

*Materials that will support children throughout these lessons:*

*Journal (somewhere to record all of their thinking)*

*Folder (storing artifacts, articles, photographs, etc.)*

**Note: All resources for each session can be found in the corresponding resource folders**

## **Session One:**

*Intention: collect children's schema around the Oregon Trail and unpack the specific draw of the Willamette Valley during the 1840's*

- 1). List as a class - What schema do you have for the Oregon Trail?
  - capture children's thinking on the whiteboard or on chart paper
  - pay attention to schema that reflects the dominant white settler narrative and schema that brings in diverse perspectives (considering many types of diversity: racial, cultural, gender, sex, education level, etc.)
  
- 2). What specific resources did land in the Willamette Valley have to offer people who came here in the 1840s?
  - Consider the impact of the rainshadow
  - Read CDA Press article excerpt
  - Song: To the West!
  
  - Turn and Talk with a partner: what do you hear these sources describing as special and/or rich about the Willamette Valley?
  
  - Whole group: spend 3-5 minutes collecting words that might be used to describe this land -- grow a list of descriptive words on the whiteboard
    - For example: free, abundant water, fewer diseases, winter forage, ocean access fertile, rich, nutrient dense, moist
  
- 3). Sketching Exercise

Give children drawing paper and drawing pens (uniball pens work nicely for detailed sketches). Leave the list of descriptive words up on the whiteboard. Based on the video and article, invite the children to spend 15-20 minutes sketching how they picture the Willamette Valley at this time.

Consider: views from a hilltop, airplane, front porch, etc.
  
- 4). Gallery Walk

After ample sketching time, have the children put their sketch out on their desks and without talking, slowly circle around the room to see how others envisioned this place. As they are walking, have them jot notes in their journal about characteristics of the land that they see represented in the sketches.

5). Reflection:

- Based on these pieces of art and images, how do you imagine the white settlers were envisioning the West?
- Who is represented in these images? Who is missing?

Project some murals of the idealized West from this time:

- Emmanuel Gottlieb Leutze - *Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way*, 1861
- John Gast - *American Progress*, 1872 (option to talk about Manifest Destiny here if time allows)
- Albert Bierstadt - *Among the Sierra Nevada*, 1868
- Albert Bierstadt - *Emigrants Crossing the Plains*, 1867
- Thomas Moran, *Shoshone Falls on the Snake River*, 1900

Project images of the Willamette Valley from this time:

- Image 1, Image 2, Image 3

Children return to their seats and as a whole group reflect on what the reasons were that drew people to the Willamette Valley by traveling the Oregon Trail.

End the session by sharing that oftentimes the version of this story that we are taught is single-sided. We typically only learn the perspective of the white settlers who traveled the trail and settled in this land. But there are many stories of the Oregon Trail and experience in the Willamette River Valley that are left out of the white settler narrative. Next time we will begin a deep dive into one of these stories about a Black woman named Letitia Carson.

Ask: How do you think we know the information that we know about white settlers who traveled the trail? Why do you think some stories get published over others? What's the impact of literacy and access to education? *(these are likely not ideas children will be prepared to dive deeply into yet -- but they are good questions to plant in their minds as they learn Letitia's story and then return to in reflection).*