

Lesson Title: Geography's Influence on the Santa Fe Trail

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Teaching Traditional American History Program

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<http://www.chillihistoryproject.com>

Lesson Overview: This lesson is designed for students to understand geography's influence on the people, climate, terrain, architecture and travel along the Santa Fe Trail.

Essential Question(s): How did geography affect different aspects of the Santa Fe Trail?

Objectives: After completing this lesson the students will understand how geography affects the different aspects of life along the Santa Fe Trail. This will be seen in the different dioramas created by the four different groups of students.

MO Grade Level Expectations 9-12:

- GLE (5, C 1.8, 1.10. 2.1) Describe physical characteristics that make specific places unique
- GLE (5, D1.10) Identify how changes in the physical environment may reduce the capacity of the environment to support human activity

Assessment: At the end of the lesson the student will be able to see just how geography impacted the different aspects of the Santa Fe Trail (people, climate, terrain, architecture and travel).

Each diorama should include:

- Well organized and neat objects
- Correct scale
- Accurate physical landscape features
- Realistic representation of forts
- Authentic animal replicas
- Correct coloration of objects

Materials: Internet access
Library access

Class time: Two class periods plus research and construction time.

1st Class period: instruction, q&q session, library visit

2nd Class period: group presentations, peer q&a session

Teacher input: This activity will fit well towards the beginning of a unit on Westward Expansion. It will demonstrate the different climates and terrain that people had to adapt to in order to survive in the various areas along the Santa Fe Trail. You will have to assign the different forts based on geographical area (possibilities are Fort Osage, Fort Larned, Fort Union and Fort William (Bent's Old Fort). Remind them that in their explanation of their forts during the student presentations, they should include how their different forts adapted to the climate and terrain (they are working on four different types of forts along the same trail).

Activities:

- Students will research their assigned fort, plus the terrain, climate, and animals of their particular geographic area
- They will construct a diorama of their assigned fort and area
- They will practice their presentation in their group for peer review
- They will present to the whole class and answer any questions

Questions for review:

1. What impact did geography have on the construction of forts along the Santa Fe Trail?
2. Were climate and terrain important factors along the SFT?
3. Did geography affect other aspects of life along the trail?
4. What were the physical characteristics of this region that made it unique?

Closure: Class discussion on the differences demonstrated in the four dioramas and the reasons for those differences. Brainstorming: other places in U.S. expansion where geography played a major role.

References: <http://www.nps.gov> (go to particular fort site)
<http://www.nps.gov/safe>
<http://www.santafetrail.org>
<http://www.santafetrailcenter.org>

