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Washoe County School District

Social Studies Fourth Grade Units

Lesson 3

Explorers and Settlers in Nevada

H 6.4.18 Identify explorers and settlers in pre-territorial Nevada including Kit Carson and John C. Fremont.

1 Introduce

- Ask students to name some famous explorers in American history, such as Columbus, Lewis and Clark, or David Crockett.
- Discuss with students the general time line of European exploration and settlement, based on the names and dates of the explorers they name and ones you might want to provide. Help students understand that the nation was mainly settled from east to west.
- Tell students in this lesson they will learn about the explorers and early settlers of Nevada.

2 Teach

Have students read the lesson. Review the meanings of any unfamiliar words such as *mission*, *mountain man*, or *expedition*. Make a time line on the board and ask individual students to list different events in the history of exploration and settlement in Nevada on it. Then ask:

How did fur traders affect the settlement of Nevada? (Possible answer: Fur traders built the Old Spanish Trail, which made travel west easier.)

Why was Kit Carson a useful guide for John C. Fremont? (Carson had been to Nevada before and helped work on the Old Spanish Trail, so he was familiar with the area.)

Explain to students that Fremont wrote books about his expeditions and his adventures in Nevada and the West. In them, he described the beauty of the mountains and the wild lands he traveled, and he portrayed Carson as a hero. Tell them that Carson River is also named for Kit Carson.

3 Assess and Extend

Assess After students answer the questions, discuss them as a class. Erase the time line and write the name of each explorer or settler on the board. Tell students to turn over their papers and have them try to recall aloud the details about each person without consulting their pages. Give hints until correct data is written under each name.

Extend Have students research one of the explorers and early settlers of Nevada. Ask them to make a trading card with a picture of the person on the front of the card and three or four bulleted points about that person's role or contribution to the exploration or settlement of Nevada. Then have them share their trading cards with a partner.

Answer Key

Lesson 3 Explorers and Settlers in Nevada

1. Garcés was on his way to set up Spanish missions in California. Jedediah Smith led fur traders to trap and trade animals. John C. Fremont explored and surveyed the area. Kit Carson served as a guide for John C. Fremont's explorations.
2. Possible answer: Because it was a long and difficult journey across mountains
3. It was one of the first trading routes of the West.
4. Carson led a group through Nevada to help improve the Old Spanish Trail, and he served as a guide for Fremont. Fremont led an expedition to survey areas in Nevada. Fremont made maps of Nevada that helped others traveling in the area. He wrote books about his expeditions.

Name _____ Date _____



Grade 4, Lesson 3
H 6.4.18

Explorers and Settlers in Nevada

Read the passage.

In the 1800s, settlers from the eastern United States began making the long journey to Nevada. They had to cross mountains and other rugged lands.

Francisco Garcés was the first European to come to the area. He came in the 1770s. He was on his way to set up Spanish missions in California. Later, in 1827, fur trader Jedediah Smith led the first Americans into Nevada.

The Old Spanish Trail, which crosses southern Nevada, was established by fur traders. It was one of the first trading routes of the West. It stretched from California to New Mexico. Mountain man Kit Carson traveled with a group through Nevada in 1829. They helped improve the Old Spanish Trail.

In 1843 John C. Fremont led an expedition west to explore and survey the area. Kit Carson served as his guide and became famous throughout the region for his bravery. Carson City, the state capital, is named after him. Later, Fremont traveled through Nevada. The trails he used, the maps he made, and the books he wrote helped interest other explorers and settlers in Nevada. Fremont also was the first white person to see Lake Tahoe.

In 1848 Nevada came under the control of the United States. With the discovery of silver at the Comstock Lode in 1859, the area's population grew. In 1861 Nevada became an official U.S. territory.

Answer the questions.

1. Circle the names of three people who explored what is now Nevada. Then underline why they came here.

2. Why do you think settlement of Nevada did not take place until the 1800s? _____

3. Why was the development of the Old Spanish Trail important? _____

4. What roles did Carson and Fremont play in the exploration and settlement of Nevada?
