

Westward Expansion:

Did It Unite Us or Divide Us?



Ilene Haney

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Teaching With Primary Sources in the History Classroom

Dr. Scott Waring

Book Backdrop

“Ghost Town at Sundown” by Mary Pope Osborne

This book for young readers is the story of two children who go back in time to the Wild West. Their story is one of adventure and exploration, including rattlesnakes and cowboys. This book is the backdrop for students (8th and 11th grades) to explore the real West in U.S. History and to ask themselves how its story really depends on who is telling it.

Westward Expansion: Did it Unite or Divide Us?

We often associate westward expansion with the “pioneer spirit” and “facing the frontier.” Movies and other media often glorify westward movement as one of many fundamental pieces of the American character. Stories and folklore perpetuate the idea that this experience in American life was a time of honorable cowboys, aggressive Native Americans, and complacent railroad workers. Other legends create images of the “wild west” as a time of renegades and shoot-outs. Throughout the 19th century many groups moved to the west from the Eastern seaboard and impacted not only the physical land but other cultural groups, as well. Many versions of the true west emerge – often one of selfless pioneers who were drawn together to build an America that was ripe with ideology and hope for all. This included the idea of Manifest Destiny – that the west was meant to be tamed, populated and enlightened. Many artifacts, however, tell a different story. After analyzing the following documents, make decisions regarding the characteristics of Westward Movement. What was it like to live in those times? In what ways were the experiences different for various population groups? After looking at the attached documents and answering the accompanying questions discuss and then write about the following question:

Essential Question: *Did the events represented in these documents unite us as a nation or divide us?*

Use evidence from the documents to support your decision.

Document 1:



"American Progress" by John Gast

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/awhbib:@field%28NUMBER+@band%28ppmsca+09855%29%29:display:m856sd=ppmsca:m856sf=09855>

Question 1.1:

Use the Analysis Sheet (attached.) What do you see in each quadrant? Who are the different groups of people you see? Explain "movement" as you see it in the picture.

Question 1.2:

What was the message that John Gast was trying to portray in his painting, "American Progress?"

Question 1.3: How is the idea of Manifest Destiny expressed in this image?

Document 2:



Mining Life in California

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/cph.3c30289/>

Question 2.1

What surprises you about the image in this cartoon?

Question 2.2:

How does the cartoonist portray "mining life?"

Document 3:



Map of Indian Reservations, 1883

<http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/mussm:@field%28NUMBER+@band%28sm1880+11339%29%29>

Question 3.1

What do you notice in this map? (Use either of the Map Analysis Sheets (attached) to Observe, Reflect and Question)

Question 3.2

Explain the differences between the red sections and tan sections

Question 3.3

Can you think of reasons why the red sections are separated from one another? What are they?

Document 4:



“The Chinamen Must Go” by H.B. Pasmore

<http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/mussm:@field%28NUMBER+@band%28sm1880+11339%29%29>

Question 4.1:

What phrases in the song suggest that the lyrics are referring to workers from China?

Question 4.2:

Describe the jobs that are being taken by the Chinese workers.

Document 5:



The Idaho Indian War

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/00650888/>

Question 5.1: Describe the characteristics of the photographs in Documents 5 and 6 that suggest that these are scenes of war.

Document 6:



Oglala War-Party

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2002719686/>

Document 7:



Letter from Uriah W. Oblinger

<http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/ps:@field%28DOCID+1082%29>

Question 7.1

According to Uriah, what are the largest drawbacks to settling on homesteaded land?

Question 7.2:

What did prospective settlers have to do to claim land in the West?

Question 7.3:

How does Uriah's account compare with the vision of "manifest destiny" in the painting American Progress (Document 1)?

Document 8:



Old Mission Church, Los Angeles

<http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/detr:@field%28NUMBER+@band%28det+4a05360%29%29>

Question 8.1:

In what ways can a building of this sort represent unity? Division?

Document 9:



"I Will Go West" by J.P. Barrett

<http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/h?ammem/mussm:@field%28NUMBER+@band%28sm1875+10352%29%29>

Question 9.1

Describe the different emotions that are portrayed in this song.

Document 10:



New Transcontinental map of the Pacific RR

<http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/gmd:@field%28NUMBER+@band%28g4051p+rr005110r%29%29>

Question 10.1

What physical land features are connected by the railroad?

Question 10.2

Summarize the opportunities available to settlers based on the length and location of the railroad tracks.

Document 11:



Interview with Bones Hook

[http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/wpa:@field\(DOCID+@lit\(wpa337091205\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/wpa:@field(DOCID+@lit(wpa337091205)))

Question 11.1

What skills did Bones Hooks need to have to be a Cowboy?

Question 11.2

Describe the affection described in this interview between Bones Hook and the pioneer women.

Reset Form

Photo Analysis Worksheet

Print Form

Step 1. Observation

A. Study the photograph for 2 minutes. Form an overall impression of the photograph and then examine individual items. Next, divide the photo into quadrants and study each section to see what new details become visible.

B. Use the chart below to list people, objects, and activities in the photograph.

People	Objects	Activities

Step 2. Inference

Limit response for each question to 5 lines of text

Based on what you have observed above, list three things you might infer from this photograph.

Step 3. Questions

A. What questions does this photograph raise in your mind?

B. Where could you find answers to them?

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Map Analysis Worksheet

Print Form

1. TYPE OF MAP (Check one):

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Raised Relief map | <input type="radio"/> Bird's-eye map |
| <input type="radio"/> Topographic map | <input type="radio"/> Artifact map |
| <input type="radio"/> Political map | <input type="radio"/> Satellite photograph/mosaic |
| <input type="radio"/> Contour-line map | <input type="radio"/> Pictograph |
| <input type="radio"/> Natural resource map | <input type="radio"/> Weather map |
| <input type="radio"/> Military map | <input type="radio"/> Other |

2. UNIQUE PHYSICAL QUALITIES OF THE MAP (Check one or more):

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Compass | <input type="checkbox"/> Name of mapmaker |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Handwritten | <input type="checkbox"/> Title |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Date | <input type="checkbox"/> Legend (key) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Notations | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Scale | |

3. DATE OF MAP:

4. CREATOR OF THE MAP:

5. WHERE WAS THE MAP PRODUCED?

6. MAP INFORMATION

A. List three things in this map that you think are important.

Limit response for each question to a single line of text

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

B. Why do you think this map was drawn?

Limit response for each question to 2 lines of text

C. What evidence in the map suggests why it was drawn?

D. What information does this map add to the textbook's account of this event?

E. Does the information in this map support or contradict information that you have read about this event? Explain.

F. Write a question to the mapmaker that is left unanswered by this map.

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TEACHER'S GUIDE ANALYZING MAPS



Guide students with the sample questions as they respond to the primary source. Encourage them to go back and forth between the columns; there is no correct order.

OBSERVE

Have students identify and note details.

Sample Questions:

Describe what you see. · What do you notice first? · What size and shape is the map? · What graphical elements do you see? · What on the map looks strange or unfamiliar? · Describe anything that looks like it does not belong on a map. · What place or places does the map show? · What, if any, words do you see?

REFLECT

Encourage students to generate and test hypotheses about the source.

Why do you think this map was made? · Who do you think the audience was for this map? · How do you think this map was made? · How does it compare to current maps of this place? · What does this map tell you about what the people who made it knew and what they didn't? · If this map was made today, what would be different? · What would be the same?

QUESTION

Have students ask questions to lead to more observations and reflections.

What do you wonder about...
who? · what? · when? · where? · why? · how?

FURTHER INVESTIGATION

Help students to identify questions appropriate for further investigation, and to develop a research strategy for finding answers.

Sample Question: What more do you want to know, and how can you find out?

A few follow-up activity ideas: *Beginning*
Have students write a brief description of the map in their own words.

Intermediate
Study three or more maps of a city or state at different time periods. Arrange them in chronological order. Discuss clues to the correct sequence.

Advanced
Search for maps of a city or state from different periods, then compile a list of changes over time and other differences and similarities between the maps.

For more tips on using primary sources, go to <https://www.loc.gov/teachers>