



ANSWER KEY

Exercise: 1

Instructions: Massacre Rocks was named from the skirmishes that took place in this area during the 1800s when large numbers of settlers passed through on the Oregon Trail. It was declared a state park in 1967. The area is also known for its geology because volcanic evidence is abundant. By doing this activity, you will learn about the history and geology of this unique area along the Snake River in Southern Idaho. Use your knowledge to answer the following questions completely and accurately.

1. Why did the earlier emigrants refer to this area as “Devil’s Gate” and “Gate of Death”?

This area was called “Devil’s Gate” and “Gate of Death” because emigrants were worried that Indians would be waiting in ambush in the narrow break of the rocks. There may have been some battles there, but they remain unverified.

2. What types of evidence did the early travelers leave in the Massacre Rocks area?

Many emigrants carved their names in “Register Rock”. There have also been many artifacts found including a cabin believed to have been built by early travelers.

3. How do scientists believe the area was formed? What evidence is there of this?

The Devil’s Gate Pass is left from the remains of an extinct volcano. There are beds of fragmented volcanic debris that support this volcanic explanation as well as exposed basalt shaped in strange formations.

4. How did the Lake Bonneville Flood influence the area?

The Bonneville Flood shaped the landscape by carrying large boulders that can still be found throughout the park. These boulders scraped up the landscape and are very different rock types than the local volcanic rock.

5. This area is considered to be a desert environment. What kinds of wildlife would you expect to see? How would this be influenced by the presence of the Snake River?

In a desert environment, one would expect to see life forms that are adapted to such an environment. Mammals that can be observed include cottontail, jack rabbit, coyote, and muskrat (although not a desert species). Many shore birds and aquatic birds can be observed due to the Snake River. Vegetation includes sagebrush, juniper, and rabbitbrush.