

Unit Narrative

In this unit, students will explore how the United States expanded its territory across North America and the motivations, consequences, and conflicts that followed. By examining the idea of Manifest Destiny—the belief that Americans were destined to expand from coast to coast—students will analyze how this powerful ideology influenced national policies, territorial acquisitions, and interactions with Native American nations and foreign powers.

From the Louisiana Purchase to the annexation of Texas and the acquisition of Oregon and California, students will investigate how diplomacy, war, and migration shaped the nation's growth. Key events such as the Lewis and Clark expedition, the Mexican-American War, and the California Gold Rush will be studied to understand the social, political, and economic impacts of expansion. Students will also explore how the westward movement affected Indigenous peoples, including forced removals, broken treaties, and cultural displacement.

Through the use of maps, primary sources, and historical narratives, learners will evaluate how government decisions, settler ambitions, and economic opportunities drove expansion—and how those actions shaped debates over slavery, sectionalism, and national identity. Special attention will be paid to the role of pioneers, immigrants, and women in building new communities in the West.

By the end of the unit, students will be able to assess how Manifest Destiny transformed the geography and identity of the United States. They'll be challenged to consider whose dreams were fulfilled and whose lives were disrupted in the pursuit of "destiny," and how the legacy of expansion continues to influence the nation's values and struggles today.

CONTENT STANDARDS

Below are the standards **taught** and **assessed** in this unit.

| Westward Expansion | | Connected Knowledge and Skills: 8.7, 8.11, 8.20, 8.27 |
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| 8.6 HISTORY. The student understands westward expansion and its effect on the political, economy, and social development of the nation. | | |
| STAAR | Readiness Standards | Supporting Standards |
| 3-5 Items | <p>8.1A: Identify the major eras in U.S. history through 1877, including...westward expansion,...and describe their causes and effects.</p> <p>8.6B: analyze the westward growth of the nation, including the Louisiana Purchase and Manifest Destiny</p> <p>8.6C: explain the causes and effects of the U.S. Mexican War and their impact on the United States.</p> <p>8.7C: analyze the impact of slavery on different sections of the United States.</p> <p>8.10B: compare places and regions of the United States in terms of physical and human characteristics.</p> <p>8.10C: analyze the effects of physical and human geographic factors such as weather, landforms, waterways, transportation, and communication on major historical events in the United States.</p> <p>8.11A: analyze how physical characteristics of the environment influenced population distribution, settlement patterns, and economic activities in the United States.</p> <p>8.12C: analyze the causes and effects of economic differences among different regions of the United States at selected times</p> | <p>8.1B: explain the significance of the following dates...1803, Louisiana Purchase,...</p> <p>8.10A: located places and regions directly related to major eras and turning points in the United States during the ...19th centuries</p> <p>8.11B: describe the positive and negative consequences of human modification of the physical environment of the United States.</p> <p>8.12A: identify economic differences among different regions of the United States.</p> <p>8.20B: analyze reasons for and the impact of selected examples of civil disobedience in U.S. history such as ...Henry David Thoreau's refusal to pay a tax</p> <p>8.23C: identify ways conflict between people from various racial, ethnic, and religious groups were addressed.</p> <p>8.23D: analyze the contribution of people of various racial, ethnic, and religious groups to our national identity.</p> <p>8.26A: identify examples of American art, music, and literature that reflect society in different era,...</p> <p>8.27C: analyze how technological innovations brought about economic growth such as...the construction of the Transcontinental Railroad.</p> <p>8.28A: Compare the effects of scientific discoveries and technological innovations that have influenced daily life in different periods of history.</p> |

UNDERSTANDINGS, QUESTIONS

| Unit 6 At-A-Glance (Daily Lesson View) | |
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| Lesson 01 | Manifest Destiny |
| Lesson 02 | Early Territorial Expansion |
| Lesson 03 | Transportation Revolution |
| Lesson 04 | Groups Moving West |
| Lesson 05 | Oregon and President Polk |
| Lesson 06 | Mexican-American War |
| Lesson 07 | Mexican-American War |
| Lesson 08 | California, The Gold Rush, and Nativism |
| Lesson 09 | Transcendentalism and Art |
| Lesson 10 and 11 | Flex Days |
| Lesson 12 | Unit 6 Assessment |

Key Questions

- How did the United States acquire its territory?
- What was Manifest Destiny and why did it have popular support?
- What groups of people chose to move west and why?
- How did the physical environment impact people moving westward?
- How did westward expansion impact Native Americans and Mexicans?
- How did the transportation revolution aid western expansion?
- How did the United States win the Mexican-American War?