Westward Choices

Trace the motives, decisions, and effects of U.S. expansion.

8.H.17 "Describe the causes, courses, challenges, compromises, and consequences associated with westward expansion, including the concept of Manifest Destiny."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Circle two motives for moving west, underline two ways the United States gained or secured western land, and write C beside one compromise and E beside two effects of expansion.

Who Gained from Going West?

1. In the 1840s, a wagon heading toward Oregon carried families hoping for farmland and new opportunities. Some Americans believed in Manifest Destiny, the idea that the United States was meant to spread across the continent. This belief encouraged expansion, but it did not make the land empty or give settlers a right to take it. Native nations already lived and governed across the West. For some settlers, rich soil and reports of trade drew them west; for others, the journey promised a fresh start.

2. Expansion took different paths. In 1845, the United States annexed Texas, whose southern border was disputed with Mexico. After fighting broke out near that border, the two countries went to war in 1846. Meanwhile, Britain and the United States agreed to divide their claims to Oregon Country along the 49th parallel, avoiding war there. The 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ended the war with Mexico; Mexico ceded a vast region to the United States, which paid Mexico $15 million. Changing borders did not erase Native nations.

3. The new land brought hard choices and lasting harm. Gold found in California in 1848 drew thousands of migrants, increasing pressure on Native communities and their lands. Congress argued over whether slavery would spread into the territories gained from Mexico. The Compromise of 1850 admitted California as a free state but also imposed a stronger law requiring the return of people who had escaped slavery. Many Native nations faced forced removal, broken treaties, and violence as settlers pushed west. Expansion offered opportunity to some while taking land and freedom from others.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How could Manifest Destiny and a practical hope both encourage a family to move west?

2. How did the United States secure land in Oregon differently from land gained from Mexico?

3. What conflict did the Compromise of 1850 address, and what did each provision named in the passage do?

4. How did the discovery of gold affect migrants and Native communities differently?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a five-sentence museum label for a travel trunk from the 1840s. Connect a motive for expansion, a way the United States gained or secured land, a challenge and compromise, and different effects on two groups; end with your judgment about whether expansion meant progress for everyone.

ANSWER KEY

Westward Choices

GRADE 8 · 8.H.17

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Circle two motives for moving west, underline two ways the United States gained or secured western land, and write C beside one compromise and E beside two effects of expansion. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How could Manifest Destiny and a practical hope both encourage a family to move west?	**Manifest Destiny made expansion seem like the nation's future, while hopes for farmland or trade gave a family a practical reason to move.**
2	How did the United States secure land in Oregon differently from land gained from Mexico?	**The United States and Britain agreed to divide their Oregon claims, avoiding war there. The United States gained territory from Mexico through a treaty after a war.**
3	What conflict did the Compromise of 1850 address, and what did each provision named in the passage do?	**Congress disputed whether slavery would spread into territory gained from Mexico. The compromise admitted California as a free state and strengthened the law requiring the return of people who had escaped slavery.**
4	How did the discovery of gold affect migrants and Native communities differently?	**Gold drew thousands of migrants to California, while their arrival increased pressure on Native communities and their lands.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

This travel trunk represents settlers who traveled west seeking farmland and a fresh start. Manifest Destiny also encouraged many Americans to see expansion as their country's future, though Native nations already governed western lands. The United States secured its Oregon claims through an agreement with Britain. Disputes about slavery in new territories divided Congress, and the Compromise of 1850 admitted California as a free state while strengthening the law that returned people who had escaped slavery. Expansion was not progress for everyone: some settlers found opportunity, while many Native people lost land and safety.

Accept other passage-supported motives, land gains, compromises, and effects when students explain the connections accurately. For the museum label, look for five sentences and a judgment that recognizes expansion's unequal effects.