructed
- 5 trails are correctly named in accordance to the 5 major trails that pioneers used from the notes
- The LEGO robot successfully follows at least one of trials
- There are trials described within the trails and represented by the robot’s actions

Another formative assessment will be a summative quiz during the next class period. The students will be assessed on their knowledge of the trails and how they can apply the trials to it and today’s things we struggle with.

**Reflection:** Overall, the lesson went really well and engaged the 8<sup>th</sup> Graders. They seemed to enjoy the project/activity, while gaining the content knowledge expected of them. However to improve the lesson, I would have better connected the activity to the content of the Westward expansion unit. This would have then allowed for the students to better apply the content to the activity and to broader ideas. Next time, I would provide more guidelines for the student to have them apply the content to the standards more.

In terms of my presence within the classroom, I did a good job of remaining confident and in charge of the classroom. I had positive relationships (and comments for) with my students. This created positive learning environment, a must when educating students. An area I could have improved would be my speaking pace and explanations. Often I spoke too fast and did not explain my expectations very well. If I were to slow down and clearly explain my expectations, then my student would benefit more and there would be less time wasted. Within in middle school specifically, this would also give student to have a better opportunity to connect their energy to the content. Overall, this lesson went very well, I simply need to raise the expectations and connect the activity to the content/standards. Every student did have a successful LEGO robot trail and had the opportunity to be active within the classroom. Thus, the lesson that was present was successful, it simply needs some tweaks to better connect the content. – ADAPTATIONS MADE