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Let's go West!



After the Lewis and Clark expedition settlers, **gold prospectors** and **trappers** went to the West. The American frontier was **immense**.

Settlers wanted to build homes and farms in the West. They wanted a better life. **Gold prospectors** wanted to find gold and become rich. Trappers wanted to hunt wild animals. This was an exciting period.

In 1841 thousands of pioneers began their long journey. They started in Independence, Missouri. From there they took the Oregon Trail or the Santa Fe Trail. They traveled for four to six months.

Most journeys began in the spring.

The pioneers wanted to arrive before winter. The pioneers traveled in covered wagons pulled by **mules** or **oxen**. They put food, clothes, furniture and other things in the covered wagon. A lot of families took cattle and sheep.

Many covered wagons traveled together. This was called a wagon train. All the wagon trains had a leader called a captain. They also had a scout. The scout knew the trail well. He walked in front of the others to look for Indians or other dangers.

The journey was long, difficult and dangerous. It was difficult to cross big rivers and tall mountains.



The weather was another problem. In the summer it was very hot. There was little water to drink. There was little grass for the animals to eat. Rain and snow were also a problem.

About 10,000 people died on the Oregon Trail between 1835 and 1845. The Indians killed only 400 people!

Explain the meaning of the following words.

gold prospectors: _____

trappers: _____

immense: _____

wagon train: _____

What is the plural word for **an ox**? _____



Why did so many people die on the Oregon Trail?

Watch the following video clip on The Oregon Trail.