

Grade 4 Unit 8: PBL Westward Expansion

Unit Purpose

Think back to your most positive experience as a student — a time that was meaningful to you. Why did this leave a lasting impression? How did your teacher make this experience possible? What learning was embedded in this experience?

Talk with your colleagues about your experiences and memories. It's likely you'll find some consistent themes: working with peers, independence, choice, engagement, content-specific learning, and applying learning in a real-world context. Project-based learning offers all of this and more!

Watch [this video from PBLWorks](#) to see project-based learning in action. The teacher is knowledgeable and passionate about the topic. The children are making choices about what they do and how they do it, they're asking questions, reflecting, and interacting with peers and adults by discussing their ideas and feedback.

Project Based Learning (PBL) is a critical aspect of Success Academy's (SA) school design. Our scholars learn the thrill of becoming experts in a subject when they have extended time to immerse themselves in a fascinating topic from a cross-disciplinary perspective — including through field studies; art projects; and classes in science, reading, writing, and/or math. The culmination of PBL studies are museum presentations scholars can share with others; this allows scholars to demonstrate the learning and engagement they have achieved.

The 19th century saw a huge increase in the physical boundaries of the United States and vast movement of people to the new territories. These migrants faced remarkable hardships in moving across the country. The expansion of the United States and the pioneers' movement westward displaced many Native Americans and decimated their way of life.

Pre-Work

Before launching the unit with your scholars, read all of the texts in the unit to ensure you have the necessary content knowledge to facilitate this study.

- Study and discuss the following books with your grade team, with the guided questions below in mind:

- *The Sioux: True Book* by Kevin Cunningham and Peter Benoit
 - This is accessible for free via the NYPL website with a library card number.
 - You can also sign up for a free trial on Scholastic, which will give you a personalized log in you can share with families and access for six weeks.
- *Westward Expansion and the Oregon Trail: True Books* via the NYPL and Scholastic
 - This series of True Books on Westward Expansion can be accessed via the NYPL website with a library card number.
 - You can also sign up for a free trial on Scholastic, which will give you a personalized log in you can share with families and access for six weeks.
- Study the levels T and U from *Understanding Nonfiction Texts and Readers* by Jennifer Serravallo.

Learning Objectives

- Use information gained from words and text features (e.g., maps, photographs) demonstrate understanding (e.g., where, when, why, and how key events occur)
- Explain events, procedures, ideas, or concepts in a historical text, including what happened and why, based on specific information in the text
- Conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic
- Explain events or ideas in a historical text, including what happened and why, based on specific information in the text
- Write informative texts examining a topic and developing the topic with facts, details, or other information and examples related to the topic
- Produce clear, logical, and organized writing
- Compose informative/explanatory writing, requiring students to articulate and support their ideas

Guiding Questions and Essential Understandings

Every week, scholars think about these guiding questions and pose, refine, and confirm their ideas about the answers to these questions. By the end of the unit, scholars draw conclusions resembling the Essential Understandings below.

- **How did the United States change after the Revolutionary War?**
 - The Louisiana Purchase doubled the size of the country in 1803.
 - U.S. leaders wanted to expand to greater territory for land, resources, and profitable trade routes.
- **Why do people emigrate?**

- Emigrants moved west for different reasons: manifest destiny, religious freedom, land opportunities, gold, health, adventure, family.
- The U.S. Government encouraged settlers to move to unsettled territories through propaganda and land grants.
- **What risks did emigrants face while moving west?**
 - Pioneers were willing to endure great hardships including material, health, and emotional sacrifices to improve their circumstances.
- **What advantages and disadvantages did the prairie provide for pioneers and settlers?**
 - People relied on the prairie to provide the basic needs of food and shelter.
 - The prairie provided natural resources and wildlife for people to survive when their goods spoiled or ran out.
 - The vastness and mystery of the prairie provided hope and optimism for people looking for a better life.
 - The prairie environment presented challenges with its unpredictable weather and climate.
- **What can we learn from the pioneers' encounters with Native American tribes like the Sioux?**
 - Different cultures have different beliefs about how natural resources are owned, used, and shared, and these differences will cause changes in both cultures.
 - Prejudice influences interactions between two cultures.

Text List

The texts listed below can be accessed by scholars digitally. Throughout the unit, scholars can read and annotate copies of the texts using Google comments.

- “The Ships of the Plains” from [Pioneers](#)
- [Appleseeds: Growing Up on the Oregon Trail](#)
- [Journals from the Oregon Trail](#)
- [How Native Americans Used the Buffalo](#)

- “Uses of the Buffalo” from [Mystic Warriors of the White Plains](#) by Thomas Mails

Books:

- *Heading West: Oregon Trail and Westward Expansion* by Virginia Loh-Hagan
- *Dandelions* by Eve Bunting
- *If You Traveled West in a Covered Wagon* by Ellen Levine
- *A Walk in the Prairie* by Rebecca L. Johnson
- *We the People: The Sioux and Their History* by Mary Englar
- *Picture the Past: Life in a Sioux Village* by Sally Senzell Isaacs
- *The Sioux: The Past and Present of the Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota* by Donna Janell Bowman
- *How Would You Survive as an American Indian?* by Scott Steedman
- *The Oregon Trail and Westward Expansion* by Kristin Marciniak
- *Viewpoints on the Oregon Trail and Westward Expansion* by Kristin Russo
- *Manifest Destiny and the Journey West* by Cynthia Kennedy Henzel
- *Sioux* by Valerie Bodden
- *The Sioux: True Book* by Kevin Cunningham and Peter Benoit
- *Westward Expansion True Books* by Teresa Domnauer

Writing Assignments

- **Study Journals**

The study journal will contain student notes, student-created maps and drawings, along with information, for example, maps, you will give them. Additionally, you may choose to have the students trim some of their worksheet, for example, trip sheet, to paste into their notebook.

Suggestions for how to organize study journals can be found [here](#).

Projects

Projects are not the dessert; they are the main course of project based learning. Below are several options for projects to complete with your class and display in your PBL museum. We recommend completing a minimum of three projects with your class by the end of the unit.

- Landmarks Project
 - Scholars create a map of the Oregon Trail to show and describe the landmarks pioneers used along the journey.
- Poster Project
 - Scholars demonstrate their understanding of how the government encouraged people to move west by creating a poster that persuades local townspeople to move west.
- Packed Wagon Diagram
 - Scholars demonstrate their understanding of how pioneers prepared for the journey of a lifetime by creating a large diagram of the inside of a wagon.
- Prairie Illustration
 - Scholars demonstrate what they have learned about the prairie in an authentic (visual) manner.
 - They must use specific information they know to add detail to their work and convey their understanding of the value and beauty of the prairie.
- Diaries from the Trail
 - Scholars demonstrate how much they have learned about the life of a pioneer by describing the daily life and challenges of the journey in first person.
- Buffalo Mural
 - Scholars demonstrate their understanding of the ways in which the Sioux used all parts of the buffalo by creating a life-size drawing or painting.

Supplemental Resources

- Click [here](#) for supplemental PBS documentaries you can share with scholars about Westward Expansion.

- [Museum of the Frontier West - National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum](#)
 - [Outdoor Adventurers - National Women's History Museum](#)
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Lesson Outline

Topic	Big Ideas	Discussion Questions
Introduction to Westward Expansion Unit	<p>How did the United States change after the Revolutionary War?</p> <p>The Louisiana Purchase doubled the size of the country in 1803.</p> <p>U.S. leaders wanted to expand to greater territory for land, resources, and profitable trade routes.</p>	<p>What was the Treaty of Paris?</p> <p>What did the Treaty of Paris mean for the United States?</p>
The Louisiana Purchase	<p>How did the United States change after the Revolutionary War?</p> <p>The Louisiana Purchase doubled the size of the country in 1803.</p> <p>U.S. leaders wanted to expand to greater territory for land, resources, and profitable trade routes.</p>	<p>Why would Jefferson want to expand the country?</p> <p>Why did the United States want more land?</p>
Lewis and Clark	<p>How did the United States change after the Revolutionary War?</p> <p>The Louisiana Purchase doubled the size of the country in 1803.</p> <p>U.S. leaders wanted to expand to greater territory for land, resources, and profitable trade routes</p>	<p>What might explorers want to learn about the land?</p> <p>Why did Jefferson want Lewis and Clark to go on this expedition?</p> <p>What did Lewis and Clark learn?</p> <p>How was this important to the expansion of the United States?</p>

<p>Expanding the Nation</p>	<p>Why do people emigrate?</p> <p>Emigrants moved west for different reasons: manifest destiny, religious freedom, land opportunities, gold, health, adventure, family.</p> <p>The U.S. Government encouraged settlers to move to unsettled territories through propaganda and land grants.</p>	<p>Why did people want to move west?</p>
<p>Deciding to Move West</p>	<p>Why do people emigrate?</p> <p>Emigrants moved west for different reasons: manifest destiny, religious freedom, land opportunities, gold, health, adventure, family.</p> <p>The U.S. Government encouraged settlers to move to unsettled territories through propaganda and land grants.</p>	<p>Why did the government want people to move west?</p> <p>What work do you think the government had to do to persuade people to move west?</p> <p>What did the government do to persuade people to move West?</p> <p>Would you have been persuaded to move west? Why or why not?</p>
<p>Preparing for the Trail</p>	<p>Why do people emigrate?</p> <p>Emigrants moved west for different reasons: manifest destiny, religious freedom, land opportunities, gold, health, adventure, family.</p> <p>The U.S. Government encouraged settlers to move to unsettled territories through propaganda and land</p>	<p>What did pioneers need to bring for the journey?</p> <p>What did pioneers consider “essential” for the trip?</p> <p>What else did they need to consider while preparing for the trip?</p>

	grants.	
On the Trail: Supplies and Tools	<p>What risks did emigrants face while moving west?</p> <p>Pioneers were willing to endure great hardships including material, health, and emotional sacrifices to improve their circumstances.</p> <p>What advantages and disadvantages did the prairie provide for pioneers and settlers?</p> <p>People relied on the prairie to provide the basic needs of food and shelter.</p>	<p>What challenges do you think the pioneers had to overcome?</p> <p>How did they do this?</p> <p>What natural resources did pioneers rely on for survival?</p> <p>What tools did pioneers need to bring to survive off the land?</p>
On the Trail: Landmarks	<p>What advantages and disadvantages did the prairie provide for pioneers and settlers?</p> <p>People relied on the prairie to provide the basic needs of food and shelter.</p> <p>The prairie provided natural resources and wildlife for people to survive when their goods spoiled or ran out.</p> <p>The vastness and mystery of the prairie provided hope and optimism for people looking for a better life.</p>	<p>What is a landmark?</p> <p>Why are landmarks helpful or important?</p> <p>What were some of the important landmarks along the Oregon Trail?</p> <p>Why were they important and/or helpful for travelers?</p> <p>Why did the government want people to move west?</p> <p>What did the government do to persuade people to move West?</p>

		Would you have been persuaded to move west? Why or why not?
On the Trail: The Prairie	<p>What advantages and disadvantages did the prairie provide for pioneers and settlers?</p> <p>People relied on the prairie to provide the basic needs of food and shelter.</p> <p>The prairie provided natural resources and wildlife for people to survive when their goods spoiled or ran out.</p> <p>The vastness and mystery of the prairie provided hope and optimism for people looking for a better life.</p>	<p>What were some features of the prairie?</p> <p>How did these features help or hinder the pioneer journey west?</p>
On the Trail: Diaries	<p>What advantages and disadvantages did the prairie provide for pioneers and settlers?</p> <p>People relied on the prairie to provide the basic needs of food and shelter.</p> <p>The prairie provided natural resources and wildlife for people to survive when their goods spoiled or ran out.</p> <p>The vastness and mystery of the prairie provided hope and optimism for people looking for a better life.</p> <p>The prairie environment presented challenges with its unpredictable weather and climate.</p>	<p>What is a diary?</p> <p>Why did pioneers keep diaries?</p> <p>What did they include in their entries?</p> <p>What hardships did pioneers face throughout their journey?</p>

<p>The New York Historical Society</p>	<p>What can we learn from the pioneers' encounters with Native American tribes like the Sioux?</p> <p>Different cultures have different beliefs about how natural resources are owned, used, and shared, and these differences will cause changes in both cultures.</p> <p>Prejudice influences interactions between two cultures.</p>	<p>What did you learn about Sioux culture?</p>
<p>American Museum of Natural History</p>	<p>What can we learn from the pioneers' encounters with Native American tribes like the Sioux?</p> <p>Different cultures have different beliefs about how natural resources are owned, used, and shared, and these differences will cause changes in both cultures.</p> <p>Prejudice influences interactions between two cultures.</p>	<p>How do you think the Sioux and pioneers will interact? Why do you think this?</p> <p>What other historical events from Iroquois and Lenape or American Revolution show what might happen between the pioneers and the Sioux?</p> <p>What was the relationship between pioneers and the Sioux like?</p> <p>What do you think led to disagreements between the two groups?</p>
<p>A Clash of Cultures</p>	<p>What can we learn from the pioneers' encounters with Native American tribes like the Sioux?</p> <p>Different cultures have different beliefs about how natural resources are owned, used, and shared, and these differences will cause changes in both cultures.</p>	<p>Why was it so important to the pioneers to own land?</p> <p>What did the Native Americans believe about land ownership?</p> <p>What was the result of this difference of priorities?</p>

	Prejudice influences interactions between two cultures.	
The Plains Indians	<p>What advantages and disadvantages did the prairie provide for pioneers and settlers?</p> <p>Different cultures have different beliefs about how natural resources are owned, used, and shared, and these differences will cause changes in both cultures.</p> <p>Prejudice influences interactions between two cultures.</p>	<p>What is a “culture”?</p> <p>What topics do we need to study when examining a culture?</p> <p>How did the Sioux meet their basic needs?</p>
The Sioux and the Buffalo	<p>What advantages and disadvantages did the prairie provide for pioneers and settlers?</p> <p>Different cultures have different beliefs about how natural resources are owned, used, and shared, and these differences will cause changes in both cultures.</p> <p>Prejudice influences interactions between two cultures.</p>	<p>How did the Sioux use the buffalo?</p> <p>What have you learned about Sioux culture?</p>