Manifest Destiny
Lesson 1 The Oregon Country

ESSENTIAL QUESTION
How does geography influence the way people live?

Terms to Know
- joint occupation: situation in which people from two countries can occupy an area
- mountain man: an adventurer of the American West
- emigrant: a person who leaves his or her country to live somewhere else
- prairie schooner: a canvas-covered wagon used by pioneers in the mid-1800s
- Manifest Destiny: the belief that the United States was destined by God to extend its boundaries to the Pacific Ocean

Where in the world?

![Map showing the Oregon Country, British Territory, United States, and Mexico. Claimed by U.S. and Mexico is indicated. The Oregon Trail is shown.]

When did it happen?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1815</td>
<td>1819 Adams-Onís Treaty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1825</td>
<td>1824 Russia gives up claim to Oregon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1835</td>
<td>1836 Whitmans arrive in Oregon</td>
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<tr>
<td>1845</td>
<td>1846 U.S. and Britain agree to 49° N as border of Oregon</td>
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<tr>
<td>1840s</td>
<td>1840s Americans begin the “great migration” to Oregon</td>
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Manifest Destiny

Lesson 1 The Oregon Country, Continued

Rivalry in the Northwest

Guiding Question Why did Americans want to control the Oregon Country?

The Oregon Country covered much more land than today’s state of Oregon. Oregon, Washington, Idaho and parts of Montana and Wyoming were all a part of it. In the early 1800s, four countries claimed the Oregon Country. They were the United States, Great Britain, Spain and Russia.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Reason for Claim</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Claimed the land based on Robert Gray’s discovery of the Columbia River in 1792 and on the Lewis and Clark expedition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Britain</td>
<td>Claimed the land because it had explored the Columbia River</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>Controlled California</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>Had settlements south of Alaska and into Oregon</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Many Americans wanted access, or a way to get to the Pacific Ocean. One way would be to control Oregon. In 1819, the United States and Spain signed the Adams-Onís Treaty. In it, Spain gave up its lands in the Oregon Country. Spain's territory would end at California’s northern border. In 1824, Russia gave up its claims on lands south of Alaska.

The deal with Britain was more complicated. In 1818, John Quincy Adams worked out a solution. The United States and Great Britain agreed to joint occupation. This meant that settlers from both countries could live there. When Adams became president in 1825, he suggested a plan for Britain and the United States to divide the land. Britain said no, so joint occupation continued.

The first Americans to live in the Oregon Country were fur traders. These men trapped beaver for their skins. Fur companies bought the skins to sell in the United States and Europe. The fur trappers were called mountain men. Mountain men traded with Native Americans. Many adopted Native American ways.

For years, trappers made their living trading furs. They trapped so many beavers that there were few left. Styles began to change, too, and fewer people used fur. Mountain men had to find new ways to make a living.
Some became farmers. Others used their knowledge of the region and became guides. Jim Bridger and Kit Carson were two mountain men who became guides.

Guides helped settlers who were moving west to the Oregon Country. They created new routes that led from the east to the west. The best-known route was the Oregon Trail. Guides created other important routes. One was the California Trail and another was the Santa Fe Trail.

**Oregon and Manifest Destiny**

*Guiding Question* *What is Manifest Destiny?*

Americans began to settle all over the Oregon Country in the 1830s.

Dr. Marcus Whitman and his wife Narcissa were among the first settlers. They built a mission among the Cayuse people in 1836. The Cayuse are Native Americans who lived near what is now Walla Walla, Washington. The Whitmans wanted to convert the Cayuse to Christianity. They also wanted to provide medical care.

New settlers came to the mission. They did not know it, but they carried the disease, measles. The Cayuse had no defenses against measles, and the disease spread. Many children died of measles. The Cayuse blamed the Whitmans for the deaths. In November 1847, the Cayuse attacked the mission. They killed the Whitmans and 11 others.
Settlers kept coming to Oregon. Reports of fertile land attracted many of them. Others faced economic hard times and wanted a fresh start. These pioneers were called emigrants. Emigrants are people who leave their home country for another place. To reach Oregon, they had to travel about 2,000 difficult miles. They packed everything they owned in covered wagons. These wagons were called prairie schooners. From a distance, they looked like a ship called a schooner. Even though it was a very hard trip, thousands of people started for Oregon.

In the early 1800s, many Americans thought they should spread freedom by settling the whole country, all the way to the Pacific Ocean. In the 1840s, newspaper editor John O'Sullivan called this mission “Manifest Destiny.”

Many Americans wanted the United States to take over all of Oregon. Democrat James K. Polk ran for president in 1844. He strongly supported Manifest Destiny. His campaign slogan was “Fifty-four Forty or Fight!” This names a line of latitude (54 degrees, 40 minutes North of the equator). He wanted America's northern border in Oregon to be here. His Whig opponent, Henry Clay, did not take a strong position about Oregon. James Polk won the election because of his support for Manifest Destiny.

The British did not agree to this location. The border was finally set at 49°N (49 degrees North of the Equator).

**Writing**

**Check for Understanding**

1. **Expository** Explain the outcomes of the claims of the four nations on the Oregon Country.

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2. **Expository** Explain why Americans moved to Oregon.

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