

Dear Levi: Letters from the Overland Trail
by Elvira Woodruff

Historical fiction can be used to integrate social studies across the curriculum. For example,

* Language Arts: You've already made it to Oregon. Write a letter to Austin offering him specific advice and encouragement.

* Reading: As you read pioneer books over the next two weeks, make journal entries about how you would feel in the main characters' shoes.

* Math: Conduct a five-question survey to see what at least fifteen fifth-graders know about wagon trains. Analyze your data and write a conclusion.

* Geography: Sketch three landmarks Austin might see on his journey on the Overland Trail.

* Health: Using the computer, research one disease or condition that pioneers frequently suffered from.

* Art: Design a button you would give Reuben to sew on his special "button coat."

* Music: Create a new verse for "Oh Susannah!" that reflects Austin's experiences.

* Critical thinking: Identify a problem Austin faced. With a partner, brainstorm at least three alternative solutions. Circle the one you like best and tell why.

* Physical education: Learn a square dance.

Source: Lindquist, Tarry (1997). Ways That Work: Putting Social Studies Standards Into Practice. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.