

Primary Source Set

Voices From Western Expansion

Guiding Questions

- How did the acquisition of new territories impact the nation's growth and development?
- How did westward expansion impact Native American tribes, and what were the consequences of these interactions?

Objectives

- ☐ I can understand what drove Americans to want to settle further westward.
- ☐ I can understand the impacts that western expansion had on Native Americans.

General Instructions to Surveyors, 1833

Background Information

Land surveying is the mapping and logging of land features and boundaries. As the U.S. expanded westward, surveying was essential for the government to log boundaries for land tracts sold to pioneers. The following is a list of instructions that the General Surveyor of the United States gave to his deputies for surveying land in Ohio, Indiana, and Michigan.

General Instructions to Surveyors, 1833

Source: <https://www.teachushistory.org/Westward/ps-general.htm>

Text	Vocabulary and Context
The public Lands of the United States are surveyed in a uniform mode, established by law...giving to the tracts thus surveyed, the rectangular form.	
The public lands are laid off and surveyed, primarily, into tracts of six miles square, called Townships, containing, each, 23,040 acres. The townships are subdivided into thirty-six tracts, called Sections, each of which are one mile square, and contains 640 acres...	tracts - sections

The public lands are surveyed under the direction of the Surveyor General, by Deputies appointed by himself. He selects for his deputies none other than skilful and experienced practical surveyors, men of good moral character, in whose integrity and **fidelity** the fullest confidence can be **reposed**.

fidelity- faithfulness

reposed- confidence placed in

Cherokee Petition Protesting Removal, 1836

Background Information

As Americans expanded westward, they inevitably came into contact with Native Americans. Their interactions varied from harmony and goodwill on both sides to violence, force, and fraud by one or both. The Cherokee Nation was a large tribe in the southeastern United States. American settlers were eager to farm and mine on land they held and pressed the U.S. government to make a treaty for the Cherokee to cede their lands and move further west. A majority of the Cherokee, led by Chief John Ross, opposed such a treaty. However, a minority group negotiated a treaty with the U.S. government to exchange their land for money and territory in modern-day Oklahoma. Ross wrote the following petition to Congress to express opposition to the treaty, which he deemed to be a fraud.

Cherokee Petition Protesting Removal, 1836

Source: <https://www.americanyawp.com/reader/manifest-destiny/cherokee-petition-protesting-removal-1836/>

Text	Vocabulary and Context
The United States solemnly guaranteed to such nation all their land not ceded , and pledged the faith of the government, that "all white people who have intruded, or may hereafter intrude on the lands reserved for the Cherokees, shall be removed by the United States...."	ceded - given up

The Cherokees were happy and prosperous under a scrupulous observance of treaty stipulations by the government of the United States, and from the fostering hand extended over them, they made rapid advances in civilization, morals, and in the arts and sciences.	prosperous- successful scrupulous observance- strict observation stipulations- rules fostering- promoting development
Little did they anticipate, that when taught to think and feel as the American citizen, and to have with him a common interest, they were to be despoiled by their guardian, to become strangers and wanderers in the land of their fathers, forced to return to the savage life, and to seek a new home in the wilds of the far west, and that without their consent.	despoiled- robbed
An instrument purporting to be a treaty with the Cherokee people, has recently been made public by the President of the United States, that will have such an operation if carried into effect. This instrument, the delegation aver before the civilized world, and in the presence of Almighty God, is fraudulent, false upon its face, made by unauthorized individuals, without the sanction, and against the wishes of the great body of the Cherokee people.	purporting- claiming aver- assert sanction- authorization

The Donner Party, 1847

Background Information

Traveling west was an extremely dangerous undertaking. Settlers took the risk of leaving their homes and going into an entirely new area. Travel via covered wagon was slow. Bad weather, dangerous animals, disease, starvation, and hostile Native Americans were all potentials. Nevertheless, many individuals and families believed that the opportunities offered by moving west far outweighed the dangers.

In 1846, a group known as the Donner Party left Missouri and attempted to migrate to California. However, early snowfall left them stranded in the Sierra Nevada mountains for the winter. Brutally cold temperatures and limited supplies led to many deaths within the party, and some resorted to cannibalism in order to survive. The following newspaper article was published in 1847 before the party was fully rescued.

The Donner Party, 1847

Source: Number 49 <https://spartacus-educational.com/WWdonnerP.htm>

Text	Vocabulary and Context
It is probably not generally known to the people, that there is now in the California mountains in a most distressing situation a party of emigrants from the United States, who were prevented from crossing the mountains by an early heavy fall of snow. The party consists of about sixty persons, men, women and children.	emigrants - a group of people leaving one area to go to another
They were, almost entirely out of provisions, when they reached the foot of the mountain, and but for the timely succor afforded them by Capt. J.A. Sutter , one of the most humane and liberal men in California, they must have all perished in a few days.	Capt. J.A. Sutter - Captain Sutter helped send supplies to the stranded members of the party. His actions helped some of them survive the brutal hardships. liberal - generous

Captain Sutter as soon as he **ascertained** their situation, sent five mules loaded with provisions to them. A second party was dispatched with **provisions** for them, but they found the mountain **impassable**, in consequence of the snow. We hope that our citizens will do something for the relief of these unfortunate people.

ascertained- assessed

provisions- supplies

impassable- unable to be passed through

Eldorado: or, Adventures in the Path of Empire, 1850

Background Information

Bayard Taylor was a journalist with the New York Tribune. He traveled to California in 1849, where a gold rush had sparked a huge wave of people moving there looking to strike rich by panning for gold. In this writing, Taylor noted his observations about the character of the people who had braved the journey to live in California.

Eldorado: or, Adventures in the Path of Empire, 1850

Source: <https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/gdc/calbk/123.pdf>

Text	Vocabulary and Context
A man, on coming to California, could no more expect to retain his old nature unchanged, than he could retain in his lungs the air he had inhaled on the Atlantic shore. The most immediate and striking change which came upon the greater portion of the emigrants was an increase of activity, and proportionately , of reckless and daring spirit...	retain- keep proportionately- in a way that corresponds reckless- overly brave, to the point of not thinking

It was evident that had the Californians been more cool, grave and deliberate in their temperament—had they lacked the fiery energy and impulsive spirit which pushed them irresistibly forward—the dangers which surrounded them at the outset would have been far more imminent. Besides, this energy did not run at random; it was in the end directed by an enlightened experience, and that instinct of Right, which is the strength and security of a self-governed People. Hundreds of instances might be adduced to show that the worst passions of our nature were speedily developed in the air of California...	temperament- personality adduced- shown as evidence
After what has been said, it will appear natural that California should be the most democratic country in the world. The practical equality of all the members of a community, whatever might be the wealth, intelligence or profession of each, was never before thoroughly demonstrated. Dress was no gauge of respectability, and no honest occupation, however menial in its character, affected a man's standing.	menial- small
Lawyers, physicians and ex-professors dug cellars, drove ox-teams, sawed wood and carried luggage; while men who had been Army privates, sailors, cooks or day laborers were at the head of profitable establishments and not infrequently assisted in some of the minor details of Government. A man who would consider his fellow beneath him, on account of his appearance or occupation, would have had some difficulty in living peaceably in California.	

Interview of Harriet Scott Palmer, 1939

Background Information

Harriet Scott Palmer was an 11-year-old girl when her family journeyed west from Illinois in 1852. Her father believed that the West offered ample opportunities for a better life, and they left in the spring of that year. Palmer gave an interview decades later in 1939 in which she recounted the challenges of the journey.

Interview of Harriet Scott Palmer, 1939

Source: <https://www.legendsofamerica.com/we-crossingplains/>

Text	Vocabulary and Context
In our home in Illinois, in the early 1850s, there was much talk and excitement over the news of the great gold discoveries in California — and equally, there was much talk concerning the wonderful fertile valleys of Oregon Territory and an act of Congress giving settlers 640 acres of land. My father, John Tucker Scott, with much of the pioneer spirit in his blood, became so interested that he decided to “Go West.”...	fertile - soil that is good for growing crops
The old emigrant trail holds many hard experiences. Coming to the Snake River , and for many miles along, it was impossible to reach it to get water for the oxen. We had to travel all night at times. On one occasion, the camp was made after dark, and there was such a stench in the air. Early daylight found us camped close between two dead oxen on one side and a dead horse on the other — so we had to move before breakfast.	emigrant - people who travel from Snake River - a major river that flows from Wyoming to Washington

On and on, we journeyed — averaging 15 miles a day over cactus, sagebrush, and hot sand. Everybody's shoes gave out, and we bartered with Indians for **moccasins**, but that didn't help much about the **prickly pears**. One by one, the oxen fell by the way. We came to **Burnt River** — a most desolate country. Here, our baby brother, Willie, fell sick. It was in the heat of August. The train was halted so that the darling child of four years could be better cared for, but he became unconscious and passed away.

moccasins- shoes worn by Native Americans

prickly pears- a type of cactus

Burnt River- a small river in eastern Oregon

When we came to **Fort Walla Walla**, we saw a crowing rooster on a rail fence. Oh, how we all cried. There we stood, a travel-worn, weary heart, and homesick group, crying over a rooster crowing.

Fort Walla Walla- a fort in Washington that was a stop on the Oregon Trail

