

Lesson Plan

Creating Context with Visual Elements

Book: *Manifest Destiny and the Journey West*

Series: Expansion of Our Nation

Level: Navigator

Objective

To help students explore how visual elements such as maps and timelines contribute to the development of ideas in a text, and to analyze how different formats achieve different effects.

Supplies

- *Manifest Destiny and the Journey West* book

Before the Activity

Read *Manifest Destiny and the Journey West*, or assign it to students to read on their own.

Activity

During the 1800s, the United States grew rapidly, acquiring several large areas of land in western North America. Have students turn to page 21 of *Manifest Destiny and the Journey West* and look at the map called “The United States Expands.” This map shows several areas of land the United States acquired during the 1800s. Have students look at pages 20 and 21 to answer the following questions:

- Which areas of land on the map are mentioned in the main text? (Answer: Oregon Country and Texas Annexation)
- Which areas of land are only on the map? (Answer: Louisiana Purchase, Mexican Cession, and Gadsden Purchase)
- Why do you think the author chose to include these areas on the map? (Answer: Including more areas helps readers see more of the process of westward expansion.)

Ask students to use the information from the map to create a timeline. They should give the timeline the title “The United States Expands.” Each timeline entry should begin with a date. It should also include a one-sentence description of the land that changed hands at that time. Students should describe the countries and areas involved in each transfer of land.

Give students several minutes to create their timelines. Then use the following questions to have a short group discussion:

- What information can you tell from the map on page 21 but not the timeline? (Answer: The map shows the specific area involved in each transfer of land.)

- Why do you think the book’s author chose to use a map instead of a timeline? (Answer: The main text on page 21 says people “wanted the country to expand all the way across North America,” and the map helps readers see how this happened.)
- What information is easier to see in the timeline? (Answer: The timeline makes it easier to see the order in which the transfers of land happened.)
- Can you think of a situation in which a timeline might be more helpful? (Answers will vary.)
- What other events might you add to this timeline to help readers understand the situation? (Answers will vary.)

Evaluation

Collect the timelines and give students 2 points for ordering and describing each of the following events accurately, for a total of 10 points:

- 1803: The United States buys a large area of land from France in the Louisiana Purchase.
- 1845: Texas is annexed by the United States and becomes a state.
- 1846: The Oregon Treaty establishes a border between the United States and Canada in the Oregon Country.
- 1848: The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo transfers land in the Southwest from Mexico to the United States.
- 1853: The United States buys the Gadsden Purchase from Mexico.

Standards

This lesson may be used to address the Common Core State Standards’ reading standards for informational texts, grade 7 (RI 7.5, 7.7).