

The Santa Fe Trail vs. Raton Pass

Interpreting a Drawing and Using Primary Sources

Overview:

This activity, which has been devised for teaching students how to interpret a drawing, painting, or photo, will help them to use their visual-spatial sense to gain an understanding of the challenges presented by crossing Raton Pass. Students, working with a partner, will carefully study the picture, “William Becknell Expedition to Santa Fe, 1822.” Once all students have had an opportunity to study the entire picture, the teacher will lead a class discussion which will begin analyzing the reproduction through a series of questions which spiral from the basic level using elemental cognitive skills (observation, description, and recall) to higher levels.

Students will then make connections between primary source documents, secondary text and the photo. The use of primary source documents (first hand accounts such as newspapers, letters, diaries, government documents) helps students interpret the past through the view points of the people who lived it. The partners read and discuss the primary source and secondary readings then answer questions over the material. A final important component of the exercise has the students using their own sketch of the photo to make a graphic organizer. As the teacher reviews the material, the students will take notes on their own sketch of the reproduction.

National Curriculum Standards of Social Studies:

Era 4 Expansion and Reform (1801-1861)

- Standard 1: United States territorial expansion between 1801 and 1861, and how it affected relations with external powers and American Indians.

People, Places, and Environments

- The study of people, places, and environments enables us to understand the relationship between human populations and the physical world.

Historical Thinking Standard 2

- **Differentiate between historical facts and historical interpretations** but acknowledge that the two are related; that the facts the historian reports are selected and reflect therefore the historian’s judgment of what is most significant about the past.

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards

Reading

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
9. Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the author’s take.

Speaking and Listening

Comprehension and Collaboration

1. Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
2. Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

Writing

Text Types and Purposes

1. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or text, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

Research to Build and Present Knowledge

7. Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

Objectives:

Content:

- Determine opportunity cost decisions related to Raton Pass
- Compare the painting with primary and secondary sources related to the pass.

Skills:

- Closely examine a drawing
- Demonstrate cooperation and compromise in roles of leadership and participation.

Estimated time: two class periods

Materials:

- "William Becknell Expedition to Santa Fe, 1822." Daniel MacMorris, Oil. Santa Fe Collection from the Business Men's Assurance Company. Found in *Path to Glory: A Pictorial Celebration of the Santa Fe Trail*, by Jami Parkison, page 7. Projected through the PowerPoint.



- Copies of the work of art may be printed for the students or projected through PowerPoint or document cameras.
 - For projecting the image, use the William Becknell Expedition to Santa Fe 1822 PowerPoint
 - If you are using a document camera, print a copy of the image. Make a paper mask out of construction paper with one quadrant removed. As you progress through the viewing of the image flip the mask to reveal only the quadrant on which you want the students to focus.
- **Crossing Raton Pass** copies for each student.

Day 1

1. Explain to the students that this is a pair-share activity, in which they will each look at the same read an image just as they would a book, from left to right and top to bottom. As time allows they will discuss with their partners everything they see in each quadrant. One of the students is to record this information in the same quadrant of their blank sheet of paper.
2. Project the first slide. Allow the students sufficient time to study the quadrant in detail including the pair-share discussion and record their findings. As this is occurring you should walk around the room observing the pairs. Talk with those who seem to not be taking the project seriously or having difficulty seeing parts of the image, helping them to

study the image closely. Each slide will take two to three minutes. Once it appears that all the partners are ready to move on switch to the next slide.

3. Continue in this manner until all four slides have been shown. Then reveal the next slide which is the entire picture. Begin the discussion of what they observed at the very lowest level and continue to spiral the questions higher and higher. Sample questions are below.
 - a. What did you observe?
 - b. What objects do you see?
 - c. What people?
 - d. What actions do you see happening in this image.
 - e. What do you notice about the dress of the people?
 - f. What do you think is happening?
 - g. What time period do you think this portrays?
 - h. Where might this be taking place?
 - i. How do you think these people were feeling about this place and this time?
 - j. Imagine what kinds of sounds and smells might have been a part of this scene. Describe them.
 - k. Why do you think these people have come to this place?
 - l. What might be the goals for each of these different people?
 - m. What might have been the artist's purpose in making this image?
 - n. What descriptive words might be used to tell about this image?
 - o. What can you infer from this image?
 - p. What questions does this image raise in your mind
4. After the picture has been interpreted, ask each student to make a **quick** sketch of the picture, including only the features that you believe are most important to portraying the hardships of crossing Raton Pass. Write a three to four word caption for the picture. Share some of these in class.
5. Students will develop their sketches into a graphic organizer by placing key information by each of the main points of the drawing, ie by the man looking out of the picture, write trader on the Santa Fe Trail.

Day 2

1. In this next portion of the lesson students have an opportunity to interpret and analyze the picture as it relates to primary and secondary sources of information, e.g., journal entry, diary, newspaper clipping, etc. They will also compare the writings of two Santa Fe Trail travelers who crossed Raton Pass. They will also need to do a quick research project related to crossing the pass today.
2. Distribute copies of the handout **Crossing Raton Pass** to each student.
3. If you want to include a closure activity, have each student produce an exit ticket by writing a metaphor or simile, which compares the photo to something in modern history.

An example might be “Crossing Raton Pass is like a toddler who is taking their first steps through an overcrowded living room.”

For the teacher:

Rationale:

With the nationwide acceptance of College and Career Readiness Standards in English and Language Arts (commonly known as Common Core), the use of primary sources and alternative texts K-12 has greatly increased. The interdisciplinary structure of Common Core provides teachers with a way to easily connect Social Studies with Reading.

To introduce more rigor into the curriculum, teachers are realizing they need more than the standard textbook. Many teachers have already been introducing primary sources and alternative texts into their classrooms. One way to do this is by teaching the students to interpret photos, drawings, and paintings. The use of these items builds on Howard Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences and Robert Marzano’s belief in the importance of developing concepts through the use of pictures and pictographs to represent knowledge. The well-known Teachers Curriculum Institute includes the use of pictures as an important component of their History Alive! program. The TCI approach uses visual discovery and graphic organizers to help students process information. Interpreting a drawing, painting, or photo and comparing it to text material

Most students have not witnessed the historical events that we are teaching in our classrooms; therefore, teachers are responsible for helping students understand history by providing visual images. These images help the students make the connections that are necessary for learning. This can be accomplished somewhat through videos, but this method often evolves into passive learning. Students must be directly involved to achieve the results we desire. Teachers should carefully choose images that will fill in content gaps, further students’ knowledge, or enrich their understanding. Through activities that help students analyze photos, paintings, and other documents, we can help students develop long-lasting concepts, which will be stored in their long-term memory.

Crossing Raton Pass



When reading primary and secondary sources, it is necessary to evaluate the information given. Primary sources are those produced at the time of the event usually by someone who was present. Secondary sources are those that are made by someone who has studied the primary sources and make their own interpretations of the information.

In this activity, you will make judgments as to the reliability of the image you have been studying. The drawing you have been studying can be found in *Path to Glory: A Pictorial Celebration of the Santa Fe Trail* by Jami Parkison. It is an image of an oil painting. The caption under the picture reads, “William Becknell Expedition to Santa Fe, 1822: Daniel MacMorris. Oil. Santa Fe Collection from the Business Men’s Assurance Company.

Read the following **secondary information** based on writings from Becknell himself: Becknell’s first trip to Santa Fe, 1821, was for the stated purpose of catching wild horses. However he and some men who answered his ad for companions to accompany him left with pack horses carrying trade items such as calico cloth. They did not have any wagons with them. Becknell’s horse-pack train took the mountain route, following the Arkansas River west into the southeastern mountains of present-day Colorado. For several days, they struggled to cross Raton Pass.

From Becknell’s own writings (**primary source**) this is what he says of the pass.

“We had now some cliffs to ascend, which presented difficulties almost insurmountable and we were laboriously engaged nearly two days in rolling away large rocks, before we attempted to get our horses up, and even then one fell and was bruised to death.”

Additional **secondary information about Becknell** found in a caption under the painting by MacMorris (page 7), probably written by the author of the book Jami Parkison.

William Becknell set out on a second trip to Santa Fe on May 22, 1822, bringing \$3,000 worth of merchandise into Santa Fe. The trip was wildly lucrative. Profits were \$60,000 – 2,000 percent of the investment. Becknell’s first caravan to Santa Fe followed the labor-intensive route into Colorado and over the Raton Pass: The Mountain Route. The second time, Becknell took a short cut. Near the great bend of the Arkansas River, he headed southwest into Oklahoma and New Mexico. In the years after, most traders opted for this treacherous route, waterless and relentlessly stalked by hostile Indians. The Cimarron Cutoff saved time (about five or six days), but it cost lives.

1. View the image again. Based on both the primary source and secondary source information you have just read, explain how this could be an accurate interpretation of Becknell’s second trip.

2. What type of man do you think Becknell was? Justify your reasons.

Susan Magoffin

One of the most important historical records of the Santa Fe Trail is a journal (primary source) written by Susan Shelby Magoffin. In June 1846, Susan was an eighteen-year-old new bride traveling to Santa Fe with her husband who was a veteran Santa Fe trader. Susan’s diary describes the dangers and excitement of the trail.

Read the following account from her diary August 15, 1846 entry:

“Saturday 15. Camp No. 9. Still in the Raton, traveling on at a rate of half mile an hour, with the road growing worse and worse . . . Worse and worse the road! They are even taking the mules from the carriages this P.M. and half dozen men by bodily exertions are pulling them down the hills. And it takes a dozen men to steady a wagon with all its wheels locked—and for one who is some distance off to hear the crash it makes over the stones, is truly alarming. Till I rode ahead and understood the business, I supposed that every wagon had fallen over a precipice. We came to camp about half an hour after dusk, having accomplished the great travel of six or eight hundred yards during the day.”

After reading the information about both Santa Fe Trail travelers answer the following questions:

1. How are the passages by Becknell and Magoffin related?
2. Do a quick research to see how long it takes to go over Raton Pass today? Hint: Raton Pass is between Trinidad, CO and Raton, NM.
3. What technologies have led to this improved travel time?