

Lesson developed and shared by Ryan Markel, Cusick School District  
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Notes to Educators from Ryan: I do this project with my 11<sup>th</sup> Grade US History class during my unit on the American West. It covers both History and Geography. Please see student examples. This lesson does require set up in the classroom beforehand.

## **The Nez Perce Trail Map Exercise**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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Directions: In this activity you will be retracing the journey that Chief Joseph and his band of Nez Perce took as they tried to flee to Canada in 1877. You and a partner are to make a map that documents this journey. You will do this by using a variety of online resources as well as books. This all will be done on a large sheet of white paper. Your map must include:

1. The route that Chief Joseph and his people took on their way from Oregon to Canada
2. The Nez Perce traditional homeland
3. Battle sites along the trail
4. State borders
5. Major mountain ranges
6. Major rivers and streams
7. Major cities
8. Reservations
9. Compass Rose

## 10. Map Key

\*Be sure to use a variety of color in you map and feel free to add other elements to your map that you think are important.

\*Here are some online sites that may be helpful

<http://www.nps.gov/nepe/index.ht>

### About the Trail

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Congress passed the National Trails System Act in 1968, establishing a framework for a nationwide system of scenic, recreational, and historic trails. The Nez Perce (Nimíipuu or Nee-Me-Poo) National Historic Trail stretches from Wallowa Lake, Oregon, to the Bear Paw Battlefield near Chinook, Montana. It was added to this system by Congress as a National Historic Trail in 1986.

The 1877 flight of the Nez Perce from their homelands while pursued by U.S. Army Generals Howard, Sturgis, and Miles, is one of the most fascinating and sorrowful events in Western U.S. history. Chief Joseph, Chief Looking Glass, Chief White Bird, Chief Ollokot, Chief Lean Elk, and others led nearly 750 Nez Perce men, women, and children and twice that many horses over 1,170 miles through the mountains, on a trip that lasted from June to October of 1877.

Forced to abandon hopes for a peaceful move to the Lapwai reservation, the Nez Perce chiefs saw flight to Canada as their last promise for peace. The flight of the Nez Perce began on June 15, 1877. Pursued by the Army, they intended initially to seek safety with their Crow allies on the plains to the east. Their desperate and circuitous route as they tried to escape the pursuing white forces is what we now call the Nez Perce National Historic Trail.

This route was used in its entirety only once; however, component trails and roads that made up the route bore generations of use prior to and after the 1877 flight of the nontreaty Nez Perce.



The trail starts at Wallowa Lake, Oregon, then heads northeast and crosses the Snake River at Dug Bar. It enters Idaho at Lewiston and cuts across north-central Idaho, entering Montana near Lolo Pass. It then travels through the Bitterroot Valley, after which it re-enters Idaho at Bannock Pass and travels east back into Montana at Targhee Pass to cross the Continental Divide. It bisects Yellowstone National Park, and then follows the Clark Fork of the Yellowstone out of Wyoming into Montana. The trail heads north to the Bear's Paw Mountains, ending 40 miles from the Canadian border.

Example of student work.

