

Lesson: Westward Expansion and the Transcontinental Railroad

Teacher: Sandra Lomeland
Subject Area: Social Studies

Grade: 5
School: Desert View Elementary

School Demographics:

Number of students: 529 (K – 5)

Ethnicity: 90% Navajo; 9% Anglo; 1% Other

SES: 92% of students are on free and reduced lunch = high poverty

Mobility: High mobility among kindergarten and first grade students. Grades 2 – 5 are more stable. About 5 % of students in these grades come and go at least twice during the school year.

Classroom Demographics:

- 10 of 26 students receiving intensive intervention in reading
- 7 of 26 students reading on or above grade level

Background Information: The Indian Wars of the United States began in 1540 when the conquistador Francisco Vasquez de Coronado and his men clashed with Zuni Pueblo warriors of Hawikuh. The wars ended three and one-half centuries later, in 1890, when the U.S. cavalry troops almost wiped out Big Foot’s band of Sioux in the Battle of Wounded Knee. These two events and numerous other conflicts in between were part of the continuing struggle for possession of North America. In the mid-19th century the wars spread from the eastern woodlands to the plains, mountains, and deserts of the trans-Mississippi West. The Louisiana Purchase in 1803 and the land acquisitions of the 1840s brought new tribes within the limits of the United States. The discovery of gold in California (1848) also contributed to the demise of a permanent “Indian Frontier” along the eastern edge in the Great Plains. With the passage of the Homestead Act and the Railroad Act (1862), the discovery of new materials, and other economic opportunities, the frontier of settlement was pushed further west, and one after another, Native American tribes were brought under subjection, either through armed force or negotiation. This unit focuses mainly on the conflicts regarding the land between the settlers and the Native Americans during the 1860s through the 1880s and the impact that the transcontinental railroad had on these two cultures.

Arizona State Standards: Social Studies

- **ISS-E1** Understand and apply the basic tools of historical research, including chronology and how to collect, interpret, and employ information from historical materials. **(PO 2)** Identify primary sources and secondary sources historians use to construct an understanding of the past, using such sources as letters, diaries, newspaper articles, archeological evidence, maps, and government records.
- **ISS-E5** Describe the causes, course, and consequences of Early European exploration of North America, with emphasis on **(PO 3)** the political, economic, and social impact on the indigenous peoples