

United States History & Geography
Growth & Conflict
Grade 8B



Lesson Plans

“Westward Expansion”

Subject:

United States History and Geography: Growth and Conflict 8B

Level:

Grade 8

Abstract:

Students will study the Westward Expansion of the United States during the period between 1840 and 1890. Students will think about the different reasons people moved west, such as opportunity and adventure, gold and wealth, jobs provided by working on the railroad, the chance to homestead, or the lure to become a cowboy. Students will also study the impact upon the Native Americans as new people came and settled their lands. Students will learn about the several western trails including the Oregon Trail, the California Trail, and the trail which ended in Los Angeles, the Old Spanish Trail. In groups, students will be assigned a topic to research further. Topics will be: Native Americans Living on the Plains, Miners and the Gold Rush, Building the Transcontinental Railroad, Ranchers and Cowhands, Farmers and Homesteaders, Westward-Moving Wagon Trains, and Early Settlers to the Los Angeles Basin. Each student group will then plan and produce a short video to portray their topic, emphasizing the life of the people and the impact the westward expansion had on the history of the United States. Students will also research the early years of the City of Los Angeles and make connections between the past and present.

Invitation:

Today, the Los Angeles area is home to millions of people and a flourishing economy. However, it wasn't always that way. In the late 1700s, the area was considered wilderness and was populated only by a few Native Americans and Spanish missionaries. The Spanish Governor of California understood the potential of the area and wanted to establish a pueblo along the river north of the San Gabriel Mission. However, the Governor had great difficulty convincing people to settle the new pueblo, called El Pueblo de la Reina de Los Angeles (Town of the Queen of the Angels). This settlement was very far away from the urban centers of the time, and the people knew little about the region. Then, almost 70 years later the area mushroomed in growth. In 1848, the Mexican-American War ended with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, and California became a state. In 1850, Los Angeles was established as one of California's original counties and the city of Los Angeles was incorporated as an American city. In 1852 the first Los Angeles public school system was established.

In 1876, the Southern Pacific Railroad reached Los Angeles, encouraging even more people to seek the better life in the land of fertile soil and mild climate. Today, Los Angeles County is recognized as one of the top metropolitan areas in the United States, and it embraces a rich culture and tradition from its past inhabitants. Let's explore how and why the early settlers chose to move west, what life was like for the new homesteaders on the road west, and how the western movement forever changed the people and the country.

Situations:

Where: The lesson takes place primarily at school using computers in the classroom or computer lab, and video cameras in the classroom or elsewhere on school grounds. Optionally, some of the research may occur outside the school if students have access to a computer, and some video filming may occur away from school.

When: This social studies lesson takes place after students have studied the Civil War and Reconstruction.

How Long: This unit requires three weeks to complete.

Tasks:

Task 1:

Students will listen to the invitation to this lesson.

Task 2:

Students will read in their textbooks and/or other available material supplied by the teacher about the Westward Expansion and the changing tapestry of what becomes the Western United States. If available, the teacher will supplement the reading with appropriate videos on the topics assigned in Task 4.

Task 3:

Students will reinforce their understanding of the reading by creating an outline or logical notes.

Task 4:

The teacher will divide the class into seven groups, each having a different focus topic. The topics are: Native Americans Living on the Plains, Miners and the Gold Rush, Building the Transcontinental Railroad, Ranchers and Cowhands, Farmers and Homesteaders, Westward-Moving Wagon Trains, and early settlers to the Los Angeles basin.

Task 5:

The teacher will explain the assignment, which is for each group to research their topic and then write and produce a short video to portray the life and experiences of the people studied. The video will also emphasize the impact this group of people had on the later history of the United States and the American people. (See the "Handout: Westward Expansion Video and Research Guide" attachment.)

The teacher will also conduct a "mini-lesson" explaining how a video can be a powerful tool to communicate facts and ideas in a short period of time (that is, multiple mediums of sound, photography, special effects etc. Compare and contrast a multi-media video to a pedagogical lecture).

Task 6:

Each group will research their topic. Students will begin with the information from their textbook and supplemental information gained in class. Students will then use the Internet for further research.

Task 7:

Students within the group will take turns taking notes using a simple spreadsheet to manage information and record sources of all information used. (See the "Step Sheet: Creating a Data Table" and "Sample: Spreadsheet for Recording Data" attachments.) The spreadsheet serves as a repository of facts from their research and also as a bibliography of resource sources.

Task 8:

The group will review their research and write an outline of key points to be included in their video. Students will take turns writing the outline. (See the "Step Sheet: Formatting an Outline" attachment.) When complete, the outline and spreadsheet from Task 7 will be submitted to the teacher for review.

Task 9:

The teacher will review each group's research notes and outline and offers suggestions if key points are missing. The group will edit the outline if necessary and resubmit it to the teacher.

Task 10:

Each group will select its writer, director, and cinematographer. The writer will lead the group in planning the video, including determining the key points to be emphasized, the acting roles and dialogue, and the sequence of scenes and camera shots. The writer will also write the storyboard (that is, script) for the video. The director will oversee the activities needed to

translate the storyboard into a video. Using the storyboard as the script, the director will set up and prepare for each scene which includes ensuring that costumes and props are procured, and permission is obtained to “shoot” at off-school locales, if warranted. The director will also coach and direct the narrator and “actors” in their performances, and advise on the final editing. The cinematographer will be responsible for the technical aspects of the video, including camera work (that is, “shooting”), editing, animation, music, and “final release.”

Task 11:

Each group, led by their writer, will conduct a brainstorming session to determine the high-level story line and scenes for their video. Their goal is for an entertaining, memorable, and educational video that represents key points from their outline, involves everyone in the group, and, when complete, has a running time within the prescribed time limits (that is, 3 to 5 minutes.) The group will reach consensus on the key points to be included and their general story line.

Task 12:

The writers will write the initial storyboard for their group. (See the “Step Sheet: Using PowerPoint to Create a Video Storyboard Organizer” attachment.)

Task 13:

The writers will present their storyboard to their group. Group lead members will critique the completed storyboard and provide feedback to the writer, who will revise the storyboard if necessary.

Task 14:

The director will assign roles to team members, make a list of suggested venues, costumes, and props for each scene, and review it with the group. The group will reach consensus on the list and their individual responsibilities including who will be responsible for obtaining each costume and prop item. The group will establish their schedule to rehearse, shoot, and edit their video.

Task 15:

The video is rehearsed and filmed. The director will first lead the group in a “walk through” rehearsal of each scene in the storyboard. The director will coach the actors, and note “problem areas” such as confusing dialog, scene taking too much time, inaccurate representation of historical points, etc. If necessary, the lead writer will correct the storyboard to resolve the problems, and the rehearsal is repeated. Finally, the cinematographer will film the live scene. The recorded scene will be reviewed by the group (using

the video camera's playback feature), and if necessary, another "take" is made. The process is repeated for each scene in the video.

Task 16:

The video is edited. The cinematographer will transfer the video from the camera onto the computer and use digital editing software (e.g., Apple iMovie) to assemble and edit the scenes into the complete video per the storyboard. The cinematographer will supplement the raw video by removing superfluous segments, and providing appropriate sound, transitions, animations, special effects, etc. The group will review the complete video and provides feedback. If necessary the video will be re-edited, per group consensus and the final video and storyboard submitted to the teacher.

Task 17:

Each group's video will be shown to the class using an LCD projector. Optionally, the teacher may portray the activity as a "Hollywood Premier" where, prior to the screening of each video, its group members are treated as celebrities. The group will dress stylishly, and make a lavish entrance into the classroom when introduced by the teacher who will serve as the master of ceremonies. After viewing the video, members of the general audience will be interviewed to learn their reactions to the video, and their "most memorable scenes." The teacher may also use the interview as an opportunity to ask game show like quiz questions of the audience, and assess what was learned.

Task 18:

The teacher, working with the school's webmaster, will arrange for each group's digital video to be placed on the class website, for viewing by parents as well as other classes. (This can be thought of as the "general release" of the video.)

Interactions:

Full Class: The teacher will assign text reading and present videos, if available, on the topics of: Native Americans Living on the Plains, Miners and the Gold Rush, Building the Transcontinental Railroad, Ranchers and Cowhands, Farmers and Homesteaders, and Westward-Moving Wagon Trains. The teacher will divide the class into seven groups and aid students in their research. The teacher will guide students through the outlining of their topic, writing of the scripts, and production of the videos. The class will watch each of the videos.

Groups: Groups will research assigned topics, review and organize information, write an outline of information, and participate in planning and producing the group's video.

Individual: Each student will read the assigned text material and take notes, participate in researching information, help write the group storyboard, be responsible for role assigned, and participate in the preparation of the group's video.

Standards:

History-Social Science: Grade 8 United States History and Geography
8.8: Students analyze the divergent paths of the American people in the West from 1800 to the mid-1800s and the challenges they faced.

1. Discuss the election of Andrew Jackson as president in 1828, the importance of Jacksonian democracy, and his actions as president (e.g., the spoils system, veto of the National Bank, policy of Indian removal, opposition to the Supreme Court).
2. Describe the purpose, challenges, and economic incentives associated with westward expansion, including the concept of Manifest Destiny (e.g., the Lewis and Clark expedition, accounts of the removal of Indians, the Cherokees' "Trail of Tears," settlement of the Great Plains) and the territorial acquisitions that spanned numerous decades.
3. Describe the role of pioneer women and the new status that western women achieved (e.g., Laura Ingalls Wilder, Annie Bidwell; slave women gaining freedom in the West; Wyoming granting suffrage to women in 1869).
4. Examine the importance of the great rivers and the struggle over water rights.
5. Discuss Mexican settlements and their locations, cultural traditions, attitudes toward slavery, land-grant system, and economies.
6. Describe the Texas War for Independence and the Mexican-American War, including territorial settlements, the aftermath of the wars, and the effects the wars had on the lives of Americans, including Mexican Americans today.

Assessment:

- "Group Research and Video Development Assessment Rubric:" To be used by the teacher to assess the group's quality of research, group's ability to come to consensus on key points for the video, and the group's ability to represent same in the video's storyboard.
- "Group Video Assessment:" To be used by the teacher to assess the group's success in delivering the information in video format in a manner that is appropriate to the audience and meets the objectives of being clear, informative, educational, and entertaining.

- "Teacher Observation of Individual Participation:" To be used by the teacher to assess the student's understanding of the lesson, ability to work and participate cooperatively and productively, and listen well to others.

Tools:

- Microsoft Excel
- Microsoft Word
- Microsoft PowerPoint
- Internet Browser
- Video Camera (preferably digital)
- Apple iMovie
- LCD Projector

Project Tips and Alternatives:

Tip #1:

When gathering information and organizing on a spreadsheet, remind students to save work often.

Tip #2:

The following are some of the more popular videos that can be shown (available from the Teacher's Video Company and other sources. Teacher's Video -- 1-800-262-8837, www.teachersvideo.com):

- *Lewis and Clark*, 50 minutes, Teacher's Video Item #BLCH
- *Last Stand at Little Big Horn*, 60 minutes, Item #LSLH
- *Wild West: Video Quiz*, 25 minutes, Item #WWVQ
- *Untold West*, 60 minutes, Item #UWOH
- *Transcontinental Railroad*, 50 minutes, Item #TCRH

Tip #3:

The teacher may want to give a mini-lesson on the role of women in government. In 1869 Wyoming and Utah territories granted women the right to vote and in 1887, two Kansas towns, Argonia and Syracuse, passed laws allowing women to vote. The Farmer's Alliances had several women serve as officers and women, such as Mary Elizabeth Lease, were popular speakers. Women were allowed to file claims for homesteads.

Tip #4:

The teacher may want to show television news stories as examples of how video can effectively communicate its message in only a few minutes. For example, news stories often begin a headline or "attention getter," followed by basic explanation or description, and then a summary or conclusion. They often feature background narration by the reporter (audio) while the video displays several camera shots of the subject or action. Sometimes the basic

scenes are supplemented with text to identify the person or place, and often graphics such as maps or special effect animations are used to communicate key points. Also, there are often brief “sound bytes” from witnesses or key figures accompanied by appropriate visual content. This multi-media approach often communicates more information more effectively than traditional print or narration techniques. The teacher may use a VCR to record the recent news stories from broadcast television and an LCD projector to screen them.

Tip #5:

The teacher may want to review with students how to use a search engine to perform research via the Internet.

Tip #6:

With larger groups (four or more students), the teacher may increase individual participation and responsibility by

- Reference Tasks 6-8: Assign research and outline tasks to student pairs within the group. After each pair has created an outline, the group reconvenes. The group reviews and discusses the points from each outline, and agrees on which points shall be included. Students then edit their original outlines to reflect the group review.
- Reference Tasks 10, 15, 16: The cinematographer role should be split, with one student becoming the camera operator, and another the video editor.
- Reference Task 15: The director’s participation as an actor is optional. If the director also acts, he/she should have a minor role.

Tip #7:

If digital video cameras are not available, analog video cameras can be used as a substitute. However, an “analog to digital converter” device will be required before the video can be captured onto the computer. If a converter is not available, then editing can be done (tediously) using a VCR to capture the video from the camera. If this technique is employed, clean segues between scenes, scrolling credits, and other special effects should not be expected. Likewise, uploading the video to the class website is not feasible.

Attachments:

- "Step Sheet: Creating a Data Table"
- "Sample: Spreadsheet for Recording Data"
- "Step Sheet: Formatting an Outline"
- "Step Sheet: Using PowerPoint to Create a Video Storyboard"
- "Sample: PowerPoint Video Storyboard"
- "**Handout:** Westward Expansion Video and Research Guide"
- "Group Research and Video Development, Group Video, and Individual Participation Rubrics"

Web Resources – Content:

A list of [linked web resources](#) related to the content of this lesson can be found on the Lesson Page.

Web Resources – Excel:

A list of [linked web resources for Excel](#) can be found on the Excel Resources page.

Assistive Technology:

Please refer to the [Assistive Technology section](#) for information on methods and devices to help ensure that all students have access to the curricula in the least restrictive environment.