**Reader’s Theater for *Your Live as a Pioneer on the Oregon Trail*:**

**Setting: Is a story about pioneers heading west across North America in 1847. The story is mainly about a small family with a husband and wife named Jim and Abigail and three children named Frankie, Henry, and Jenny. They are heading west to start a new life that will take approximately five months through unsettled wilderness and steep mountains along with many annoying insects. The family won’t be traveling alone, in fact, they will be traveling along with hundreds of other families on the Oregon Trail.**

**Characters:**

**Narrator Abigail Jim Henry Frankie Jenny**

**Play:**

**Narrator: It is a sunny day in Independence, Missouri as Abigail starts to get everything ready for their long trip along the Oregon Trail. Her children are running wild all over the place.**

**Jenny, Henry, Frankie: (Together) \*laugh loudly while stomping their feet\***

**Abigail: (yells in a loud voice) Kids, come back here! We’re leaving!**

**Narrator: Abigail continues to check for the things she’ll need such as flour, bacon, beans, medicine, and tools. Once she’s sure she has everything they are ready to start their journey!**

**Jim: Alright kids, let’s head out.**

**Narrator: The trip begins and the family has traveled several miles already.**

**Abigail: I’m glad I’ve ridden with you this far already but, I feel uncomfortable. I think I should walk.**

**Jim: Okay, honey. Just remember that the wind is fast and heavy out there and it might make you more uncomfortable out there than you are in here.**

**Abigail: You’re probably right and I only have one other dress I can change into. I wish I could wear pants like you men do.**

**Jim: Now, you know you can’t do that. It’s just not appropriate. Things will get better when we arrive to our new land.**

**Narrator: Pants were not allowed for women to wear in those days, it wasn’t appropriate. Women wore long dresses with long sleeves. Also, on this trip the reason why Abigail only had one dress was because there wasn’t any more room on their wagon.**

**Abigail: You’re right things will get better when we get there. I’m going to walk with the kids.**

**Jenny: Mom, it’s SO windy! The dirt is flying in my eyes, it’s hard for me to see.**

**Henry: She’s right mom, this wind makes it even harder to walk.**

**Frankie: I wish there was more room for us to sit inside the wagon.**

**Narrator: Almost every pioneer walked the entire journey through the Oregon Trail because they couldn’t afford to buy a horse for each family member to ride and there wasn’t enough space on their wagons to fit people, this included children. Although they were long trips, the pioneers did take breaks especially for lunch.**

**Jim: Alright, everyone time to stop for some lunch!**

**Henry: What are we having for lunch today?**

**Abigail: Some dry bread**

**Jenny, Henry, and Frankie: \*whining\* Why?! We are tired of it!**

**Abigail: We’ll have better food tonight, I promise.**

**Narrator: Although Abigail wants her promise to be real she doesn’t think it will be true. That’s all they got, unless they find something else to eat. Once they are finished eating Abigail sees the Platte River.**

**Abigail: Come on kids, let’s go get clean by the river!**

**Narrator: They try to jump in the river but, it seems to be too cold.**

**Jenny: I can’t mom, the water is freezing! \*She jumps out of the river\***

**Frankie: If Jenny thinks it’s too cold, I’m not jumping in there.**

**Henry: You can count me out too.**

**Jim: Well, I don’t think I want to get in either…**

**Abigail: I guess we just have to be dirty then.**

**Narrator: The waters were extremely cold but, the pioneers got dirty daily because of the dust kicked up from the wagons. The wagons in the back of the line usually got the worst of it all but, the pioneers took turns being in the back so no one would have to receive that dirt continually.**

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**\*have a new set of students portray the roles for the class\***

**Narrator: When evening comes, there are men sent out ahead of the rest of the group to scout a good place to camp overnight. Once the place is located the wagons corral, which means they make a circle. Then, it’s time to get ready for supper.**

**Abigail: The water is really boiling, it’s time to soak the beans.**

**Jenny: \*wrinkles her nose\* that doesn’t look good..**

**Abigail: Better get used to it, it’s all we brought.**

**Narrator: Before they know it, it’s time for bed. Everyone lays outside and as Abigail begins to fall asleep something happens.**

**Abigail: AHHHHHH! There’s a snake… but, it’s only a garter snake. Sorry, false alarm!**

**Narrator: Gartner snakes were harmless but, it wasn’t uncommon to run into wild animals. This is why several men would stand guard of the camp overnight to make sure no wild animals would hurt anyone. They also made sure to protect each other from an American-Indian attack but, those didn’t happen frequently. Just, like that it was already morning again.**

**Jim: I’m going to go let the oxen graze, I’ll return in a little while.**

**Abigail: Fantastic, I shall start the fire and prepare breakfast.**

**Jenny: \*looks at mom with urgency\* Mom, I need to go!**

**Abigail: Hurry, go into the trees. I’ll follow behind you.**

**Narrator: Bathrooms didn’t exist for pioneers they had to do their duty outside. Speaking of using the bathroom, Buffalo dung which was called “buffalo chips” was used to light fires because they lasted longer than regular wood. So children and adults collected buffalo chips trying not to think about what they were. But, the kids have a different idea.**

**Frankie: How far do you think it will fly? \*throws a buffalo chip in the air\***

**Henry: \*laughs\* look at how far mine can go? \*throws buffalo chip\***

**Jenny: \*throws buffalo chip into the river\* look mine made a large splash!**

**Abigail: That’s not lady like Abigail!**

**Narrator: Although children pioneer did have lots chores they found ways to play games.**

**Abigail: Jenny, thank you for helping me wash the clothes. I know the water is cold and the soap is harsh but, you’re doing a great job.**

**Jenny: thank you mom, the water is so cold. When will we finish?**

**Abigail: soon darling! Your brothers are setting up a fire for dinner and your father looks like he is going to play the fiddle tonight. So, we have some things to look forward to.**

**Jim: As a matter of fact, I’m going to start playing it now!**

**Henry and Frankie: We finished building the fire and we have started cooking the beans and the bacon.**

**Jim: Alright boys, keep an eye on it so you it doesn’t burn.**

**Narrator: After, the chores are finished and dinner has been eaten the children read for a while and afterwards they dance to the fiddle their father plays.**

**Jim, Abigail, Jenny, Henry, and Frankie: yay!!! \*dancing around the fire\***

**Narrator: As time passes the pioneers come across a group of American-Indians called the Pawnee Indians, who were very friendly.**

**Abigail: Jim, look at their beads. We should trade with them, I really would love to own some of those beads from the ladies blouses.**

**Jim: Of course, we shall. I want to trade for some of their buffalo hide.**

**Narrator: Jim and Abigail use flour to trade for what they want. In return they also get good information for hunting grounds. After their encounter with the Pawnee Indians they proceed.**

**Jim: I’m going hunting for food. I’m going to see if the information the Indians gave us will help us find more food.**

**Abigail: Alright, be safe. We will continue onward and meet you later today.**

**Henry: Mom, can I lead?**

**Abigail: Of course! Just say, “Giddyup!”**

**Henry: \*yells\* “Gidddyup!!”**

**Abigail: Well since they didn’t move… try cracking the whip!**

**Henry: \*cracks the whip\* Left! Go Left!**

**Narrator: Everyone reunites and continues on their journey. Their trip consists of rain, bugs, and diseases. No one was happy.**

**Frankie: I’m hungry.**

**Henry: I’m thirsty.**

**Jenny: My skin itches!**

**Abigail: I’m sorry, children. But, look on the bright side you don’t have cholera!**

**Narrator: Cholera was a deadly disease that spread quickly and killed thousands of pioneers. At this point, the family still hasn’t gotten half way through the journey and the oxen are tired. It’s time to lighten the load.**

**Jim: I think we should leave you antique table it’s too heavy and will help take off some weight from the oxen.**

**Abigail: If you must, I will miss it.**

**Narrator: The pioneers continue on and come across a river. It was time to build boards to help the wagons get across.**

**Abigail: Kids, be careful and hang on tight. I know you can’t swim and it’s very dangerous.**

**Jenny: Mom, I think we’re about to tip over!**

**Henry: I’m scared, I don’t know if we’re going to make it!**

**Frankie: Things are falling out of our wagon mom!**

**Abigail: It’s okay… It was my china set at least we’ve lightened the load. \*tries to say it cheerfully\***

**Narrator: Once the pioneers made it across the river they came to the halfway point called Independence Rock.**

**Jenny, Henry, Frankie: Let’s carve our names in it!**

**Jim: Alright children do so quickly, we still have to get the wagon up and down the rock.**

**Abigail: let’s begin getting the wagon up.**

**Narrator: several men and women help get the wagon up and down the rock. Many women aren’t too excited about this part.**

**Abigail: This isn’t ladylike. \*she mutters\***

**Narrator: A couple months go by and the pioneers are exhausted from the travel.**

**Henry: Are we there yet?**

**Abigail: Yes we are! We’re home at last long!**

**Narrator: These pioneers finally arrived home in the Willamette Valley. Not everyone settled there some continued to California. Although it was a long trip, they made it with their feet throbbing and some of their belongings gone but, they made it safely and that’s what counts!**