

Oregon Trail Reflections: Letitia Carson's Story

AUDIENCE

Grades 3-5, especially fourth-grade students

DESCRIPTION

This Educator Resource Guide offers resources and background information to accompany a 10-minute video, [Oregon Trail Reflections: Letitia Carson's Story](#), created by the High Desert Museum for its Oregon Encounters program—a hands-on, multidisciplinary experience for fourth-grade students.

FOR EDUCATORS

Activity is aligned with these Oregon K-12 Social Sciences Academic Content Standards:

4.12 Explain how diverse individuals, groups (including socioeconomic differences, ethnic groups, and social groups, including individuals who are American Indian/Alaska Native/Native Hawaiian or Americans of African, Asian, Pacific Island, Chicano, Latino, or Middle Eastern descent, religious groups), and other traditionally marginalized groups (women, people with disabilities, immigrants, refugees, and individuals who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender), circumstances and events influenced the early growth and changes in Oregon (including but not limited to fur trappers, traders, Lewis and Clark, pioneers and westward movement). (History)

For third-grade students, this video addresses 3.11 and 3.14, and for fifth-grade students, it addresses 5.24.



This video is based on the true story of Letitia Carson and the experiences of people who traveled the Oregon Trail in the mid-1800s.

Discussion Questions

1. What is something you learned from the video? What surprised you?
2. What was the experience on the trail like for kids your age? What part of being on the trail do you think you would have found to be the most exciting? What would have been the most challenging?
3. How did Letitia compare her experience on the trail with that of white women traveling to Oregon? In what ways was it different? How was it the same?
4. How does Letitia describe the process of getting and keeping her homestead? What challenges did she face? Why was it so important to Letitia that she owned her cabin and homestead?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

[Teaching Tolerance](#): Teaching Tolerance is a wonderful resource. It is a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center, which provides resources for educators that focus on social justice and anti-bias education. As you prepare to teach about efforts of white settlers to exclude black settlers, such as Letitia Carson, you may find Teaching Tolerance's [Let's Talk! Discussing Race, Racism and Other Difficult Topics with Students](#) to be helpful.

Greg Nokes, ["Black Exclusion Laws in Oregon,"](#) *The Oregon Encyclopedia*: This article offers an overview of the black exclusion laws that white settlers put into place starting in the 1840s. Their goal was to discourage black people from settling in Oregon. Despite these laws, some black people settled in Oregon and took part in shaping the state's history.

["Oregon's Black Pioneers,"](#) *Oregon Experience*, Oregon Public Broadcasting: This 30-minute documentary explores the history of some of the black people who came to Oregon, starting in the late 18th century and through the early years of statehood, and the discriminatory laws white settlers passed to try to keep people of color from settling in the state. It includes a discussion of Letitia Carson, as well as the stories of many other black settlers in Oregon.

["Letitia Carson,"](#) *Black in Oregon: 1840-1870*, Oregon State Archives: This short article provides an overview of Letitia Carson's life as well as digital copies of a few primary documents related to her life.

[Oregon Black Pioneers](#): An all-volunteer nonprofit organization that educates about African Americans contributions to Oregon's history. Their website includes additional educator resources.