Instructional Unit Title: Growing Pains

The teacher may engage students in a gallery walk focused on questions around the benefits/drawbacks of westward expansion, who decides to expand, who should determine policies around land use/allocation, and what happens to native populations, so that students can begin to consider the lasting effects of territorial growth in the United States.

The teacher may present illustrations, sketches, paintings, music, dramatic and literary sources of various migrating peoples so that students can construct an understanding of the various cultures that moved into the newly acquired lands.

The teacher may brainstorm with students the use and distribution of scarce resources in the west so that students can discuss and critique the legitimacy of decisions made around resources (e.g., water and land) as population in the west increases.

The teacher may provide primary and secondary sources of the various policies and legislation (e.g., Indian Removal Act, Dawes Act, Homestead Act) regarding land policy so that students can explain the specific conflicts and outcomes that emerged as a result of the expansion of human settlement in the west.

The teacher may lead students on a walking tour of the surrounding community so that students can identify the (local) legacy of cultural diffusion such as street names, food, economic practices (e.g., use/allocation of resources such as water, land).

The teacher may provide primary source maps (e.g., maps showing the territorial growth of the U.S.) and population data so that students may brainstorm why people settle where they did and then, students can analyze settlement patterns and changing boundaries in early American history (early 1600’s - 1850’s).

The teacher may provide sketch maps, image of American Progress, suffrage, temperance movements) created through movement/ expansion of people so that students can examine the consequences of specific reform movements.

The teacher may engage students in thematic maps (e.g., natural resources, manufacturing), court decisions (e.g., Dred Scott Decision), and governmental legislation (e.g., Missouri Compromise, Kansas-Nebraska Act) so that students can understand how the social tensions in the west were not isolated events in the 1800’s in the United States and that social and economic tensions were occurring all over the country.

The teacher may bring in examples of social tensions (e.g., image of American Progress, suffrage, temperance movements) created through movement/ expansion of people so that students can examine the consequences of specific reform movements.

The teacher may use examples of trade and other economic activities in the early west so that students can begin to consider the ways in which successful settlements required cooperation and interdependence.

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The teacher may provide primary and secondary sources, such as government policies and/or legislation, so that students can document the territorial growth of the United States.

The teacher may provide political cartoons showing the perspectives of abolitionists and states’ rights advocates, illustrating key social tensions between the North and South, so that students will be able to explain how differing perspectives on the issue of slavery and its expansion facilitated southern secession.

This unit was authored by a team of Colorado educators. The unit is intended to support teachers, schools, and districts as they make their own local decisions around the best instructional plans and practices for all students. To see the entire instructional unit sample with possible learning experiences, resources, differentiation, and assessments visit http://www.cde.state.co.us/standardsandinstruction/instructionalunitsamples.