

TEACHING AMERICAN HISTORY PROJECT
Lesson Title –Should I Stay or Should I Go
From David Chassanoff

Grade – 8

Length of class period – 60 min block

Inquiry – If you were living in the mid – 1800’s, would you move west in search of a better life? Why or why not?

Objectives - Students will weigh the risks of western exploration and relocation and make a decision based on the primary sources provided.

Materials - (What primary sources or local resources are the basis for this lesson?) –
(materials)

ACROSS THE PLAINS IN 1844 BY CATHERINE SAGER PRINGLE

Taken from: *The Oregon Trail*

<http://www.isu.edu/~trinmich/00.ar.sager1.html>

French Cartoon – Depicting the Goldrush in CA

Collection of the California State Library

http://www.library.ca.gov/goldrush/images/croquis_calif.jpg

a letter written from CA during the Goldrush (printed in a Norway newspaper)

****Note the California State Library website that provided the political cartoon, warrants further exploration and has some very interesting art work!!

Activities (What will you and your students do during the lesson to promote learning?)
Students will be interpreting the primary source material and making judgments on the risks involved in traveling westward.

How will you assess what student learned during this lesson?

Students will be writing a persuasive essay, in preparation for the CMT’s. I will count this as a quiz grade.

Connecticut Framework Performance Standards –

Describe patterns of human movement across time and place.

Analyze and draw conclusions on immigration’s impact on the United States at different stages in its history.

Use evidence to identify, analyze and evaluate historical interpretations.

Compare and contrast two or more interpretations of a historical event.

Taking a Stand

Directions: Read and/or analyze the three sources below pertaining to westward expansion. Then, using information from these sources and any knowledge learned from our unit, answer the following question:

If you were living in the mid – 1800's, would you move west in search of a better life? Why or why not?

Source #1

ACROSS THE PLAINS IN 1844 BY CATHERINE SAGER PRINGLE

My father was one of the restless ones who are not content to remain in one place long at a time. Late in the fall of 1838 we emigrated from Ohio to Missouri. Our first halting place was on Green River, but the next year we took a farm in Platte County. He engaged in farming and blacksmithing, and had a wide reputation for ingenuity. Anything they needed, made or mended, sought his shop. In 1843, Dr. Whitman came to Missouri. The healthful climate induced my mother to favor moving to Oregon. Immigration was the theme all winter, and we decided to start for Oregon. Late in 1843 father sold his property and moved near St. Joseph, and in April, 1844, we started across the plains. The first encampments were a great pleasure to us children. We were five girls and two boys, ranging from the girl baby to be born on the way to the oldest boy, hardly old enough to be any help.

...We waited several days at the Missouri River. Many friends came that far to see the emigrants start on their long journey, and there was much sadness at the parting, and a sorrowful company crossed the Missouri that bright spring morning. The motion of the wagon made us all sick, and it was weeks before we got used to the seasick motion. Rain came down and required us to tie down the wagon covers, and so increased our sickness by confining the air we breathed.

August 1st we nooned in a beautiful grove on the north side of the Platte. We had by this time got used to climbing in and out of the wagon when in motion. When performing this feat that afternoon my dress caught on an axle helve and I was thrown under the wagon wheel, which passed over and badly crushed my limb before father could stop the team. He picked me up and saw the extent of the injury when the injured limb hung dangling in the air. In a broken voice he exclaimed: "My dear child, your leg is broken all to pieces!" The news soon spread along the train and a halt was called. A surgeon was found and the limb set; then we pushed on the same night to Laramie, where we arrived soon after dark. This accident confined me to the wagon the remainder of the long journey.

After Laramie we entered the great American desert, which was hard on the teams. Sickness became common. Father and the boys were all sick, and we were dependent for a driver on the Dutch doctor who set my leg. He offered his services and was employed, but though an excellent surgeon, he knew little about driving oxen. Some of them often had to rise from their sick beds to wade streams and get the oxen safely across. One day four buffalo ran between our wagon and the one behind. Though feeble, father seized his gun and gave chase to them. This imprudent act prostrated him again, and it soon became apparent that his days were numbered. He was fully conscious of the fact, but could not be reconciled to the thought of leaving his large and helpless family in such precarious circumstances. The evening before his death we crossed Green River and camped on the bank. Looking where I lay helpless, he said: "Poor child! What will become of you?"

Taken from: *The Oregon Trail*

<http://www.isu.edu/~trinmich/00.ar.sager1.html>

Source #2



French Cartoon – Depicting the Goldrush in CA

Collection of the California State Library

http://www.library.ca.gov/goldrush/images/croquis_calif.jpg

Source #3 – a letter written from CA during the Goldrush

I spent last summer in Esmeralda, building a running a quartz mill for other parties. In the fall I came here into the mountains 12 miles above Downieville for the same purpose, to build a mill and superintend the whole business of the company, but I suppose you wish to know more about that is, what I do, and what I got for doing it. I will tell you a little more beings you are my sister, my business is to hire 25 men, tell them what to do and how to do it, receive all gold and moneys and pay all bills, this does not occupy one tenth part of my time. I have an office and a private fire, I look after the men when I feel like it, read when I feel like it, or go hunting and fishing just when or where I please, for this I receive \$200 per month and all my expenses paid. This is big wages, even for this country--but in my place a man must know to do almost everything, he must be sober, industrious, and honest, for the company have to trust their gold with me, and all they know about it is what I tell them. I have been here six months, may stay here a long time

and may not. I have other business that I ought to look after, but I am very well situated here and like to stay....

We are within 1 1/2 miles of the top of the Sierra Nevada Mountains, and the storms for the last five months have been grand and sublime all the time, but we had plentiful supplies, and it was fun to see them howl. I do not know when I will go to the states, but some time, there is nothing to make me hurry. I am not married, and not in love, and, don't know when I shall be. I have not seen a woman for five months.

Original Source: Samuel S. Richardson (SSR), letter, May 12, 1850, San Francisco, to Mary Richardson Walker (MRW), Oregon, in the Papers of Elkanah and Mary Richardson Walker in the Washington State University Libraries, Pullman, Washington

Web site: <http://www.uiweb.uidaho.edu/special-collections/papers/ssr.htm>