**Fourth Grade**

**Key Concept 4:**

**Westward Expansion Lesson**

**Overview:**

Remember that totally awesome Oregon Trail computer game we would play? This lesson plan is basically a live-action version of that game using space travel as our real world example. Students will understand the motivations that prompted westward movement and will be able to answer a questions about these motivations. Students will weigh the issues of space travel and decide if they would accept the offer of free land. The students will participate in a comprehension discussion about the American frontier and the Homestead Act. Students will plan their trip west. They will organize their party members and select jobs that they will perform in their party. They will create lists of supplies needed, and determine practicality due to weight and volume. Students will participate in group activities and decision making. Students will deliberate on group rules. Students will calculate their travel figures. Students will use creative thinking in timed emergency situations. And finally, students will understand part of the impact of the Westward Movement on our nation’s cultural life and learn about the impact on the environment and Native Americans. In short, this a truly cross-curricular unit on Westward Expansion that modern day students can truly relate to and problem solve their way through to reach a deeper understanding of the impact expansion had in the U.S.

**Materials Needed:**

* Day 1
  + blank U.S. map handouts, with one being a projected version for the teacher
  + masking tape
  + Horace Greeley’s “Go West Young Man” quote and biographical information (google)
* Day 2
  + “Become a Billionaire” handout for each student (attached)
  + “Homestead History” article for each student (<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/frontierhouse/frontierlife/essay1.html>)
  + Sarah, Plain and Tall for each student
* Day 3
  + masking tape to mark of a 10’X4’ rectangle on the floor
  + Prior to class, find and denote the various "stops along the way" that are detailed in this day's lesson.
* Day 4-5
* Dice or spinner with the following categories:

1. Equipment problems: (broken wheel, etc.) lose 1 day
2. Weather problems: (mud, rain, snow) lose 1 day
3. Terrain problems: (wash-out of trail, snake-bite, etc.) lose 1- 2 days.
4. Good fortune: (short-cut works,.) gain 1 day
5. Good fortune: (help from locals, good hunting, etc.) no loss of time.
6. Crisis: (Natives restless, disease outbreak) possible loss of time.

* Video: “How the West Was Won”

**Key Vocabulary:**

Westward Expansion

Territory

Louisiana Purchase

Lewis & Clark

Expedition

Acquisition of Texas

The Alamo,

Oregon Trail

California Gold Rush

Mining towns

**Objectives:**

C.2.4.4 Use deliberative processes when making decisions acting upon civic problems

C.3.4.3 Analyze group actions and responses to local and global problems

E.4.4.1Compare examples of scarcity from different regions in the state and nation

G.8.4.2 Use thematic maps and other geographic representations to compare physical and human characteristics of a region in the United States and the interactions that shape them

G.8.4.3 Construct maps and other geographic representations of Arkansas and the United States, including physical and human characteristics, title, legend, and compass rose

G.9.4.1 Analyze effects over time of human-generated changes in the physical environment

Analyze ways cultural characteristics influence population distribution in regions of the United States and the world

G.9.4.3 Analyze ways environmental characteristics affect population distribution in Arkansas, the United States, and the world

G.10.4.1 Compare natural resources in various regions to influence human settlement patterns

G.10.4.2 Determine effects of movement and distribution of people, goods, and ideas on various places using a variety of print and digital sources, geospatial technologies, and geographic representations

G.10.4.3 Compare push- pull- factors that influenced immigration to and migration within the United States

G.11.4.1 Describe global connections created through increased trade, transportation, communication and technology

H.12.4.3 Compare specific regions of the United States in the past with those regions today noting changes over time

H.12.4.4 Analyze the impact of individuals and events on the past, present, and future

H.12.4.5 Reference historic places and national parks to guide inquiry about history

H.13.4.1 Describe ways people’s perspectives shaped the historical sources they created

H.13.4.2 Examine why individuals and groups during the same historical period had differing perspectives

H.13.4.3 Develop claims in response to compelling questions about Arkansas and United States history using evidence from a variety of primary and secondary resources

H.13.4.5 Formulate questions that relate to specific historical events in Arkansas and the United States to guide inquiry

H.13.4.6 Examine current or historical events in Arkansas, the United States, or the world in terms of cause and effect

E.4.4.2 Apply economic decision-making models when making decisions

E.7.4.2 Explain effects of increasing economic interdependence on different regions of the United States

G.11.4.2 Analyze ways communities cooperate in providing relief efforts during and after natural and human-made disasters

H.12.4.1 Create historical narratives using chronological sequences of related events in Arkansas and the United States

H.12.4.2 Interpret timelines that show relationships among people, events, and movements at the local, state, regional, or national level

H.13.4.4 Discuss why historians use a variety of primary and secondary resources

**Instructions:**

*Day 1*

1. Tape off a 10" x 10" section of the room floor. Have students all move to within the taped off square of the room. It will be crowded but not uncomfortably so. Ask the following questions allowing time for responses:
   1. Who would like to move to a more open part of the classroom?
   2. How many would like to move? Why?
2. When students have discussed reasons for wanting more space, have them move back into their seats and begin the day’s lesson.
3. Begin a discussion about the "crowded" eastern U.S. Many immigrants had been lured to America by promises of free land, and limitless horizons. They found instead hard life in eastern cities. Many were farmers by trade. Disappointed, but itching to make their fortunes, they began to listen to advertising of the promised land out west. Government free land, romantic stories of the West, and personal discontent lead thousands to prepare to move out West.
4. This lesson should be supplemented with era pictures of crowded city slums: Greeley's information about "Go West Young Man." Google these topics with your students on your projector, it is important that they learn how to search for things and modeling it live in front of them as often as possible is an awesome way to incorporate technology (you may want to google first and check out the sources credibility or walk through your thought process on whether it is a “reliable source” or not with your students out loud).
5. Pass out the **blank U.S. maps** and have the students locate major eastern cities, especially New York, and the city that most pioneers funneled through--St. Louis. (Have projected to show all students where the cities are located.) This map can be used to add expansions as you move through the history and acquisitions of Westward Expansion.
6. There is a 10 minute section of "How the West was Won" that depicts a family making a decision to head West. It gives a good depiction of the weight of the decision, as well as showing an early town, and fashions. (This will be saved for last to use as time permits.)
7. The teacher will close the lesson by explaining that many people wanted a fresh start, and the “grass is greener” thinking was in full force. With the government using settlers to “settle” the frontier with the bait of free land, people began to congregate their resources for a westward expedition. Preview a lesson in which students will begin to stock their own wagon, and plan for a wagon trip into the western frontier.
8. Independent practice will be that the students devise 5 "rules" that they think would help ensure their groups survival on their westward trek.
9. As their “Ticket Out The Door,” the teacher will ask the students to answer the following questions:
   1. Where did most immigrants find work when they arrived in the U.S.? (Cities.)
   2. What was the profession of most immigrants before they arrived in the U.S.? (Farmers.)
   3. What things encouraged people to want to move West? (Advertising, land give-aways, discontent, fortune-seeking)

*Day 2*:

1. The students will read the advertisement **“Becoming a Billionaire”** and then as a class we will discuss whether they would or would not like to become pioneers on XR-38.
   1. After students have finished reading the document, ask the following questions:
      * Would you be willing to go to XR-38?
        + Ask students who are willing to go why they would be interested in such a dangerous prospect.
        + Ask those who are not willing to go why they are hesitating.
      * What is appealing about being the first settlers?
      * What are drawbacks of being original settlers?
      * Is there anything suspicious about the offer?
   2. Be sure that you have guided responses if they didn’t get there on their own:
      * Positives—going to XR-38 would be an incredible adventure, they would be making history, the potential for economic gain could be great, and that risks seem to be minimal.
      * Negatives—they would be extremely far from civilization as we know it, they could fall prey to aliens or alien animals, they would lack resources they’ve become accustomed to on earth, there is great risk involved in the travel.
2. If available, the students will log onto the Homestead History article at <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/frontierhouse/frontierlife/essay1.html>. If not, the teacher will pass out a copy of the article to each child.
   1. The teacher will provide a focus for the students by asking them to read the third paragraph (and only the third paragraph) of the essay (It begins with the words “In reality, the frontier existed…”) to see where and when the American frontier existed.
      * Check for student comprehension. (In the paragraph, the frontier is described as having existed at a variety of times for a variety of people. The pilgrims, Daniel Boone, and Laura Ingalls Wilder are mentioned.
   2. The teacher will provide another focus by asking students to read the fourth and fifth paragraphs (they begin with “The Homestead Act…”) and determine what the Homestead Act was and what it did for American citizens.
      * Check for comprehension by asking:
        + In what year was the Homestead Act passed? (1862)
        + How did the homesteaders have to improve their land? (They had to live on the land for five years, build a dwelling, and plant crops.)
        + How much land became available through the Homestead Act? (270 million acres.)
        + Why did so many homesteaders fail? (They had little or no farming experience, their homesteads were too small for profitable crops, and it was often too dry to raise crops.)
        + How many homesteaders obtained the deeds for their homesteads? (783,000 people.)
   3. The independent practice will be the students reading the rest of the Homestead History article and finding out as much information about the homesteaders as possible.
   4. Close the lesson by asking the students how being a homesteader would be different from, or similar to, going and settling on Planet XR-38.
      * Both the land available during the Homestead Act and the land on XR-38 were advertised as “free.” Do your students think the land in either place would truly have been free? Why or why not?

*Day 3*:

1. Show a 5 minute section of "How the West was Won" that depicts some travails of wagon travel. It shows the troubles of going up hills, and losing a wheel. (Both very common events.)
2. Students will divide up into small groups of 4 with their first task of picking jobs that they will have on their wagon. These will include:
   1. A trail boss – taskmaster
   2. A scribe to record and note their descriptions
   3. A banker to do the mathematics, expenditures, figure out how much supplies the wagon will carry, distance traveled, dates, etc.
   4. A voice monitor, and a scout – keep group aware of when projects need to be completed and remind group to keep voices down
3. Have the class, as a group, draw up a list of the provisions the group will need to take on their westward movement. Those items that are essential are to be highlighted. The following are guidelines:
   1. The wagon dimension 4'x 10', (the area is taped out on the floor,) load limit 15,000 pounds.
   2. Mules, sure footed most expensive
   3. Horses, pull wagon faster
   4. Oxen, slowest, walk along beside wagon (economy what most people could afford) Also, early wagons had no brakes.
   5. Oxen drink 20 - 30 gallons of water a day. It takes eight oxen to pull wagon
   6. 8 pounds per gallon of water.
   7. Don’t forget clothing, ammunition, spare wagon parts.
   8. Weights of various staple foods can be estimated (flour, sugar, coffee, corn meal etc.) Supplies can be purchased (sometimes) along the way. Plus, there is hunting and fishing---but these are undependable.
4. On their map, have the students locate these points that they will pass through (Included are some story-starters or ideas to add flavor to their trip):
   1. INDEPENDENCE, MISSOURI. Meet at the south-east corner of Courthouse Square and wait until enough wagons show up to form a wagon train. Tell what you brought with you (supplies, heirlooms, and animals) as well as what the town looks and feels like.
   2. FIRST NIGHT--CROSSED BLUE RIVER. Describe your first day of travel by wagon plus crossing a river. Camp near the flour mills run by river power, and buy flour from either Blue Mill or Fitzhugh Mill. Someone on your wagon train is bitten by a rattlesnake and dies hours later.
   3. CROSSED KANSAS RIVER. Used the Pappan Ferry run by two brothers who used two canoes with poles to carry the wagons over. They coiled a rope around a tree to lower the boat into the water. The river was 200 yards wide, rapid and deep current. Animals swam, and it cost $4/wagon, .25/mule, .10/man. One of your children falls off the wagon and is swept away by the current and drowns.
   4. ASH HOLLOW. This is the first steep grade you've encountered, and it was so scary that people did not even talk for the last 2 miles. You lost several hours holding the wagons back with ropes (to keep them from racing down the canyon), so you decide to camp in the grove of ash trees at the bottom of the canyon.
   5. SCOTT'S BLUFF. On the south bank of the Platte River, you pass a high cliff. There is no wood and you're forced the use buffalo chips to make your fire (it does give a distinctive taste to the food).
   6. FORT LARAMIE. This Mexican-style fort made of adobe seemed to be out in the middle of nowhere. There is water on two sides. You buy supplies.
   7. INDEPENDENCE ROCK. It's the Fourth of July and you spend the next couple of days celebrating around this huge granite rock that is 3-4 acres in size and looks like a giant whale. You celebrate independence with patriotic singing, picnic lunches, and carving your name on the rock.
   8. SWEETWATER RIVER CROSSING. You camp near the river because it is a lush area with good water and grass for the animals. Indians attack this evening, and while your wagon train fought them off, several friends died.
   9. SOUTH PASS. Today you crossed the Continental Divide, although it was so gradual a climb that you were unaware at the time. This pass is only 3/4 of a mile in parts, but it marks the beginning of the Oregon Territory.
   10. FORT HALL. Although this isn't the nicest fort you've stopped at, it does sell fresh vegetables, which you've not had since the trip began. You buy supplies, but they're expensive: sugar - .50/pint; coffee - .50/pint; flour - .25/pint; rice - .33/pint.
   11. VALLEY OF GRANDE RONDE. You're almost there and now you're in a beautifully lush valley with berries everywhere. You spend several days picking fruit and resting.
   12. BARLOW ROAD. You decide to use the toll road rather than raft down the Columbia River. Even the road, though, is dangerous as it plunges down cliffs, so you have to slow your wagon by wrapping rope around trees to gently guide it down the steep incline. You can see Mount Hood in the distance, and some decide to stay here.
   13. WILLAMETTE VALLEY. You've reached your destination and it's as beautiful as you'd heard. -The students should now plot the route between points on their maps. They should label & mark mountains, and rivers.
5. For independent practice, the teacher will announce to the students that as they are about to move west, they must do the following before the next class day:
   1. Create a new identity for themselves. This would include an old-fashioned name, age, occupation, spouse, and family (minimum of two children and possibly grandparents, cousins, uncles or aunts living with them). Having a spouse is required because most adults were married then.
6. The teacher will close the lesson by explaining that it took almost all of a family’s savings to buy and outfit a wagon. Some people had to work their way across. There were very few places to buy supplies, so planning was very important---it meant life or death for your family. It was easy to get lost, so most wagon trains hired guides and scouts. Some guides abandoned the wagon trains after they were deep in the wilderness. There was danger every day. Then explain that tomorrow your wagon will embark on its rugged journey westward. Good luck.
7. As their “Ticket Out The Door,” the teacher will ask the students to answer the following questions:
   1. What are the heaviest items a wagon had to carry? (Water.)
   2. What were two important items to take with you? (Variety of answers.)
   3. How will you cross rivers? (A creative thinking question with a number of possible answers.)

*Day 4:*

1. Begin the lesson by asking the following questions:
   1. Which sports have the most rules?
   2. Are there any sports that have no rules?
   3. Do you know of any groups of people that live with no rules?
   4. What are some of the things that could happen to a group of people who had no rules? (This leads into the formation of the list of rules-to live-by that the groups will now write based which is based on Monday's homework.)
2. The students will begin by compiling their list of rules and regulations the party will follow on the trail. When they have agreed to a list of no more than 10 rules, every member of their party will sign it.
3. Next, the groups will estimate their arrival dates based on a rate of traveling 15 miles a day over flat land. They will need to take in to account the terrain, weather, feed & water for the animals. They will write their estimated arrival date on their rules list sheet.
4. It's time for them to begin their actual trip west. There will be planned and unplanned things occurring. They will deal with weather, terrain, natives, and human nature. Luck will be involved, as dice or a spinner will help determine fate. It is not a race vs. each team, per se. Rather it is a race against inclement weather, and supply shortages. Situations can be thrown at the pioneers that call for creative problem solving. (For example, spoilage of a large percentage of food stock by dampness, or insects. Disease was also quite common.) Group decision-making should be quite evident on this trip. Life or death situations can be proposed that call for quick action and thinking. (Example: A harness snaps while helping push a wagon up a hill. Each group has one minute to form a plan of action.)
5. For independent practice, the students should consider that they are often trespassers upon Indian lands. How should the Native Americans be approached, or treated?
6. The teacher will explain the following as closure to the lesson: The pioneers embarked on their great journey with high hopes and expectations. They assumed many things about the frontier that would prove false, and sometimes fatal. Managing four to six 1000 lb. animals and a cumbersome wagon over various terrain proved a daunting task. Everyone on the wagon had to help including kids, parents, and grandparents. Their journey would toughen them, or kill them. But it did a lot to prepare them for the harsh life ahead.
7. Ticket out the door: The teacher will lead a discussion on the following to check student understanding.
   1. Why did wagon trains need rules of conduct?
   2. Name 3 things that can slow your progress.

*Day 5:*

1. Video clip (5 min.) "How the West Was Won" depicting the end of the trail, followed by discussion.
2. It’s time to bring all the wagon trains to trail's end. Include one last hazard (such as coming upon a couple of burned out, vandalized wagons) and then have them role into "the promised land."
3. Then the teacher will excitedly say: “This is it! Many settlers felt that they now had it made! All they had to do was arrive out West, and everything would be smooth. Today we will look at what happened to the average settler family as the settled down out West.”
4. The teacher will explain the following: For starters, most farmers became farmers. Most businessmen became businessmen. Most seamstresses became seamstresses. In other words, they brought their former lives with them, for the most part. Many wagons carried the owner’s tools of the trade that they earned a living with back east. It was what they knew, it could feed their families, and it’s what they did. Many did try to "strike it rich" in mining, or gambling, but most people settled in and "civilized" an area near other people. There was safety in numbers, and danger close by like wild animals and “wild people.” Thieves had little fear of being caught by the law because there was very little enforcement. It was "frontier justice." That means you protected your family and your things yourself. Many things changed with the arrival of more and more settlers. Perhaps the greatest impact was on Native Americans. (Give them information on the Native Americans—trail of tears went through Arkansas--here.) The scope of harm done to Native Americans can't be covered in this series of lessons, but students should be made aware of a systematic removal of indigenous peoples under the guidelines of the Federal Government. Settlers were encouraged to "civilize" areas of the frontier by government land grants. This was a sad chapter in our history.
5. For guided practice the teacher will ask students to look back over the troubles that came upon them while they traveled and discuss some troubles that we could face today that would be comparable to them.
6. For independent practice the teacher will ask the students to imagine they were forced to leave their homes suddenly last night, taking nothing with them. In a 2 minute quick-write, have them write about what they would miss most.
7. The teacher will close the lesson by explaining the following: These lessons teach a critical era of U.S. history. One that not only spread the boundaries of our country, but one that helped shape our very image of ourselves as a hard-working, risk-taking people.
8. The students will write a unit-ending essay including the following: problems their group encountered and how they were overcome, effective and useless rules, teamwork, planning, and overcoming obstacles.

If you have technology available to all of your students, or even small groups of students, check out the “Go West Young Man: An American History Webquest on Western Expansion” at <http://bkgoldberg.tripod.com/gowest/>!

If you’re looking for research materials in print or a literacy connection to accompany the lesson, check out this book available to download online for free entitled Lawmen Stories of Men Who Tamed the West:

<http://104.236.105.142/lawmen-stories-of-men-who-tamed-the-west.pdf>



