



Overland Trails in Numbers (Upper Elementary)

Description: Students will examine the number of travelers and their destinations from a data set. Then, they will use the data set to answer some questions, represent their data in a graph, and use data to make inferences about emigrant travelers on the overland trails.

Activity Procedure:

1. Have students examine the data set in the two tables. Ask them to share their noticings and describe what the table represents.
2. Tell students that they are going to be working with a small group to represent their data set in a bar graph showing the number of travelers on the overland trails. Remind students to include the labels on their graph so the information is clear. Review the features of the different graphs, if necessary.
3. Each student within a group of 4 to complete a bar graph for their portion of the data. A
4. Have the groups look at and compare their graphs. Students should share observations with each other before returning to the large group for discussion.
5. Reconvene the group to answer the following discussion questions.

Materials:

- Overland Emigration Table Handout
- Graph Templates (1840-1844), (1845-1849), (1850-1854), (1855-1860)

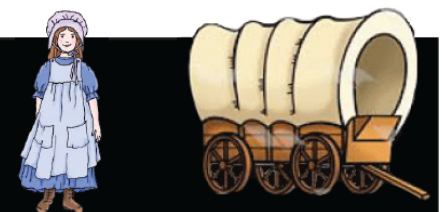
Discussion Questions:

- Why do you think having accurate numbers related to emigrant travelers is so difficult?
- Where were most people going from 1840-1848?
- When do you see a major change in the data? What event do you think led to this change?
- During the entire time frame from 1840-1860, where did most emigrants go? Why do you think so?
- How many more people went to California than Oregon in 1849?
- When did people first start emigrating to Utah?
- What was the total number of emigrants that had traveled west by 1844?
- In what year did more people go to Utah than to both California and Oregon?
- What was the main motivation for travel to Oregon? California? Utah?

The data on emigrant statistics was taken from John Unruh's *The Plains Across* (University of Illinois Press) as cited in *Reading, Writing & Riding Along the Oregon-California Trails* by William E. Hill.



National Historic Trails Interpretive Center
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U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management

The numbers of how many people traveled over the years is debated in the historical world. The data on emigrant statistics was taken from John Unruh's *The Plains Across* (University of Illinois Press) as cited in *Reading, Writing & Riding Along the Oregon-California Trails* by William E. Hill. This is an example of one historian's research. Most are just estimates.

Table 1 - Overland Emigration 1840-1848

| Year | Oregon | California | Utah | Grand Total |
|------------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|
| 1840 | 13 | - | - | 13 |
| 1841 | 24 | 34 | - | 71 |
| 1842 | 125 | - | - | 196 |
| 1843 | 875 | 38 | - | 1,109 |
| 1844 | 1,475 | 53 | - | 2,637 |
| 1845 | 2,500 | 260 | - | 5,397 |
| 1846 | 1,200 | 1,500 | - | 8,097 |
| 1847 | 4,000 | 450 | 2,200 | 14,747 |
| 1848 | 1,300 | 400 | 2,400 | 18,847 |
| Subtotals | 11,512 | 2,735 | 4,600 | 18,847 |



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Table 2 - Overland Emigration 1849-1860

| Year | Oregon | California | Utah | Grand Total |
|-------------------------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|
| 1849 | 450 | 25,000- | 1,500 | 45,797 |
| 1850 | 6,000 | 44,000 | 2,500 | 98,297 |
| 1851 | 3,600 | 1,100 | 1,500 | 104,497 |
| 1852 | 10,000 | 50,000 | 10,000 | 174,497 |
| 1853 | 7,500 | 20,000 | 8,000 | 209,997 |
| 1854 | 6,000 | 12,000 | 3,167 | 231,164 |
| 1855 | 500 | 1,500 | 4,684 | 237,848 |
| 1856 | 1,000 | 8,000 | 2,400 | 249,248 |
| 1857 | 1,500 | 4,000 | 1,300 | 256,048 |
| 1858 | 1,500 | 6,000 | 150 | 263,698 |
| 1859 | 2,000 | 17,000 | 1,431 | 284,129 |
| 1860 | 1,500 | 9,000 | 1,630 | 296,259 |
| Subtotals 1849-1860 | 41,550 | 197,600 | 38,262 | 277,412 |
| Grand Totals 1840-1860 | 53,062 | 200,000 | 42,862 | 296,259 |



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| Key | |
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| | 1840 | 1841 | 1842 | 1843 | 1844 | | | | | | | | | |



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| | | 1845 | 1846 | 1847 | 1848 | 1849 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |



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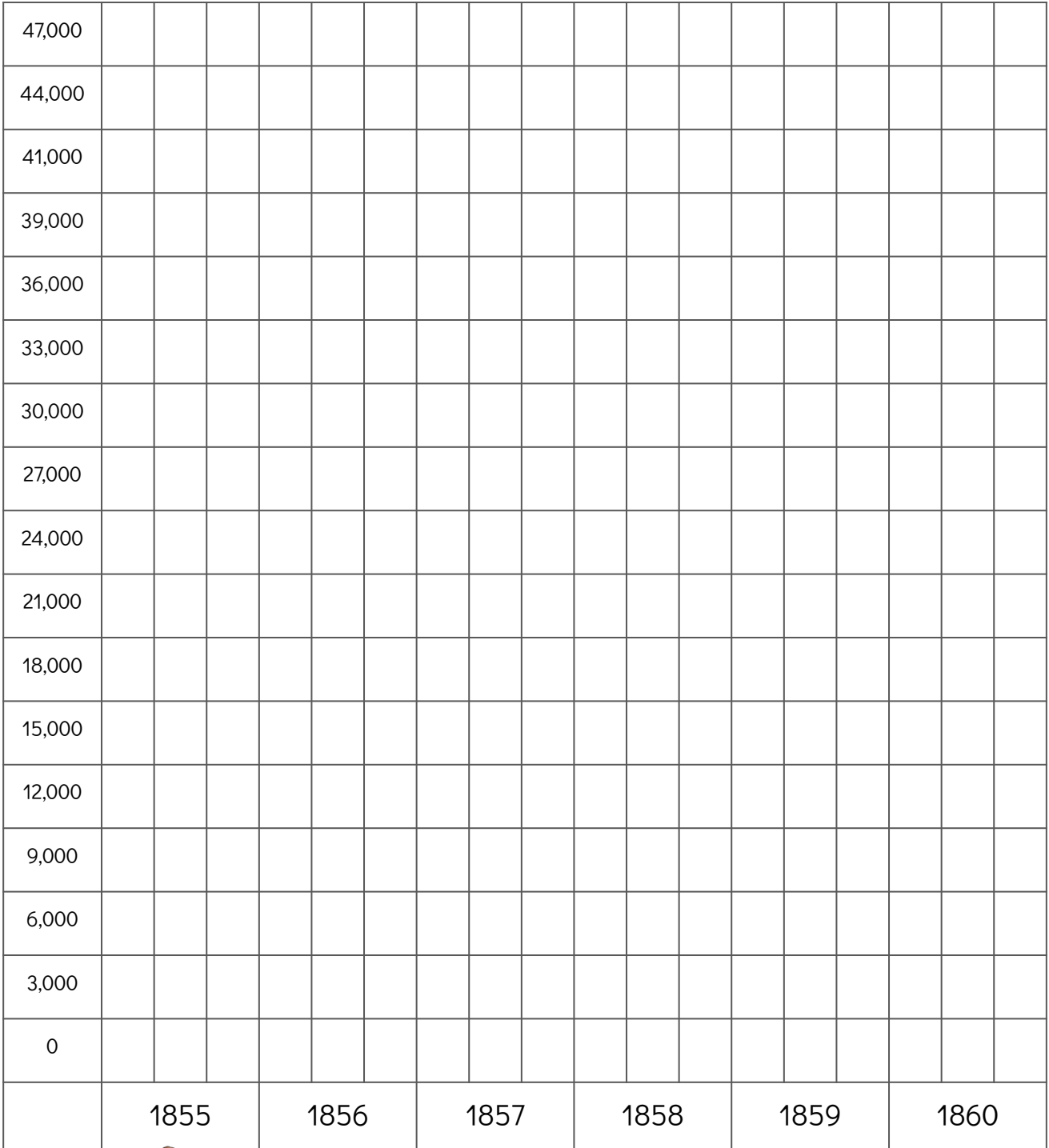
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| | 1850 | 1851 | 1852 | 1853 | 1854 | | | | | | | | | |



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