

Buffalo Trace Education Box  
Lesson 17

## Deliver the Mail

**Purpose:** Students will learn about the early mail route in eight counties on the Buffalo Trace by participating in an activity with positive and negative outcomes.

**Subject Areas:** Indiana history, language arts

**Materials Needed:** copies of the 1800 “Mail Carriers Needed” poster (and the 1860 “Pony Express” poster, if you will be comparing/contrasting the two routes)  
“Deliver the Mail” can be a whole class activity or small groups. Each group of students will need: an Indiana highway map or Indiana Historic Pathways map, 2 feet of yarn, tape, a set of 8 prepared envelopes (see below), two flashcards “You get another chance” (see below), notebook paper and pencils

Before you start:

1. Prepare 8 unsealed, business-size envelopes (one set for each group). Write these county names and numbers on the outside, one per envelope: 1. Clark County, 2. Floyd County, 3. Harrison County, 4. Crawford County, 5. Orange County, 6. Dubois County, 7. Pike County, 8. Knox County
2. Make copies of the Positive Outcomes and the Negative Outcomes flashcards (one set for each group). Cut the cards apart, keeping the Positive Outcomes separated from the Negative Outcomes. The Positive Outcomes have “You go on to the next county.” The Negative Outcomes have “You must stop at this county.” Notice that one flashcard of the Positive Outcomes and Negative Outcomes is labeled with an “8.”
3. You will need 16 smaller envelopes for each group. (Make sure you cannot see through these envelopes!) Place the Positive Outcome with an 8 in one small envelope and seal it. Place the Negative Outcome with an 8 in another small envelope and seal it. Place both envelopes in the Knox County envelope.
4. Randomly place a Positive Outcome and a Negative Outcome in two separate sealed envelopes and place in a larger County envelope, until all the Counties have two sealed envelopes inside.
5. Make copies of the flashcards “You get another chance!” (Each group will need two of the flashcards.)

**Steps:**

- Discuss the 1800 poster “Mail Carriers Needed” and the various hazards. In 1800 the Trace was designated a post road. It was the first “western” mail route, carried weekly, by two men traveling the 130 mile route on foot.
- Locate the eight counties on the map — going east to west and ending at the Wabash River — 1. Clark County, 2. Floyd County, 3. Harrison County, 4. Crawford County, 5. Orange County, 6. Dubois County, 7. Pike County, 8. Knox County
- “Deliver the Mail” can be a whole class activity or small groups. Each group reads about an outcome along the mail route through eight counties. The outcome may be positive, and the group is instructed “You go on to the next county.” However, the

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outcome may be negative, and the group is instructed “You must stop at this county” or use a special “You get another chance” card.

**Deliver the Mail:** The group tapes one end of the yarn to the map at Clark County.

6. Starting with the envelope “1. Clark County,” one student in the group takes out the two smaller envelopes. The group must decide which envelope to open (only one!). One student from the group reads the card, which will be either a Positive Outcome or a Negative Outcome

7. If the card is a Positive Outcome (“You go on to the next county!”), the yarn is stretched and taped on the next county. Students take notes about what happened in that county. The group can go on to envelope “2. Floyd County.”

8. If the card is a Negative Outcome (“You must stop at this county,”), the group must use the flashcard “You get another chance!” The yarn is stretched and taped on the next county. Students take notes about what happened in that county. The group can go on to envelope “2. Floyd County.”

9. Groups continue with the envelopes in sequence, choosing envelopes, reading the outcomes, taping the yarn and taking notes.

10. If a group uses up all the flashcards “You get another chance!” the group does not get the mail delivered.

11. If a group continues all the way to envelope 8 and chooses the Positive Outcome “The mail is delivered,” the group has successfully delivered the mail!

### Extensions:

- Using notes from the activity, write a fictional account about delivering the mail, using at least five of the outcomes.
- Compare/contrast the posters from Indiana and the Pony Express. Find the route of the Pony Express on a U.S. map.
- Discuss the importance of communication for your family, state news, government news and world events.
- How could letters be delivered from your town to the next closest town? Figure the distance in miles, what transportation to use and the time allowed to travel.

### Resources:

- Check the Buffalo Trace website, “Postal History” for more information.
- The flashcards were prepared from [kitzkikz.com](http://kitzkikz.com) free flashcard maker.
- The idea for this type of activity came from the free lesson plan called “Traveling Along the Underground Railroad,” by Anna Zervos (July 24, 2001, Chesterton High School, Chesterton, IN), [scholarworks.iupui.edu](http://scholarworks.iupui.edu). Thanks to Anna for the idea!

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8. You come to the swift running Wabash River. Because of the heavy rains, the river is flooded and you cannot get across. A crew of boatman is coming by on a flatboat. You ask if you can ride along. They say yes. Congratulations! You have delivered the mail!

You get a hole in one of your boots. You are limping from the sharp rocks poking through the hole. You see a traveler up ahead. He gives you a piece of leather to patch the hole, and that helps. You go on to the next county.

You are coughing and in need of medicine. You keep trudging along, but don't know how much farther you can walk. A traveler and his wife are up ahead. The wife gives you a spoonful of homemade cough medicine. You feel much better. You go on to the next county.

You are so thirsty. The drought in this part of Indiana has caused the creeks to dry up. Up ahead you see a group of Rangers. One of them has some extra water in a water jug. That water tastes so good! You go on to the next county.

You see a bear with two cubs on the trace. She is not friendly! You must move slowly and carefully to find a safe place. All at once, out of nowhere, a dog appears. He barks at the bear. The bear and cubs are so startled that they run off into the deep woods. The dog has saved you! You go on to the next county.

The early morning fog has been so thick that you have lost your way on the trace. Out of the fog appears a native scout! He is friendly and guides you back to the trace. You go on to the next county.

You are so hungry. You have no food left in your backpack. There is a blackberry bush full of berries. You eat several handfuls of berries. You feel much better. You go on to the next county.

A big gust of wind has blown your hat right off! Now your hat is up in a tree. To get your hat down will take a lot of climbing. A pair of Rangers on horseback help get your hat out of the tree. You go on to the next county.

8. You come to the swift running Wabash River. Because of the heavy rains, the river is flooded and there is no way for you to get across. You must stop at this county. The mail does not get delivered.

You are ready to climb some steep hills. As you go over the rough terrain, you step on a loose rock and cause a rock slide. You fall and cannot go on. You must stop at this county.

You are coughing and have a high fever. You are having a hard time breathing. You pass out. You must stop at this county.

When you tried to jump over the creek, your backpack fell off and into the deep water. Now all your gear is soaked. The letters you were carrying are all wet and ruined. You must stop at this county.

Up ahead is an area known for many deer. One animal is already there -- a mountain lion! There is no going around. You must stop at this county.

You see a mother bear with two cubs on the trace. She is protecting her cubs. You must move slowly and carefully to find a safe place to hide. You must stop at this county.

There is a herd of bison up ahead. Two of the bull bison are bumping their heads together. This is not a good time to try to get around them. You must stop at this county.

You hear a tribe of native people in front of you on the trace. They are not friendly. You must quickly find a place to hide. You must stop at this county.