Introduction:
In the history of the United States, a great migration of people occurred from east to west during the 19th century. This movement beyond the Mississippi and toward the Pacific generated a frontier spirit that developed half a continent, dramatically changed lives and the environment, and helped shape the character of our nation and the world.

The study of the westward movement provides opportunities to examine a number of important concepts. Students also benefit from building their knowledge of various cultures and considering how culture influences the attitudes and behavior of people. While all humans have many common characteristics, they are different in their beliefs, languages, values and other aspects of their cultures.

Most of all, it is useful for students to have a sense of time, an intellectual and emotional feel for the past, and how they relate to those events.

Overcoming obstacles to move into unexplored or undeveloped regions is an enduring characteristic of U.S. history.

The west attracted people for many reasons – a sense of adventure, greater freedom, opportunities for a new life, a chance to strike it rich, free farm land, inducements from businesses, and encouragement from the government were some of the attractions.

Understanding this great westward movement is essential for understanding both the history and culture, and the future, of the United States.

Goal:
To examine and analyze the history of the West and the reality of life on the frontier in U.S. history from multiple perspectives, and to build critical thinking and historic comprehension skills.

National Standards:
These lessons address NCSS curriculum standards associated with the themes of:
1. Time, Continuity, and Change
2. Culture
3. People, Places, and Environment

In addition, the lessons address social studies and history skills and abilities to:
1. Think chronologically
2. Comprehend a variety of historical sources
3. Engage in historical analysis, interpretation, and decision-making
4. Conduct historical research

Introduction to Educator:
The activities that follow are designed to enhance your regular classroom instruction. You are encouraged to select and adapt any lessons that are useful.
Activity #1: Moving from One Place to Another

In the history of the United States, a great migration of people from east to west occurred during the 19th century. This movement beyond the Mississippi and toward the Pacific generated a frontier spirit that developed half a continent, dramatically changed lives and the environment, and helped shape the character of a nation. The idea of moving to new or growing regions is an enduring characteristic of U.S. history.

This activity asks students to use their personal background and experiences to focus on the issues related to moving and then apply them to 19th-century pioneers. An easy way to think about moving, whether today or long ago, is to think of it in three stages: before, during, and after. Discuss the questions listed below with the class and record some of the information from a volunteer or two on the board.

Before:
How did you find out about the new location? What did you do to plan the trip? What did you do about food, clothing, and shelter? What plans did you have if you had an accident or sickness? Did you say ‘goodbye’ to anyone special?

During:
How did you travel – car, boat, plane? How did you find your way? What did you eat? What clothes did you wear? Where did you sleep? Did you have any accidents or sickness? What did you most enjoy about traveling? What did you least like about traveling?

After:
What did you first think about the new location when you arrived? What was different about the new location? What was most difficult to get used to? After some time had passed, did you want to stay or return?

Now, ask students to consider the similarities and differences between traveling today and in the early 1800s. Divide the class into small groups and have them record answers to the following questions:

- How would planning for a trip in the early 1800s have been the same as planning today? How would it have been different?
- What difficulties would people in the early 1800s have in traveling that we would not have today?
- How would people travel in the early 1800s? If someone in the early 1800s traveled the same route you did, how would their experiences have been different than yours? How would it have been the same?
- What would have been important reasons for people in the U.S. to move westward in the early 1800s?

Have students use this information to create a T-Chart to help organize the differences between traveling then and now. Then, ask students to prepare a “then and now” poster for a travel company explaining and illustrating the main differences in moving westward in the nineteenth century and moving today.

Additional Resources:
For research and information, lesson plans, activities, Old West clip art, etc. please visit edtech.kennesaw.edu/web/westward.html.

For links for high school and college students to the American West, go to snowcrest.net/jmike/westexp.html.

Activity #2: Making a Local Connection

Interview your parents or other families you know who moved into your community. Ask the “before, during, and after” questions listed above. Additional questions might be asked about what caused them to leave their former place, why they came to this community, and what difficulties they encountered when they first settled in this community.
Activity #3: Making a Local Connection

Many of today’s streets and highways began as commonly used trails or were designed as part of a town plan. These streets often have names that describe an activity or their earlier importance, i.e., Post Road, Ferry Point, Old Stage Highway. Many of the names of roads, schools, and towns are drawn from Native American language and history. Using a local map or street directory, make a list of these roads in your community. Consult history sources or knowledgeable individuals and find out why the roads were first placed there and how they got their names.

Historic markers provide important or interesting information. Many communities have signposts giving information about historic information. After determining where important early streets are or were located, find and record any information found on local markers. If these names include Native American words or phrases, search for their meanings and origins online or at the library. Prepare a “directory of travel markers” showing their location and telling of their historic importance.

Activity #4: Manifest Destiny

In 1845, journalist John L. O’Sullivan wrote in “The United States Magazine and Democratic Review” about “the fulfillment of our manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions.” The phrase “manifest destiny” caught on with other publications and public figures and described the great desire by many Americans to control the entire continent. Believing it was God’s plan, and following the many trails that led westward, Americans streamed across the continent into Mexican territory and onto lands claimed by Britain and, as was true so many times, on and through lands belonging to Native Americans.

In 1872, artist John Gast painted a popular scene of people moving west that captured the view of many Americans at that time. Called “American Progress” and widely distributed as an engraving, he portrayed settlers moving west, guided and protected by a goddess-like figure, and aided by modern technology.

The painting presents a larger-than-life figure representing America flowing westward. Leaving the cities of the east and crossing the wide Mississippi, she is marked with a “star of empire” on her forehead. In her right hand is a school book representing enlightenment, and in her left are telegraph wires that will bind the nation. Fleeing before her are Indians, buffalo, and wild animals as they disappear beyond the mountains and toward the ocean. In the foreground, determined settlers press forward ready to work the land.

Have students view and analyze the picture at Central Pacific Railroad Photographic History Museum at cprr.org/Museum/Ephemera/American_Progress.html. Complete the chart and answer the following questions:

| People | Environment | Objects | Activities |
|--------|-------------|---------|------------|------------|
● Describe what is taking place and what it might mean.
● What symbols (if any) are used in the painting?
● What might each of these symbols mean?
● What is the “message” of the picture?
● What groups would favor this message? Who would oppose?

Prepare a written critique of this painting by responding to the following:

● Explain why this does, or does not, accurately represent what was happening in the U.S. in the 19th century.
● Explain how this reflects, or does not reflect, what Americans thought was important.
● How might these views be distorted? Why did the painting become so popular among pioneers?

Activity #5: Making A Local Connection

Can students find evidence of the first settlements in their town? Divide the class into teams and have them research their community to learn when and where the first settlements were made. Using books, the Internet and other sources, they should attempt to determine where these historic sites may be located. Then, if possible, visit the area, go to your local museum/archive, or have a local expert come to class with maps and artifacts to confirm their findings. Students should record information about the age and location of the remains and attempt to find evidence to support their conclusions. How can its age be proven? What is its connection to the beginnings of your community? Is it possible to identify an exact date for the birth of your town? If so, plan a celebration for your town’s birth date. If your town was originally a Native settlement, discuss the special problems in finding evidence of that culture.

Are there towns in other states that have the same name as your town? How did those other towns get their names? Was there any connection between your community and these others? Do an Internet search to locate same-name towns. Then get the names of school(s) in the same-name towns. Write or email them asking for information about their town’s beginnings and its connections with yours. You may want to exchange information and other materials.
Activity #6: Drawing a Line

As the U.S. expanded, problems developed over territorial boundaries. Most of these were settled peacefully by treaty and to the advantage of the U.S. It is useful for students to understand the major land acquisitions that came to shape the continental United States. Some were resolved peacefully negotiated, some through treaty, some bought, some through annexation, and some through war. The major 19th-century additions include:

- **Louisiana Purchase, 1803**
- **Florida, 1819**
- **Texas, 1836**
- **Gadsden Purchase, 1853**
- **Mexican Cession, 1848**
- **Oregon Territory, 1846**

Have students select and research one dispute to explain how the boundary was finally determined. They should prepare a map showing the claim of each country and explain how the dispute was resolved.

### U.S. Disputes and Settlements with Other Nations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Nation and Year</th>
<th>Settlement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Louisiana Territory</td>
<td>France, 1803</td>
<td>Purchase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Lakes</td>
<td>Britain, 1817</td>
<td>Treaty. Naval disarmament on Great Lakes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>Spain, 1819</td>
<td>Treaty. Spain sells to U.S. for $5 million. U.S. gives up claim to Texas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico and Texas</td>
<td>Mexico, 1846</td>
<td>War. U.S. obtains land as far south as Rio Grande. Additional land ceded by Mexico.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southwest U.S.</td>
<td>Mexico, 1853</td>
<td>Purchase. U.S. buys land from Mexico.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After students have reviewed this chart, ask them to discuss whether negotiations, purchases, or wars are the best way to settle land disputes. What are the costs of each method? The advantages and disadvantages?

Students can perform independent research or work with a local historical society to determine if any land disputes affected the development of their local community.