

Learning Objectives

- 1) Know about the Spanish exploration and settlement of the West. Spanish explorers, called conquistadors, sailed along the California coast in 1542. They were searching for a waterway that many thought connected the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean. Soon, Spain settled much of the west and set up trade with ports as far away as Asia.
- 2) Realize that Native Americans, not the Spanish, were the first people to settle in the west; and understand the general history of the Native North Americans. The Chumash lived in Southern California; the Miwok lived in the Central Valley; and the Hupa, Yurok, and Karok lived in Northwest California. Farther north, the Chinook lived where the Columbia River meets the Pacific Ocean; the Ute and Shoshone lived in the mountain states; the Cheyenne and Crow tribes lived in Wyoming and Montana; and the Inuit (Eskimos) and Inupiat lived in Alaska. It is believed that thousands of years ago, an isthmus connected Asia to North America. People from Asia crossed this land bridge in search of food. Over time, they made new homes for themselves throughout North America and the West. Once these tribes settled, they used their natural surroundings to survive. The Native Americans hunted animals for food and clothing, and they used plants and flowers for food and medicine.
- 3) Understand the impact that the conquistadors had on the lives of the Native Americans. The Sacred Expedition of 1769 drastically changed the lives of the Native American peoples. Jose de Galvez and Father Junipero Serra set up missions in California to teach Native Americans about the Catholic religion. Many Native Americans worked in the missions, where they were taught to farm. However, they were forced to work long hours and were exposed to new and deadly diseases by the Spanish.
- 4) Know how the Louisiana Purchase and the Lewis and Clark expedition led to western settlement by Americans. In 1803 the United States bought the Louisiana Territory from France. Due to a lack of exploration, Americans knew very little about this land and the land west of the Rocky Mountains. Meriwether Lewis and William Clark were sent by the government to explore this territory and the Rocky Mountains. Before Lewis and Clark reached the Rocky Mountains, they met Sacagawea, a Shoshone Indian who spoke English. She proved to be an asset to the expedition by helping its members communicate with the Native American tribes they met during the journey and by helping the group traverse the Rocky Mountains. Not long after the expedition, pioneers began to make the difficult journey over the Rocky Mountains and across the Oregon or California trails. Religious freedom was a major reason that people headed west.
- 5) Understand how the various Gold Rushes led to western settlement. In 1848 a carpenter named James Marshall discovered gold while building a sawmill for John Sutter on the banks of the American River near Sacramento. Soon after, droves of people from all over the United States and the world came to California looking for gold; these people became known as "Forty-niners" because most of them moved to California in 1849. In 1848, there were only 800 people living in California. Conversely, by 1852, there were 250,000 people in California. After the Gold Rush ended in California, gold was discovered in other parts of the west, including the Colorado Rockies, the Yellowstone river in Montana, and the mountains of Idaho and Alaska. Towns called boomtowns quickly sprouted wherever gold was discovered. Once the gold was gone, many of these towns were deserted; these "ghost towns" are scattered throughout the west. However, many people stayed and made the west their home.
- 6) Realize that western life required women to take a more dominant role, and understand how these new roles influenced movements to give women more rights. Out West women had to perform tasks that, before, had only been done by men. Women earned respect for all of their hard work and strength. This led to women gaining more independence in the west. In 1869 Wyoming became the first state that allowed women to vote. In 1916 the citizens of Montana elected the first woman to congress. In 1924 Wyoming citizens elected the first woman governor in the United States.
- 7) Know the importance of the Transcontinental Railroad and appreciate just how difficult it was to build. There were a lot of people traveling back and forth between the east and the west, so in 1862 Congress decided to build a transcontinental railroad. This railroad would stretch across the country, and connect the east to the west. The Union Pacific Railroad hired many immigrants from Ireland and other European countries to build tracks westward from Omaha, Nebraska; and the Central Pacific Railroad hired many Chinese immigrants to help it build tracks eastward from Sacramento, California. The Central Pacific workers had the difficult task of laying down track through the steep Sierra Nevada Mountains. Dynamite had to be used to blast tunnels through the solid rock. In 1869 the two tracks came together in Promontory, Utah. Sometimes, the tracks had to be laid on steep, rocky banks. The Transcontinental Railroad allowed people and goods to cross the country in just over a week. Before the railroad, it could take months to cross the country.
- 8) Know how Alaska and Hawaii came to be states in America.
 - a) **Alaska:** In 1784 people from Russia crossed the Bering Strait in search of furs. The Russians traveled along the coast of Alaska and claimed ownership of all this land. In 1867 the United States bought Alaska from Russia for \$7.2 million. In 1959 Alaska became a state. Though Alaska is the largest state in the country, it has the second smallest population. Alaska's small population is due to its extreme weather, rugged conditions, and remote location.
 - b) **Hawaii:** Over 1000 years ago, the Polynesians settled on the eight islands known as Hawaii. A different chief ruled each Island, but in

1810, King Kamehameha brought all eight islands together into one nation. In 1778 Captain James Cook became the first European to discover Hawaii. After his arrival, many traders from Europe and the U.S. made their way to the islands. In the 1800s, more Americans began to travel to Hawaii to build churches and schools, or to grow sugarcane. By 1886, fewer than half of the people living in Hawaii were Polynesian. Americans in Hawaii gained great power, and in 1898 it became a U.S. territory. Then, in 1959 Hawaii became a state. Hawaii has a great mix of cultures. Due to its location in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, people from all over the world have moved to Hawaii.

Suggested Activities

- 1) Ask students to choose one person or group of people in the history of the Western Region that he/she believes made a significant impact on the region. Encourage students to use the video, textbook, and library resources to support their argument. Have each person present his or her argument to the class. If students have opposing views, encourage them to support their views, debate style.
- 2) Have students pick one period in the history of the Western Region. Ask them to prepare a journal of the day-to-day activities of someone their age during that period. Include information about school, chores, food, clothing, etc.

Vocabulary

Boomtown – A town experiencing a large economic or population increase

Forty-niner – One who headed to California seeking fortune from the Gold Rush

Isthmus – A narrow stretch of land that connects two larger landmasses

Strait – A narrow channel that joins two larger bodies of water

Territory – A part of the United States that is not a state, but is dependent on the federal government

