Research Lesson Plan: American Progress
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Targeted Grade Level: 5

Essential Question: Was the westward movement really progress for all Americans?

Formative Assessment Prompts:

Instructional Chunk #1: What represented “American Progress” in regard to the Westward movement of the 1800s?

Instructional Chunk #2: What impact did Westward Expansion have on the Native Americans?

Instructional Chunk #3: Explain the difference in the Native American point-of-view of American Progress to that of the settlers.

Standard Addressed: Students will explain why historical accounts of the same event sometimes differ and relate this explanation to the evidence presented or the point-of-view of the author.

Problematic Prior Knowledge (PPL) Addressed
- Students will see one side as “good” and one side as “bad”
- Different or conflicting stories of the past arise when only part of the story is known or when the truth is deliberately distorted.
- Progress is always good for everyone.

Activating Strategies:

Strategy 1: Analyze the “American Progress” painting by John Gast to determine how it represents American progress in regard to the westward movement of the 1800’s.

Strategy 2: Read about the perspective of the westward movement of the Native American point of view and how it impacted their lives.

Strategy 3: Students recreate the “American Progress” painting from the Native American point of view.

Key Vocabulary to preview
- Progress
- Manifest Destiny
- Reservations
- Westward Expansion
- technology
Teaching Strategies:

- Collaborative pairs
- Heterogeneous Grouping
- Think/Pair/Share

Graphic Organizer(s) Used:

- T-Chart  American Progress: Settlers/Native Americans  Resource #1

Materials Needed:

- “American Progress” painting, by John Gast Resource #3
- “Settlers Moving West: Native American Point of View” Handout Resource #2
- Art Supplies
- Paper

Differentiation Strategies: Grouping of students

Graphic elements on both sides of organizer or blank

Instructional Plan:

**Instructional Chunk #1:**

1. **Procedures:** Distribute to pairs of students, copies of John Gast’s painting “American Progress.” Tell students the title of the painting is “American Progress” and it was painted by artist John Gast in 1872. Tell students the female figure in the center of the painting is called Columbia. In a Think/Pair/Share, have the students predict what she is holding and why. Discuss with the students that she is carrying a schoolbook in one hand and a string of telegraph wire in the other. Ask students how these features help portray “American Progress”? Ask students what else in the painting adds to its overall message that westward settlement was also spreading American progress? How do the movements and gestures of the many figures add to this idea? How does the use of dark and light add to the idea? Distribute Westward Movement T-chart (Resource #1) to the students. Have the students work in collaborative pairs and list all the elements of the painting that demonstrate American Progress on the Settlers side of the chart.

2. **Debrief: ask the students…**
   What represented “American Progress” in regard to the Westward movement of the 1800s? What is the point of view of the artist?

3. **Check for Understanding/Summarizing Activity:** Check students’ answers on the T-chart and their response to the debriefing question.
**Instructional Chunk #2:**

1. **Procedures:** Tell students not everyone saw the idea of manifest destiny in such a positive light. As demonstrated in the painting, Native Americans were seen merely as obstacles to be overcome in westward movement. Distribute to the students the handout entitled “Settlers Moving West: The Native American Point of View” Resource #2. As a class, read the handout by chunking the paragraphs and using margin notes. Discuss with the students the differing point of view of Westward expansion. Have the students work in their collaborative pair and fill in the items from the handout that show westward expansion in a negative way on the Native American side of the T-chart (Resource #1).

2. **Debrief:** ask the students... What impact did Westward Expansion have on the Native Americans?

3. **Check for Understanding/Summarizing Activity:** Check students’ answers on the T-chart and their response to the debriefing question.

**Instructional Chunk #3:**

1. **Procedures:** Tell students to pretend that a Native American artist was asked to paint a picture titled “American Progress” from the point of view of Native Americans. Pose the following questions to the students –What kind of picture would he paint? What objects, symbols, or figures would be in the painting? Have students either work in pairs or groups to sketch or use clipart to demonstrate their ideas of what the painting would look like.

2. **Debrief:** ask the students... Explain the difference in the Native American point-of-view of American Progress to that of the settlers.

3. **Check for Understanding/Summarizing Activity:** Have students display their paintings around the room and have the other students complete a gallery walk. What are the similarities and differences in the “paintings”?

**Summarizing Strategy:** Have the students look at John Gast’s painting “American Progress”. Pose the following question to the students, Do you agree or disagree with this painting’s point of view in regards to American progress, why or why not? Why might there be two different points of views on the same historical event?

**Sources:**

*The Way We Saw It: Historical Themes in Illustration & Art*  
*Manifest Destiny: Images of An American Idea*  
*MindSpark  2001*

*The Split History of Westward Expansion in the United States  Nell Musolf  2013*
Answer the essential question, was the westward movement really progress for all Americans, using evidence from the text/picture to support your point of view.

Settlers | Native Americans
Settlers Moving West
The Native Americans Point of View

When settlers began to spread across the West, they brought their own cultures with them. These cultures were different from the cultures of the Native Americans. Settlers, or homesteaders, began to fan out over the plains. Of course, the lands these settlers claimed for their farms were lands that had long been home to a variety of Native American tribes. While some settlers were sympathetic to the Native Americans, most were not. Many settlers thought the Native American were simply in the way, and that they should make room for the settlers. Some of the Native Americans were very unhappy about the newcomers. Often they were sick with measles and other diseases such as cholera and smallpox when they arrived. These deadly diseases spread though the tribes since the Native Americans had never been exposed to these germs and didn’t have any immunity. An outbreak of smallpox in 1837 almost wiped out the Mandan tribe of North Dakota and the Lakota and Cheyenne tribes of the Great Plains suffered many deaths from cholera in the 1840’s.

The settlers were mostly farmers. They cleared trees, planted crops, and built fences. There fences prevented buffalo from roaming free on the open plains. The Native Americans who lived on the plains depended on the buffalo, ‘their supermarket on a hoof’, in many ways. The meat of the buffalo was the main element in their diet. The hides of the buffalo were used to make shelter, bedding, and clothing. Bones, horns, and hooves were used to make tools and utensils. During this time, professional hunters came through the plains, killing as many as 1 million buffalo each year. During the construction of the transcontinental railroad in the 1860’s, hunters killed thousands of buffalo while clearing the land, often leaving behind the bodies of the buffalo to rot in the sun. After the railroad was completed, it became easier for hunters to send hides back East, and the number of buffalo killed increased.

The government wanted to force the Plains Indians to give up their valuable land. If the buffalo were gone, the government reasoned, the Indians would be forced to give up their land. Sometimes the government made treaties with the Native Americans, granting them the rights to certain lands if they would withdraw from a particular area. The treaties were often signed under threat of violence. Many treaties were broken when more land was needed, or when the land “given” to Native Americans turned out to be more valuable than expected. In the worst cases, the Native Americans were rounded up and forced to leave their homes. When gold was discovered in the Black Hills of South Dakota in 1875, the government wanted to break the treaty given to the Lakota Sioux. When they refused to go, the government sent soldiers to attack them and forcing them to leave the Black Hills and move to reservations. Native Americans faced difficulty adjusting to life on the reservations. These reservations were located in other parts of the country. Poverty levels were high and living conditions were poor. It was easy for Native Americans to become depressed in their new homes. Some turned to alcohol as a way to cope with their unhappiness.