

TEACHING AMERICAN HISTORY PROJECT

Lesson Title – The Pioneer Experience

From Lisa Bastien

Grade – Tenth

Length of class period – (1) 90 minute blocks and 30 minutes during the next block

Inquiry – (What essential question are students answering, what problem are they solving, or what decision are they making?)

During the westward movement of the mid-1800 how did the experiences of pioneers differ?

Objectives – Students will:

- compare and contrast the experiences of two pioneers.
- write a persuasive essay based on primary source documents.
- view a variety of visual primary sources and choose one, explaining why it best captures the experience of a pioneer they read about.

Materials – Diaries, letters and memoirs of pioneers can be found at the following website: www.isu.edu/~trinmich/Oregontrail.html
(students will choose two on their own or the teacher can assign sources)

Variety of photographs, artwork and political cartoons of the westward movement - many can be found online. Multimedia Learning, LLC has a PowerPoint presentation called ‘Westward Movement’ that has a large selection of visuals. It can be purchased at: www.multimedialearning.org

Activities (What will you and your students do during the lesson to promote learning?)

- 1.) For homework the night before the lesson students should have read (whether in a textbook or another secondary source) an overview the westward movement. To start class have a discussion using open-ended questions to review the night’s reading or give a reading quiz.
- 2.) Explain the assignment and essay topic with the students before going to the computer lab to pick sources on the website above. Be sure to describe what would make a good source for this kind of assignment (detail). Design the assignment sheet as you wish.

The assignment is as follows:

- After finding and reading two good sources create a t-chart. List on one side of the chart all the similarities about the two pioneers you have chosen and on the other side list all the differences. Find as many as possible. For example a similarity might be that the two both took the journey with their family as teenagers. A difference may be that one lost family members along the journey and the other pioneer didn't lose anyone.
 - Using the letters, journals or memoirs as your sources and the t-chart decide which of the two pioneers was the most challenged by the west. Your answer to this question will become your thesis to your paper.
 - * Your introduction should give a general overview of both pioneers, focusing mostly on their similarities, as well as the thesis and the supporting points.
 - * The supporting points are the differences that made one pioneers experience more challenging than the others and the explanation of those differences (ex. one paragraph may focus on food or sickness)
 - * The conclusion should include all the elements a normal persuasive conclusion should have.
- 3.) Allow the students time to start their reading in class so that they can at least get an idea of the experiences of one of their chosen pioneers. As a closer have them reflect in a journal entry whether they would be willing to make such a journey into the west if they lived during that time period -explain why. End with discuss on their responses.
- 4.) During day 2 start class by showing the students visuals of the westward movement including photographs, artwork or political cartoons. Have the students, as they are watching the visuals, pick one that they feel would most accurately depicted an experience of their most challenged pioneer. Go around the room and have a variety of students tell which visual they chose and why. Also ask each of these students if they could decipher, based on their source, why the person was heading west. Generate a list on the board of reason why people chose to go west. Use this as a springboard into the next lesson (ex. Mexican-American war, Gold Rush, the Mormon Exodus, expanding territory leading to the slavery debate).
- 5.) Optional: As a final journal or a group brainstorm ask the students whether in today's world there is any experience that could be personally similar to that of the pioneers heading west.

How will you assess what the student learned during this lesson?

- 1.) The use of the sources, development of a thesis and quality of the comparisons made within the essay will exhibit the understanding that there were differences between the experiences of pioneers during the westward movement.

Connecticut Framework Performance Standards –

- Standard 1: formulate historical questions and hypotheses from multiple perspectives, using multiple sources
- Standard 1: use primary source documents to analyze multiple perspectives
- Standard 4: describe relationships between historical subject matter and other subjects they study, current issues and personal concerns.