**THE OREGON COUNTRY**

1. In the early 1800s, Oregon included all of the land along the Pacific coast from Alaska to California. Four countries claimed this region. Spain said it owned Oregon because of the expeditions of Balboa and other Spanish explorers during the 1500s and 1600s. England based its claim on the voyages along the Oregon coast by Sir Francis Drake (1579), Captain James Cook (1778), and Captain George Vancouver (1792). Russia, which owned Alaska, wanted Oregon because Russian explorers and fur trappers had gone there in the 1700s. The United States pointed out that Captain Robert Gray had traded with the Oregon Indians for furs during the 1780s. The furs were then carried to China and exchanged for silk, tea, and other goods. Gray discovered a river which he named for his ship, the Columbia. Lewis and Clark strengthened the American claim by visiting Oregon in 1805, while exploring the Louisiana Territory.

On the map:

1. Next to Arrow 1, print *1513: Balboa discovers the Pacific and claims all land which borders it, including Oregon, for Spain*. In the area which today is Mexico and the southwestern United States, print Spanish territory until Mexico gained its independence in 1821.
2. Print these explorers and countries along the dotted lines: Arrow 2 – 1579: Sir Francis Drake (England); Arrow 3 – 1778: James Cook (England); Arrow 4 – 1788: Robert Gray (United States); Arrow 5 – 1782: George Vancouver (England); Arrow 6 – 1804-1805: Lewis and Clark (United States).
3. Label the Columbia River, Pacific Ocean, Rocky Mountains, United States, and British Canada.
4. In parentheses underneath ALASKA, print Russian territory. Along Arrow 7 from Alaska to Oregon, print Russian fur traders.
5. Lightly shade in the Oregon Country.
6. Spain and Russia eventually gave up their claims to the Oregon Country. In 1818, Great Britain and the United States signed a treaty which allowed citizens of both nations to live there. The first white settler in Oregon was John Jacob Astor, an American fur trader. He built a fur-trading post at Astoria, near the mouth of the Columbia River. British traders employed by the Hudson’s Bay Company founded Fort Vancouver. John McLoughlin, who directed the operation of the Hudson’s Bay Company, acted as governor for about 20 years. He established good relations with the Indians, and welcomed settlers as well as fur traders to the region. But few settlers moved to Oregon during the 1820s and 1830s, some American missionaries, arrived to teach Christianity to the Indians. The missionaries included Henry and Eliza Spalding, and Marcus and Narcissa Whitman. The Whitmans wrote letters to friends back East describing the abundant wildlife, beautiful mountains, and fertile river valleys. Many easterners, including people who had lost their jobs during the Panic of 1837, began forming wagon trains to go to Oregon. Most of the pioneers gathered at Independence, Missouri. As many as a hundred wagons or more would leave together on the 2,000-mile journey over the Oregon Trail. Their destination was the Williamette Valley, famous for its rich farmland.

On the map:

* 1. Next to dot 8, print 1843: First wagon train leaves Independence, Missouri.
  2. Label the Oregon Trail.
  3. Print Astoria next to dot 9, and Fort Vancouver next to dot 10.
  4. South of Fort Vancouver, print Williamette Valley.

1. In 1844, James K. Polk used the slogan “54-40 or Fight!” during his campaign for President. It was a reference to the latitude line which marked the northern boundary of Oregon. Many Americans demanded that Great Britain give up its claim to Oregon, so the United States could own all of it. But after Polk became President, the Americans and British decided to end their “joint occupation” (shared ownership) of Oregon by dividing the territory between them. The boundary became the 49th parallel, the same line which separated the United States and Canada farther east. President Polk was happy to solve the Oregon question peacefully. He knew that a war was near with Mexico because of the annexation of Texas, and a dispute over the boundary between Mexico and the United States.

On the map:

* 1. Next to the northern boundary of the Oregon Country, print 1844: James K. Polk “54-40 or Fight!”
  2. Next to the dotted line which shows the division of Oregon, print 1846: U.S. and Great Britain divide Oregon at the 49th parallel.

**Questions on the Oregon Country:**

1. In your opinion, did Spain, Russia, Great Britain, or the United States have the strongest claim to the Oregon Country? Explain your answer. (30-40 words)
2. Instead of dividing the Oregon Country with Great Britain, do you think the United States should have followed President James K. Polk’s campaign slogan of “54-40 or Fight!”? (30-40 words)
3. Give the meaning of the following terms (10-20 words):
   1. Missionaries
   2. Joint occupation
   3. 49th parallel
4. Identify these people (10-20 words):
   1. Captain Robert Gray
   2. John McLoughlin
   3. Marcus and Narcissa Whitman
   4. President James K. Polk

