

# Day 1: Setting the Scene



The first day of this unit provides students with the background knowledge they will need to develop a beginning understanding of the experiences of Black pioneers in Oregon. By reading, analyzing and questioning a series of primary and secondary sources, students will set the stage for further analysis of the Black experience along the Oregon trail.

## WHAT IS A PRIMARY SOURCE?

**PRIMARY SOURCES** are the raw materials of history! Some examples of primary sources include: oral histories, objects, newspapers, journals, photographs, and government records. Primary sources give us a first hand account of a person, a place or an event.

**SECONDARY SOURCES** are sources that interpret, investigate or retell an event.

## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- ✓ Why do you think early pioneers kept journals along the trail?  
Do you think these journal entries are representative of what everyone experienced and how everyone felt?
- ✓ Why do you think people wanted to make the difficult journey west? Do you think everyone had the same reason for making the journey?

## MATERIALS

- ✓ Journal entry from Amanda Gardner Johnson
- ✓ Wagon Photos from the Oregon Trail Interpretive Center
- ✓ Journal excerpts from the National Historical Interpretive Center: [oregontrail.blm.gov](http://oregontrail.blm.gov)

## PART 1: Building Context

In order for students to understand the Important contributions of Black pioneers along the Oregon Trail they need to first understand that the journey west was a difficult one! Using journal excerpts and photos, Students begin this unit by having a conversation about the decisions pioneers had to make when they traveled west.



### In Small Groups:

Begin by reading students a series of journal entries. After you read allow students to work in groups to annotate and mark sentences that they find interesting or important. Students should then work together to compile a list of words they would use to describe the journey west based on what they have just read. Allowing students to read and discuss the content in small groups will provide some additional reading support for students who may need it.



### As a class, explore the following questions together:



What words did you come up with to describe the journey west?



Do you think these journal entries are representative of what everyone experienced and how everyone felt?

Why do you think people wanted to make the difficult journey west? Do you think everyone had the same reason for making the journey?

**\*\*Students will more than likely not have enough background knowledge to dig into these questions and that's OK! Let students know that they will have opportunities to think more about these questions in the coming days!**

**Share the excerpt of Amanda's interview. Inform students that the excerpt is not a journal entry, but part of an interview she did later in life.**

How is this recount similar to the other journal entries?

Many pioneers kept journals but not many were interviewed and written about later on in their lives. Why do you think this pioneer was interviewed later on in her life? Let students know that they will learn more about this pioneer tomorrow.