



The Desert Speaks

#1108 The Devil's Highway
Teacher Information Sheet

Program Description

What was it really like to journey through the desert before the days of air-conditioned vehicles and cell phones? Travel on foot, on horseback and by Model T Ford in 120 degree heat was torturous, even fatal. Many people didn't make it. This episode vividly illustrates the rigors of yesteryear journeys on the aptly named El Camino del Diablo (The Devil's Highway). People still risk their lives to get from Mexico to California on this route. To this day, it is one of the deadliest in the world.

Teaching Tips

1. Discuss vocabulary words
2. Introduce the episode by giving a brief summary of the program and telling students what information you would like them to gain from viewing the program.
3. Allow time at the conclusion of the program for discussion and the completion of the *Student Viewing Sheet*.
4. Investigate the related web sites listed below.

Vocabulary Words

- arid extremely dry; parched
- league a unit of distance
- perilous involving grave risk or danger

Related Web Sites

El Camino del Diablo

While this web site was originally designed to provide information for people seeking "off road" adventures, it still provides a lot of good general information about *El Camino del Diablo*. It includes a comprehensive history of the highway as well as a "Pictorial Essay" of interesting sites along the trail. *The Desert Survival* link provides good information for traveling in the desert.

www.off-road.com/~rstodda/devilhwy.html

Westward Expansion: Links to Trails West

A vast collection of web site links dealing with the Westward Expansion. Contains information on such topics as *Trails to the Gold Rush*, *Wagon Roads to the West*, *Military Roads of the Old West*, *Diaries and Letters from the Trails West* and much more.

<http://www.frii.com/~lizabeth/overland/trwest.html>

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Student Viewing Sheet

Use information in the video to answer the following questions.

1. *El Camino del Diablo* means _____ .
2. This road, *El Camino del Diablo*, leads from _____ to _____
3. How did the Devil's Highway get its name? _____

4. What about his road makes it such a difficult one to travel? _____

5. During the days of the Gold Rush, why did some people choose to travel across the desert in the summertime? _____

6. What were some of the dangers of traveling along the Gila River? _____

7. Even today, there are people who die each year trying to cross the desert. What motivates people today to attempt this dangerous crossing? _____

8. In an attempt to discourage people from trying to cross the desert, the U.S. has put up a sign. What does it say? _____

Many different people have traveled *El Camino del Diablo* over the years. Why do you think the following groups chose to travel this road?

- Spanish Priests _____
- Surveyors _____
- Scientists _____
- People with little money _____

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Answer Key

1. Road of the Devil
2. Mexico to America
3. Because it was so difficult to travel and many people died along the way
4. The ground is very rough, its extremely hot and there is no water along the way
5. They were in a hurry to get to California; they hoped to strike it rich
6. There were hostile people along the river such as bandits and Apaches
7. They hope to find work and a better life in the U.S.
8. *In the next 43 miles, you will not find food, water, or lodging. There is danger of death.*

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| Spanish Priests | to visit the missions |
| Surveyors | to survey and map the land |
| Scientists | to research and study the land, plants and animals |
| People with little money | to find a better life |