

**Teacher's Edition**

# **ACTIVITY WORKSHEETS**

**FOR**

# **Trailblazers**

**Off to Oregon  
Along the Santa Fe Trail  
Gold Rush Fever  
The River and the Trace  
Through the Wilderness**

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**HNB**

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# Introduction

Each of the five books in the *Trailblazers* series presents a different cast of characters whose lifestyles and goals have caused them to follow one of the American trails hacked through the wilderness by stalwart pioneers. Each group encounters a unique set of problems and dangers to be overcome by personal courage and determination. As they make their slow and arduous way, life on the trail is vividly described, including encounters with friendly Indians, stampeding buffalo, treacherous rivers as well as small daily travails. Young readers will gain new insight into the qualities of the indomitable men and women who forged ahead to make our country great.

The vocabulary has been drawn basically from the Dolch Basic Sight Vocabulary and the Francis-Kucera List with a vocabulary of more difficult or unusual words provided in this workbook at the end of each story synopsis.

Each of the novels (high first/low second grade reading level) is 48 pages with, in most cases, 44 of text. There are between five and eight characters in each novel. Chapters range in length from 4 to 10 pages and close at natural breaks in the story line. Field testing of the series indicates that reluctant readers can take about this much copy in terms of attention and interest span and still feel they have completed a specific goal. There are three pen-and-ink illustrations in each book.

Contractions are used in conversation throughout the novels. For the most part, few sentences are in inverted order, and figurative language is avoided.

Because of their high interest and low, controlled vocabulary, the novels that make up the *Trailblazers* series are ideal for youngsters who are reading well below grade level and who require reading matter that is exciting and motivating, yet suited to their readability level and appropriate for their age.

# To The Teacher

## – Guidelines –

An important element of this workbook is the “Introducing the Story Suggestions” and “Follow-Up to the Story Suggestions” which can be found following the vocabulary pertaining to each story. These have been designed to enrich the stories and the student’s knowledge, using all manner of activities, including drama, art, geographical and historical research, discussions, thinking skills, correspondence, map reading, films, creative writing, poetry, expressive language, and much more. Such activities are a tried and true way to develop not only interest and motivation in reading but also both expressive and receptive language as they relate the material to the student’s own needs and experience.

There are four activity sheets for each novel in the *Trailblazers* series. Users are given permission to photocopy directly from the activity sheets for classroom use. On the back side of each sheet is a teacher’s master copy listing the correct answers for quick and easy scoring.

1) The activity sheets should be assigned with care. The primary purpose of these high interest/low reading level novels is to motivate students to read – and to read more – and to learn that reading is indeed an enjoyable activity. If there is any indication that the use of these activity sheets is discouraging the student from further reading, then their use should be reduced or set aside.

2) The novels may be read in any order. They are not in any way “layered,” that is, the reading of one novel is not dependent on the reading of the next.

3) Each set of activity sheets is preceded by a synopsis, chapter-by-chapter. In addition, a “quick synopsis” is given for the teacher. Should a teacher wish to have the child or children read one chapter a day, the chapter-by-chapter synopsis offers a quick and convenient outline of what occurs in that chapter. In addition, key vocabulary words in the novel follow each synopsis.

4) The major vocabulary list used as the basis for these novels is the Dolch Basic Sight Vocabulary and the Francis-Kucera List. Every effort has been made to give massive repetition of these basic lists so that sight recognition vocabulary can begin to develop.

5) Not all activity sheets need to be used. And not all parts of each sheet need to be used. Perhaps only the top or just the bottom half can be used or just every other item on any given page might need to be assigned. These sheets can be assigned for either oral or silent use. Teachers will know how much to assign, how to modify, or how to adapt according to the interest and learning styles of their students.

6) In field-testing this program, it was found that small-group oral work on these activity sheets was far more advantageous than individual silent work. The exchange and sharing appeared to be highly beneficial to the development of decoding skills.

7) The **Story Frame** form, page 11, can be used, as necessary, for those students who need written language development. Not only is recall stimulated, but spelling and handwriting skills are also developed.

8) On the reverse side of the **Story Frame** form, page 12, there is a **Books I Have Read** form that students may keep in their work folders. As students begin to see what they have accomplished, this form acts, in a sense, as a reward.

9) On page 10 there is an **Award of Recognition** certificate that can be photocopied on colored paper stock, if available. This may be awarded when all five novels have been read or as each novel is successfully completed.

10) On page 63 of this activity book, **Related Learning Experiences** are listed. These are activities that teachers can use to continue to build decoding and encoding skills, comprehension, and recall.

# Determining Reading Level

In order to determine whether the *Trailblazers* series is right for your disabled readers, there are two terms that should be understood. They can be confusing, even to teachers as they try to separate aliterate (students who can read, but don't) youngsters from those who are really having problems.

**Reading level** indicates that a specific developmental or basal reader is aligned to the child's age, interests, experience, and grade level. Therefore, for example, a fourth grade book has been developed for the average reader in a typical fourth grade class.

**Readability**, on the other hand, is a term that indicates the reading ease of a published work. While the *Trailblazers* series was written at "high first/low second grade readability level," the novels are not necessarily suitable for first or second graders. Readability is based on the contents, cognition, experience, interest level, the number of words and syllables in each sentence, the use of figurative language, the use of hyphenated words, dependent phrases, and prepositions.

To determine a student's ability to read these novels, in either a one-to-one or in a small group classroom setting, two basic approaches can be taken – formal reading assessments or informal reading surveys.

**Formal Assessments.** There are a number of reading tests available for teachers to use in order to pinpoint specific strengths and abilities. Check to see what instruments are available in your own school or school district. Check with your building administrator or district supervisor of reading. Such instruments and assessments will identify phonic abilities, recall, comprehension, sound-blending abilities, oral and silent reading abilities and, quite often, listening skills. Often, however, time on the part of a busy teacher is so limited that such detailed assessments cannot be carried out.

**Informal Surveys.** Along with a teacher's experience and observation of a child, there are two quick, easy-to-use surveys that can be used to pinpoint word identification skills:

- Single word decoding of the basic sight vocabulary can be accomplished by asking the child to pronounce each of the 220 words on the Dolch Basic Sight Vocabulary List (SRA, McGraw-Hill, Columbus, Ohio). If the child misses no more than twenty-five percent (55 words) and is nine years or older, then the *Trailblazers* series will make ideal recreational reading.

- From your school library or district curriculum library, obtain one copy each of a first- and second-grade reader. Ask the child to read, orally, one or two pages from each reader. If the child misses more than seven words per page, that grade level reader is too difficult.

# Award of Recognition

*This certificate acknowledges that*

\_\_\_\_\_

*has successfully completed reading the following novels*

\_\_\_\_\_ Off to Oregon

\_\_\_\_\_ Along the Santa Fe Trail

\_\_\_\_\_ Gold Rush Fever

\_\_\_\_\_ The River and the Trace

\_\_\_\_\_ Through the Wilderness

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Signed: \_\_\_\_\_





## For Teacher Use

# Off to Oregon

### Quick Synopsis

Ben's father announces that he is selling their store so that the family can join a wagon train heading for Oregon. A week later Ben, his father, mother, and young sister (Pa, Ma, and Ann) start out). As they cross the prairie, they encounter a group of friendly Pawnees, and trading takes place. A near catastrophe occurs when the wagon train is crossing the Platte River. Ben's friend Tom nearly drowns when his horse steps into quicksand. He is saved by Pa. Some days later a buffalo stampede narrowly misses the wagon train. As the trail grows steeper, it becomes obvious the wagons are too heavily loaded, so many family treasures and important food supplies must be left along the trail. At Fort Laramie a letter from grandparents awaits. On one frightening day Pa comes down with cholera, and the train goes on without them. He eventually recovers, they catch up with the train, and at long last Oregon is sighted.

### Chapter 1 – A Fresh Start

Ben is surprised when his father, who owns a general store in Independence Missouri, brings up the subject of going west. It seems that Ben's mother is in agreement, so the store is sold, and many plans and preparations are quickly made for the trip. Ben is happy to learn that his good friend Tom Wood and his family will also be members of the wagon train.

### Chapter 2 – Wagons Roll

As the wagon train starts a week later, Ben's father, mother, and small sister, Ann, are in the heavily loaded wagon. Ben and his dog walk alongside. Frank Wade is captain of the wagon train aided by a scout named Jed. The wagons stop for a short lunch ("nooner") but the strict captain soon has them on their way again. He plans that the train must cover at least 15 miles a day.

### Chapter 3 – Pawnees!

As they cross the vast prairie, the wagon trail encounters a group of friendly Pawnee Indians. They like Pa's red shirt so it is swapped for a thick buffalo robe. Ma gives them a mirror, and in turn the Pawnees give Ben and his friend two huge bear claws on strings to hang around their necks.

### Chapter 4 – The Crossing

After days of hard travel, the wagon train reaches the wide Platte River. There is much confusion and fear when the thirsty oxen, who pull the wagons, and the rest of the stock bolt for the river. Tom on his horse in the river is in trouble. Pa is able to grab him just as his horse sinks in quicksand and manages to get him back to shore. Moving the wagons across the Platte is slow, dangerous, and frightening but gradually the entire train makes it.

### Chapter 5 – A Close Call

One evening as they get ready to prepare a meal, a sound like thunder is heard, and a huge cloud of dust is seen in the distance. Everyone scrambles into the wagons as a herd of buffalo thunders by, narrowly missing the train.

## Chapter 6 – Push on Ahead

The trail grows steeper as the wagon train makes its way to Chimney Rock, a towering landmark on which Ben and Tom carve their names. The wagons are too heavily loaded, so precious household treasures and food supplies must be left behind. Finally the train reaches Fort Laramie where a letter from grandparents awaits. Next stop is Independence Rock. Ben and Tom climb it and once again carve their names and the date.

## Chapter 7 – Graves on the Trail

The next stop is Fort Hall where farewells are said to friends heading south to look for gold in California. Frightening rumors of cholera are heard, and on one terrible day Pa comes down with it. The train must go on without them. While Pa is slowly regaining his strength, he allows Ben for the first time to go out hunting for meat for their supper.

## Chapter 8 – Oregon

The family catches up to the wagon train at Fort Boise. One August day the train stops on top of a hill overlooking a lush green valley. “That’s Oregon” is the message that travels through the train. One more set of mountains to cross and then they will have reached their new home.

### Vocabulary

|         |          |           |          |
|---------|----------|-----------|----------|
| decided | current  | Missouri  | bellowed |
| bawling | stampede | supplies  | wondered |
| islands | buffalo  | acres     | troubles |
| company | worried  | quicksand | canyons  |

### Introducing the Story Suggestions

The students will:

- Study the map of the Oregon Trail shown on page 4 of *Off to Oregon*.
- Make a list of foods (not necessarily amounts) that would be needed on a nineteenth century wagon train trip from Independence, Missouri, to Oregon.
- Make a list of items (not foods) that should be taken on a nineteenth century wagon train trip from Independence, Missouri, to Oregon. (Be sure to include tools, medical supplies, etc.)
- Find out all they can about oxen. Why are they particularly suited to long, arduous cross-country trips? (They live on grass alone; do not require feed.)
- Look up the history of the buffalo, including when and why they more or less disappeared from the West.

### Follow-Up to the Story Suggestions

The students will:

- Discuss the reasons why people were willing to make the difficult cross-country trip in a covered wagon.
- List some of the worst hardships encountered during a nineteenth century trip that lasted many months, and attempt to offer possible solutions.
- Find out how Independence Rock got its name. Why was it called “The Register of the Desert”?
- Learn about cholera – treatment, cure (if any), where epidemics occur, etc.
- Find out all they can about quicksand (where it is found, what causes it, etc.).

*Off to Oregon #1*

---

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

An idiom is a group of words that do not mean exactly what they say. For example, "Hold your horses" means to wait a minute. Below are 12 underlined idioms based on *Off to Oregon*. Write their meaning on the line under each one.

1. Some days Ben thought he had too many irons in the fire.  
\_\_\_\_\_
  2. When Tom was crossing the Platte River, he got in a jam.  
\_\_\_\_\_
  3. When they came to water, the oxen acted as if they had lost their marbles.  
\_\_\_\_\_
  4. When the wagon train travelers spotted some Indians, they thought they would have to face the music.  
\_\_\_\_\_
  5. The trail captain told the travelers it was time to call it a day.  
\_\_\_\_\_
  6. Ma was down in the mouth when she had to leave her good dishes behind on the trail.  
\_\_\_\_\_
  7. It was clear that Pa was under the weather.  
\_\_\_\_\_
  8. Ben knew it was important throughout the trip to keep on his toes.  
\_\_\_\_\_
  9. At times during the trip the wagon train travelers felt as if they were burning the candle at both ends.  
\_\_\_\_\_
  10. Now and then Ma seemed on the edge of tears.  
\_\_\_\_\_
  11. Ben had to put up a good front many times.  
\_\_\_\_\_
  12. When they reached Oregon, everyone was on top of the world!  
\_\_\_\_\_
-

Off to Oregon #1

---

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

An idiom is a group of words that do not mean exactly what they say. For example, "Hold your horses" means to wait a minute. Below are 12 underlined idioms based on *Off to Oregon*. Write their meaning on the line under each one.

1. Some days Ben thought he had too many irons in the fire.  
Was trying to do too many things at one time
  2. When Tom was crossing the Platte River, he got in a jam.  
Got in serious trouble
  3. When they came to water, the oxen acted as if they had lost their marbles.  
Gone crazy
  4. When the wagon train travelers spotted some Indians, they thought they would have to face the music.  
Be brave; take what's coming
  5. The trail captain told the travelers it was time to call it a day.  
Stop what they were doing; make camp for the night
  6. Ma was down in the mouth when she had to leave her good dishes behind on the trail.  
Very sad
  7. It was clear that Pa was under the weather.  
Sick; not feeling well
  8. Ben knew it was important throughout the trip to keep on his toes.  
Stay alert at all times
  9. At times during the trip the wagon train travelers felt as if they were burning the candle at both ends.  
Working too hard; not getting enough rest
  10. Now and then Ma seemed on the edge of tears.  
About to cry
  11. Ben had to put up a good front many times.  
Act brave even if he didn't feel that way
  12. When they reached Oregon, everyone was on top of the world!  
Feeling great!
-

*Off to Oregon #2*

---

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

I. There are 10 compound words from *Off to Oregon* in the list below. Circle them. Then put a line through the compound word where the two smaller words are joined.

quicksand

miles

home

hungry

deerskin

rifle

store

toolbox

months

people

firewood

campfires

friends

sugar

winter

feedbag

buckskin

tent

whips

anywhere

gunshot

sunbonnet

II. See if you can think of four compound words. List them below.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_ 4. \_\_\_\_\_

---

Off to Oregon #2

---

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

- I. There are 10 compound words from *Off to Oregon* in the list below. Circle them. Then put a line through the compound word where the two smaller words are joined.

quicksand

miles

home

hungry

deerskin

rifle

store

toolbox

months

people

firewood

campfires

friends

sugar

winter

feedbag

buckskin

tent

whips

anywhere

gunshot

sunbonnet

- II. See if you can think of four compound words. List them below.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_ 4. \_\_\_\_\_

*Off to Oregon #3*

---

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Some of the sentences given below are true. Some are not. Put a “T” in front of each sentence that is true and an “F” in front of each sentence that is false.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Ben had two sisters
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 2. The wagons were pulled by horses.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Ben’s father owned a store in Independence, Missouri.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Ben was happy to hear that Tom Wood was going on the trip to Oregon.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Ben was 14 years old.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 6. The first Indians that the wagon train met were Pawnees.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 7. The Pawnees gave Ben and Tom two buffalo claws.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Tom’s horse was lost in the Platte River quicksand.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 9. The wagon train was almost overrun by a herd of buffalo.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 10. The Platte is a narrow river.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 11. A letter from Gram was waiting at Fort Laramie.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 12. Ben and Tom carved their names and the date on Independence Rock.
-

*Off to Oregon #3*

---

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Some of the sentences given below are true. Some are not. Put a “T” in front of each sentence that is true and an “F” in front of each sentence that is false.

F 1. Ben had two sisters

F 2. The wagons were pulled by horses.

T 3. Ben’s father owned a store in Independence, Missouri.

T 4. Ben was happy to hear that Tom Wood was going on the trip to Oregon.

F 5. Ben was 14 years old.

T 6. The first Indians that the wagon train met were Pawnees.

F 7. The Pawnees gave Ben and Tom two buffalo claws.

T 8. Tom’s horse was lost in the Platte River quicksand.

T 9. The wagon train was almost overrun by a herd of buffalo.

F 10. The Platte is a narrow river.

T 11. A letter from Gram was waiting at Fort Laramie.

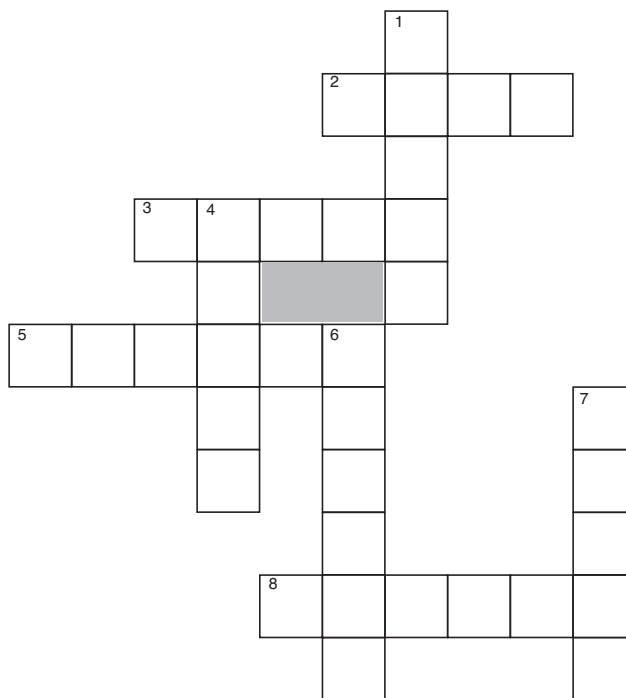
T 12. Ben and Tom carved their names and the date on Independence Rock.

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Off to Oregon #4

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Use the clues below to solve the crossword puzzle. The 8 words needed to solve the puzzle can be found in the box below the clues.



**Across**

- 2. the opposite of narrow
- 3. a beaten path
- 5. the material used on a covered wagon top
- 8. a male parent

**Down**

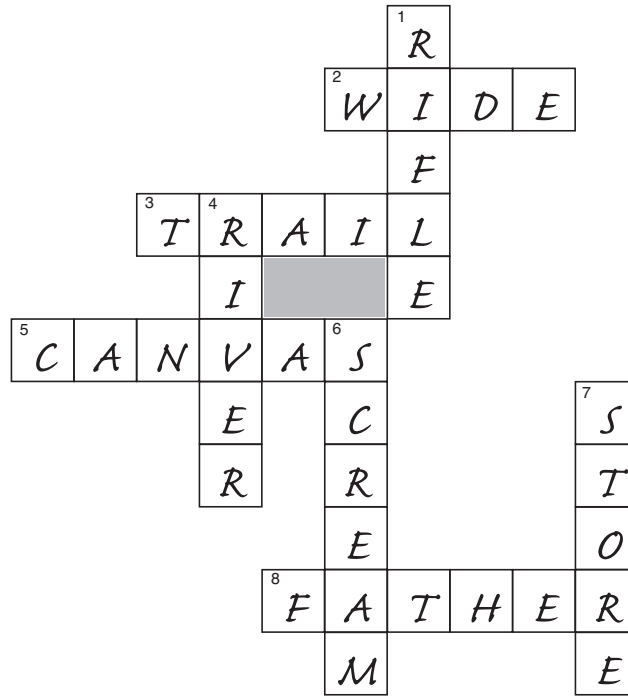
- 1. the kind of gun Ben used
- 4. the Platte \_ \_ \_ \_
- 6. a loud yell
- 7. a place where goods are sold

|        |       |        |        |
|--------|-------|--------|--------|
| father | store | canvas | trail  |
| rifle  | wide  | river  | scream |

Off to Oregon #4

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Use the clues below to solve the crossword puzzle. The 8 words needed to solve the puzzle can be found in the box below the clues.



**Across**

2. the opposite of narrow
3. a beaten path
5. the material used on a covered wagon top
8. a male parent

**Down**

1. the kind of gun Ben used
4. the Platte \_ \_ \_ \_ \_
6. a loud yell
7. a place where goods are sold

|        |       |        |        |
|--------|-------|--------|--------|
| father | store | canvas | trail  |
| rifle  | wide  | river  | scream |