

Karie Lynch
Homesteaders of the Western Prairie
Lesson Plan Final Draft

Lesson Title: Women of the 19th Century Western Prairie

Duration, Class, Grade Level, Number of Students:

The lesson is designed for a class of approximately 35 11th grade college prep. American Literature students. It is to be completed over a period of three consecutive 90 minute class periods.

Location:

High school 11th grade American Literature classroom

Key Vocabulary:

The West – the area of land east of the Mississippi River and west to the California coast

Manifest Destiny -Manifest Destiny was a belief in the 1830s and 1840s that the "divine right" of the US was to expand westward toward the Pacific Ocean and conquer the entire continent

Utopia - an ideal or perfect place free on any type of economic, political, legal, or other problems

Homestead Act of 1862 - The Homestead Act of 1862 provided that any adult citizen, or intended citizen, could claim 160 acres of surveyed government land. Claimants were required to “improve” the plot by building a dwelling and cultivating the land. After 5 years on the land, the original filer was entitled to the property, free and clear, except for a small registration fee.

Prairie – an area of flat, predominately treeless grassland

Characterization – the act of creating and developing a character, including both direct and indirect characterization

Tone – the writer’s attitude toward his or her subject, characters, or audience

Point of view – the perspective, or vantage point, from which a story is told. Three commonly used points of view are first person, omniscient third person, and limited third person.

Instructional Materials:

2 literary excerpts from the course textbook: *The American Experience: Timeless Voices, Timeless Themes* published by Prentice Hall

-journal excerpts from Miriam Davis Colt's "Heading West"

-short story from Willa Cather titled "A Wagner Matinee"

Power Point: Homesteaders of the Western Prairie Parts I and II

Link to You Tube "America, the Story of Us" on Power Point

Power Point or handout with questions for student groups

Copies of Oblinger family letters for selected students to read aloud

CD of various musical pieces mentioned in "A Wagner Matinee"

Student made Characterization Four Square worksheets

Enduring Understanding:

Through their study of the American Great Plains Homesteaders, students will gain an understanding of the importance of hard work, dedication, and the American dream in the development of the United States as well as the sacrifices and risks dreams often require in the pursuit of one's own dream. They can apply these ideas to their own lives as they identify and pursue their own dreams.

Students will also use the two selected literary pieces to strengthen their literary analysis skills as they practice inference skills and examine the authors' use of tone and characterization to reveal plot development and important themes.

Essential Question:

What was life like for women on the Great Plains in 19th century America and how did their experiences affect and change them? How can we interpret their experiences to help us face challenges in the pursuit of our own dreams?

Learning Objectives:

-Students will gain an understanding of why homesteaders were willing to leave their homes in the East for a new life in the West as well as develop an understanding of what life was like on the American Western Prairie.

-Students will compare and contrast works of literature to understand how life on the Western prairie changed homesteaders.

-Students will read, comprehend, analyze, and critique a short story and journal entries.

-Students will analyze and respond to the use of tone and point of view to develop characterization.

California State Standards: 11th Grade

Aesthetic Valuing

4.0 Analyze, assess, and derive meaning from works of art, including their own, according to the elements of art, the principles of design, and aesthetic qualities.

Visual Literacy

5.2 Compare and contrast works of art, probing beyond the obvious and identifying psychological content found in the symbols and images.

Literary Response and Analysis

3.5 Analyze recognized works of American literature representing a variety of genres and traditions:

- a. Trace the development of American literature from the colonial period forward.
- b. Contrast the major periods, themes, styles, and trends and describe how works by members of different cultures relate to one another in each period.
- c. Evaluate the philosophical, political, religious, ethical, and social influences of the historical period that shaped the characters, plots, and settings.

Writing Strategies

1.2 Use point of view, characterization, style (e.g., use of irony), and related elements for specific rhetorical and aesthetic purposes.

Written and Oral Language Conventions

- 1.1 Demonstrate control of grammar, diction, and paragraph and sentence structure and an understanding of English usage.
- 1.2 Produce legible work that shows accurate spelling and correct punctuation and capitalization.
- 1.3 Reflect appropriate manuscript requirements in writing

National Standards: taken from The National Council of Teachers of English

1. Students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.
2. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification

strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).

3. Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts.
4. Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and non-print texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.

Background:

This lesson is built upon the information students previously studied in a literary unit about Victorian America. Students will use this information to understand how the Victorian woman of the East became the empowered woman of the Western Plains.

Suggested Procedure:

Day One:

-Journal: write about a time when you and your family had to relocate. (If you have never moved, imagine what it would be like.) Where did you go? How did you say goodbye to your friends and family? What feelings did you experience throughout your journey? What did you think about your final destination upon arrival? What was most difficult about the experience?

-Review Victorian era characteristics and ideologies by asking students what they remember from the previous unit.

-Opening Question: (Think, Pair, Share) When you hear people talk about the West in America, what images and ideas come to mind? After meeting in pairs, students share their ideas with the class as teacher or student volunteer writes them on the board. Discuss the male dominated stereotypes that emerge from the discussion. Ask students to think about women of the West and what kind of images come to mind.

-Show Power Point image of "American Progress." Ask students to identify what they see in the picture. Discuss the images as well as the symbols present (i.e. the angel, the use of light and dark, the placement of the people in the painting and the direction the people and things are headed). As a class, discuss how this image relates to the idea of the American dream.

-Use the *Homesteaders of the Western Prairie Part I* Power Point to provide students with necessary background information. Students should take Cornell Notes.

-Read Miriam Davis Colt's "Heading West" journal entries. Before reading, discuss how tone is used to reveal emotions. A writer's attitude towards something emerges from his or her tone. Pay attention to the tone created by the author's word choice, descriptions, and details. When a work is written from first person point of view, tone is a significant contributor towards characterization. While reading the journal, the class should stop at

key points in the story to discuss the changes in tone and what they reveal about the character.

Day One Homework: Research about life on the Western Great Plains in the 19th century and write down 7-10 facts from your research. Include the following information: weather, daily chores for men and women, living conditions, health problems, life expectancy, any other interesting information. Bonus: Research 7-10 facts about the author Willa Cather. No Wikipedia please. Bonus credit will only be given if a bibliography of sources is included.

Day Two: As students enter the classroom, play music mentioned in Cather's "Wagner Matinee": Overture from *Tannhauser*, Prelude to *Tristan and Isolde*, selections from *The Flying Dutchman* and Siegfried's funeral march.

-Journal: Respond to the music. How does it make you feel? What does it remind you of? What do you picture in your mind?

-Students take turns sharing homework facts with class, one fact per student. The teacher will clarify any misunderstandings shared by students concerning their research.

-*Homesteaders of the Western Prairie Part II* Power Point

-Read Willa Cather's "A Wagner Matinee." Before reading, discuss how a writer uses characterization to reveal a character's personality. Characterization is generally developed through four methods: direct statements about the character, physical description, the character's actions, thoughts, or comments, and comments made about the character by other characters. Students do popcorn reading and complete the characterization chart for the main character, Aunt Georgiana, while the story is being read. Throughout reading, the teacher should occasionally stop to ask questions and check for students' understanding.

Day Two Homework: Finish your left-hand margin entries and summaries for your Cornell Notes.

Day Three:

Journal: Write a brief summary of "A Wagner Matinee." Summarize only the portion of the story we have read thus far.

-Review yesterday's portion of "A Wagner Matinee" by asking a student volunteer to summarize what the class has read thus far.

-Complete the class reading of "A Wagner Matinee."

-Students have 15 minutes to meet in groups of 4 or 5 to complete the follow up questions for both literary pieces. Each group is then assigned a question to present to the class. Groups have five minutes to review their question and answer and make any needed changes. Student groups take turns presenting their ideas to the class. After each student group presents, they may entertain questions or ideas about their assigned question from the class.

-Assign writing project.

Day Three Homework: Complete and type your homestead letter. Students have two days to complete the homework assignment.

Evaluations/Assessments:

Writing Project: Students write a letter to a cousin in Boston or New York City from the first person perspective of a homesteader who has been living on the Western prairie for one year.

*See attached handout

Extensions:

-Read "Forging New Frontiers" and excerpt from *Lonesome Dove* by Larry McMurtry in the course textbook. Compare this fictional story with Miriam Davis Colt's account in her journal excerpt "Heading West." Discuss each character's romantic expectations versus the realities they faced on their journeys.

-Organize a fieldtrip to the Autry Museum in Los Angeles where students can experience an overview of America's Western history including exhibits on westward expansion, the California gold rush, and Native American culture. This would help students understand how the experience of 19th century women of the Great Plains is complexly connected to the larger picture of the American West.

-Review sentence fragments, comma splices, and run-on sentences. Identify the use of these errors in the literature pieces and possible corrections.

Resources:

Curtis, Edward S. "The Three Chiefs Piegan." Wikipedia Commons.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Three_chiefs_Piegan_p.39_horizontal.png>

Gray, Susan E. Review of *The Important Things of Life: Women, Work, and Family* by Dee Garceau. *The Journal of American History*, Volume 85, Number 3 (December 1998): 1097-1098.

Hoy, Jim. "The Great Plains Map." Department of Food Management and Dietetics. Kansas State University. <<http://greatplainsfoodways.com/about/the-great-plains-map/>>

Lavendar, Catherine. "Making It Their Own: Women in the West." 2001.

<<http://www.library.csi.cuny.edu/webweb/pages/women.html#Texts>>

Library of Congress. *Prairie Settlement: Nebraska Photographs and Family Letter, 1862-1912*. <<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/connections/prairie-settlement/history2.html>>

"Manifest Destiny." U.S. History Online Textbook. U.S. History.org. 16 July 2012.

<<http://www.ushistory.org/us/>>

“Manifest Destiny in Pictures, 1776-1893”. Fulbright American Studies Institute. University of Illinois at Chicago. <<http://tigger.uic.edu/~pbhales/fasi/visuals%20manifest%20destiny.html>>

“NCYE/IRA Standards for the English Language Arts.” National Council of Teachers of English. 19 July 2012. <<http://www.ncte.org/standards/ncte-ira>>

“Oklahoma Attractions: Pioneers and Prairie Song Living Museum. Hub Pages. 15 August 2011. 14 July, 2012. <<http://urbanechaos.hubpages.com/hub/OklahomaPioneersPrairieSong#>>

“Prairie Homestead: The Letters of Clay and Kate Bowen.” Kansas Collection Articles. <<http://www.kancoll.org/articles/attey/kateltr.htm>>

Ryan, Melissa. “The Enclosure of America: Civilization and Confinement in Willa Cather’s *O Pioneers!*” *American Literature*, Volume 75, Number 2, June 2003. pp. 275-303

Stewart, Elinore Pruitt. “Letters of a Woman Homesteader.” *In The Western Women’s Reader*. Lilian Schlissel and Catherine Lavender, ed. New York: Harper Collins Publishers. 2000. pp. 109.

Thomas, Selma. “There are no Renters Here.” Women of the West Museum. 2001. <http://theautry.org/explore/exhibits/sod/chips_full.html>

“Welcome to the Badlands.” Associated Newspapers Limited. 5 May 2012. 6 July 2012. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2140121/Black-white-images-rare-glimpse-life-American-frontier.html>

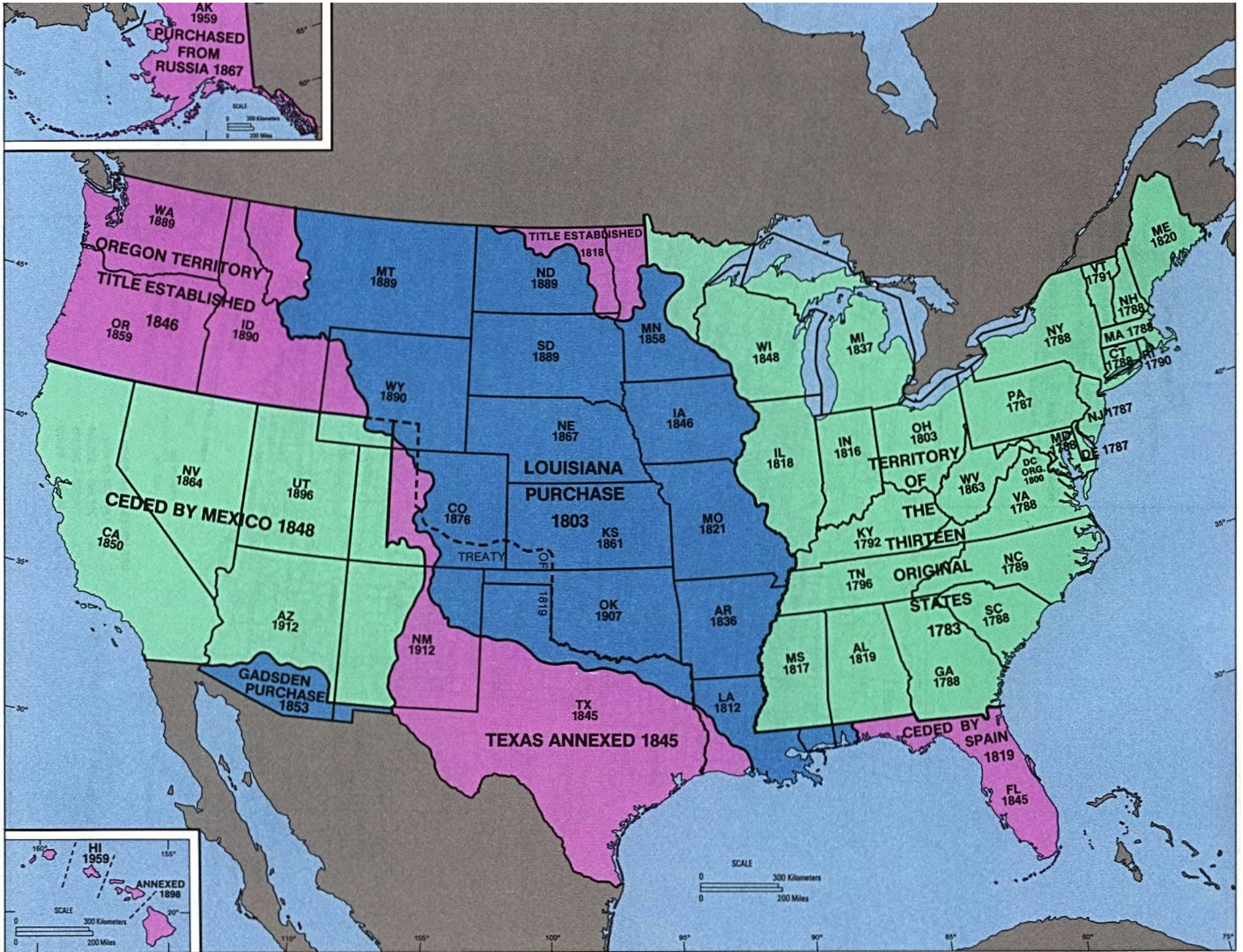
Wishart, David J. “Women Homesteaders.” *Encyclopedia of the Great Plains*. University of Nebraska-Illinois. 2011. <<http://plainshumanities.unl.edu/encyclopedia/doc/egp.gen.040>>

Homesteaders of the Western Prairie

Part I



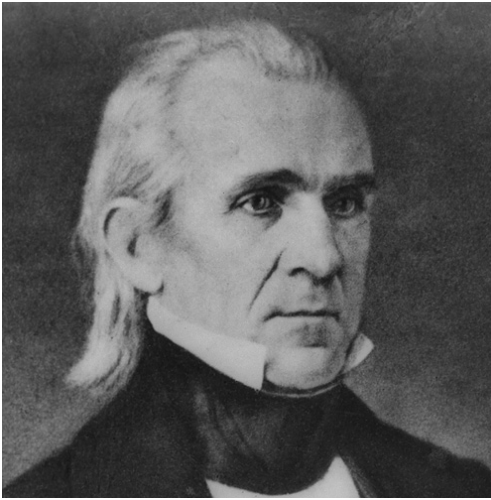
“American Progress” by John Gast (1872)



What is Manifest Destiny?

The phrase 'Manifest Destiny' refers to the idea that America had a divine obligation to stretch the boundaries of their republic to the Pacific Ocean. It was first used to describe the spread of the USA across the West by journalist John O' Sullivan in 1845.

- religion - growth of the nation was a blessing by God
- economic gain (fur, land, gold)
- idea of cultural and racial superiority
- patriotism
- morality



"...It is confidently believed that our system may be safely extended to the utmost bounds of our territorial limits, and that as it shall be extended the bonds of our Union, so far from being weakened, will become stronger..."

~ From the inaugural address of James K. Polk, 11th President (1845-49)



“Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way” by Emanuel Gottlieb Leutze (1861)



William S. Jewett, *The Promised Land—The Grayson Family*, 1850, Terra Foundation for American Art, Daniel J. Terra Collection, 1999.79.

Homestead Act of 1862

The U.S. Congress enacted the Homestead Act in 1862. The Act served two purposes:

1) to encourage settlement of the West

It offered homesteaders full title to a quarter section (160 acres) of public land for \$10.00 if they built a home and improved the property for five years.

2) to tie the West to the North politically and economically during the Civil War

252
HOMESTEAD.

Land Office at

Brownville Mo
January 20th 1868.

CERTIFICATE,
No. 1 }

{ APPLICATION,
No. 1

It is hereby certified, That pursuant to the provisions of the act of Congress, approved May 20, 1862, entitled "An act to secure homesteads to actual settlers on the public domain,"

Daniel Luman has
made payment in full for ~~the NW 1/4 & NE 1/4 of NW 1/4~~ SW 1/4 of NE 1/4 of
Section ~~Twenty Six (26)~~ in Township four (4) N
of Range five (5) E containing 160 acres.

Now, therefore, be it known, That on presentation of this Certificate to the
COMMISSIONER OF THE GENERAL LAND OFFICE, the said Daniel
Luman shall be entitled to a Patent for the Tract of Land above described.

Henry M. Atkinson Register.

Homestead Act = a fresh start in life

Homesteaders were not only white Americans, but included immigrants to the U.S., single women, and former slaves.

There were two main factors that made them leave the East.

1) The Plains offered them lots of land very cheaply compared to the shortage of farmland in the East.

2) The end of the Civil War left hundreds of thousands of ex-soldiers looking for a new challenge. They could find little opportunity to get on in the East or South and moved to the Plains for a new start.

Other reasons include

- escape religious persecution
- escape prejudice of the South



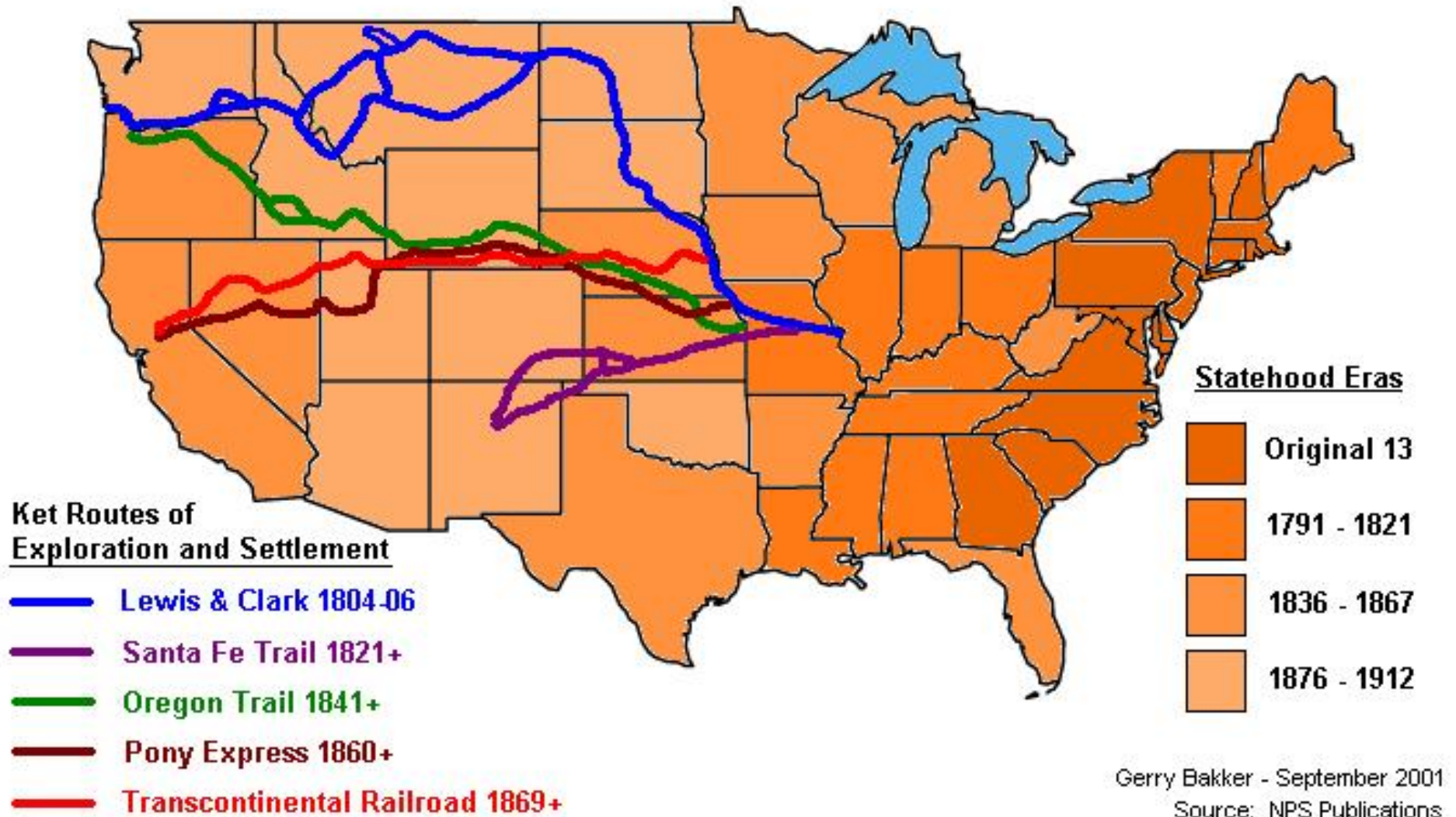
Where is the Great Plains?



<http://greatplainsfoodways.com/about/the-great-plains-map/>

How did Homesteaders travel to their new homes?

Westward Expansion of the United States



Heading West – a long and difficult journey



Fannie Flora Palmer, for Currier and Ives, *The Rocky Mountains-- Emigrants Crossing the Plains*, 1866





<http://thislifeofwander.wordpress.com/2011/04/09/go-west-young-man/>

Utopian Vision

The following is a letter from Uriah Oblinger to his new wife Mattie Thomas. He went to Nebraska with two of his brothers-in-law to establish homesteads. Mattie did not join him until May 1873, so Uriah wrote her almost weekly.



“what was once known as the great 'American desert' will blossom as the rose surely the hand of Providence must be in this, as it seems this desert as it has been termed so long has been specially reserved for the poor of our land to find a place to dwell in and where they can find a home for themselves & families and where they can enjoy the companionship of their loved ones undisturbed by those that have hertofore held them under their almost exclusive control.”

-letter from Uriah W. Oblinger to Mattie V. Oblinger, February 9, 1873



Frances Flora Palmer, for Currier and Ives, *Across the Continent: Westward the Course of Empire Makes Its Way*, 1868.

Part II

Life on the Western Prairie



[http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/displayPhoto.pl?path=/award/nbhips/lca/106&topImages=10658r.jpg&topLinks=10658v.jpg&displayProfile=0&title=Sod%20house,%20Custer%20County,%20Nebraska.&m856s=\\$dnbhips\\$f10658&dir=ammem&itemLink=r?ammem/psbib:@field\(DOCID+@lit\(p10658\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/displayPhoto.pl?path=/award/nbhips/lca/106&topImages=10658r.jpg&topLinks=10658v.jpg&displayProfile=0&title=Sod%20house,%20Custer%20County,%20Nebraska.&m856s=$dnbhips$f10658&dir=ammem&itemLink=r?ammem/psbib:@field(DOCID+@lit(p10658)))

-letter from Uriah W. Oblinger to Mattie V. Oblinger,
November 3, 1872



Dear Wife & Baby

Ma this is as pretty a country to look at as any one ever saw but it has its drawbacks as well as other places one objection is the depth to water wells back from the streams vary from 50 to 150 ft in depth...another objection is no timber at all you might say all there is stand along the streams and it is all taken up some of it however stand on rail road land and settlers go for that but is a limited supply at best. If I get either of the pieces selected I will have to haul my wood 10 to 12 miles...

A man can come here with \$500.00 and manage properly and in a few years he can have a good comfortable home in a beautiful looking country and the most I see unfavorable is the timber & water...

Ma there is several with me today but I am lonesome without you and baby and I tell you there is a vacant place to me wherever I go and no one can fill it but Ma & baby well good by for the present...

D. Dunn just landed on his claim in Custer County



[http://memory.loc.gov/cgibin/displayPhoto.pl?path=/award/nbhips/lca/132&topImages=13261r.jpg&topLinks=13261v.jpg&displayProfile=0&title=D.%20Dunn%20just%20landed%20on%20his%20claim%20in%20Custer%20County.&m856s=\\$dnbhips\\$f13261&dir=ammem&itemLink=r?ammem/psbib:@field\(DOCID+@lit\(p13261\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgibin/displayPhoto.pl?path=/award/nbhips/lca/132&topImages=13261r.jpg&topLinks=13261v.jpg&displayProfile=0&title=D.%20Dunn%20just%20landed%20on%20his%20claim%20in%20Custer%20County.&m856s=$dnbhips$f13261&dir=ammem&itemLink=r?ammem/psbib:@field(DOCID+@lit(p13261)))

To overcome the lack of timber to build their houses, the Homesteaders used sods of earth cut from the Plains as bricks. They built their houses out of this earth and called them **sod houses**.



"My first house in Nebraska, 1880. Built from 'Nebraska brick'."



[http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/displayPhoto.pl?path=/award/nbhips/lca/102&topImages=10216r.jpg&topLinks=10216v.jpg&displayProfile=0&title%22My%20first%20house%20in%20Nebraska,%201880.%20%20Built%20from%20'Nebraska%20brick'."%22&m856s=\\$dnbhips\\$f10216&dir=ammem&itemLink=r?ammem/psbib:@field\(DOCID+@lit\(p10216\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/displayPhoto.pl?path=/award/nbhips/lca/102&topImages=10216r.jpg&topLinks=10216v.jpg&displayProfile=0&title%22My%20first%20house%20in%20Nebraska,%201880.%20%20Built%20from%20'Nebraska%20brick'.)

George Copsey sod house, Westerville, Custer County, Nebraska.



[http://memory.loc.gov/cgibin/displayPhoto.pl?path=/award/nbhips/lca/101&topImages=10152r.jpg&topLinks=10152v.jpg&displayProfile=0&title=George%20Copsey%20sod%20house,%20Westerville,%20Custer%20County,%20Nebraska.&m856s=\\$dnbhips\\$f10152&dir=ammem&itemLink=r?ammem/psbib:@field\(DOCID+@lit\(p10152\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgibin/displayPhoto.pl?path=/award/nbhips/lca/101&topImages=10152r.jpg&topLinks=10152v.jpg&displayProfile=0&title=George%20Copsey%20sod%20house,%20Westerville,%20Custer%20County,%20Nebraska.&m856s=$dnbhips$f10152&dir=ammem&itemLink=r?ammem/psbib:@field(DOCID+@lit(p10152)))

...Some come here and put up temporary frame houses thought they could not live in a sod house This fall they are going to build sod houses so they can live comfortable this winter a temporary frame house here is a poor thing a house that is not plastered the wind and dust goes right through and they are very cold a sod house can be built so they are real nice and comfortable build nice walls and then plaster and lay a floor above and below and then they are nice Uriah is going to build one after that style this fall The one we are in at present is 14 by 16 and a dirt floor Uriah intends taking it for a stable this winter it will be a nice comfortable stable.



-Letter from Mattie V. Oblinger to George W. Thomas, June 16, 1873

What were the advantages of living in a sod house?



00



http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Three_chiefs_Piegan_p.39_horizontal.png

What do you think of when you think about
Native Americans of the Great Plains?

Since Mattie had not been to Nebraska yet, she was curious about the area. In a letter dated January 19, 1873, Uriah answered a question Mattie asked him about Indians:

...you wanted to know about the Indians if they were troublesome where we are going to settle I can tell you they are not for we will not be living on the trail they pass along when they go hunting and they are not troublesome anyway till they get out farther on the frontier than my homestead there was a party of them camped for a few days at Sutton this winter as they were going on a hunt but bothered no one as I can learn.



Problems They Faced

- Building a house
- Staying healthy
- Extreme weather
- Lack of fuel
- Indian attacks
- Isolation
- Keeping clean
- Lack of water
- Pests and vermin
- Dust storms



...I can tell you of one of the most terrible storms I ever witnessed
Language fails to describe so that one may know just how it seemed
to one in the storm it struck us at sunset Sunday evening with wind &
rain & rained nearly all night the wind increasing all the time Monday
morning it turned to snow (very fine article) & snow & wind
increasing all the time all though it seemed as though the wind was
doing it best the storm lasted from sunset sunday evening till near
midnight wednesday night making near 80 hours storm when we
would go out to try to do anything for the stock we could not see
other more than from 5 to 10 ft & to be heard we had to shout at the
top of the voice on account of the wind blowing such a gale one
could hardly keep his feet at all we had to dig snow about 1/2 hr
whenever we undertook to feed anything in order to get to the
stable door the snow streamed through every crevice I say streamed
through for it just almost blinded one to get to the corn pile we had
to shovel in short it was shovel to utmost of ones strength to do
anything or get anything.

-Letter from Uriah W. Oblinger to Mattie. V. Oblinger, April 13-18, 1873

Insects were another problematic aspect of the Great Plains environment. A letter from Mattie to her family, dated September 10, 1876, talked about being "grasshoppered" again:

...I suppose you would like to know if we have been Grasshoppered again they were here several days pretty thick and injured the corn considerable Some fields they striped the blades all off and other pieces striped partly they nibbled the ends of most all the ears and eat of all the silks so it will not fill out and be as good Neb would have had a splendid corn crop if the hoppers had stayed away awhile It looked rather gloomy when they begin to light on the corn they were not so large nor did not eat near so fast as they did two years [a]go They eat nearly all of my cabbage...

-Letter from Mattie V. Oblinger to thomas Family, Sept. 10, 1876

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hwMFrAePc0E&feature=BFa&list=PLAEAE5E85DC9EDF0B)

[v=hwMFrAePc0E&feature=BFa&list=PLAEAE5E85DC9EDF0B](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hwMFrAePc0E&feature=BFa&list=PLAEAE5E85DC9EDF0B) Part 24 5:05-Part 25
1:15

The Importance of Community

Life on The Great Plains was a life of isolation and loneliness. Families often lived 10-20 miles from their nearest neighbor. Families relied on each other for company.

- barn raisings
- sewing and quilting groups
- harvest
- church
- community meals
- marriage and funerals



Women making quilts near Fairdale, N.D., 1890s



The Great Plains Farm Wife

- cleaning
- washing
- childcare
- gardening
- cooking
- sewing
- collecting fuel (buffalo dung)
- helping with field work
- cleaning killed animals for food
- fetching water
- educating the children



***Women were viewed as partners rather than “helpmates.”**

http://theautry.org/explore/exhibits/sod/chips_full.html



Saturday forenoon 11 Oclock Aprl 25th 1874

Fillmore Co Neb

Dear Father & Mother & Bros & Sister



To day finds Ella & I alone as the boys (Giles & Uriah) have gone to Sutton. I have finished my Saturdays work and thought I would write until the boys come for their dinner. Nett my Saturdays work does not amount to much. To day I give the house a general sweeping & brushing cleaned out the cupboard and washed off all my dishes then washed down the windows & doors. I washed & then scoured my tin ware so we will live bright for a few days. Now Mother are you ready to say well Marth what do you scour tin ware with away out in Neb? Well I use sand just as I use to in Ind but I can not go to the Creek here and get it for we are not near any runing stream.the sand I useed come out of Mr Powells Well it was some Mrs Allkire give me. Nett we recd your letter dated Apr 16th last evening Mr Robinson brought it out to Giles then Giles came over last evening stayed all night. I was truly glad to hear for it did seem like a long time since we had a letter from home.

Homesteading Women

Thousands of women took advantage of the Homestead Act. (About 20% of homestead entries were women.) Women who were single, widowed, divorced, or deserted were eligible to acquire 160 acres of federal land in their own name.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2140121/Black-white-images-rare-glimpse-life-American-frontier.html>

Benefits:

- economic opportunity
- independence
- adventure



“To me, homesteading is the solution of all poverty’ s problems, but I realize that temperament has much to do with success in any undertaking, and persons afraid of coyotes and work and loneliness had better let ranching alone. At the same time, any woman who can stand her own company, can see the beauty of the sunset, loves growing things, and is willing to put in as much time at careful labor as she does over the washtub, will certainly succeed; will have independence, plenty to eat all the time, and a home of her own in the end.”

-Letter from Elinore Rupert Stewart to her friend in Colorado, Wyoming (1909)



“In Nebraska, as in so many other States, we must face the fact that the splendid story of the pioneers is finished, and that no new story worthy to take its place has yet begun. The generation that subdued the wild land and broke up the virgin prairie is passing, but it is still there, a group of rugged figures in the background which inspire respect, compel admiration. With these old men and women the attainment of material prosperity was a moral victory, because it was wrung from hard conditions, was the result of a struggle that tested character.”

-Willa Cather, 1923 ⁶_—



The US Government wanted total control over the land of the USA, and so encouraged settlement of the Plains. The Acts it passed and the actions of the US Army in the Plains Wars all made it easier for the nation to fulfill its ‘Manifest Destiny’ of taking over the whole continent. The US Government encouraged the homesteaders to believe that their sacrifices on the Plains were part of the nation’s work towards its Manifest Destiny.



Bibliography

Curtis, Edward S. "The Three Chiefs Piegan." Wikipedia Commons.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Three_chiefs_Piegan_p.39_horizontal.png

Gray, Susan E. Review of *The Important Things of Life: Women, Work, and Family* by Dee Garceau. *The Journal of American History*, Volume 85, Number 3 (December 1998): 1097-1098.

Hoy, Jim. "The Great Plains Map." Department of Food Management and Dietetics. Kansas State University.

<<http://greatplainsfoodways.com/about/the-great-plains-map/>>

Lavendar, Catherine. "Making It Their Own: Women in the West." 2001.

<http://www.library.csi.cuny.edu/webweb/pages/women.html#Texts>

Library of Congress. *Prairie Settlement: Nebraska Photographs and Family Letter, 1862-1912*.

<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/connections/prairie-settlement/history2.html>

"Manifest Destiny." U.S. History Online Textbook. U.S. History.org. 16 July 2012.<

<http://www.ushistory.org/us/>>

"Manifest Destiny in Pictures, 1776-1893". Fulbright American Studies Institute. University of Illinois at

Chicago. <http://tiger.uic.edu/~pbhales/fasi/visuals%20manifest%20destiny.html>

"Oklahoma Attractions: Pioneers and Prairie Song Living Museum. Hub Pages. 15 August 2011. 14 July, 2012.

<<http://urbane-chaos.hubpages.com/hub/OklahomaPioneersPrairieSong#>>

"Prairie Homestead: The Letters of Clay and Kate Bowen." Kansas Collection Articles.

< <http://www.kancoll.org/articles/attey/kateltr.htm>>

Bibliography Continued

Ryan, Melissa. "The Enclosure of America: Civilization and Confinement in Willa Cather's *O Pioneers!*" *American Literature*, Volume 75, Number 2 (June 2003): 275-303.

Stewart, Elinore Pruitt. "Letters of a Woman Homesteader." *In The Western Women's Reader*. Lilian Schlissel and Catherine Lavender, ed. New York: Harper Collins Publishers. 2000. pp. 109.

Thomas, Selma. "There are no Renters Here." Women of the West Museum. 2001.
http://theautry.org/explore/exhibits/sod/chips_full.html

"Welcome to the Badlands." Associated Newspapers Limited. 5 May 2012. 6 July 2012.
<<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2140121/Black-white-images-rare-glimpse-life-American-frontier.html>>

Wishart, David J. "Women Homesteaders." *Encyclopedia of the Great Plains*. University of Nebraska-Illinois. 2011. <<http://plainshumanities.unl.edu/encyclopedia/doc/egp.gen.040>>

"Oklahoma Attractions: Pioneers and Prairie Song Living Museum. Hub Pages. 15 August 2011. 14 July, 2012.
<<http://urbane-chaos.hubpages.com/hub/OklahomaPioneersPrairieSong#>>

Characterization Four Square

Direct statements about the character

Physical description

The character's actions, thoughts,
or comments

Comments made about the character by
other characters

Homesteaders of the 19th Century Western Prairie
Group Questions

***Heading West* by Miriam Davis Colt pg. 596**

1. What is the appearance of the settler woman whom Colt describes meeting in her May 11 entry? What does this settler woman suggest to Colt about her own future?
2. How do Colt's expectations about life in Octagon City compare with reality?

***"A Wagner Matinee"* by Willa Cather pg. 677**

3. What is revealed about Aunt Georgiana's character through descriptions of her appearance and reactions or comments by her and other characters?
4. Find two examples of events Clark recalls from living with Aunt Georgiana. How do these events help to shape our impression of her?
5. What details about Aunt Georgiana's life in Nebraska help you to understand her better?
6. What can you infer from the characterization of Aunt Georgiana in "A Wagner Matinee" about life on the Great Plains? Provide specific quotes from the story to support your conclusions.

Extended Understanding

7. Based on Colt's experiences and Aunt Georgina's character, explain what character traits you feel were necessary to being a successful pioneer.
8. How are people's personalities shaped by the environment in which they live? Support your answer.

Homesteaders of the Western Great Plains
Writing Assignment
11th Grade American Lit.
25 points

Name: _____

Assignment: Write a letter to a cousin in Boston or New York City from the first person perspective of a homesteader who has been living on the Western prairie for one year. Include the following information:

- Identify the location of your new home in the West (city and/or state)
- Identify your reason/motivation for moving West.
- Describe your travel experience westward.
- What were your expectations? Are they a reality?
- Describe your typical daily routine on your homestead. -Identify the biggest challenge or obstacle in your life.
- Include commentary about your experiences - thoughts and feelings about your adventure westward and your new life.

Your letter should be a minimum of one full page and is not to exceed two pages. **The letter must be typed double space, using 12 point Times New Roman font.**

Rubric:

_____ (15) concrete examples (evidence that you were paying attention in the class lectures and while reading the literary excerpts) location, reason for move, travel experience, expectations, daily routine, biggest obstacle

_____ (5) commentary about your experiences

_____ (5) mechanics (grammar, spelling, sentence structure, and punctuation)

Total Points earned _____
25

***Be sure to print this assignment page and attach it to the front of your letter before turning it in to the teacher.**