



Name _____

Date _____

PONY EXPRESS

When people moved west in covered wagons, things came slowly. Letters and news took a long time to get from one side of the country to the other. People had to wait for months to hear news from other places. Sometimes the mail took as long as one year, and other times it didn't arrive at all.

The Pony Express was established in 1860 to help mail and news move quickly from one place to another. Riders brought mail and messages to people who were willing to pay for it. The Pony Express gave the riders \$100 dollars each month.

Each rider had to weigh less than 125 pounds. They rode in rain or snow, day or night. They often rode in very dangerous conditions. Mail carriers had to ride very fast. They would change horses every 10–15 miles at a relay station. After 100 miles, a new rider would take over.

The Pony Express did not last long because it had many problems. The people who gave money to get it started did not get much money back. The letters cost too much to send. In 1862, the Pony Express ended.

STORY QUESTIONS

1. The Pony Express was ...
 - a. a place to keep ponies.
 - b. a group of horses and riders that carried mail and news across the U.S.
 - c. a line of horses that had many names.
 - d. a train named after a pony.
2. Which of the following could be dangers that a Pony Express rider probably faced?
 - a. friendly pioneers
 - b. calm streams and beautiful scenery
 - c. wolves and Native American attacks
 - d. wagon trains and campfires
3. If you wanted to be a rider for the Pony Express, how much could you weigh?
 - a. less than 125 pounds
 - b. more than 125 pounds
 - c. 155 pounds
 - d. weight didn't matter
4. According to the passage, why was the Pony Express started?
 - a. so riders could get practice riding across the country
 - b. to teach pioneers how to ride faster
 - c. so riders could exercise their ponies
 - d. to move messages and information quickly from place to place



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RAILROADS

Did you know that the idea for trains started in Germany? In 1550, some roads in Germany had wooden rails. They ran along the road. They were called “wagon ways.” These roads were used for wagons pulled by horses. They were easier than traveling on dirt roads.

In 1776, metal rails were made. The rails were made of iron. They were called “tramways.” They were very popular. They went all over Europe. A man named William Jesse had an idea. He made wheels with a groove, or cutout edge. These wheels helped the wagons move faster on the iron rails. The wagons were still pulled by horses.

The steam engine came next. A man named Richard Trevithick wanted to move people and things from place to place without using animals. He made the first steam engine. It could carry 10 tons of iron, 70 men, and five wagons for 9 miles in two hours.

A man named John Stevens put all of these ideas together. He is called the “father of the American railroad.” He showed how steam trains would work. He got the first charter railroad.

Each new idea has made traveling easier and faster.

STORY QUESTIONS

1. Who was called the “father of the American railroad”?
 - a. Richard Trevithick
 - b. William Jesse
 - c. Orlando Bloom
 - d. John Stevens
2. Which words best describes the “wagon ways”?
 - a. wooden rails
 - b. iron rails
 - c. steam engines
 - d. fire wagons
3. Which word is an **antonym** for the word *pulled*?
 - a. snatched
 - b. grabbed
 - c. pushed
 - d. yanked
4. Which statement is **NOT** true about the history of the railroads?
 - a. The idea for trains began in Germany.
 - b. Today trains run very slowly and are pulled by horses.
 - c. “Tramways” had rails made of iron.
 - d. Today trains run much faster and easier than in the past.



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TRADING POSTS ON THE OREGON TRAIL

Have you ever wondered how the pioneers lived without grocery stores? Trading posts helped families survive. Forts were built along the Oregon Trail. Each fort had a trading post. It was like a grocery store and department store put together.

The trading post was a place for the weary travelers to stop and rest. Trading posts stocked things the settlers needed. It was also a place to meet new people and hear any news.

The pioneers could buy rifles and bullets at the trading post. Food, such as dried meat, beans, eggs, and coffee could be bought at a trading post.

To travel safely, wagons were kept in good repair. Wagon parts, wood, hammers, saws, ropes, and chains were sold at the trading post.

Prices at the trading posts were high. Pioneers were willing to pay for things they needed. Without trading posts, many travelers would never have made it to the end of the trail.

STORY QUESTIONS

1. In the passage, *weary* means . . .
 - a. excited, joyful, and nervous.
 - b. happy, joyful, and angry.
 - c. worn out, fatigued, and tired.
 - d. mad, upset, and furious.
2. The main idea of the last paragraph is . . .
 - a. to show the importance of trading posts for survival on the Oregon Trail.
 - b. to show what food items a pioneer could purchase.
 - c. to discuss needed equipment for a wagon.
 - d. to give a list of things that people didn't want to buy at trading posts.
3. This passage was written to . . .
 - a. entertain the reader with events which occurred at a trading post.
 - b. inform the reader about the prices of items at the trading posts.
 - c. persuade the reader to buy from a trading post.
 - d. give the reader some information about trading posts.
4. According to this article, the travelers of the Oregon trail were called . . .
 - a. kings.
 - b. pioneers.
 - c. hunters.
 - d. outlaws.