

Class: Lesson 6

Grade Level: 5th Grade

Unit: Westward Expansion

Standards: Commonwealth of Massachusetts Frameworks:

- **5.33** Explain the reasons why people moved west from the beginning of the 19th century, describe their lives on the frontier.

NCCS Curriculum Strands:

- Humans seek to understand their historical roots and locate themselves in such time. Such understanding involves knowing what things were like in the past and how things change and develop. (**Strand II-Time, Continuity and Change**)
- Social Studies should also include experiences that provides for the study of people, places, and environments.(**Strand III – People, Places and Environments**)
- The student conducts historical research. Therefore, the student is able to obtain historical data from a variety of sources, including library and museum collections, historic sites, historical photos, journals, diaries, eyewitness accounts, newspapers, and the like; documentary files, oral testimony, census, tax records, city directories, statistical compilations, and economic indicators. (**Strand IV**)

Topic: Fitchburg Goes West – A Gentleman’s Journey – George Reed

Statement of Purpose: Students often wonder how Fitchburg history connects to our Nation’s history: especially when studying Westward Expansion. Who would leave the safety of Fitchburg and venture to the perilous west? What lured residents to cast caution to the wind and be among those who desired to capitalize on this untamed territory? The Fitchburg Historical Society provides students an opportunity to delve into Fitchburg’s rich history and read about those who dared and left a perspective through their letters. Students will read the letters of George Reed who bravely left for California to the land of gold, and begin to understand the motive(s) behind the journey and his experiences.

Learning Objectives:

- Students will identify why different groups of people migrated to the west (California).
- Students will describe the events and effects of the California Gold Rush.
- Students will participate in a Jig Saw Cooperative learning activity and read the letters of George Reed; Students will create teaching posters based on their readings.
- Students will analyze and evaluate primary source documents related to the Gold Rush.

Schedule: Material and Time

- **Length of time:** sixty to ninety minutes
- **Introduction/Guiding Question(s):** Why did George Reed leave Fitchburg to journey to the shores of California? How did George Reed describe his experiences? How did George Reed describe the “gold life”? What have you learned about this period of time through the “eyes” of George Reed? How does his experiences compare to those you have read about in a textbook?
- **Materials:** Letters (5) written by George reed in 1852 (Transcribed for students), chart paper, overhead, Interactive Social Studies Notebook, primary source documents taken from **The Westward Movement** by Karen Baickner (2002), document analysis sheet, Social Studies Text Book, **United States History – Early Years** by Houghton Mifflin (2005), pages 402-403 –**California Gold Rush.**

Key Vocabulary: “forty-niners”, California Gold Rush, boom town, miner

Activity and Procedure:

Part 1

Activator: Orally ask students what they know about the Gold Rush in the mid 1800s. Chart all information. Ask students to present questions they may have about the topic and chart those questions. Then proceed to tell students that before they embark on their journey of discovery, they will be given primary source documents to read analyze and evaluate.

1. Students will be in groups of four. Distribute **Evaluate That Document** and primary source documents. Discuss how the different types of documents provide different views of the Gold Rush.
2. Review the advertisement and ask students to consider the expectations and hopes that might be raised by the. Were the ads accurate? What do they demonstrate about the emotional climate of the time?
3. Based on the photograph what can students infer about panning for gold was like? Point out that Chinese workers and provide some overview about the role of the Chinese California during the Gold Rush, and explain their role was often to serve the miners.
4. Assist students in interpreting the cartoon. The illustration, created by Nathaniel Currier, is title “**The Way They Go to California**”. In it, he depicts imaginative ways that desperate gold seekers might get to California.

5. Students will then read pages 402-403 in the social studies textbook as well as pages 39-42 in *Promise of America: The Struggling Dream*.
6. Students will process information by doing a **Think-Pair Share Activity** based on the question **what information did you acquire by reading the information on the California Gold Rush?**

Part 2

A Gentleman's Journey to California – George Reed of Fitchburg

Jigsaw Activity

In this structure, students will form cooperative learning groups of five members and each member is assigned a number from 1 to 5. Each member of the home group will leave that group to join a group made up of one member of each of the other groups. The purpose of this arrangement is to have groups of students become “experts” on one aspect of a piece of information to be analyzed. Each member gets only one piece of the information to read, and acquire in-depth knowledge.

2. Present each “expert group” one of George Reed’s letters. Tell students they are going to read a first hand account of a George Reed who lived in Fitchburg and journeyed to California to the land of gold.

3. Each “expert” member is responsible for reading, analyzing and interpreting the letter as well as writes down pertinent information and creates a mini-teaching poster based on their readings. Each member will use their poster to discuss the important aspects of the letter to their home group.

*Note: This activity fosters individual accountability through the use of the “expert” role. It promotes group interdependence through “teaching and learning” process. It encourages the use of high-quality communication skills through teacher and learner roles.

4. After each home group shares their understanding of George Reed’s letters, a whole group discussion will take place based on the focus questions: **What do we know about George Reed? How did he describe his experiences in California? Why did he discourage his friends from coming? How important is “perspective” in understanding the complexities of an historical period?**

5. Student will do a “quick write” in their Interactive Social Studies Notebook based on their understanding of today’s lesson.

- **I learned.....**
- **A question this raises.....**
- **I am confused by....**
- **My point of view on the topic is.....**

Assessment: Document analysis sheets, Social Studies Interactive Notebooks, Student mini-teaching poster, oral discussion/presentations, participation, student and group evaluation and follow up activities.

Follow up Activities

Differentiated Instruction:

Students can be given a choice of activities to choose from and as well as the criteria for completion of each activity.

1. Students will be asked to do a time line on George Reed's journey to California.
2. Students will create a map based on George Reed's letters.
3. Students will design an advertisement billboard they might find as they traveled to California in the mid-1800s.
4. Create a travel brochure based on George Reed's letters.
5. Write a newspaper article for a newspaper back east about the Gold Rush Fever.
6. Boom towns grew quickly and died quickly in California. Research more about boom towns and make a diorama of one. Be prepared to discuss the positives and negatives of boom town life.

References

Web Sites

<http://www.museumresearcher.com/fitchburg>

<http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps>

<http://www.pbs.org>

Books

The Westward Expansion by Karen Baicker (2002)

People of the West by Dayton Duncan (1996)

Promise of America: Struggling for the Dream by Larry Cuban and Phillip Roden (1971) *Adventures in California, 1851-1852*, pages 39-41.

Document-Based Assessment in American History. Prentice Hall (2003)

United States History – Early Years. Houghton Mifflin (2005)

