

FORT LANCASTER

— STATE HISTORIC SITE —

Sheffield, Texas

Pre-Visit Guide

High School

Overview: Go West...

In preparation for a visit to Fort Lancaster, students will learn about the fort's construction, its function as a refuge for settlers heading west, the impact of westward expansion on Texas, the landscape of North America, and Native Americans on the frontier territories.

U.S. History Since 1877 TEKS

(12) Geography. The student understands the impact of geographic factors on major events. The student is expected to:

(A) analyze the impact of physical and human geographic factors on the settlement of the Great Plains.

(13) Geography. The student understands the causes and effects of migration and immigration on American society. The student is expected to:

(A) analyze the causes and effects of changing demographic patterns resulting from migration within the United States, including western expansion.

(29) Social studies skills. The student applies critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of valid sources, including electronic technology. The student is expected to:

(A) use a variety of both primary and secondary valid sources to acquire information and to analyze and answer historical questions; and

(B) analyze information by sequencing, categorizing, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, comparing and contrasting, finding the main idea, summarizing, making generalizations, making predictions, drawing inferences, and drawing conclusions.

Materials

- Historical images for display/distribution
- Site Introduction video at <https://youtu.be/abheEKzNG9w>
- Instructional materials for distribution

Vocabulary

- **Manifest Destiny:** the idea that the United States not only had the right to expand across the continent to the Pacific coast, but that it had a responsibility to do so, since it was considered to be "God's will."

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Activity: Illustrating Westward Expansion

15 minutes

“Go west, young man, and grow up with the country,” was a famous quote made by Horace Greeley, founder and editor of the *New York Tribune* newspaper and a major proponent of westward expansion and settlement in the 19th century.

Display or distribute **John Gast’s 1872 painting, *American Progress*** (alternate title, *Westward the course of destiny*).

Give students time to study the painting to determine how elements visually display the concept of westward U.S. expansion. Ask students to respond to these questions for discussion:

- **What is represented in the painting? What is the focal point?**

[The painting shows an allegorical female figure of America leading pioneers westward, as they travel on foot, in a stagecoach, by wagon, and by railroads. On their way, they encounter Native Americans and herds of bison.]

- **How does the painting illustrate ideas of “American Progress” in the 1800s? What points of view or bias are illustrated?**

[The female representing American Progress looks to be a divine figure, and the native peoples and wildlife in her shadow seem to be fleeing. Students might notice the light on the right side (eastern) side of the painting and the darkness of the left side (western), illustrating the painter’s concept of American Progress bringing light to the darkness of the uncivilized western frontier.]

- **How does this painting illustrate the American concept of westward expansion?**

[From the U.S. point of view, “American Progress” and the settling of the west were one in the same. This progress was divinely supported as “Manifest Destiny.”]

Extend the analysis by discussing how different audiences (i.e. Native Americans, expansion opponents) might have interpreted this painting.

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Primary Source Activity: Native Americans in the 1800s

20 minutes

Historical Context

Thomas Jefferson's 1806 message to Congress was delivered at the beginning of the westward expansion movement. At that time, the Louisiana Purchase in 1803 and the expeditions of explorers Lewis and Clark were sparking U.S. interest in the west. Yet, it was not until the dramatic events of the 1840s that waves of settlers set out west, threatening tribal hunting grounds and buffalo herds. In the 1840s, the United States annexed Texas, acquired Oregon, California and New Mexico, and forced the Native Americans in the Great Lakes to resettle on the Great Plains, cementing an aggressive mission to settle the west. After the U.S.- Mexican War, people from the U.S. set out to explore, mine for gold, and claim land in California and Colorado.

Immigrants from the United States, Mexico, and Europe poured into frontier territory, threatening tribal hunting grounds and buffalo herds. Native groups raided livestock and settlements to slow the loss of their land. In the 1850s, in response to the tribal attacks and in order to increase safety for travelers heading west, the U.S. military established forts like Fort Lancaster. The new presence of the soldiers disrupted a maze of tribal trails that crisscrossed the area and led in and out of Mexico. Native American tribes remaining in Texas, such as the Comanche and Lipan Apaches, lost as many as half of their population due to hunting lands being blocked by forts and settlements, professional hunters and settlers decreasing the buffalo herds, and deaths caused by diseases brought by European settlers.

Only fifty years passed between Jefferson's message and the establishment of Fort Lancaster. Yet, by 1856, U.S. dominion stretched from the Atlantic to the Pacific, forever altering land and lives.



An image believed to represent Fort Lancaster.

Fort Lancaster, Texas, 1861. Wood engraving printed in *Harper's Weekly*. Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2003677260/>. (Accessed October 21, 2017.)

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Distribute or display the primary source materials, **Thomas Jefferson’s 1806 Message to Congress** and **U.S. Army Inspector General Joseph Mansfield’s Fort Lancaster report, 1856**. After students complete the activities, share responses to the questions.

Thomas Jefferson Letter Answer Key:

1. Congress
2. The first phrase is more negative and dismissive in tone, and it also acknowledges an existing fear regarding Native Americans.
3. Answers will vary, but could include Jefferson’s overly positive portrayal of the “Indian” issue and his assertion of their desire for U.S. patronage. The tone is neighborly, but the language is imperialistic.

Inspector General Mansfield Report Answer Key:

1. Other U.S. Army officials
2. To explain and justify the need for West Texas forts
3. Answers will vary but could include Native Americans characterized as marauders, highwaymen, and murders.

Extend the discussion by asking students to compare and contrast these two accounts of westward expansion. Consider who the audiences were for both sources, political motivations, experiential interactions, etc.

Media Activity: History Worth Preserving

10 minutes

As a class, watch the introduction video to Fort Lancaster. Ask students to be prepared to answer the following questions as a response discussion.

- Why were settlers traveling west? [Gold Rush/settlement of California]
- How did they travel? [stage coach or wagon train]

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- When was Fort Lancaster established? [1855]
- What was one way a soldier might be punished? [barrel coat]
- After the Civil War, what nickname was given to African American soldiers? [Buffalo Soldiers]
- What happened to the buildings at Fort Lancaster after it was abandoned?
[Local people took the stone to use for their own building materials. Natural deterioration also caused the buildings to crumble. Once the structures' roofs were burned during the Civil War, the adobe and plaster walls lacked protection and stability.]
- What other facts did you learn about Fort Lancaster? [Answers will vary.]

Assessment

Evaluate student participation and printouts for completeness and understanding.

Additional Resources & Extensions

The Portal to Texas History

<https://texashistory.unt.edu>

The Handbook of Texas Online

<https://tshaonline.org/handbook>

Library of Congress

<https://www.loc.gov/>

PBS: “Archives of THE WEST”

<http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/resources/archives/index.htm>

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Activity Image: Illustrating Westward Expansion

John Gast's *American Progress*/Westward the course of destiny, 1872

Crofutt, George A. *American Progress*. ca. 1873. Chromolithograph. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/97507547/>. (Accessed November 21, 2017.)



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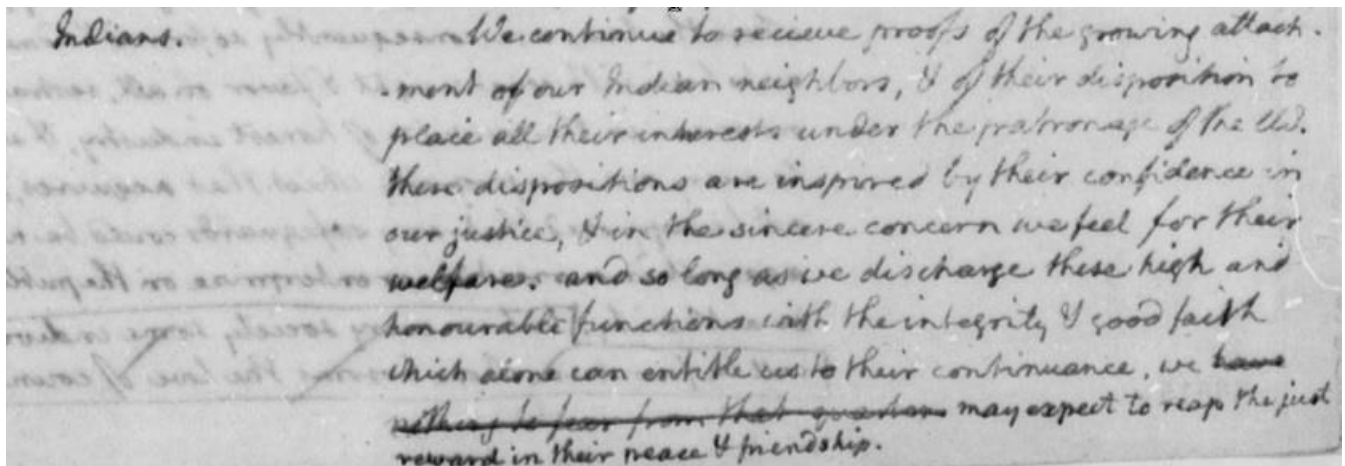
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Primary Source Activity: Thomas Jefferson Letter to Congress, December 2, 1806



“We continue to receive proofs of the growing attachment of our Indian neighbors, and of their disposition to place all their interests under the patronage of the United States. These dispositions are inspired by their confidence in our justice, and in the sincere concern we feel for their welfare; and as long as we discharge these high and honorable functions with the integrity and good faith which alone can entitle us to their continuance, we ~~have nothing to fear from that quarter~~ may expect to reap the just reward in their peace and friendship.”

Answer the following questions:

1. Who was the audience for this letter?
2. How does Jefferson’s edit of “we have nothing to fear from that quarter” to “we may expect to reap the just reward in their peace and friendship” change the tone or meaning of this letter? What might have been his motivation to make that edit?
3. Is there bias in this letter? Find any examples.

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Primary Source Activity: U.S. Army Inspector General Joseph Mansfield Report on Camp Lancaster, June 1856

Indians in this locality are marauding parties of Apaches & Mescaleros as highway men, and murderers. They keep out of sight & commit depredations & murders at time when least expected. They are on the Pecos, in the mountains, on Devils river, &c, always concealed & difficult to find. The night after I left Capt Lindsay at the 1st crossing on his return from Devils river, say 80 miles from Fort Clark, I encamped at the second crossing, and a large cow & calf train bound for New Mexico, which encamped 5 miles ahead of me, was attacked & one man killed & another badly wounded & they were so disorganized when I came up to them in the morning having but 4 men left, as to make it necessary to detach 5 of my escort to accompany them to Camp Lancaster where thro' the assistance of Capt Granger they were rested & refitted & furnished with an escort to Fort Davis. But for my timely arrival, and the aid of this post, these men would have been murdered & their cows & calves, so important to the inhabitants of New Mexico, captured by the Indians. The number of these Indians cannot be estimated. They do not occupy the ground permanently but come from a distance, and it is quite probable that this and other posts will have to be maintained for a great many years.

Answer the following questions:

1. Who was the audience for this report?
2. Why did Mansfield write this report? How might his conclusion have affected westward expansion?
3. Is there bias in this report? Find any examples.

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Site Visit Recommendations

- Complete the pre-visit lesson or other introductory lessons prior to your field trip.
- Divide students into small groups, each with an adult chaperone.
- Make sure students bring pencils. Pens and markers are not allowed in the exhibits.

Information

To schedule a site visit field trip for your students, please call 432-836-4391, or complete a reservation form on our website.

For admission prices and hours of operation, please visit us online at <http://visitfortlancaster.com>.

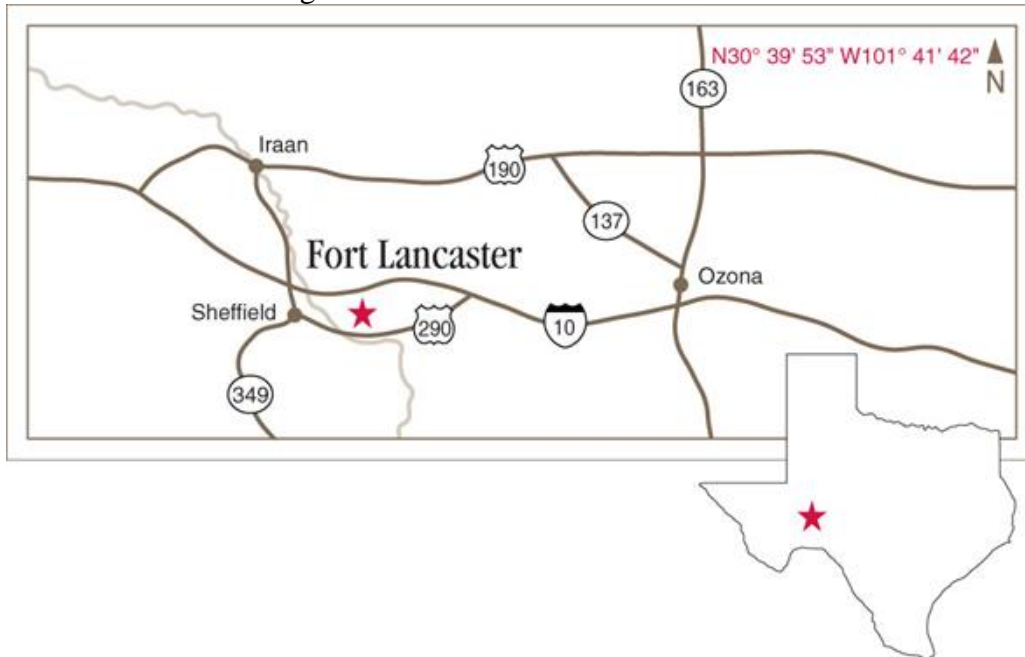
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