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Westward Expansion

Backwards Planning Curriculum Units

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How To Use This Unit

Backwards planning offers an innovative yet simple approach to meeting curriculum goals; it also provides a way to keep students engaged and focused throughout the learning process. Many teachers approach history instruction in the following manner: they identify a topic required by state and/or national standards, they find materials on that topic, they use those materials with their students, and then they administer some sort of standard test at the end of the unit. Backwards planning, rather than just starting with a required instructional topic, goes a step further by identifying exactly what students need to know by the end of the unit—the so-called "enduring understandings." The next step involves assessment: devising ways to determine whether students have learned what they need to know. The final step involves planning the teaching/learning process so that students can acquire the knowledge needed.

This product uses backwards planning to combine a PowerPoint presentation, activities that involve authentic assessment, and traditional tests (multiple-choice and essay) into a complete curriculum unit. Although the materials have enough built-in flexibility that you can use them in a number of ways, we suggest the following procedure:

1. Start with the "essential questions" listed on slide 2 of the PowerPoint presentation (these also appear in the teacher support materials). Briefly go over them with students before getting into the topic material. These questions will help students focus their learning and note taking during the course of the unit. You can also choose to use the essential questions as essay questions at the end of the unit; one way to do this is to let students know at the outset that one of the essential questions will be on the test—they just won't know which one.

2. Next, discuss the activities students will complete during the unit. This will also help focus their learning and note taking, and it will lead them to view the PowerPoint presentation in a different light, considering it a source of ideas for authentic-assessment projects.

3. Present the PowerPoint to the class. Most slides have an image and bullet points summarizing the slide's topic. The Notes page for each slide contains a paragraph or two of information that you can use as a presentation script, or just as background information for your own reference. You don't need to present the entire PowerPoint at once: it's broken up into several sections, each of which concludes with some discussion questions that echo parts of the essential questions and also help students to get closer to the "enduring understandings." Spend some time with the class going over and debating these questions—this will not only help students think critically about the material, but it will also allow you to incorporate different modes of instruction during a single class period, offering a better chance to engage students.

4. Have students complete one or more of the authentic-assessment activities. These activities are flexible: most can be completed either individually or in groups, and either as homework or as in-class assignments. Each activity includes a rubric; many also have graphic organizers. You can choose to have students complete the activities after you have shown them the entire PowerPoint presentation, or you can show them one section of the PowerPoint, go over the discussion questions, and then have students complete an activity.

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5. End the unit with traditional assessment. The support materials include a 20-question multiple-choice quiz; you can combine this with an essay question (you can use one of the essential questions or come up with one of your own) to create a full-period test.

6. If desired, debrief with students by going over the essential questions with them again and remind them what the enduring understandings are.

We are dedicated to continually improving our products and working with teachers to develop exciting and effective tools for the classroom. We can offer advice on how to maximize the use of the product and share others' experiences. We would also be happy to work with you on ideas for customizing the presentation.

We value your feedback, so please let us know more about the ways in which you use this product to supplement your lessons; we're also eager to hear any recommendations you might have for ways in which we can expand the functionality of this product in future editions. You can e-mail us at access@socialstudies.com. We look forward to hearing from you.

Dr. Aaron Willis
Chief Education Officer
Social Studies School Service

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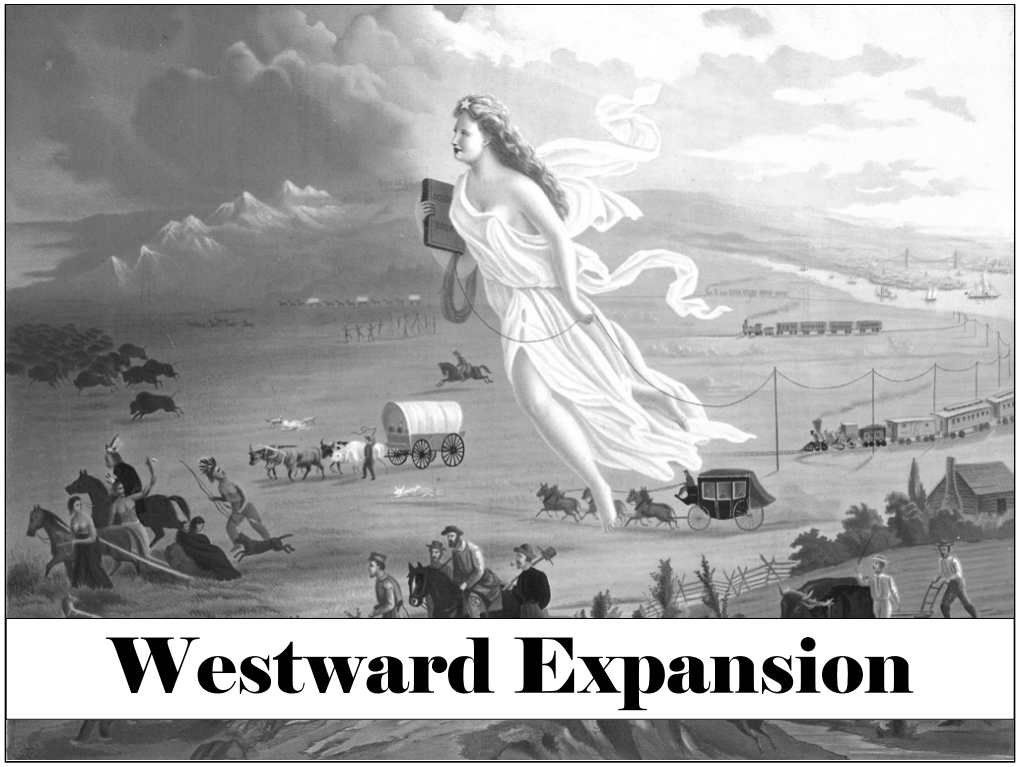

Westward Expansion

Although people had begun to move westward almost from the beginnings of European settlement in America, the era of westward expansion began in earnest in the mid-19th century. In 1803, the Louisiana Purchase doubled the size of the United States and opened a vast new territory for settlement. The Lewis and Clark expedition explored this territory in 1804 and 1805, and other explorers and fur traders continued to gather information about the West during the first half of the century. Beginning in the 1840s, pioneers set out on the Oregon Trail hoping to build new lives on the Great Plains, in the mountains, or in Oregon Territory. Over the next few decades, thousands of settlers headed West in search of farmland and gold and other minerals. In the process, the new arrivals interrupted the lifestyles and livelihoods of Native Americans and changed the Western landscape forever.

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Essential Questions

- Why did Americans of European descent feel so compelled to expand the country westward?
- What might 19th-century Native Americans have said about Manifest Destiny? Why would they have taken this perspective?
- How might the country have developed differently if no gold or other precious minerals had been discovered in the West?
- What would it have been like to walk in the shoes of a 19th-century settler in the West?
- What did 19th-century federal legislation and military activity reveal about the government's attitude toward westward expansion?
- In what ways did westward expansion rely on immigration?

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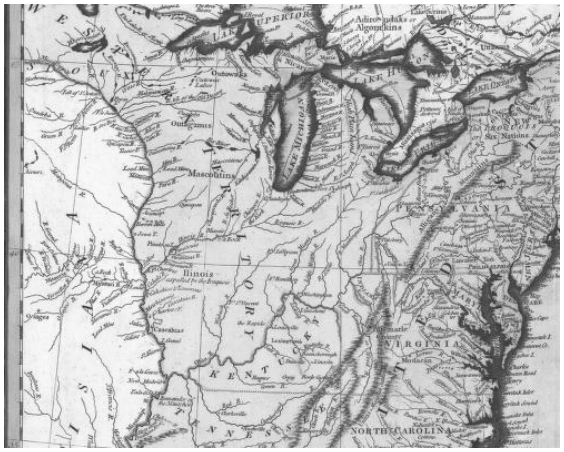
Defining the West

- The definition of the West has changed
- "Old West" in colonial times
- Northwest (present-day Midwest)
- West of the Missouri River



A 1794 map showing the Western Territory of the U.S., a region including present-day Wisconsin, Michigan, and Ohio (among other states)

The definition of the American West has changed drastically since the first settlers arrived in what is today the United States. During colonial times, settlers explored and settled inland river valleys and the Appalachian mountains in what is today the eastern United States. This region is sometimes referred to as the "Old West," not to be confused with the "Wild West" of the 19th century.

As settlers continued westward, the concept of the West shifted to what we today think of as the Midwest (known in the early 19th century as the Northwest) and the Deep South. By the 1820s, settlers had crossed the Mississippi River. As the 19th century progressed, the term "the West" became associated with the lands west of the Missouri River, including the Great Plains, the Rocky Mountains, the Great Basin, California, and the present-day Southwest and Pacific Northwest.

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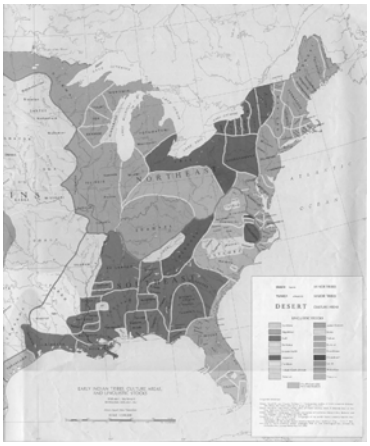
The Myth of "Discovery"



As this map shows, dozens of tribes speaking nearly 20 different languages existed in America before the Europeans came

- Native Americans already lived on the land that white explorers claimed to have "discovered"
- An extremely diverse set of cultures inhabited North America before Europeans arrived

As white explorers and settlers moved westward, they encountered numerous groups of people who already inhabited the land. They therefore only "discovered" new territories in terms of their own understanding of the continent; Native Americans had been living here for generations and did not think of their land as needing to be "discovered."

Before Europeans arrived in North America, a large number of diverse cultures inhabited the continent. Members of these cultures spoke hundreds of languages and participated in diverse economic activities, religions, and customs. Some were hunter-gatherers, traveling in small groups over large territories throughout the year. Others established large and complex civilizations based on farming, hunting, or fishing. Some Native American cultures, such as the Pueblo tribes of the present-day Southwest and the Mississippian culture of the eastern part of the continent, built grand settlements whose ruins can still be seen today.

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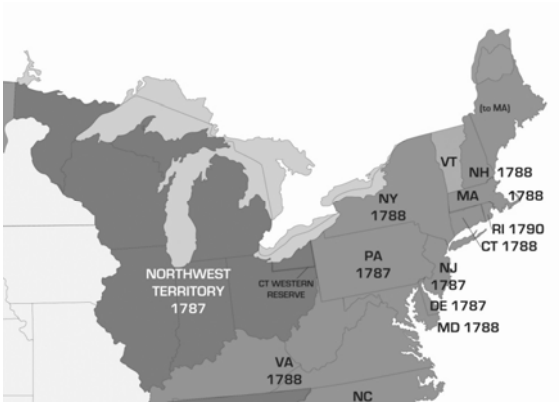
The Northwest Ordinance



The Northwest Ordinance gave the government control over the area in green

- Passed in 1787
- Paved the way for future expansion
- Promised property rights for Native Americans
- Settlers ultimately allowed to stay on Native American land

In 1787, the Continental Congress passed the Northwest Ordinance, establishing official governmental control over the Northwest Territory. Settlers soon headed into this region north of the Ohio River and west of Pennsylvania to the Mississippi River seeking good farmland with lower population density than in the increasingly crowded East. They established towns and farms and paved the way for future westward expansion.

The Northwest Ordinance set the example for the United States to acquire land by adding new territories and states, rather than by making existing states bigger. The territory acquired through this act would eventually become the states of Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, and part of Minnesota.

The Northwest Ordinance promised to honor the land and property rights of Native Americans. In reality, however, conflict arose between Native Americans and new settlers. A confederation of Native American groups fought for their land rights, but the Legion of the United States, an extension of the United States Army, ultimately defeated these groups, allowing settlers to permanently settle Native American land.

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Westward Expansion: Backwards Planning Activities

Stage 1: Identify Desired Results

Enduring understandings:

- The westward expansion of the United States was closely related to the concept of Manifest Destiny, which many used as justification for America's territorial expansion
- The story of westward expansion involved settlers moving onto land already occupied by Native Americans
- The discovery of gold in the West played a pivotal role in westward expansion
- Life in the West was very challenging and did not generally live up to the idealized and romantic notions that people sometimes have ascribed to it
- Throughout the period of westward expansion, federal legislation reflected the public's growing desire to move west and usually enabled such movement
- Westward expansion involved not just white Europeans, but immigrants and slaves as well

Essential questions:

- Why did Americans of European descent feel so compelled to expand the country westward?
- What might 19th-century Native Americans have said about Manifest Destiny? Why would they have taken this perspective?
- How might the country have developed differently if no gold or other precious minerals had been discovered in the West?
- What would it have been like to walk in the shoes of a 19th-century settler in the West?
- What did 19th-century federal legislation and military activity reveal about the government's attitude toward westward expansion?
- In what ways did western expansion rely on immigration?

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Learning Experiences and Instruction

Students will need to know…	Students will need to be able to…
1. How population growth, exploration, trade, and legislation facilitated the westward expansion of the United States 2. The significance of the California Gold Rush 3. Patterns of interaction between the United States government, settlers, and Native Americans 4. How the concept of Manifest Destiny contributed to westward expansion 5. What it was like to live on the frontier 6. The role of women, African Americans, and immigrants in westward expansion and in frontier life 7. How paintings and other romantic portrayals of the West helped shape attitudes toward westward expansion	1. Research and draw connections between exploratory expeditions, territorial acquisitions, commerce, legislation, government and settler attitudes, and white–Native American relations 2. Identify differing perspectives regarding the positives and negatives of westward expansion 3. Describe Manifest Destiny and relate it to events of the 19th century 4. Envision and describe what it might have been like to migrate to and settle on the frontier, both for white men and for women and minorities 5. Identify some ways in which the West was portrayed and perceived in the 19th century

These lessons incorporate the following learning activities to help students reach the enduring understandings:

- Overview of essential questions and basic understandings
- Questions for class discussion of subject matter in the PowerPoint presentation
- Teacher introduction of common terms and ideas in the essential questions and related projects
- Provide students with primary source materials from which they will complete the related projects in the unit
- Students conduct research in groups to be used later in individual and group projects
- Informal observation and coaching of students as they work in groups
- Evaluation and delivered feedback on projects and research reports
- Students will create and present their unit projects
- Posttest made up of multiple-choice questions covering the presentation, and one or more essential questions as essay questions

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Project #1: Frontier Newspaper

Overview:

An excellent way for students to better understand a historical time period is to put themselves in the shoes of people who lived at that time. In this lesson, students work in groups to create newspapers from particular locations or regions on the 19th-century frontier. They research frontier life and compile their findings into news and feature articles, editorials, and other reports that might have appeared in actual frontier newspapers

Objectives:

As a result of completing the lesson, students will

- Be familiar with the types of content typically found in 19th-century newspapers
- Understand some details of life on the frontier
- Understand some of the perspectives of 19th-century settlers

Time required:

Five to seven class periods

Methodology:

Ask students to describe some of the things they know about life on the American frontier in the mid- to late-19th century. They might mention things they have learned about housing, work, school, and other aspects of pioneer daily life. List their ideas on the board.

Divide the class into groups of three or four. Explain that they will pretend to be journalists and editors for a frontier newspaper. Each group will create a newspaper with at least six articles, plus some illustrations and advertisements.

Ask groups to research 19th-century newspapers. If they type “19th-century newspaper” into a search engine, they will probably get several intriguing results. They might also try the specific search “How to read a 19th-century newspaper.” Ask them to see if they can find out about typical components and layouts of 19th-century newspapers, then have them record this information in section 1 of the Student Handout to keep in mind for their own newspapers.

Have students use section 2 of the Student Handout to research the topics for their frontier newspapers. They should begin by browsing the Library of Congress American Memory Web site (http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/index.html), and then conduct further Internet or library research. They’ll use the chart on this handout to record their research findings.

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When using the American Memory resource, students will probably find the best material in the "Immigration, American Expansion" section. Ask each group to choose one general geographical area to research in order for the newspaper to be as realistic and consistent as possible. For example, if a group selects California as its region, it would not want to include news stories about events or daily life on the Great Plains. For California, students might look at the materials in "California First-Person Narratives" and "The Chinese in California, 1850–1925" sections. If they choose the Great Plains region, they would want to investigate documents in the "Prairie River Settlement, Nebraska" section.

Ask groups to divide the responsibilities of writing at least six newspaper articles between group members. If students are in groups of four, each student should write one article; the remaining articles may either be co-written, or groups may divide up the tasks of writing additional articles and creating the illustrations.

The newspapers should include the following components:

- At least two news articles that talk about something that happened recently in this region (students can write about actual events or make up something based on occurrences typical of that time and place, such as discovering a new gold deposit, or a drought on the Plains)
- At least one editorial presenting an opinion of something that's been going on in the region
- At least one feature article about a person or place of particular interest in the region (students may use a real person or place or make something up based on their research)
- Other articles to make a total of six (e.g., weather reports, crop reports, a calendar of community events, a report from a local social or political club, letters to the editor, obituaries)
- Illustrations, including:
    - Images to accompany each news and feature story
    - Advertisements (at least three)
    - Weather map (optional)
    - Other charts or graphs (optional)

In writing their articles, students should cover the six journalistic questions: Who, Where, When, What, Why, and How.

Have groups type their articles and create their newspapers either on the computer or on 8½" x 11" sheets of paper stapled together.

Once students have completed their newspapers, discuss as a class the things they have learned from this process. What did they find out about daily life on the frontier? What new information surprised them? What do they find the most interesting or unusual about the things they've learned in this project? What would they like to learn more about? How has this project helped them understand frontier life?

Evaluation:

Use a rubric to evaluate groups' newspapers. A sample rubric follows this lesson.

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