Name: _____ Date: _____

The Pony Express Rides

Circle group

In 1860, there was no telephone and no email. There was no railroad all the way across the country. A letter from Missouri to California could take weeks. A company set up a faster way. It was called the Pony Express.

The plan was to have riders pass the mail along like a relay race. Stations stood about every ten to fifteen miles. At each station, a rider hopped off a tired horse. He grabbed the mail bag and jumped on a fresh horse. Then he raced to the next station. After a few stations, a new rider took over. This way, mail went about two thousand miles in around ten days.

The riders were often young and light, so the horses could run fast. They rode through heat, snow, and rough land.

The Pony Express lasted only about eighteen months. In 1861, a telegraph line was finished. It could send messages across the country in moments. Riders were not needed.

Questions

1. How long could a letter from Missouri to California take before the Pony Express?

_____

_____

2. How far apart were the stations?

_____

_____

3. What did a rider do at each station?

_____

_____

4. About how long did the Pony Express take to carry mail across the country?

_____

_____

5. Why were riders often young and light?

_____

_____

6. Why did the Pony Express end?

_____

_____

Words to know

relay: a race or job where each person does one part and passes it on
telegraph: a machine that sent messages along wires

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

The Pony Express Rides

Triangle group

In 1860, there was no telephone, no email, and no railroad all the way across the country. A letter sent from Missouri to California could take weeks. A company set up a faster way. It was called the Pony Express.

The plan was to have riders pass the mail along like a relay race. Stations stood about every ten to fifteen miles along the route. At each station, a rider jumped off a tired horse, grabbed the mail bag, and leaped onto a fresh horse. Then the rider galloped to the next station. After several stations, a new rider took over. This way, mail traveled about two thousand miles in around ten days.

The riders were often young and light, so the horses could run fast. They rode through heat, snow, and rough land.

The Pony Express lasted only about eighteen months. In 1861, a telegraph line was finished that could send messages across the country in moments. The riders were no longer needed.

Questions

1. How long could a letter from Missouri to California take before the Pony Express?

_____

_____

2. How often were stations built along the route?

_____

_____

3. What did a rider do at each station?

_____

_____

4. About how long did the Pony Express take to carry mail across the country?

_____

_____

5. Why were riders often young and light?

_____

_____

6. Why did the Pony Express end?

_____

_____

Words to know

relay: a race or job where each person does one part and passes it on
route: the path from one place to another
galloped: ran at a fast pace, as a horse does
telegraph: a machine that sent messages along wires

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

The Pony Express Rides

Square group

In 1860, there was no telephone, no email, and no railroad stretching all the way across the country. A letter sent from Missouri to California could take weeks to arrive, so a company organized a much faster service called the Pony Express.

The plan was to have riders pass the mail along like a relay race. Stations were built approximately every ten to fifteen miles along the route. At each station, a rider leaped off an exhausted horse, grabbed the mail bag, and vaulted onto a fresh horse. Then the rider galloped toward the next station, and after several stations, a new rider took over. Using this method, mail traveled about two thousand miles in around ten days.

The riders were often young and light, so the horses could run swiftly. They rode through blazing heat, deep snow, and rough, unfamiliar land.

The Pony Express lasted only about eighteen months. In 1861, workers completed a telegraph line that could transmit messages across the country in moments, and the riders were no longer needed.

Questions

1. How long could a letter from Missouri to California take before the Pony Express?

_____

_____

2. How often were stations built along the route?

_____

_____

3. What did a rider do at each station?

_____

_____

4. About how long did the Pony Express take to carry mail across the country?

_____

_____

5. Why were riders often young and light?

_____

_____

6. Why did the Pony Express come to an end?

_____

_____

Words to know

relay: a race or job where each person does one part and passes it on
route: the path from one place to another
galloped: ran at a fast pace, as a horse does
telegraph: a machine that sent messages along wires

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

For the teacher: The Pony Express Rides

Each student sheet carries a shape, not a level. The same topic and facts, written three ways.

Circle: The Pony Express Rides

Easier · 159 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 3.9

1. Weeks.
2. About ten to fifteen miles.
3. Got off a tired horse, grabbed the mail bag, and got on a fresh horse.
4. Around ten days.
5. So the horses could run faster.
6. A telegraph line could send messages across the country in moments, so riders were not needed.

Triangle: The Pony Express Rides

This passage · 162 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 5.2

1. Weeks.
2. About every ten to fifteen miles.
3. Jumped off a tired horse, grabbed the mail bag, and got on a fresh horse.
4. Around ten days.
5. So the horses could run faster.
6. A telegraph line was finished that could send messages across the country in moments, so riders were no longer needed.

Square: The Pony Express Rides

Harder · 171 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 8.4

1. Weeks.
2. Approximately every ten to fifteen miles.
3. Leaped off an exhausted horse, grabbed the mail bag, and vaulted onto a fresh horse.
4. Around ten days.
5. So the horses could run more swiftly.
6. A telegraph line could transmit messages across the country in moments, so riders were no longer needed.