What Teachers Need to Know

Guidelines for the study of westward expansion are divided into two parts, with part A focusing on the decades before the Civil War, and part B focusing on the years after the Civil War. Teachers may wish to plan a single section on westward expansion, or divide the material so that part B becomes a section taught after the Civil War. See Section II of American History and Geography for Grade 5, beginning on page 264.

Background

A frontier is defined as the border between settled territory and wilderness. When teaching about the West in American history, however, it is important to note that frontier meant the edge of white settlement adjoining Native American territory, and that Native Americans were settled beyond the frontier. Where the frontier was and what constituted the American West shifted as the nation's boundaries moved west and southwest.

In addition, the line of settlement was not a steady progression across the country from east to west. The far West (California, Oregon, and Washington) was settled before the middle of the country. For many years the interior of the nation was considered a barren wasteland; people called this area "the Great Desert."

Originally, the frontier was anything to the west of the Atlantic coastal plain. The first English colonists had settled along the coast. By the time of the American Revolution, the frontier line had moved generally west to the Appalachian Mountains. After independence, people began to push inland into the newly acquired lands of the Old Northwest Territory and the Old Southwest. The new United States had received these lands as a result of the peace treaty ending the Revolutionary War. The Old Northwest would become the states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin. The Old Southwest was the area south of the Ohio River and would become the states of Tennessee, Kentucky, Alabama, and Mississippi. (Notice that the Old Northwest is not the same as the area we consider the Northwest today; nor is the Old Southwest the same as the modern Southwest.)

By 1803, when the United States, under Thomas Jefferson, bought the Louisiana Territory from France, the frontier had moved west to the Mississippi River as more and more people moved inland. By that time, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Ohio had large enough populations that they asked for and were granted statehood. The Louisiana Purchase opened up an area west of the Mississippi as far as the Canadian border to the north, the British Territory of Oregon in the northwest, and Spanish lands in the far west, including the present-day states of California, New Mexico, Arizona, Texas, Colorado, Nevada, Utah, Oklahoma, Kansas, and Wyoming.

The United States acquired the Oregon Territory (Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and parts of Montana and Wyoming) as a result of a treaty with the British in 1846. It was not until the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which ended the Mexican-American War (1848), that the Mexican lands in the west became United States territories. The former Mexican-held area of Texas also joined the Union in 1845.

A. Westward Expansion Before the Civil War

Geography

Rivers

North America is crisscrossed by a network of rivers. These rivers were important for the initial settlement of the continent (many early towns sprang up along the banks of rivers) and also for the later expansion of the United States to the west. The chart below presents basic information on some important North American rivers.

River	Source	Drainage Area	Empties into	Interesting Facts
James	Botetourt County, Virginia	Virginia	Chesapeake Bay	• The lower part of the river is near the site of Jamestown, the first permanent English colony on North American mainland. • Important as navigable waterway for Richmond, capital of the Confederacy

River	Source	Drainage Area	Empties into	Interesting Facts
Hudson	Adirondack Mountains, part of the Appalachian chain, in northern New York State	New York	Atlantic Ocean at New York City	• Explored in 1609 by Henry Hudson, for whom it is named • Navigable to Albany, the state capital • Linked by the Erie Canal to the Great Lakes in 1825
St. Lawrence	Lake Ontario	Forms 120 miles of U.S. -Canadian border	Gulf of St. Lawrence	• One of the largest rivers in Canada • Part of the St. Lawrence-Great Lakes Seaway
Mississippi	Lake Itasca, Minnesota	Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois, Missouri, Kentucky, Arkansas, Tennessee, Mississippi, Louisiana	Gulf of Mexico	• Longest river in North America, 2,348 miles • Has more than 250 tributaries; two major tributaries, the Ohio and Missouri Rivers • Explored by the Spaniard De Soto in 1541; Frenchman La Salle in 1682 • Control of the Mississippi an important reason for the Louisiana Purchase
Missouri	Formed in Rockies by the Jefferson, Madison, and Gallatin Rivers	Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Iowa, Missouri	Empties into Mississippi, 17 miles north of St. Louis	• One of two major tributaries of the Mississippi • Seen by Frenchmen Marquette and Joliet in 1673 • Explored by Lewis and Clark
Ohio	Formed at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, by the Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers	Pennsylvania, Ohio, West Virginia, Indiana, Kentucky, Illinois	Mississippi River at Cairo, Illinois	• One of two major tributaries of the Mississippi • Navigable its whole length • From 1783 to opening of Erie Canal in 1825, principal route west
Columbia	Rocky Mountains in British Columbia	British Columbia, Washington, Oregon	Pacific Ocean at Cape Disappointment, Washington	• Followed by Lewis and Clark to the Pacific Ocean • Many rapids and dams • Source of irrigation and hydroelectric power today
Rio Grande	Rocky Mountains in southwest Colorado	Colorado, New Mexico, Texas, Mexico	Gulf of Mexico	• Name means “large river” • Name in Mexico is Rio Grande del Norte, meaning “large river to the north” • Forms two-thirds of border between United States and Mexico • Shallow river used for irrigation today

River	Source	Drainage area	Empties into	Interesting Facts
Colorado River	Rocky Mountains in Colorado	Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, New Mexico, Nevada, Arizona, and California	Gulf of California in Mexico	• In Arizona, forms 17 miles of border between U.S. and Mexico • Known as the "Lifeline of the Southwest" • The Hoover Dam (formerly known as the Boulder Dam), completed in 1936, was a unique engineering project that allows the river to be used for irrigation, power, tourist recreation, flood control, and navigation.

Erie Canal, Hudson River, Lake Erie

Although rivers were an important means of travel, some rivers were not navigable, or not navigable beyond a certain point, and others came close to but did not connect to important bodies of water. To overcome these limitations, Americans built canals that connected rivers, lakes, and other bodies of water. The most famous of these canals was the Erie Canal.

In 1811, DeWitt Clinton, the governor of New York, proposed building a canal linking the Hudson River (near Albany) with the Great Lakes. This would open up a natural route to the West. Albany was near the limits of navigation on the Hudson River above New York City. In 1825, when the Erie Canal opened, it joined the Atlantic Ocean to Lake Erie and to the Great Lakes beyond.

The Erie Canal was the largest public works project of its time, employing thousands of workers to dig a 300-mile canal. The canal was 40 feet wide and four feet deep. In addition to the digging of the canal, the construction of canal locks was an important engineering achievement. A canal lock is the part of a canal that has sets of doors in the front and back. Canal locks are necessary to accommodate changes in elevation. When a boat comes into the lock, the doors shut behind it. Then water comes in or goes out of the lock depending on whether the land is going uphill or down. When the water inside the lock has risen or fallen to the level of the water outside the lock, the front doors open, and the boat moves on.

Canal boats had no motors or sails. Mules or horses that walked along a path on the bank of the canal pulled the boats.

When Dewitt Clinton proposed the Erie Canal, many people laughed at the idea and said it would never work. No canal that long had yet been built. But Clinton had the last laugh. In 1825, the first canal boat made its way from Buffalo to New York City. It carried a barrel of water from Lake Erie, and Governor Clinton dumped the water into the Atlantic Ocean to show that these two bodies of water were now connected.

Aside from rushing people and goods westward, the canal helped New York City dominate other Eastern seaboard ports, such as Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Boston; all these lacked direct links to the West. Before the canal was built, New York was less important than the other cities noted. After the canal was built, New York rose to become the largest and most important city in the United States. The canal also dramatically cut the cost of transporting goods. For example, shipping between New York City and Buffalo dropped from $100 a ton to $10 a ton.

The success of the Erie Canal stimulated a boom in canal building. Among the most important were the Champlain Canal, connecting Lake Champlain and the Hudson River, the Chesapeake Canal, the Ohio Canal (which was never completed but was meant to connect Pittsburgh and the Ohio River to the Potomac River and the Atlantic Ocean), and the Miami and Erie Canals in Ohio, which connected Lake Erie to the Ohio River at Cincinnati. Canal building continued for many years until canals were gradually replaced by railroads.

Appalachian Mountains

The Appalachian Mountains are the oldest mountain chain in North America and stretch from Newfoundland to central Alabama. They are about 1,800 miles (2,897 km) long and range from 120 to 375 miles (193 to 604 km) wide. The highest peak is Mount Mitchell in North Carolina, named for Maria Mitchell, a 19th-century astronomer. It rises 6,684 feet (2,037 m) above sea level. The Appalachians are divided into various ranges, such as the White Mountains in Maine and New Hampshire; the Alleghenies in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia; the Blue Ridge Mountains in Pennsylvania, Maryland, West Virginia, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia; and the Great Smokies in North Carolina and Tennessee. Major rivers that flow through the mountains are the Hudson, Delaware, Susquehanna, Potomac, and Tennessee. The mountains are rich in iron and coal deposits, but proved a barrier to westward movement in the colonial era until Daniel Boone blazed the Wilderness Trail, also known as the Wilderness Road, through the Cumberland Gap in 1775. Further north, settlers traveled down the Ohio River on keelboats to get through the mountains.

Rocky Mountains and Continental Divide

The Rocky Mountains extend for more than 3,000 miles from Alaska to New Mexico. The highest point in North America is Mount McKinley in Alaska. It rises 20,320 feet (6,194 m) above sea level. The major ranges of the Rocky Mountains are the Southern, Central, and Northern Rockies in the contiguous United States, the Brooks Range in Alaska, and the Canadian Rockies. The Rocky Mountains were more formidable barriers to travel than the Appalachians because the Rockies are in general more than twice as tall as the Appalachians. The major pass through the Rockies for travelers in the nineteenth century was South Pass in Wyoming. The Oregon Trail took this route.

Of major topographical interest is the Continental Divide that runs north and south through the mountains. Rivers to the east of this long, high crest flow to the east toward the Arctic or Atlantic Oceans, and rivers to the west of the divide flow toward the Pacific on the west. Lewis and Clark, whom students should have studied in earlier grades and will study again this year, crossed the Continental Divide in 1805 as part of their voyage of discovery.

Great Plains

The Great Plains stretch south to north from Mexico into Canada roughly along the 98th parallel. The plains are a plateau, or high flat land, that slopes downward from the Rockies. The plains vary in width from 300–700 miles (483–1,127 km) and cover all or part of the following states: Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, North and South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas.

The area experiences hot summers and cold winters. Rainfall is typically only about 20 inches a year, but some parts may also have heavy snows. Natural

vegetation is typically short grasses; however, the rich soil in some areas makes the region a major grain producer. Before the Civil War, the Great Plains were settled by whites who moved there in larger numbers after the war.

Early Exploration of the West

Daniel Boone, Cumberland Gap, Wilderness Trail

Daniel Boone was born in Pennsylvania in 1734. As a boy he hunted animals, first with a spear and later with a gun. He became a crack shot and is said to have shot his first bear at age 12. Boone took part in the French and Indian War in 1755.

For many of his adult years, Boone was a "long hunter." He would hunt alone in the woods, hundreds of miles from white civilization, for months at a time. One of his hunting trips lasted 18 months.

In 1769, Boone and some others passed through the Cumberland Gap in the Appalachian Mountains into Kentucky. They found a land filled with buffalo, deer, and wild turkeys, as well as meadows perfect for farming. Boone was separated from his party and spent the winter of 1769–70 in a cave.

In 1775, Boone began working for the Transylvania Company, which wanted to establish a colony called Transylvania in the frontier areas of Virginia and North Carolina. The scheme collapsed, but not before Boone had blazed the Wilderness Road in 1775. This wagon road, which was often nothing more than a wide place in the forest, ran from Virginia through the Cumberland Gap and into the Ohio River Valley.

The Appalachian Mountains had long been a natural barrier to westbound travel, but the Wilderness Road allowed settlers to travel through the mountains more easily. Settlers moved along it into what would become the states of Kentucky and Tennessee. The road was a main route west in the southeastern states until the National Road was completed in 1837. The Wilderness Road, which eventually became part of U.S. Highway 25, is still around today.

After blazing the Wilderness Road, Daniel Boone continued to hunt and explore. During the Revolutionary War he was taken prisoner by the Shawnee. He so impressed his captors with his great skills as a hunter and woodsman that he was accepted as a member of a Native American family. Eventually, however, Boone returned to his original family.

After several more years in sparsely settled Kentucky, Boone went west to Missouri in a dugout canoe. When someone asked him why he was leaving Kentucky, Boone allegedly replied: "Too crowded." He lived in Missouri for the rest of his life, dying in 1820 at the age of 85.

Boone published his memoirs, *The Adventures of Colonel Daniel Boone,* in 1784. In them he describes his explorations and his many encounters with Native Americans. After his death, Boone was romanticized and marketed as an American hero, a man who lived close to nature, fought Native Americans, and helped "win the West." His genuine adventures have been supplemented and embellished with numerous additional stories.

Lewis and Clark

In 1800, France, under Napoleon Bonaparte, had acquired the Louisiana Territory from Spain. Napoleon was interested in rebuilding France's holdings in North America. In 1802, Americans were banned from using the port of New

Orleans at the mouth of the Mississippi. This meant closing the major route by which settlers in the Midwest and South shipped their goods to market.

Thomas Jefferson, president of the United States at the time, sent James Monroe and Robert Livingston to France with an offer to buy New Orleans. Although his political opponents argued for war, Jefferson preferred to avoid a fight. Napoleon agreed to sell not only New Orleans but also the entire Louisiana Territory. The price was $15 million.

By 1803, Napoleon had abandoned his dream of an empire in North America. He had lost the colony of Santo Domingo because of a revolt begun by Pierre Toussaint L'Ouverture and other enslaved Africans. Napoleon worried that the United States might someday try to take Louisiana by force. In that event, he would not be able to deploy troops to America to defend the territory. Most of all, Napoleon was about to go war with much of Europe and needed money. For all these reasons, he decided it would be wiser to sell all of Louisiana than to try to keep it.

Although President Jefferson had initiated the offer to buy New Orleans, he was not sure that the United States Constitution allowed him to acquire new territory for the nation or to grant citizenship to the 50,000 or more inhabitants of Louisiana. Jefferson believed that an amendment to the U.S. Constitution was needed. His advisers, however, warned him that it would take time to ratify a constitutional amendment and that Napoleon could change his mind if he had to wait. In the end, Jefferson decided to do what he believed the majority of Americans wanted. He sent the treaty approving the purchase of the Louisiana Territory to the Senate for ratification. Thus, the United States acquired land that more than doubled the nation's size. The Louisiana Territory stretched from the Mississippi River to the Rocky Mountains and from the Canadian border to the Gulf of Mexico.

Once the American flag was raised over New Orleans, Jefferson was eager to find out what exactly the United States had purchased. He appointed his private secretary, Meriwether Lewis, to lead an expedition into the territory. A former military man and naturalist, Lewis had a great deal of experience in the West (Old Northwest). His co-leader, William Clark, was also a soldier who had seen action in the West and who had experience dealing with Native Americans. Together, they signed up 48 men for their Corps of Discovery, and in the spring of 1804, they left St. Louis and set off up the Missouri River.

By the fall of that year, the Corps had reached what is today North Dakota. They wintered in a fort they built and named Fort Mandan after the local Native Americans. Among the Mandan, Lewis and Clark met a French Canadian trader named Toussaint Charbonneau and his Shoshone wife, Sacagawea. Lewis and Clark decided to take them on as guides and interpreters.

In April, the expedition and its new members continued their journey northwest, reaching the Rockies and, eventually, the Great Falls in Montana. Carrying their canoes and boats through the mountains was difficult work, but by late summer, the Corps had crossed the Continental Divide in what is now Montana. After sailing down the Columbia River, they reached the Pacific by November. There, they built Fort Clatsop and spent the winter of 1805–06. When spring arrived, the Corps began their return trip home. By September 1806, two years after leaving St. Louis, the Corps was back home.

Jefferson had given Lewis and Clark specific instructions about what the expedition should accomplish. The men were to look for a water route that

connected the Upper Mississippi with the Pacific Ocean, to map the region they explored, to establish contact with the Native Americans in the area, and to take notes about and collect specimens of the plants, animals, and minerals they found. These would be sent to Washington for further study. The Corps discovered that the Rockies stood in the way of an all-water route to the Pacific. The expedition did, however, establish official relations with many Native Americans bands. The most valuable information brought back from the expedition was the notes, drawings, and specimens that documented the trip. The Lewis and Clark expedition stimulated interest in the West and brought thousands of settlers into the territory.

Sacagawea

Sacagawea was a young Shoshone woman who was the wife of a French Canadian trader, Toussaint Charbonneau. She had been kidnapped as a child by another tribe, the Hidatsa, and sold to a Mandan who later traded her to Charbonneau. Charbonneau signed on with Lewis and Clark as an interpreter and guide during the winter of 1805 to 1806, along with his wife Sacagawea and her baby. She proved to be of great help in enlisting the aid of Native Americans when the Corps reached the Upper Missouri River. In late summer, the Corps crossed paths with Sacagawea's band, the Shoshone, and her brother Cameahwait. Sacagawea persuaded the Shoshone to provide horses for the expedition and to guide the Corps through the mountains of Idaho.

Zebulon Pike and Pikes Peak

Lewis and Clark were not the only explorers that President Jefferson commissioned. From 1805 to 1806, Lieutenant Zebulon Pike was sent to explore the sources of the Mississippi, Red, and Arkansas Rivers. When his expedition reached Colorado, they attempted to climb the mountain (Pikes Peak) that was later named after him. Pike and his men moved south into New Mexico and were taken prisoner by the Spanish. They were returned to the United States, bringing with them much important information about the Spanish territory.

"Mountain Men" and the Fur Trade

"Mountain Men" was the name given to trappers who were lured west by the profits of the fur trade. They moved into Oregon Country, the huge, barely charted area beyond the Rockies, where the forests and mountains were home to beaver and other fur-bearing animals. These men opened the way for later settlers. Today, this area includes the states of Oregon, Washington, Idaho, parts of the states of Wyoming and Montana, and southwestern Canada.

The fur trade was an important industry in the first 200 years of European settlement in North America. The French and their Indian allies had dominated the trade in the old Northwest Territory. The trade attracted adventurous frontiersmen who trapped beaver and traded with the Native Americans.

At first, the British had a monopoly on the fur trade in Oregon Country, but by the 1820s, U.S. companies were competing for the enormous profits to be made from the fur trade. Originally the British and the Americans set up trading posts where Native Americans and a few non-Native American trappers would come to sell or barter their furs. Then two U.S. businessmen hit upon the idea of an annual rendezvous, or fair, where Native Americans and trappers could bring their furs and sell them to traders for guns, knives, whiskey, cloth, and similar trade goods.

The rendezvous took place at a designated site in Wyoming. From the 1820s until the late 1830s, beaver was the most important trade commodity. Beaver hats were in style in the East and in Europe. By the late 1830s, however, styles had changed and the beaver had all but disappeared due to overtrapping. The life of the mountain man was ending.

But by then the mountain men had gained a reputation as wild and colorful characters. To Easterners, they were romantic figures, dressed in buckskin, with long hair, roaming the forests at will and answering to no man. But the life of mountain men was hard. They lived off the land, finding food where they could—animals, plants, nuts. In the spring, summer, and fall, they hunted and trapped on their own, but they often wintered in Native American villages. If a trapper fell and broke a leg, was mauled by a bear, or slipped and fell into a river, he could die. No one would know because he was alone in the forests.

Pioneers

Flatboats and Steamboats

Both native-born Americans and immigrants (who began to come in greater numbers after 1820) wanted to make a better life for themselves. But in the early 1800s, the coastal plain was becoming crowded, there was little land left to buy, and there were a limited number of jobs. To own land and to make a living, people were forced to move to less settled areas.

The first people to move into the land beyond the mountains traveled either down the rivers or overland through the valleys and gaps between mountains. Going downstream was the easiest way to travel, and people used canoes, rafts, and flatboats to carry passengers and freight. Overland, people used wagons and pack animals to carry them along dirt roads and mountain trails—both of which were little more than tracks that became muddy in the rainy season and treacherously rutted in the winter.

The transportation revolution of the early 1800s greatly spurred the movement of people inland. In the 1760s, James Watt of Scotland invented the first practical steam engine. In 1807, Robert Fulton used a steam engine to power his boat, the *Clermont*, up the Hudson River from New York to Albany. He covered the 150 miles in 32 hours, averaging a little under 5 miles per hour—slow by modern standards, but much faster than a canoe or flatboat could have covered the same distance. His was the first commercially successful steamboat company. By 1811, the steamboat *New Orleans* was plying up and down the Mississippi, carrying passengers and freight. Steamboats, being fast and large, could carry many passengers and much cargo. They could also navigate upstream against the current.

The steamboat helped ignite the transportation revolution, but without canals, its ability to travel the inland waterways would have been severely hampered. The canal era began in 1825 when the Erie Canal was opened. The canals were the best routes of transportation available, especially for heavy, bulky cargoes, such as coal, timber, and stone. In the 1850s, there was a boom in railroad building, offering faster, longer distance travel than steamboats. Still, many passengers found travel by canal boat smoother, less tiring, and less dangerous than land travel.

Wagon Trains

Before the transcontinental railroads and regional rail lines were built, linking all parts of the country, people went west by wagon. The wagons, called

prairie schooners, were small, four-wheeled vehicles with canvas tops and wooden bodies. They were light enough so that they would not sink easily into the soft prairie sod. Teams of oxen, rather than horses, often pulled the wagons. Horses were faster but not as strong or hardy as oxen.

Some pioneers, including women, traveled west alone. Others traveled in small groups, either on foot or on horseback. The most common arrangement was for several families to travel together in an organized wagon train. An experienced leader, or an elected head assisted by guides, would take command of the group.

Land Routes: Santa Fe Trail and Oregon Trail

Between 1840 and 1860, more than 250,000 people went west. Most settlers went to the Oregon Territory and California. The most famous route was the Oregon Trail, which began in Independence, Missouri, and crossed 2,000 miles of plains, mountains, and rivers. In southern Idaho, the trail diverged. Those wanting to go to California followed the California Trail through northern Nevada into California's Sacramento Valley. The ruts cut by thousands of wagon wheels can still be seen along parts of the Oregon Trail. 50

The even older Santa Fe Trail went from Independence, Missouri, to the former Spanish capital of Santa Fe. It was first used in 1821 and continued as a major trade route until 1880, when a railroad line was opened. The trail was relatively short—780 miles—on open plains across Kansas and up the Arkansas River or across the desert. The Santa Fe Trail, unlike the Oregon Trail, was basically a trade route.

Mormons: Brigham Young, Salt Lake City

The Mormons are members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The church was founded in 1830 by Joseph Smith, who claimed to have received revelations from God on golden tablets. The teachings, known as the Book of Mormon, became the basis of the Mormon faith. Mormons believe the Bible and the Book of Mormon are the "Word of God" and that the president of the church is a prophet of God. One of their most publicized practices was the practice of polygamy, having more than one spouse at a time.

Smith and his followers moved from their original home in New York State to Ohio because they were attacked for their religious beliefs. After again being persecuted, they moved to Missouri, but controversy and resistance followed them and they were forced to move a third time. In 1844, after settling in Nauvoo, Illinois, conflict again broke out and Smith was killed. Under the leadership of Brigham Young in 1847, the Mormons moved far west to the Great Salt Lake Basin in what is now Utah. At the time, the area was part of Mexico. 51

Considered unsuitable for agriculture, the area was passed over by other pioneers, but the Mormons irrigated the desert and established farms. They built a prosperous community and in 1849, after the Mexican-American War, they formed the state of Deseret with Young as governor. The same year, the people of Deseret petitioned the United States Congress for admission as a state. Congress, however, was in the midst of the controversy over whether to allow the spread of slavery into the territories and denied the request (see "The Civil War: Causes, Conflicts, and Consequences," on pp. 264–296). Congress also had a problem with the Mormon practice of polygamy. The following year, the Compromise of 1850 was worked out and Deseret was recognized as the Utah Territory. However, Utah did not become a state until 1896, after the Mormons had banned polygamy.

Gold Rush and the '49ers

In January 1848, John Sutter hired James Marshall to build a sawmill on the American River, which ran through Sutter's property near Sacramento, California. As he worked, Marshall noticed in the riverbed shiny flakes that looked golden in the light. When he examined them more closely, he saw they were gold. Though the two men tried to hide Marshall's discovery, word got out and the rush to find gold was soon on. (52)

Californians took to the rivers and streams looking for gold. Much of it was easily found in streams and riverbeds by panning. Miners literally used pans with small holes poked through their bottoms. They let the water flow through the holes, and the heavy gold sank to the bottom of the pans.

By the following summer, 100,000 people arrived in California—not just from the east coast of the United States but from Europe and much of the Pacific Basin, especially China, as well. Most came overland by horse and wagon train, but many came by boat. Some sailed around Cape Horn at the tip of South America and up the coast, while others sailed to Panama, trekked overland, and took a ship again from the west coast of Central America.

The '49ers, as the miners were called, were an enterprising group of men and women. Most miners were young men who expected to make their fortune and then return home. Some family men brought their wives and children along, expecting to stay. Single women, hoping to find gold or to earn money cooking or doing laundry for the miners, traveled to California as well. Some free blacks came, as well as some southerners who brought their slaves to mine for them. Even though few miners found a substantial amount of gold, many stayed for the climate and the rich farmland.

Native American Resistance

From the beginning, the new United States' dealings with Native Americans resulted in a string of conflicts, misunderstandings, epidemics, skirmishes, wars, broken treaties, and unfulfilled promises. At first, the federal government recognized Native Americans as sovereign nations and negotiated treaties with them for their land. Sometimes these treaties were freely negotiated, and other times they were the result of wars. The Treaty of Greenville (1795) is an example of a treaty that was forced on the Native Americans as a result of war. The treaty, by which the native peoples of the Old Northwest (Ohio, Illinois, Wisconsin, Michigan) gave up most of their lands, was an outcome of the Battle of Fallen Timbers (1794). The Treaty deprived Natives of claims to roughly two-thirds of the land of modern-day Ohio. Federal troops under General Anthony Wayne defeated a force of Shawnee, Miami, Ottawa, Potawatomi, Ojibwa, Fox, and Sauk near what is today Toledo, Ohio. Later, the War of 1812 would break the back of Native resistance in the rest of the region.

As more settlers pushed the frontier back by moving west and south from the original thirteen states, they came in contact with more Native Americans. Many European Americans considered the Native Americans uncivilized, and saw them as obstacles standing in the way of settlers' ambitions. The settlers continued to push the Native Americans westward. Sometimes the army tried to prevent settlers from encroaching on Native American lands, but at other times the army

fought against the Native Americans. The conflict over land in the Southeast is an example.

The Native American nations of the southeastern United States—the Cherokee, Creek, Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Seminole—became known as the "Five Civilized Tribes" due to their adoption of constitutions, laws, and other aspects of culture deemed to be "civilized." The Cherokee in particular adopted European American ways by becoming farmers and converting to Christianity. However, as the frontier moved south and west, settlers covered the tribal lands in the Carolinas, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Florida.

In 1830, President Andrew Jackson supported passage of the Indian Removal Act, which gave him the power to force the Native Americans of the Southeast to move to what was known as the Indian Territory, now part of the state of Oklahoma. The Choctaw left first, followed by the Creek and the Chickasaw. The last to leave were the Seminole after the Second Seminole War (1835–1842). 48

The Cherokee chose legal means rather than warfare to resist removal. In two lawsuits that went all the way to the Supreme Court, Cherokee rights to their lands were upheld. But President Jackson and the state of Georgia ignored both decisions, and seeing the inevitable, some 2,000 Cherokee agreed to move. By 1838, some 14,000 still remained in the Southeast. Jackson was no longer president, but his successor, Martin Van Buren, decided to enforce the move. The Cherokees' forced march to the Indian Territory became known as the "Trail of Tears." The four-month trek took place in winter and it is estimated that about 4,000 men, women, and children died along the way. The cost of the removal was subtracted from the money to be paid to the Cherokee for their lands, so they were left with $3 million.

The Cherokee and the other nations removed to Indian Territory were promised that this land would remain theirs forever. "Forever" lasted a generation. First, they lost part of their land to other Native American peoples whom the federal government resettled in the Territory in 1866. As the West filled up, there was pressure on the government to open Native American lands. In 1889, the Creek and the Seminole sold 50,000 acres to the United States for white settlement. By 1907, there were more whites than Native Americans in the Territory, and in that year, it was made part of the new state of Oklahoma.

Tecumseh and the Battle of Tippecanoe

In the first decade of the 1800s, the states and territories bordering the frontier believed that the British in Canada were aiding Native Americans who were attacking frontier settlements. Beginning around 1811, Tecumseh, a Shawnee chief, and his brother Tenskwatawa, tried to unite native peoples east of the Mississippi in a giant confederacy. The two men believed that if the Native American nations banded together and refused to sell land to Americans, they could hold back American settlement.

Tenskwatawa was known as the Prophet because he claimed to have entered the spirit world, communicated with the "Master of Life," and returned to Earth with knowledge of how Native Americans should live. He said they had to renounce dependence on American trade goods and return to their traditional ways of living and hunting. Here are some of the things he told his people:

> . . . But now those things of the white men have corrupted us, and made us weak and needful. Our men forgot how to hunt without noisy guns. Our women don't want to make fire without steel, or cook without iron, or sew without metal awls and needles, or fish without steel hooks. Some look in those mirrors all the time, and no longer teach their daughters to make leather or render bear oil. We learned to need the white men's goods, and so now a People who never had to beg for anything must beg for everything! . . . Many of us now crave liquor. . . . There are drunkards in almost every family. . . . We were fools to take all these things that weakened us. We did not need them then, but we believe we need them now. We turned our backs on the old ways. Instead of thanking the Great Spirit for all we used to have, we turned to the white men and asked them for more. So now we depend upon the very people who destroy us! This is our weakness! . . . And that is why Our Creator purified me and sent me down to you full of the shinning [sic] power, to make you what you were before! . . . Do not eat any food that is raised or cooked by a white person. It is not good for us. Eat not their bread made of wheat, for Our Creator gave us corn for our bread. Eat not the meat of their filthy swine, nor of their chicken fowls, nor the beef of their cattle, which are tame and thus have no spirit in them. Their foods will seem to fill your empty belly, but this deceives you for food without spirit does not nourish you. . . . There are two kinds of white men. There are the Americans, and there are the others. You may give your hand in friendship to the French, or the Spaniards, or the British. But the Americans are not like those. The Americans come from the slime of the sea, with mud and weeds in their claws, and they are a kind of crayfish serpent whose claws grab in our earth and take it from us. . . . That is what the Creator instructed me to tell you.

General William Henry Harrison, governor of the Indiana Territory, was concerned about the growing influence of Tecumseh and the Prophet. In 1811, Harrison led 1,000 soldiers to the Shawnee village on Tippecanoe Creek, near what is now Lafayette, Indiana. Tecumseh was not there, but Tenskwatawa was. Although Tecumseh had warned of the dangers of engaging the military in fighting, Tenskwatawa still attacked Harrison's force at night. Before attacking, Tenskwatawa gave an impassioned speech in which he promised his troops that the white man's bullets could not hurt them. Fighting was fierce and neither side won a decisive victory, although Harrison burned the Native American village and declared that the Americans had won.

Harrison also claimed that his men had found British weapons in the Native American camp. This sent shockwaves around the country. For many years settlers who lived near the frontier had claimed that the British were arming the Native Americans from bases in Canada and encouraging the native peoples to attack American settlers. Now Harrison had given them a "smoking gun" that seemed to prove what they had long suspected. The "war hawks" used Harrison's claim to press for a war with Great Britain. This was one of the reasons for the War of 1812.

Tenskwatawa lost most of his supporters after the Battle of Tippecanoe, but Tecumseh continued the struggle. During the War of 1812, Tecumseh allied with the British. When he died while fighting in Canada, so did his dream of a Native American alliance.

Tecumseh's significance in the struggle of Native Americans against land-hungry American settlers can be seen in the following statement:

> I am a Shawnee. My forefathers were warriors. Their son is a warrior. From them I take only my existence, from my tribe I take nothing. I am the maker of my own fortune, and Oh! that I could make that of my Red people, and of my country, as great as the conceptions of my mind, when I think of the Spirit that rules the universe. I would not them come to Governor Harrison to ask him to tear up the treaty [of 1809], and to obliterate the landmark, but I would say to him: "Sir, you have liberty to return to your own country."
>
> The Being within, communing with past ages, tells me that once, nor until lately, there was no Whiteman on this continent, that it then all belonged to the Great Spirit that made them to keep it, to traverse it, to enjoy its productions, and to fill it with the same race, once a happy race; since made miserable by the White people, who are never contented but always encroaching.
>
> The way, and the only way, to check and to stop this evil, is for all the Redmen to unite in claiming a common and equal right in the land, as it was at first and should be yet; for it was never divided, but belongs to all for the use of each. That no part has a right to sell, even to each other, much less to strangers—those who want all and will not do with less. The White people have no right to take the land from the Indians, because they had it first, it is theirs. . . there cannot be two occupations in the same place. The first excludes all others. It is not so in hunting or traveling, for there is same ground will serve many. . . but the camp is stationary. . . . It belongs to the first who sits down on his blanket or skins, which he has thrown upon the ground, and till he leaves it, no other has a right.

William Henry Harrison went from his "victory" at Tippecanoe to fight in the War of 1812. He was made a brigadier general and later promoted to major general. After the war, he ran for and was elected to the Ohio legislature and later to Congress. He also served as United States minister to Colombia. A popular military figure, even more than 20 years later, he won the Whig nomination for President in 1840. He and his Vice Presidential running mate, John Tyler, campaigned on the slogan of "Tippecanoe and Tyler, too!" At his inauguration in March 1841, Harrison caught a cold and developed pneumonia. He died a month later.

Osceola, Seminole Leader

Before his election to the presidency, Andrew Jackson had a long record of fighting the Native Americans of the Southeast. In the First Seminole War, Jackson invaded Spanish Florida in an effort to end Seminole raids into the United States. Weakened by war and in need of money, Spain sold Florida to the United States. By the 1830s, the Seminole had been forced south to live in the Everglades, a swampy area.

When the Seminole were told they had to leave Florida and resettle in Oklahoma, Chief Osceola and his supporters refused. It is said that Osceola stabbed the treaty with a dagger and declared: "This is the only treaty I will make with the white man!" By 1835, the Second Seminole War was underway. For two years Osceola and his warriors foiled successive American campaigns to destroy the Seminole. They did this even though they were outnumbered. Hiding in the

Everglades, Osceola and his warriors fought a guerilla war, luring the army into traps and ambushes and inflicting high casualties on soldiers fighting in a terrain for which they had no training. In 1837, Osceola arranged to meet the commander of the U.S. troops under a flag of truce. Despite the truce, he was taken prisoner. Although Osceola was imprisoned, the Seminole continued to fight until 1842, by which time most of the Seminole had been killed. Over 4,000 were deported to Oklahoma. The Second Seminole War cost the United States more than $30 million.

Manifest Destiny: Texas and Conflict with Mexico

The term manifest destiny was coined in the 1840s. The phrase appeared in an editorial in the United States Magazine and Democratic Review in 1845. The editorial said that the United States had a "manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence." *Manifest* means "clear or obvious"; *destiny* means "something that is bound to happen," and *Providence* refers to God's oversight of the world. The writer meant that God had given the United States a clear right to extend its authority across the continent, and that the nation was destined to do so. This idea was popular with many Americans during the 1840s and 1850s. They had seen their country growing and concluded it was destined to continue growing until it covered the whole continent. "Manifest Destiny" was an expression of pride in the young, growing nation, but it was also a way of justifying the displacement of native peoples and supporting other land-hungry actions of the 1800s.

Early Settlement of Texas: Stephen Austin

The settlement and annexation of Texas can be seen as an example of America pursuing its "manifest destiny." Mexico had won its independence from Spain in 1821. During the 1820s, small numbers of Americans began moving into the Mexican province of Texas from the southeast to raise cotton and sugar on plantations.

In 1821, Stephen Austin was given permission by the newly installed Mexican government to establish settlements in East Texas. In 1822, he and 300 families entered Texas. More immigrants followed. In less than a decade, there were 25,000 Americans, including many slaves, in Texas. The settlers far outnumbered the 4,000 Mexicans living there. Concerned about the growing imbalance, the Mexican government banned all further settlement by Americans and all further importation of slaves.

Texans—transplanted Americans and native Mexicans—asked several times for autonomy. They declared that they needed slaves to work their plantations and wanted to rid themselves of Mexican government in general. Austin was jailed by the new Mexican dictator, General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna, for delivering the most recent request for autonomy, and the Texans rebelled. Santa Anna had seized control of the Mexican government in 1834 and declared himself president.

Battle of the Alamo

The Texas Revolution ended almost as quickly as it had begun. The fighting lasted from late 1835 to April 1836.

The most memorable battle of the revolution was the Battle of the Alamo. The Alamo was a mission-fortress built by Spanish priests in San Antonio. About

1,500 to 2,000 Mexican troops besieged the fort defended by fewer than 200 Texans. The siege began in February 1836 and ended twelve days later when Mexican cannons blew huge holes through the walls. Mexican soldiers entered the fort through the gaps in the walls, and all 182 Texans as well as 1,500 Mexican soldiers died during the heroic defense.

The defense of the Alamo was led by William B. Travis. When Santa Anna demanded that he surrender, Travis is said to have replied, "The enemy has demanded my surrender. I have answered their demand with a single cannon shot. I shall never surrender."

Among the other defenders who died during the siege of the Alamo were Davy Crockett and Jim Bowie, who had shared leadership of the men with Travis until falling ill. Both Crockett and Bowie were well-known frontiersmen, and both have become folk heroes. Crockett was from Tennessee. He had fought with Andrew Jackson during the Indian Wars in the southeast and had served in Congress from 1827 to 1835. Crockett was an expert rifleman. At the Alamo, it is said that Crockett's marksmanship killed five successive Mexican gunners who were manning a cannon hundreds of yards from the Alamo walls. Jim Bowie was born in Kentucky and spent most of his life in Louisiana before moving to Texas. He or his brother invented the Bowie knife, which is used for hunting.

During the Battle of the Alamo, Mexican and American Texans proclaimed their independence. Two months after the Battle of the Alamo, Texan troops led by General Sam Houston charged into battle during the Battle of San Jacinto crying "Remember the Alamo!" The slogan emerged as a reminder of the defeat and as an inspiration to continue the fight. The Texans defeated Santa Anna in that battle and secured their independence, later electing the hero of the Battle of San Jacinto, Sam Houston, as their first president.

The Mexican-American War

Although Mexico had not recognized Texas's declaration of independence, Texas asked for annexation by the United States. The United States initially refused for two reasons. First, annexation would surely mean war with Mexico, and second, Texas would be a slave state. The United States was still trying to reach a compromise over the issue of slavery. By 1844, however, the clamor to admit Texas was growing and it became a major campaign issue in the presidential election that year.

James K. Polk ran on a platform of annexation against the incumbent President John Tyler and won. Early in 1845, the United States annexed Texas. The Mexican-American War was fought to determine where the southwestern boundary between Texas and Mexico lay. When United States troops under General Zachary Taylor moved across the boundary, they were attacked. The United States responded with a declaration of war.

Zachary Taylor led an army across the Rio Grande into Mexico. He won a victory at the Battle of Monterrey in September of 1846. Santa Anna marched north to meet Taylor's army but was defeated at the battle of Buena Vista in February of 1847. Meanwhile, another American army under the command of Winfield Scott landed on the Mexican coast, near Veracruz. Scott won battles at Veracruz and Chapultepec and eventually occupied Mexico City.

The war lasted from May 1846 to September 1848. Under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848), which ended the war, Mexico ceded to the United States all or part of what became the following states: California, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, Wyoming, New Mexico, and Arizona.

General Zachary Taylor was known to his soldiers as "Old Rough and Ready." He was a soldier for forty years, fighting in the War of 1812, subduing Native Americans in the Midwest, and defeating the Seminole in the Second Seminole War in Florida. He became a national hero after his defeat of General Santa Anna in the Mexican-American War.

Taylor was nominated as the Whig candidate for President in 1848 and won. Although it was his success that added large tracts of land to the United States, he opposed the expansion of slavery into any territory seeking admission to statehood. He died after only sixteen months in office.

Opposition to the War

Opposition to the war was strong among some Americans. Southerners and Westerners felt they would benefit from a larger United States and supported the war. Many Northerners, on the other hand, opposed the war on moral grounds; they opposed the addition of more slave states to the Union. One of those who was against the war was Henry David Thoreau. In his "Essay on the Duty of Civil Disobedience," Thoreau asked whether a man had the right to disobey a law or government he felt was wrong. He concluded that there was such a right:

> Must the citizen ever for a moment, or in the least degree, resign his conscience to the legislator? Why has every man a conscience, then? I think that we should be men first, and subjects afterward. It is not desirable to cultivate a respect for the law, so much as for the right. The only obligation which I have a right to assume is to do at any time what I think right.

Thoreau went on to explain his opposition to a government more concerned, in his eyes, with conquest than justice. (54)

> The government itself, which is only the mode which the people have chosen to execute their will, is equally liable to be abused and perverted before the people can act through it. Witness the present Mexican war, the work of comparatively a few individuals using the standing government as their tool; for, in the outset, the people would not have consented to this measure.

Thoreau had actually declined to pay his taxes, and spent one night in prison. Was he ashamed of this? On the contrary, Thoreau wrote: "Under a government which imprisons any unjustly, the true place for a just man is . . . a prison."

Thoreau's opposition did little to affect the war, though his ideas about civil disobedience would influence the thinking of others, including Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., who chose nonviolent resistance, such as going to jail, rather than cooperation with unjust laws.

What Teachers Need to Know

Note: The descriptions and activities in the main text below are intended to help you become familiar with the artworks before presenting them to students; however, some of the activities might be adapted for classroom use. Activities intended specifically for students can be found in the Teaching Idea sidebars. The Looking Questions given below are also printed on the reverse side of the *Art Resources,* and have been written with students in mind, so that they might be used as a rough plan for class discussion. You should feel free to use these questions or develop questions of your own. Be sure students have time to look at the reproductions carefully before asking the Looking Questions.

Romantic Views of the American Scene

How old was the United States by the mid-19th century? With the new government just under 100 years of age, the country's artists retained strong links to western European art traditions. Many professional artists in America were born, trained, and/or studied in Europe.

Nonetheless, 19th-century artists in America did not slavishly reproduce European art or represent the same subjects. Instead, they adapted established ways of painting and sculpting to suit a new need—depicting the ever-expanding United States in the best light possible.

Although the United States didn't have a long-established history, it did have land—lots of it. The public hungered for images of the country's glory, splendor, and bounty. Artists largely ignored the often-unpleasant realities of life on the frontier; they deliberately painted as if looking though rose-colored glasses. Painters like George Caleb Bingham, in his *Fur Traders Descending the Missouri,* portrayed the humble lifestyle of those who made their living off the land. (See the discussion on pp. 354–355.) Bingham chose not to show any of the actual hardships involved in the pioneering life; the figures look out serenely, as if they had not a care in the world.

Landscape painters initially thrived along the East Coast. The Hudson River School artists, such as Thomas Cole (whose work students in Core Knowledge schools should have discussed in Grade 2), painted unsullied, pastoral views of the New York and New England regions. The typically vast vistas of the painters of the Hudson River School captured the light in mists, sunsets, and other memorable idyllic moments.

However, American landscape art was not just an East Coast phenomenon. It followed the country's explorers and pioneers as they moved across North America. Artists—like explorers, surveyors, and scientists—ventured into "new lands," bringing their amazing visual expressions back to eastern audiences.

Albert Bierstadt's paintings, including *The Rocky Mountains, Lander's Peak,* immortalized the West's natural scenery. (See discussion on p. 354.) Through size, scale, and a wide range of color, Bierstadt painted pictures that evoked a religious sense of awe and admiration for the land.

Most artists, like society itself, paid little attention to the Native Americans who had inhabited the country for some 10,000 years before Europeans arrived. Native peoples are absent from Bingham's fur trading genre paintings, though Native American hunting talents were crucial to the fur trade. Even when Native Americans are included, as they are in Bierdstadt's composition, they are generally not the focus.

Looking at the Included Reproductions

art resource 15

Thomas Cole, *View from Mount Holyoke, Northampton, Massachusetts, after a Thunderstorm—The Oxbow* (1836)

Ironically, British-born artist Thomas Cole (1801–1848) is best known for his romantic views of the American landscape. For him, the young country's rustic, rugged beauty, interspliced with areas of pastoral charm, epitomized the United States. Cole celebrated the divine "New World" with bright, almost supernatural, color and light. One of the popular ideas of Romanticism was that there was an intimate connection between God and nature, that nature was permeated and infused with holiness and divinity. Looking at Cole's landscape paintings, one sometimes feels that they are artistic representations of this romantic idea about the intimate connection between God and nature.

Cole came to Philadelphia from England at age 17. He studied in both the United States and Europe, but was ultimately drawn to America. Here, he painted vistas of the wilderness that would soon vanish as the population and industry encroached upon the virgin land.

Look at the included reproduction of *The Oxbow.* What is the weather like in this view? Cole detailed the sunlight on the lingering mist after a thunderstorm. Although realist artists like Cole appear to work in a nearly photographic style, they often change certain elements in their scenes. They might move, eliminate, enlarge, decrease, and/or add items in their compositions. It is important not to confuse realism and reality.

Cole divided the painting into two. The left half represents the powerful, uncontrollable, yet sublime aspect of nature, symbolized by the broken tree trunk and dark clouds. On the right, Cole painted a quiet, pastoral, sunny view, "civilized" by humans, who have cultivated nature into bucolic, prosperous farms. Cole's painting reflects the debate among Americans during his day: Would civilization wipe out the wilderness or could the two coexist?

Looking questions

Note: Cover up the title on the front of the print before showing to students.

- **What do you see?** ***Answers will vary. Point out the lone figure.***
- **What is the lone figure doing?** ***It is a self-portrait of the artist at work.***
- **Why did Cole make his self-portrait so small? (Hint: How does his size affect the way you see the rest of the scene?)** ***The size of the self-portrait greatly enhances the grandeur and enormity of nature.***

- **What two different aspects of nature did Cole present? Compare the left half to the right.** ***On the left, Cole presented the rustic, wild side of nature. On the right side, he depicted the idyllic, pastoral side.***
- **What clues in the painting might lead you to believe that Cole saw the wilderness receding in the presence of civilization? What was Cole's message about civilization?** ***Answers will vary, but he implies that civilization is good and orderly.***
- **This painting is called *The Oxbow.* Why do you think the artist chose this title?** ***Students may identify the bow shape. Explain that the river makes the shape of an oxbow, a curved harness that is put over the necks of oxen.***

art resource 16

Albert Bierstadt, *The Rocky Mountains, Lander's Peak* (1863)

Albert Bierstadt (1830–1902) ventured to the Rocky Mountains with surveying expeditions, making sketches and photographs for his artwork. The dramatic grandeur of the mountains he depicts suggests the Alps, and indeed, Bierstadt was trained in Europe and born in Germany, but it was in America that he painted.

Bierstadt used his preparatory sketches and photographs to compose paintings back in his New York studio. He deliberately exaggerated reality, making mountains appear higher and scenes perfectly idyllic. He presented the great outdoors the way Americans in the second half of the 19th century wanted to see the West—through a romantic lens. His works were enormous; this one is over 6 feet long and 10 feet high. Bierstadt's art, in fact, did draw tourists from the East to the newly acquired western lands, much as Bingham's had done some twenty years earlier.

Looking questions

- **What first catches your eye in this enormous painting?** ***Answers will vary, though the waterfall in the middle ground is a central focus.***
- **How does Bierstadt draw your gaze to certain parts of the painting?** ***He makes frequent use of contrasting lights and darks.***
- **How did Bierstadt suggest the huge scale of this scene?** ***The scale of the scene is suggested in the actual size of the canvas, the towering peaks in the distance, and the way the landscape dwarfs the Native American camp.***
- **How did Bierstadt use atmospheric perspective to give the viewer a sense of deep space?** ***The mountains in the background are painted with much lighter colors and much less detail so that they seem far away.***
- **How did Bierstadt include reference to his own role as an artist?** ***He included the camera in the lower left center of the work.***
- **Why do you think Bierstadt included his camera in the painting?** ***Answers will vary.***

art resource 17

George Caleb Bingham, *Fur Traders Descending the Missouri* (1845)

George Caleb Bingham (1811–1879) moved from Virginia to Missouri with his family when he was a boy. He worked as a cabinetmaker and later became a painter of portraits, traveling from place to place. Other than a few months at an art school in Pennsylvania, Bingham was self-taught until he was in his forties,

when he studied in Europe. Bingham is best known for his paintings of scenes along the Missouri River.

In this picture, Bingham presents a single moment of the vanishing frontier way of life. All the figures look straight at the artist, making us aware of Bingham's role as visual recorder as well as pulling us directly into the scene. Bingham's painting is not, however, an exact replica of reality. His alluring, harmonious colors and blanketing tranquility offer a highly romantic vision that appealed to northeastern audiences.

How did Bingham enhance the stillness of his scene? He evenly balanced the composition. The boy displays the duck he has shot, which hangs over the edge of the covered box on which the young man leans. The background trees sit nearly dead center and frame the canoe like a halo. The water is so still you can see reflections in it, almost undisturbed. This type of painting was the "tourist brochure" of the age.

Looking questions

Note: Cover up the title on the front of the print before showing to students.

- **What is happening in this painting?** ***Two traders with their goods and a fox are in a canoe. Explain that the painting was first called*** **French Trapper/Half-Breed Son,** ***which tells us more about these two figures. A "half-breed" was a crude term for someone who was half Native American.***
- **What mood does this painting suggest to you?** ***Answers will vary.***
- **How did Bingham create the sense of a calm early morning?** ***Answers will vary, but students should note the still water, the mist-covered background, the strong horizontal lines, and that there is little action in the work.***
- **Compare this work to** ***The Rocky Mountains, Lander's Peak.*** **What do the artists want us to think about the West?** ***Answers will vary, but it should be noted that in both works, the solemn, still scenes immortalize the vanishing world of the American frontier.***

art resource 18

William Sidney Mount, *Eel Spearing in Setauket* (1845)

Born in Setauket on New York's Long Island, William Sidney Mount (1807–1868) is most well known for his images of everyday American life. He is particularly noteworthy for his (somewhat stereotypical) inclusion of African Americans in his work.

Mount drew inspiration from the local town and rural life on Long Island. *Eel Spearing in Setauket* draws its name from the activities surrounding the plentiful local sea life. It is an idyllic, romantic scene, but nonetheless it is a snapshot that captures the pastimes, garb, landscape, and social context of Long Island life in 1845. These scenes by Mount became wildly popular when they were made into engraved reproductions and thus became widely disbursed. They tapped into the same fascination with the simple life of American folk that Mark Twain would explore later in the century.

Looking questions

- **What characteristics of Mount's painting recall the work of Pieter Bruegel?** ***The similarities include the attention to detail and the interest in the everyday life of common people.***

- **What effect do the broad horizontal bands made by the sky, land, water, and canoe have on the mood of the painting?** ***The bands establish a calm, tranquil mood.***
- **How did Mount break the horizontal lines and keep the painting from seeming visually boring?** ***Mount placed some vertical trees on the left and right, the woman creates a vertical line that breaks into the sky areas, and the pole and paddle are very strong diagonals.***
- **How did Mount use line and color to tie the two figures together despite the wide space between them?** ***If the line of the paddle were extended up it would intersect the pole. Also, bright red is used only on the woman's kerchief, and the boy's hat and cushion.***
- **It has been said that a good writer could create a whole story based on one of Mount's paintings. Do you agree? Why or why not?** ***Answers will vary.***
- **How might your thoughts about this painting be different from those of a fifth-grader seeing it in 1845?** ***Answers will vary.***

"Git Along, Little Dogies"

"Git Along, Little Dogies" is one of the great cowboy songs collected at the beginning of the 20th century, but sung since the mid-1800s. These songs reflect the lonely, rugged life of the cowman. In this particular song, the singer suggests his affection for the herd of cattle, or "dogies." But he also declares he intends to drive them to their destination. A "cowpuncher" is another name for a cowboy. Many cowboy songs are known to have been derived from pre-existing songs when singers improvised new lyrics to describe life on the plains. "Git Along, Little Dogies" is believed to be based on an Irish melody from the 1700s.

"Shenandoah"

Named for a Native American chief living on the Missouri River, this beautiful song was actually a chantey sung on riverboats and later at sea, dating from around the 1820s. Later it became associated with the American West. The melody is a blend of elements from several folksong traditions, including Irish and African American. The songs of many cultures were sung on American ships and in that environment, songs like "Shenandoah" were created. 89

"Sweet Betsy from Pike"

Most likely dating from the gold rush of 1849, "Sweet Betsy from Pike" is a humorous ballad of a couple's attempt to make the difficult journey over the mountains to California. The text is certainly meant to be humorous, but it also captures the danger and exhaustion of life on the trail. Earlier versions of this song include quite a lot of verses recounting the adventures of Betsy and Ike during their travels, usually ending with them reaching California and getting married (and then immediately divorced). 90