

Trail of Hope Speaking Assignments

WELCOME

This part could be assigned to anyone. We had our trail boss welcome each group with this information at the beginning of their walk along the Trail of Hope. You could also ask a youth leader or your stake president to do it.

Welcome to the Trail of Hope!

As you travel the trail, we would ask you to follow a few simple rules:

- First, stick together and travel in silence so you don't interrupt anyone in either your group or another group.
- Second, as it gets dark, please don't shine your light in the face of the performers.
- Third, once you are finished, please return to your camp and remain quiet for the rest of the evening so the other families won't be interrupted.

In February of 1846, under threat of persecution from mobs, companies of latter-day saints abandoned their beautiful homes and farms in Nauvoo, Illinois and crossed over the Mississippi River.

Many of these saints had to leave quickly and were ill-prepared for the winter storms and cold weather that faced them. They didn't know where they were going or how they would provide for their family until they got there. Because of the sadness and hardship associated with this forced exodus, for many years the path these saints followed out of Nauvoo was referred to as the Trail of Tears. But while there were certainly some tears shed as the saints looked back on their beautiful city and thought about what they were being forced to leave, this also was the start of a period of great hope in which the pioneers looked forward to a better day. Because of this, President Gordan B. Hinkley requested that the name be changed to the Trail of Hope. And thus it is now called if you ever have the chance to visit Nauvoo.

Our purpose here tonight is to allow each of you to hear some of the experiences and feelings of these pioneers in their journey along the Trail of Hope. As much as possible, these stories are in the pioneers' own words. Our trail will start with a young man as he starts his journey in the east and follow the experiences of others until they arrive in the Salt Lake Valley. You will then hear from a few more recent pioneers that continue the Trail of Hope in our day.

If you listen to these stories and carefully ponder these pioneer experiences, I testify that the Holy Ghost will touch your heart and strengthen your testimony of the gospel.

PART #1 *This role should be played by a man age 18-30.*

“Upon arriving at the departure point, my fiancé and I found that we had insufficient funds to take both of us on to the valley. While we were reflecting on our condition, ...we noticed a dust coming from the east. It proved to be a family that had crossed the sea with us. The result was that my young lady was to continue on with them to Salt Lake City and I was to pay forty dollars for her fare, and I was to go to Florence to work my way across. I think this was the greatest trial I ever underwent to leave my betrothed.... However, I submitted and kissed my girl goodbye and gave her a half sovereign, all the money I had in the world, and jumped into the buckboard and off we went ...

After arriving in Florence, ...we began to turn in. I had occasion to go to my bag for some clothes and in taking out what I expected to be white duck sailor overalls and holding them up and examining them they turned out to be some sort of ladies' unmentionables trimmed and adorned with lace. The eyes of the crowd caught onto it, and in all the long years that have passed, in meeting any of the old friends and comrades who were there that night, this circumstance would be rehearsed and has caused many a good laugh. I had made a mistake and got my sweetheart's bag instead of my own. Of course, you can imagine the remarks that followed.”

-William Wood

PART #2 *This role should be played by a young woman age 12-16*

I used to see other children running along barefooted and thought it would be nice to take my shoes off too. But my feet were not accustomed to such rough usage, and I was generally glad to put them on again. One day while trying the experiment, I wandered a little way from the road and, getting among a bed of prickly pear cactus, was obliged to sit down and take care of my feet while some of the children went to the wagon for my shoes. As the wagons kept traveling on, this threw me some distance behind our team, and I was considerably fatigued by the time I caught up. I think this must have cured me of the desire to go barefooted.

-Mary Jane Mount

PART #3 *This role should be played by a young man age 12-16.*

On one occasion a night drive was necessary, and a young man was entrusted with the freight wagon team. The young teamster was unusually devoted to helping the young ladies, ...so I ran in behind the ox and climbed up on the seat that had been arranged in the front of the wagon. This seat consisted of a broad plank placed across the open head of a large barrel. The day had been hot and the hours of the journey long, and I was decidedly tired, nearly unto exhaustion. Fearing that my riding, which was against the law, would be discovered, I slipped the broad board from the barrel head and conceived the idea of dropping down in the barrel, secure from the eyes of those who might oust me from my seat in the wagon if I were found. To my surprise, if not amazement, I discovered when I let myself down in the barrel that my feet went into about three or four inches of a sticky liquid substance which turned out to be molasses. ...Too tired to attempt to climb out, I remained and gradually slipped down and went to sleep doubled up in the bottom of the barrel, with such results as can well be imagined.

It was daylight when I woke up, and there began to be the usual camp noises of teamsters shouting to each other.... As I crawled out of the uncomfortable position, and with molasses dripping from my trousers, I was greeted with yells and laughter by some of the teamsters and emigrants who caught sight of me. I crept away as fast as I could to scrape off the syrup, which added to the weight and thickness of shirt and trousers, for there was no change of clothing for me, and so spattered I had to pass on until dusk and drying somewhat obliterated the discomfort.

-B.H. Roberts

PART #4 *This role should be played by a young woman age 12-18*

While crossing the plains, my mother's health was very poor, so I tried to assist her as much as I could. Every morning I would rise early and get breakfast for the family and milk my cow so that I could hurry and drive her on ahead of the company. Then I would let her eat in all the grassy places until the company had passed on ahead, when I would hurry and catch up with them.

The cow furnished us with milk, our chief source of food, and it was very important to see that she was fed as well as circumstances would permit. Had it not been for the milk, we would have starved.

Being alone much of the time, I had to get across the rivers the best I could. Our cow was a Jersey and had a long tail. When it was necessary to cross a river, I would wind the end of the cow's tail around my hand and swim across with her. At the end of each day's journey I would milk her and help prepare our supper and then would be glad to go to sleep wherever my bed happened to be.

One night our cow ran away from camp, and I was sent to bring her back. I was not watching where I was going and was barefooted. All of a sudden, I began to feel I was walking on something soft. I looked down to see what it could be, and to my horror found that I was standing in a bed of snakes, large ones and small ones. At the sight of them I became so weak I could scarcely move; all I could think of was to pray, and in some way I jumped out of them. The Lord blessed and cared for me

-Margaret McNeil

PART #5 *This role should be played by a young woman around 17 years old.*

I recollect one day the captain put me to a cart with six people's luggage on and only three to pull it—a woman, a lad of sixteen, and I, seventeen.... All grown people were allowed twenty pounds of luggage apiece and their cooking utensils besides. That made quite a load for us. I know it was the hardest day's work I ever remember doing in all my life before or since. ...

While pulling this heavy load, I looked and acted strange. The first thing my friend Emmie knew I had fallen under the cart, and before they could stop it, the cart had passed over me, and I lay at the back of it on the ground. When my companions got to me, I seemed perfectly dead. Emmie could not find any pulse at all, and there was not a soul around. They were, she thought, all ahead, so she stood thinking what to do when Captain Rowley came up to us. "What have you got there, Emmie?" he said. "Oh my, Fanny is dead," she said. It frightened him, so he got off his horse and examined me closely but could not find any life at all.

When I came to myself, my grave was dug two feet deep, and I was in a tent. The sisters had sewed me up to the waist in my blanket, ready for burial. I opened my eyes and looked at them. I was weak for some time after...but through it all, I found I had a great many friends in the company.

-Fanny Fry Simmons

PART #6 *This role should be played by a young man 12-18.*

I crossed the plains when I was a small boy. I have never forgotten how I would be so tired that I would wish I could sit down for just a few minutes. But instead of that, my dear, nearly worn-out father would ask me if I could not push a little more on the handcart.

When one of the teamsters shot a buffalo, the meat was divided among the whole handcart company. My parents got a small piece, which my father put in the back end of the handcart. That was in the beginning of the week. Father said we would save it for our dinner next Sunday. I was so very hungry all the time, and the meat smelled so good to me while pushing at the handcart, and having a little pocketknife, I could not resist but had to cut off a piece or two each half day. Although I was afraid of getting a severe whipping..., I could not resist taking a little each half day. I would chew it so long it got tasteless. When father went to get the meat on Sunday..., he asked me if I had been cutting off some of it. I said, "Yes, I was so hungry that I could not let it alone." Then, instead of giving me the severe scolding or whipping, he did not say a word but started to wipe the tears from his eyes.

-John Stettler Stucki

ROLE #7 *This role can be played by anyone, but it should be memorized.*

“I have pulled my handcart when I was so weak and weary from illness and lack of food that I could hardly put one foot ahead of the other. I have looked ahead and seen a patch of sand or a hill slope and I have said, I can go only that far and there I must give up, for I cannot pull the load through it. I have gone on to that sand and when I reached it, the cart began pushing me. I have looked back many times to see who was pushing my cart, but my eyes saw no one. I knew then that the angels of God were there. Was I sorry that I chose to come by handcart? No. Neither then, nor any minute of my life since.

...Every one of us came through with the absolute knowledge that God lives, for we became acquainted with him in our extremities.... The price we paid to become acquainted with God was a privilege to pay....”

-Martin Handcart Company Pioneer

PART #8 *This role should be played by an adult man.*

Agreeable to President Young's instructions, Elder Pratt and others started on this morning on horses to seek out a suitable place to plant some potatoes, turnips, etc., so as to preserve the seed at least.

While the brethren were cutting the road, I followed the old one to the top of the hill and on arriving there was much cheered by a handsome view of the Great Salt Lake lying, as I should judge, from twenty-five to thirty miles to the west of us... There is an extensive, beautiful, level looking valley from here to the lake which I should judge, and from the numerous deep green patches must be fertile and rich... It appears to be well supplied with streams, creeks and lakes, some of the latter are evidently salt. There is but little timber in sight anywhere, and that is mostly on the banks of creeks and streams of water... There is no prospect for building log houses without spending a vast amount of time and labor, but we can make Spanish brick and fry them in the suit; or we can build lodges as the Pawnee Indians do in their villages.

For my own part I am happily disappointed in the appearance of the valley of the Salt Lake, but ... I have no fears that the Saints can live here and do well while we will do right. When I commune with my own heart and ask myself whether I would choose to dwell here in this wild looking country amongst the Saints surrounded by friends, ...enjoying the privileges and blessings of the everlasting priesthood, with God for our King and Father; or dwell amongst the gentiles with all their wealth and good things of the earth..., the soft whisper echoes loud and reverberates back in tones of stern determination; give me the quiet wilderness and my family to associate with, surrounded by the Saints and adieu to the gentile world ...”

-William Clayton

PART #9 *This role should be played by an adult man with a beard. It's Brigham Young!*

"It is enough. This is the right place.

I scarcely ever say much about revelations, or visions, but suffice it to say, ...I was here, and saw in the Spirit the Temple not ten feet from where we have laid the Chief Corner Stone. I have not inquired what kind of a Temple we should build. Why? Because it was represented before me. I have never looked upon that ground but the vision of it was there. I see it as plainly as if it was in reality before me.

We have been kicked out of the frying-pan into the fire, out of the fire into the middle of the floor, and here we are and here we will stay. God has shown me that this is the spot to locate His people, and here is where they will prosper."

-Brigham Young

PART #10 *This role should be played by a young woman age 14-18.*

I did not cross the plains with a handcart. I'm a teenager today just like you. My family members stopped attending church one by one until I was the only one still going. I liked going to church but realized that "because I like it" was not really a sufficient reason to keep going when my family wasn't. As I searched for a deeper testimony, I prayed a lot and one day received an answer. The Spirit clearly told me in my heart that Jesus Christ is our Mediator, and that God is the Father of my spirit.

After that, I tried even harder to turn my heart to the Holy Ghost and decided that no matter what, when I felt the Spirit, I would follow its promptings. I sometimes worried that my involvement at church would distance me from my family, but my desire to be connected to my heavenly home helped me stay committed to my faith.

I am a pioneer in my own way. I take comfort in the fact that irrespective of time and nationality, I am connected to others who follow the Lord.

-Akie Taneda

PART #11 *This role should be played by a young man age 16-25.*

My family joined the church when it was quite new in the country of Guatemala. We did not have a building to meet in, so members donated their time to carry bricks, work with cement and iron, and build our chapel. We all met together in work groups. We ate together and the brothers and sisters worked through the night since we couldn't work on the chapel during our normal working hours. Just like the early Saints, without money and with very little resources, we gave, and we finished the house of the Lord.

I have made many more sacrifices throughout my life for my faith. Being a member of the Church has meant not being able to participate in sports teams on Sundays, being excluded from popular groups because I didn't share habits like drinking and smoking, being rejected for keeping the law of chastity because it wasn't the fashion. You could say that, like the pioneers, I traveled through the desert, because many times I was alone in my fight and search for the Spirit.

I am grateful for the example of the first pioneers of the Church who were willing to give everything, even their lives, for the wonderful work they had embraced.

-Nery Méndez Aguirre