

Out West

Non-Fiction Writing

Realism, or non-fiction, is less about imagination and more about information, people, or facts.

- It can still be creative or have opinions – just stay on the realistic side.
- Examples: history, biographies, places, events, or reports.

The **Oregon Trail** was a 2,170 mile path across the western United States. Its “golden age” was 1846-69, when 400,000 settlers, farmers, miners, business owners, and families made the difficult journey. Once on the trail, pioneers could choose routes to California, Montana, Utah, and Oregon.

Pioneers left from Independence, MO in early spring when grass was plentiful. The journey took 4-6 months, traveling 15 miles a day. Many quickly realized they over packed and abandoned belongings along the trail to lighten their load. There were many dangers along the way like gun accidents, falls, and cholera. It is estimated 10% of the pioneers died along the journey. Once the settlers arrived in the West, they could apply for homestead land or purchase an acre for \$1.50. The trail was abandoned with the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad in 1869.



Essay #1 Would you leave comfortable living in the East for adventure, hardship, and opportunity out West?

(18-24 sentences)

From 1860-61, the **Pony Express** was a mail service delivering messages, news, and packages from St. Joseph, Missouri, to Sacramento, California. It was an important service connecting California to the rest of the country. Mail could now travel across country in an impressive 10 days. However, the Pony Express never made a profit and closed at the outbreak of the Civil War and completion of a cross country telegraph line. Overall, it delivered 35,000 pieces of mail.

The Pony Express was a complicated operation. Eighty riders were always on horseback transporting mail between the 187 stations. Every 15 miles station keepers and stock tenders resupplied riders with a fresh horse and food on their 75-mile a day journey.



Essay #2 What would be three challenging aspects of riding for the Pony Express? **(16-20 sentences)**

Essay #3 Describe the activity at the relay station five minutes before and after a rider arrives?

(16-20 sentences)