

Rationale for Westward Expansion Lesson

The reason for developing this lesson is to help students see the many perspectives of Westward Expansion. This lesson correlates well with the fifth grade social studies curriculum as well as the reading curriculum. This lesson fits directly with theme five in the reading anthology; “One Land, Many Trails.” In this theme there are great stories about the American West, but students lack the understanding of how these stories fit into the time period, other events, and situations. After learning so much about the Native American perspectives from the Fort Robinson course, I wanted to be sure to tie the stories together and have students understand many different perspective of the Westward Movement. This lesson specifically compares the pioneers and Native American perspectives. However, I intend to teach lessons that tell the perspectives of Buffalo Soldiers, Gold Miners, Chinese Immigrants, Railroad Workers, United States Government, etc. Teaching about multiple perspectives is an important part of “Historical Habits of Mind.”

Other aspects of “Historical Habits of Mind” are analyzing the primary sources and putting those documents into context. In the active engagement part of this lesson, students will learn about other events going on in history during the time of Westward Expansion. The reason for this is so students will understand where the documents they are studying fit contextually in the big picture. My lesson also includes primary document pictures and texts that the students will answer questions about.

In learning about the Native American experience, specifically the Sioux, students can begin to understand how that past has effected today’s current situation on reservations throughout the United States. An extension activity that I did not formally include in this lesson would be for students to analyze the Fort Laramie Treaties in order to help them make that connection between the past and present.

Topic: Westward Expansion

Objective: Students will understand the interaction between early settlers and indigenous people in the U.S.

Materials:

- Book: Our Hearts Fell to the Ground: Plains Indian Views of How the West was Lost by Colin Calloway
- Picture: “American Progress” by John Gast.
<http://www.csub.edu/~gsantos/img0061.html>
- Houghton Mifflin Anthology; Theme 5
- Blank map of the United States (copy for each student)
<http://www.eduplace.com/ss/maps/pdf/usphys.pdf>
- Map of the United States and the trails west to display on overhead.
<http://www.eduplace.com/ss/maps/pdf/trailswest.pdf>

Connection: This lesson correlates with the LPS reading curriculum. Use this lesson as an introduction to Reading Theme 5: “One Land, Many Trails.”

Teaching:

Lesson may take 2-3 days to complete

Active Engagement: As a preview activity display the picture “American Progress” (1872) painted by John Gast. Ask the following questions:

1. Tell me what you notice in the picture.
2. What are 3 details in the image that you think represent important historical ideas that might be part of this lesson.
3. What topics do you think we will explore?

Allow students to discuss in pairs and record their answers in their notebooks. Lead a class discussion and explain the concept of manifest destiny and how it affected Native Americans during the United States westward expansion.

- ❖ At this time you might share other events going on in the United States and globally to help put U.S. Westward expansion in perspective. Develop a classroom timeline.

Whole Group activity: Tell students that in the 1800’s many people assumed the availability of land in the West meant the chance for a better life. Thousands risked their lives on this assumption—an assumption that was often proven false by the harsh reality of frontier living. Read individually or as a class “Pioneer Girl” from Theme 5 in the Houghton Mifflin Anthology. Pay attention to the propaganda used to lure pioneers out west. Give each student a blank map of the U.S. Display a map of the U.S. and the trails west for the students to copy onto their papers. Discuss what life was like in the west according to this pioneer memoir.

Small Group/Individual work: Divide students into groups and assign them various selected texts from Our Hearts Fell to the Ground: Plains Indian Views of How the West was Lost by Colin Calloway. Students will gain an understanding for the Native American perspective of United States expansion of the west. The following are possible questions students could answer. Students can then record their answers and draw a picture/poster representing the information. Each group will share with the class.

1. Identify what you would describe as the most significant events in the history of white-Indian contact on the Great Plains. What events have you chosen and why are they the "most significant"?
2. Using the accounts of Two Leggings, Lone Dog, Four Bears, Howling Wolf, Four Dancers and others, describe some common cultural characteristics among the Plains Indian tribes to which these men belonged. What activities and values were important to these men?
3. How did Plains Indian peoples respond to increasing white settlement on the frontier? Describe some of the responses of Indians to the presence of whites in their homelands.
4. Many demographers and historians have argued that disease was the most devastating "exchange item" brought to the New World by Europeans. Do you agree with this statement? Why? What impact did disease have on Indian people in the Great Plains region?
5. Indian women's voices are seldom heard in traditional histories of the American West. Using the accounts of Buffalo Bird Woman, Mrs. Spotted Horn Bull, and Pretty Shield (as well as those of Indian men), discuss how the lives of Indian women changed during the nineteenth century.
6. Describe the "reservation period." How were Indians affected by reservation life?
7. Indians' armed resistance to whites generally ended in the 1880s. How did Indian people continue to resist whites during the reservation period and later? What aspects of their traditional cultures did they retain and how did they do so?

Processing Activity: Ask students to imagine they were forced to leave their homes suddenly last night, taking nothing with them. Have them write about what they will miss the most.

Formative Assessment: Have students answer the following questions on an exit ticket: What is "Manifest Destiny?" What did this term mean for pioneers? What did it mean to Native Americans?