

Who were the Mormons and why did they decide to Head West?

Learning Objectives:

- To understand who the Mormons were and why they were unpopular in the East.
- To assess how successful their move West was in comparison with the Donner Party.
- To evaluate the role of Brigham Young in the migration west and the formation of a new Mormon city and state.



Background Information:

The **Mormons were a religious group** (full name Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints) who were **followers of Joseph Smith**. He claimed in the 1820s an angel visited him and told him about two buried golden plates written on in an old language. He dug up and translated these plates (no-one else was allowed to see them) and this became the Book of Mormon. Most other Christians shunned this new rival religion and he and his early followers faced hostility. It was called '*contemptible gibberish*'. He originally only had five followers but soon had several hundred. Smith was very charismatic but many people suspected he was a fraud. He decided he and his followers would go to **Kirtland in Ohio** where they would form a community.

Kirtland 1831 – 1837

By 1831 there were over 1000 Mormons. They worked hard and soon established a bank, mill, and printing press but in 1837 when economic depression hit their bank collapsed. Non Mormons lost money too and were angry. The Mormons were chased out.

Missouri 1837 – 1838

They relocated to Missouri and were no more popular there. It was a slave state and the Mormons were anti slavery and also sympathetic to the Native Americans. Mormon property was destroyed in a riot and the Mormons were held responsible and Smith was imprisoned. He is released on the understanding he and his followers move again.



A reconstruction of the Golden Plates Joseph claimed to have found.

Whatever the truth of his claim, we can be fairly certain they were not made of gold as gold is too soft to carve on in such a way. In his defence, he only ever said 'golden plates' and did not claim they were made of gold.

Other ancient texts have been discovered in other parts of the world carved into metal or stone so his is not a unique claim. These golden plates have never been seen since though as Smith claimed an angel took them after he had translated them!

Who were the Mormons and why did they decide to Head West?

Nauvoo 1839 - 46

They moved again to the tiny town of Commerce in Illinois they renamed Nauvoo. Here they were allowed to set up an independent community with their own laws and worked hard to create an ideal society – no poverty, no drinking or smoking. Now numbers had swelled to 35,000. Many Mormon followers were arriving from Europe. It seemed they had managed to create a peaceful, prosperous community.

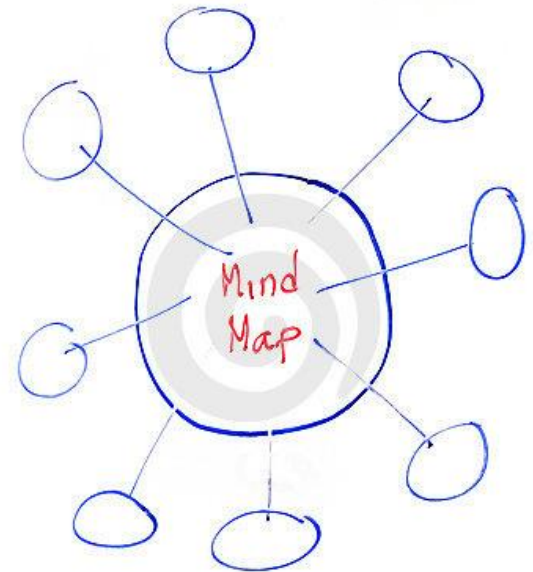
Joseph Smith's fatal errors

In 1844 he claimed God said certain Mormons could have more than one wife (polygamy). Some Mormons denounced him and criticised him in newspapers. Smith had their printing presses destroyed. Some claimed he had become a dictator and imprisoned him. This was not helped by Smith stating he planned to run for President of the USA. Non Mormons heard about the polygamy and the Presidential plans and marched on the jail he was being held in. He was attacked and shot dead.

Task:

Make a mind map including all the reasons why people were hostile to the Mormons.

Question: Was all this hostility justified? Explain your decision.



Who were the Mormons and why did they decide to Head West?

A New Leader

Brigham Young became the new leader of the Mormons. In 1845, he decided that the Mormons needed to move again. He thought that they needed somewhere isolated and unwanted by others to avoid future confrontation. He decided to head West along the Oregon Trail but leave it early and head for the Great Salt Lake. Although a Salt Lake does not sound ideal to build a new community around, he had heard there were streams fed by snow from mountains nearby and good soil around.



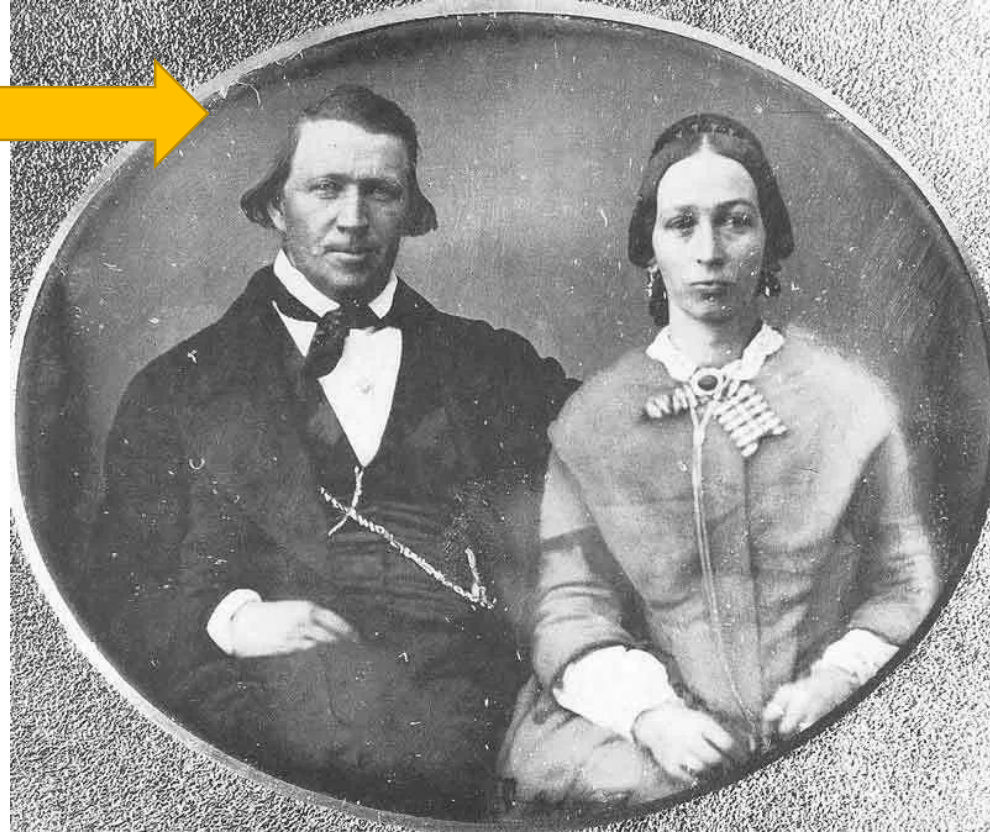
Question:
Explain why Brigham Young took the decision to relocate the Mormon community to the Great Salt Lake.

There was another important reason as well. At this point (1845) the Great Salt Lake was still in Mexico so Brigham Young felt they would safer out of the reach of the USA. .

BIG QUESTION: How was he going to get many thousands of Mormons successfully across the Plains and through the Rocky mountains and build a successful community from scratch for them to live in? Was this going to be another disaster like the Donner Party?

Planning and Preparation

Brigham Young, the second leader of the Mormons and one of his wives. He apparently had 55 in total, including 5 that had previously been Joseph Smith's wives. He married 5 of his widows!



The Mormons believed that Young was God's prophet and so they obeyed him completely.

Task:

Look at the cards you have been given concerning the preparation and the journey. Get them into the correct chronological order. Then, shade in the cards that show positive aspects of the preparation and journey and the less positive aspects too. Use two colours.



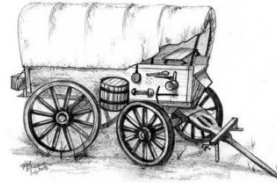
Young taught the wagon trains to circle when camping along the trail to keep the people and cattle safe .

In February 1846 an advance party including Young went ahead and crossed the frozen Mississippi river to establish a **base camp**. This was to be the first of several rest camps which would have facilities to repair wagons and plant crops. The crops would be to feed later parties of Mormons. The plan was for the Mormons to travel across in different groups at different times..

By June 1846 Young and the first wagon trail reached the Missouri river and built the **Winter Quarters**. These were cabins for the Mormons to shelter from the worst of the winter and rest.



During the winter of 1845 preparations were underway. Wagons were built, oxen bought and equipment and food collected.



By the autumn of 1846 the first wagon trails reached the **Winter Quarters** . However the winter of 1846/7 was particularly harsh and food and fuel supplies ran low and disease spread. Despite Young's excellent preparations several hundred died. He could not control the weather.



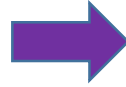
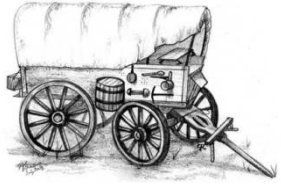
The Mormon travellers continued to come in these organised groups until 1869.

At the **base camp**, Young organised the groups into separate wagon trains. There were 100 wagons in each one with a Captain . There was also a lieutenant with a responsibility for every 10 wagons within the group.

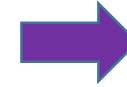
By the end of 1847, around 2000 Mormons had reached Salt Lake valley. Young returned to the Winter Quarters to organise the next batch. He was exceptionally organised and his followers obeyed him without question.

In April 1847, Young continued on with 143 people all especially chosen for their endurance and a balance of skills. Their job was to lead and mark out the way and to select the best site to begin building the settlement at the Salt Lake.

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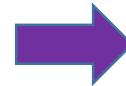
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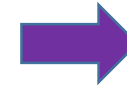
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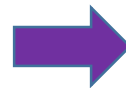
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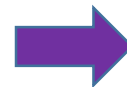
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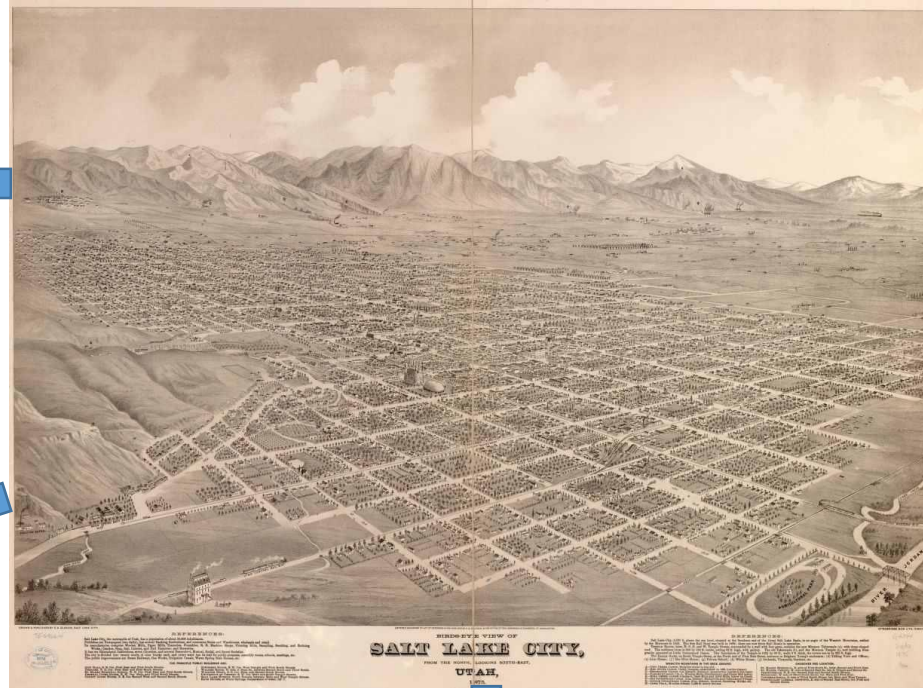
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Building the new Settlement at Salt Lake

The Mormons faith and their long isolation from other people meant they worked hard together.

Young planned to make everyone self sufficient. He decided there would be no private ownership of land or water, the church owned it all. It would be assigned to people according to need.

Snow melt water was brought into the new town by a system of irrigation ditches. A timetable was drawn up for when people could draw water for their plots.



In order to try and be self sufficient each new area developed was designed to produce particular products (crops, timber, etc.)

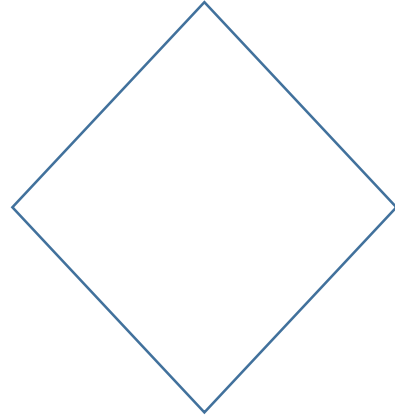
However in 1848, the Mormons found themselves back in the USA after the war with Mexico. Brigham Young decided he would try to make the Mormon lands into a new territory in the USA with himself as Governor. After some compromise this was agreed. This territory later became the state of Utah.

A Perpetual Emigration Fund was set up to help thousands of Mormons around the world emigrate to Salt Lake City.

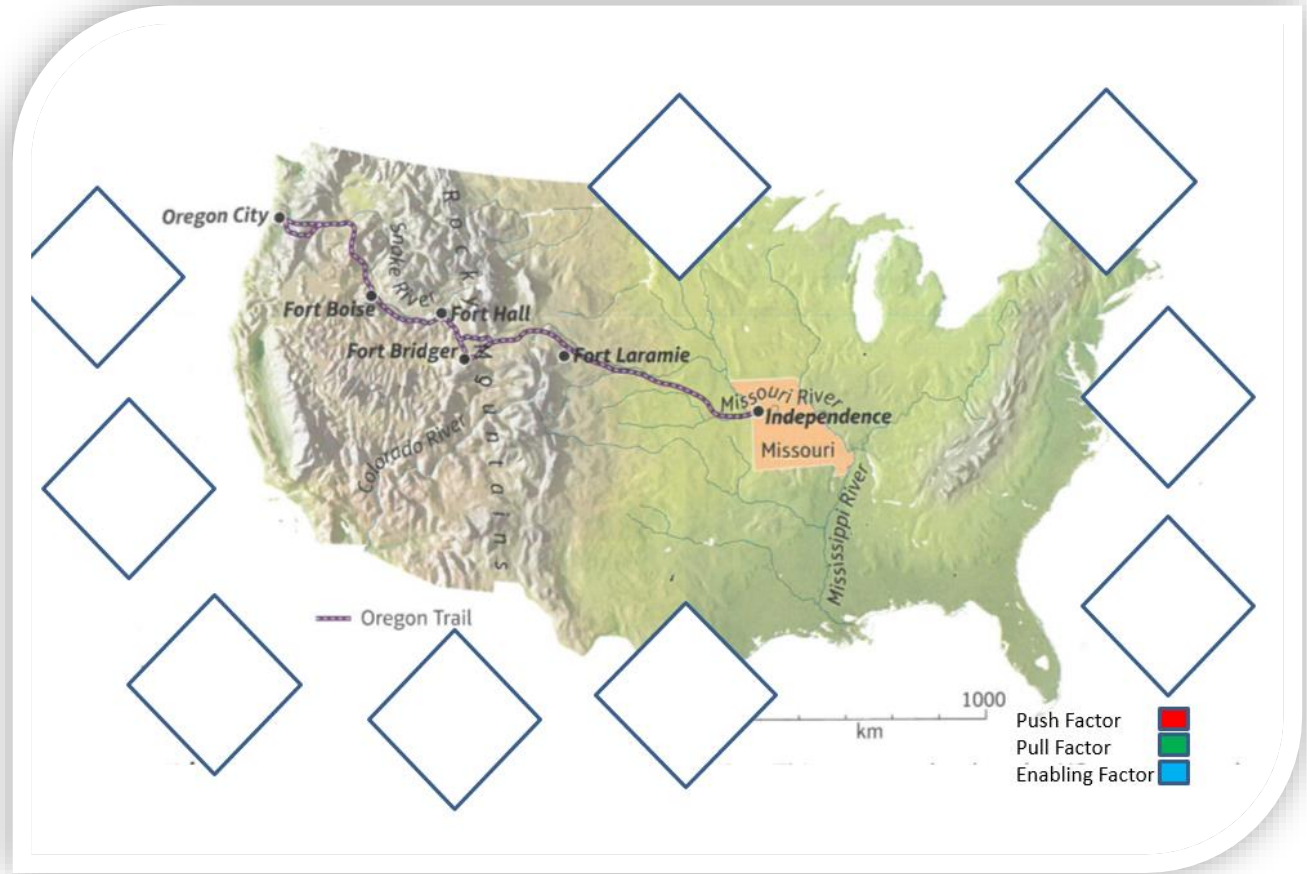
Task: Make a brief mind map of the above information.

Plenary:

You now have another reason why people went West in the period 1836-1849.



Draw one final diamond on your A3 map with this extra reason people went west. (Hint – your heading could be religious persecution)
Think about whether it is a push, pull or an enabling factor as you need to decide where to place it on your map.



Exam Question (8 marks)

- ***Write a narrative account analysing why Americans went West in the years 1836 – 1849.***
You may use the following in your answer:
 - The Oregon Trail from 1836
 - The Californian Gold Rush 1849
 - You must also use information of your own.



You will need to write an organised answer, putting events into the correct chronological order (get revising those timelines!). You need to show how each event is connected to and led to the next event. You will need to explain **THREE** events in your narrative.

Events to Think about:

- The Oregon Trail**
- Californian Gold Rush**
- Economic Depression in the East**
- California becomes US territory**
- Oregon becomes US territory**
- Government Encouragement (Pre emption Act)**
- Any others?**

Step1: Put these events in chronological order and match the dates to the event

1837 From 1836 1849 1842 1848 1846



Step 2 - Decide which three events you want to include in your answer

Analytical narratives are NOT just stories.

The analytical narrative, as well as linking events, also makes clear what followed on from them and what difference they made.

The use of process words and phrases show that something was happening and therefore suggest the impact.

Practice selecting key events, sequencing them and linking them into a process that explains an outcome.

**Key phrases/words for
a historical narrative
to demonstrate links:**

- therefore
- because of this...
- thus...
- in order to...
- as a consequence...
- hence...
- this led to...
- combined with...
- as a result...

Process words:

- began
- became
- developed
- changed
- realised
- ended
- intensified
 - grew
- followed
- worsened
- improved
- increased
- reinforced
- encouraged
- deteriorated
 - despite

Level	Mark	Descriptor
	0	No rewardable material.
1	1–2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A simple or generalised narrative is provided; the account shows limited analysis and organisation of the events included. [AO2] • Limited knowledge and understanding of the events is shown. [AO1]
2	3–5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A narrative is given, showing some organisation of material into a sequence of events leading to an outcome. The account of events shows some analysis of the linkage between them, but some passages of the narrative may lack coherence and organisation. [AO2] • Accurate and relevant information is added, showing some knowledge and understanding of the events. [AO1] <p><i>Maximum 4 marks for answers that do not go beyond aspects prompted by the stimulus points.</i></p>
3	6–8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A narrative is given which organises material into a clear sequence of events leading to an outcome. The account of events analyses the linkage between them and is coherent and logically structured. [AO2] • Accurate and relevant information is included, showing good knowledge and understanding of the key features or characteristics of the events. [AO1] <p><i>No access to Level 3 for answers which do not go beyond aspects prompted by the stimulus points.</i></p>

Write a narrative account analysing why Americans went West in the years 1836 – 1849.

You may use the following in your answer: (8 marks)

-The Oregon Trail from 1836

-The Californian Gold Rush 1849

-You must also use information of your own.

*An important first development in the early settlement of the West was the **opening of the Oregon Trail** which was used by people other than explorers and fur trappers from **1836**. **Due to** the opening of this trail it became possible for settlers to cross the Plains and find a route through the Rocky Mountains to Oregon and California. This was more affordable than travelling by sea. **As a consequence** of this route being established, increasing numbers of people began to head West and by 1846 over 5,000 people had made the journey.*

*This new access, **combined with economic depression** in the east from **1837 encouraged** more Americans to brave the trail and head for a new life West. In the East banks had collapsed, unemployment was rising and this may have increased some people's determination to head west to start a new life. There were negative things pushing them out of their lives on the East coast. This combined with new developments and opportunities on the West coast **encouraged** people to make the journey. The US government gained land from Mexico and from Britain during this period (land that would become the states of California and Oregon) and gave incentives to people to settle there.*

*In the mid to late 1840s certain groups had other reasons to make the decision to head west. The Mormons, under the leadership of Brigham Young, decided to start a new community away from other white Americans due to the hostility and persecution they had faced in the East. Three times they had been chased out of communities in Ohio, Missouri and Illinois, all states in the USA. **As a consequence** Young decided to lead them West to build a new settlement at Salt Lake. From 1846 onwards Mormons began to make the journey, with two thousand arriving by 1847 with many thousands more following in the years to come.*

*The most dramatic **increase** in people heading west however came after gold was discovered in California in 1848; **because of this** many thousands used the trail hoping to reach California and find gold and make their fortune. Only an estimated 5,000 had used the trail before the discovery of gold but by 1852 the population of California had rocketed to 250,000.*

Key phrases/words for a historical narrative to demonstrate links:

- therefore
- because of this...
- thus...
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Process words:

- Began Became
- Developed Changed
- Realised Ended
- Intensified Grew
- Followed Worsened
- Improved Increased
- Reinforced Encouraged
- Deteriorated
- Despite

Exam Question:

Explain the importance of Brigham Young to the successful arrival and settlement at Salt Lake by the Mormons.



Explain the importance of the Brigham Young to the successful arrival and settlement at Salt Lake by the Mormons

One way in which Brigham Young was important is...

A second way in which he was important is...

Level	Mark	Descriptor
1	1-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A simple generalised answer is given, showing limited development and organisation of material.• Limited knowledge and understanding of the topic is shown.
2	3-5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• An explanation is given, showing an attempt to analyse importance. It shows some reasoning, but some passages may lack coherence and organisation.• Accurate and relevant information is added, showing some knowledge and understanding of the period.
3	6-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• An explanation is given, showing analysis of importance. It shows a line of reasoning that is coherent and logically structured.• Accurate and relevant information is included, showing good knowledge and understanding of the required features or characteristics of the period studied.

