

Teacher Introduction

These Common Core History Assessments are designed to help your students develop key literacy and history thinking skills as they learn about westward expansion. The assessments are intended to be *formative* more than *summative*. That is, they are meant to be part of the instructional process itself, providing you and your students with information at a point when timely adjustments in teaching and learning can be made.

Similar sets of assessments are available (or planned) for each unit in a typical American history class.

★ *Historical Thinking and the Challenge of the Common Core*

This set includes nine assessments aligned with the first nine Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standards. We have left out the tenth Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standard, which does not lend itself to assessments of the sort provided here. The set also includes two writing tasks aligned with two key Common Core History/Social Studies Writing Standards.

These Common Core standards challenge history teachers to develop in students the complex literacy skills they need in today's world and the ability to master the unique demands of working with historical primary and secondary source texts. The Common Core standards are supportive of the best practices in teaching historical thinking. Such practices include close reading, attending to a source's point of view and purpose, corroborating sources, and placing sources in their historical context. These are the skills needed to make history less about rote learning and more about an active effort to investigate and interpret the past.

These assessments are also useful in many ways for ELA teachers. They assess many of the skills specified in the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards, which put a good deal of emphasis on the reading of informational texts. The Anchor Standards form the basis for all of the various Common Core standards for English Language Arts.

★ *What Are These Assessments Like?*

- *A group of nine reading skills assessments and two writing tasks for each major era of American History*

Each reading skills assessment is based on one of the key Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standards. Two writing tasks are based on the first two College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing, which are the basis for the Common Core History/Social Studies Writing Standards. The two writing standards focus on writing arguments to support claims and writing informative/explanatory texts.

- *Based on primary or secondary sources*

In most cases, one primary source is used. In some cases, an assessment is based on more than one primary source or on a primary and a secondary source. The sources are brief. In most cases, texts have been slightly altered to improve readability, but without changing meaning or tone.

- *Brief tasks promoting historical literacy*

For each assessment, students write brief answers to one or two questions. The questions are not tests of simple factual recall. They assess the students' mastery of the skills addressed by that assessment's Common Core History/Social Studies Standard.

- *Two versions of each of the nine reading standards assessments*

A BASIC and an ADVANCED version of each assessment are provided. The BASIC Assessment addresses the Common Core Standard for grades 6–8. The ADVANCED Assessment is based on the Common Core Standard for grades 9–10 and grades 11–12 combined. Each version uses the same source or sources. In some cases, sources have been somewhat shortened for the BASIC version.

- *Easy to use both as learning and assessment tools*

These assessments do not take valuable time away from instruction. The primary sources and background information on each source make them useful mini-lessons as well as tools to assess student historical thinking skills. The sources all deal with themes and trends normally covered when teaching the relevant historical era.

- *Evaluating student responses*

Brief but specific suggestions are provided defining acceptable and best responses to each question asked in the assessment. The suggestions are meant to aid in evaluating students, but even more importantly they are a way for teachers to help students better understand and master the skills on which the assessment is focused.

Westward Expansion Assessment 1

Basic Level

Teacher Instructions

Based on Common Core Reading Standard 1 for grades 6–8

★ Key Ideas and Details

- 1. (6–8)** Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

★ Using this Assessment

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Westward Expansion: Assessment 1 is designed to measure students' ability to master the skills described in Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standard 1 for grades 6–8. It asks students to cite specific textual evidence from two documents. It also challenges students to adapt that reading skill to the unique demands of thinking historically as they carefully interpret textual evidence in a primary source from a time in the past and a secondary source account of that same time in the past.

★ Evaluating Student Responses to this Assessment

[This section is not available for review on sample pages]

Westward Expansion: Assessment 1

Directions: This exercise asks you to read a primary source document and a secondary source document carefully and answer questions about specific details in the documents. In order to better understand the documents, read and make use of the source information located just below each document. When you have studied the documents and the source information, answer the two assessment questions that follow.

CCS Standard 1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

Document 1: A Primary Source

The object of your mission is to explore the Missouri River and such principal stream of it, as, by its course and communication with the water of the Pacific ocean may offer the most direct and practicable water communication across this continent, for the purposes of commerce.

Beginning at the mouth of the Missouri, you will take observations of latitude and longitude at all remarkable points on the river, & especially at the mouths of rivers, at rapids, at islands & other places & objects distinguished by such natural marks & characters of a durable kind, as that they may with certainty be recognized hereafter. The courses of the river between these points of observation may be supplied by the compass, the log-line & by time, corrected by the observations themselves. The variations of the compass too, in different places should be noticed.

The interesting points of the portage between the heads of the Missouri & the water offering the best communication with the Pacific ocean should be fixed by observation, & the course of that water to the ocean, in the same manner as that of the Missouri.

Source Information: In 1803, President Jefferson sent a team to explore the northwest and discover a route to the Pacific Ocean. In 1804, Meriwether Lewis and William Clark led this team up the Missouri River. They crossed the Rocky Mountains, struggled to locate the Columbia River, traveled down it and reached the Pacific Ocean in November 1805. They returned with much new information on the native peoples, the resources, and the lands they explored. Before the expedition left, Jefferson wrote down a long list of instructions for Lewis. This document is one small excerpt from those instructions.

Source: Jefferson, Thomas. "Jefferson's Instructions to Meriwether Lewis." *Thomas Jefferson's Monticello*. <http://www.monticello.org/site/jefferson/jeffersons-instructions-to-meriwether-lewis>.

Westward Expansion Assessment 7

Advanced Level

Teacher Instructions

Based on Common Core Reading Standard 7 for grades 9–12

★ *Integration of Knowledge and Ideas*

- 7. (9–10) Integrate quantitative or technical analysis (e.g., charts, research data) with qualitative analysis in print or digital text.
- 7. (11–12) Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

★ *Using this Assessment*

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Westward Expansion: Assessment 7 is designed to measure students' ability to master the skills described in Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standard 7 for grades 9–10 and 11–12 combined. It asks students to do something historians must do all the time—integrate evidence found in a wide variety of primary sources presented in many visual and textual formats. It also asks them to judge the relative strengths and weaknesses of visual as compared with written sources.

★ *Evaluating Student Responses to this Assessment*

[This section is not available for review on sample pages]

Westward Expansion: Assessment 7

Directions: This exercise asks you to study three primary source documents carefully and answer questions focused on what the sources have in common. In order to better understand these documents and their importance as historical evidence, read and make use of the source information just below or next to each document itself. When you have studied the documents and the source information, answer the assessment question that follows.

CCS Standard 7: (9–10) Integrate quantitative or technical analysis (e.g., charts, research data) with qualitative analysis in print or digital text. **(11–12)** Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

Document 1: A Primary Source Table

Dates	Days to California	Days to Oregon
1841-1848	157.7	169.1
1849	131.6	129.0
1850	107.9	125.0
1850-1860	112.7	128.5
1841-1860	121.0	138.6

Source Information: This table provides a variety of estimated times to travel from the Mississippi across the plains and mountains to either California or Oregon. The figures show the average number of days the overland trip took during several different years or sets of years. The estimates are not exact, as information about exact jumping off places and other details was not always available. These estimates can be found in John Unruh, Jr., *The Plains Across: The Overland Emigrants and the Trans-Mississippi West, 1840–60*, (Champaign IL: University of Illinois Press, 1979), page 403. This table can be accessed online at http://www.octa-trails.org/learn/trail_facts.php#deaths.

Document 2: A Written Primary Source

After experiencing so many hardships, you doubtless will think I regret taking this long and tiresome trip, and would rather go back than proceed to the end of my journey. But, no, I have a great desire to see Oregon, and besides, there are many things we meet with—the beautiful scenery of plain and mountain, and their inhabitants, the wild animals and the Indians, and natural curiosities in abundance—to compensate us for the hardships and mishaps we encounter. People who do come must not be worried or frightened at trifles; they must put up with storm and cloud as well as calm and sunshine; wade through rivers, climb steep hills, often go hungry, keep cool and good natured always, and possess courage and ingenuity equal to any emergency, and they will be able to endure unto the end. A lazy person should never think of going to Oregon.

Source Information: This brief excerpt is a passage from Elizabeth Wood's diary of her journey to Oregon in 1851. This account, copied from the *Weekly Republican* of Peoria, Illinois, February 13, 1852, appears with the title "Journal of a Trip to Oregon, 1851," by Elizabeth Wood, *The Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (March 1926), page 199.

Document 3: A Visual Primary Source



Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Reproduction Number: LC-DIG-ppmsca-08375.

Source Information: This photograph shows a family group standing in front of their sod house with a windmill on the roof of an adjoining building. The location was Coburg, Nebraska, around 1884.

Assessment Question

Imagine you are in a family in the mid-1800s. Your family is thinking about heading to Oregon. Explain how all three of these documents would influence your thinking about the challenges that lie ahead? Explain what the documents have in common and how they differ in what they show you about those challenges.