Lesson Description

In this lesson, students learn that explorers respond to incentives, such as the promise of wealth and fame or the hope of excitement and adventure. They participate in an activity that helps them recognize that it takes courage to explore a new place or idea. They also engage in an activity to help them see that the idea of “the west” means something different today than it did in the late 1700s.

Economic Concepts

incentives

Objectives

Students will be able to:

1. explain incentives that led people to explore.
2. identify the “West” as defined following the Revolutionary War.
3. explain that, over time, the location of the West changed for Americans.
4. explain the importance of the Mississippi River and the port of New Orleans.

Materials

π a large, cardboard box
π wrapping paper
π rock, plastic snake, fur, feather or arrowhead, coin, sealed container of water, steel wool pad, silk or plastic leaf or flower
π U.S. map
π copy of Activities 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3 for each student
π pocket folder, one sheet of construction paper, and ten to twelve sheets of white paper for each student
π crayons, markers, and other art supplies for each student

Time Required

1 to 1½ class periods

Preparation

Wrap the cardboard box so that no writing is visible. Cut a hole in the top that is large enough for a student’s hand and small enough that the contents can’t be seen. Place various items in the box, such as a rock, plastic snake, fur, feather, arrowhead, coin, sealed container of water, and steel wool pad. Each item will be used to represent something that Lewis and Clark might have encountered on their journey. For example, the rock represents the mountains, the arrowhead represents the Native Americans, the fur represents buffalo or beaver, the snake represents danger, the coin represents gold, the water represents rivers, the steel wool pad represents rough paths and terrains.

Display a map of the United States that shows the Appalachian Mountains.
Warm Up

Display the wrapped box in a prominent place in the classroom, which students cannot reach. Do not bring the box to the students’ attention. Allow them to discover it.

1. Explain that the class will learn about some explorers. Explorers investigate or study something very carefully. Point out that it takes courage to explore new ideas and new places. When little is known about something, it can be frightening. Courage is an important characteristic. Ask for other characteristics that relate to explorers. (responsibility, integrity, curiosity)

2. Tell the students that explorers don’t know what they will find when they travel to a new place. People weren’t exactly sure what they would find as they began to explore the ocean floor. They still aren’t certain as they continue to explore. For example, several years ago, a previously unknown form of life, tubeworms, was discovered.

3. By this time, a student will probably have seen the box. If not, ask the students to look around the room to see if they notice anything new or different.

4. After students have speculated about what might be in the box, point out that there is a hole in the top. Discuss the following and record the number of students for each answer on the board.

   a. How many of you are willing to put your hand inside the box to find out what is in there?
   b. How many of you would be willing to put your hand in the box if you could place the item on a table or desk with your name on a card as the discoverer?
   c. How many of you would be willing to put your hand in the box if you could place a sign or note listing you as the discoverer and let you keep the item?

5. Allow the students to take turns pulling items from the box, displaying their “finds” on a table. Discuss the following.

   a. Why did you volunteer to reach inside the box? (curious, why not, thought the teacher wanted me to, wanted to keep the item I found, wanted my name listed with my find named)
   b. How did you feel when you reached inside the box? (nervous, anxious, scared) Why? (didn’t know what to expect)
   c. As you saw some of the things, were you more or less nervous? (less) Why? (saw that others weren’t hurt or frightened by anything in the box)
6. Have the students name some famous explorers. (Christopher Columbus, Neil Armstrong, Marco Polo) Explain that early explorers, such as Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, had very few ways of knowing what they would encounter. Some experiences were good ones, and some were very dangerous. It took courage for a student to put a hand in the box not knowing what was there. It took even more courage for explorers to start their journeys.

7. Ask the students to name some of the dangers explorers such as Lewis and Clark might face. (storms, running out of food, fast and dangerous rivers, dangerous animals)

8. Ask why people would choose to explore if it took so much courage. (Answers will vary.) Explain that the promise of wealth and fame led some to explore. Point out that the excitement and adventure of being the first person from a country to do something or see something caused people to face the dangers of unexplored places.

9. Define incentives as rewards that encourage people to behave in a particular way or penalties that discourage people from behaving in a particular way. Discuss the following.

   a. How many students were willing to put their hands in the box when first asked? (refer to number on the board for the answer)
   b. What happened that changed some students’ behavior? (teacher offered to display student’s name and item discovered, teacher offered to let student keep what he or she discovered from the box)
   c. How did these offers change students’ behavior? (more students were willing to reach in the box)
   d. Because these offers changed behaviors, could they be called incentives? (Yes.)
   e. Describe a reward that a parent or an adult in your family has offered you, causing you to behave in a particular way? (special prize for a good grade, pizza for a home run in baseball/softball or a goal scored in soccer)
   f. Are there any penalties that encourage you to behave in the classroom? (time out, loss of recess time, visit to principal)
   g. What incentives encourage people to explore new places or ideas? (promise of wealth, promise of fame, promise of excitement or adventure, desire for achievement)

10. Explain that Lewis and Clark led a group of men and one woman who joined the expedition in route to explore the Louisiana Territory. Refer students to the items from the box. Ask if any
items could represent something that Lewis and Clark could have found on their westward journey.  (rock-mountains; water-rivers; fur-buffalo, beavers, or other animals; plastic snake-dangerous animals; feather or arrowhead-Native Americans; coin-gold; steel wool pad-rough paths and trails; silk flower or leaf—plants and flowers)  Explain that these were some things that Lewis and Clark expected to find on their journey.

Procedure

1. Write “The West” on the board. Ask what students think about when they read the words on the board.  (Rocky Mountains, cowboys, Native Americans, skiing, Utah, Nevada, California, deserts)

2. Explain that when the Revolutionary War ended with the 1783 Treaty of Paris, England gave the United States all land south of Canada, north of Florida, and east of the Mississippi. The Mississippi River became the boundary between Spanish Louisiana, which was transferred to France by Spain in the 1800s, and the United States.

3. Give a copy of Activity 1.1 and crayons or colored pencils to each student. Have students trace the Mississippi River with a blue crayon. Show students the U.S. map and have them draw an area representing the Appalachian Mountains, using the ^ symbol.

4. Draw the chart below on the board, and discuss the questions that follow, entering information where appropriate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Before the Revolutionary War</th>
<th>After the Revolutionary War</th>
<th>Today</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>

a. Refer to the wall map to show the location of the original thirteen colonies.  (between the eastern/Atlantic seaboard and the Appalachian Mountains)

b. What is the Atlantic Seaboard?  (the coastal area along the Atlantic Ocean)

c. After the Revolutionary War, which portion of the country was considered to be the West?  (between the Appalachian Mountains and the Mississippi River)

d. Where is the “West” today?  (between the Rocky Mountains and the Pacific Ocean)

e. Why is little information drawn or written on the map west of the Mississippi?  (In 1800, only a few Europeans had traveled in the
5. Explain that much information known about the Louisiana Territory in 1800 was learned from fur traders who traveled to the territory to buy furs from Native Americans and roving trappers. Fur traders and trappers moved further and further west as the stock of beaver and other animals was depleted in the east. The traders and trappers moved over land and rivers. They didn’t record what they knew about the land and its inhabitants or share the information with others. Ask why a fur trader might be reluctant to share his information about trails and animals? (He wouldn’t want someone else to find the areas in which he was trading.)

6. Explain that many Americans headed west (beyond the Appalachian Mountains) after the Revolutionary War. Give a copy of Activity 1.2 to each student. Allow time for students to read. Discuss the following.
   
a. As people settled along the Mississippi, where was the west? (west of where they were, beyond the river)
   b. Who owned the river and the Louisiana Territory in 1783? (Spain)
   c. Which was larger in 1783, the United States or the Louisiana Territory? (They were about the same size. It is generally said that the purchase of the territory doubled the size of the United States.)

7. Tell students that today, people can send e-mail to a friend in another state and have it arrive in only a few seconds. A letter mailed through the U.S. Postal Service will be delivered to a friend in another state in just a few days. If people want to send a package of food or other items, it will be delivered in a few days or even overnight.

8. Ask if people today had to wait six weeks for food, clothing, and other items they wanted, how would life be different? (It would be harder to get things and take more time to send and receive things; people would have to plan their purchases very far in advance; people might learn to get along with fewer things.)

9. Explain that the Mississippi River was important to the settlers west of the Appalachian Mountains. Rivers west of the Appalachians flow into the Mississippi. Farmers along the Mississippi and the Ohio Rivers and fur traders further west used it to travel and to move
goods to the port of New Orleans. It was much faster than moving goods over land. Discuss the following.

a. Why was New Orleans important to the American settlers? (It was the port city at the mouth of the river; people and goods moving between the Mississippi and eastern seaboard had to change there from riverboats to seagoing ships.)

b. Name other reasons why the Mississippi River and Spanish Louisiana would be important to the citizens of the United States. (Answers will vary, but might include: they wanted more land; they wanted the river to be part of the United States so that they could always use it.)

c. Predict what you think might have happened if Americans were denied use of the river and the port of New Orleans. (Those living west of the Appalachians couldn’t ship their products on the river. They couldn’t receive some goods that they wanted as quickly or as cheaply if the goods had to be shipped overland. The United States might have gone to war to get possession of the river and port.)

10. Explain that farmers and fur traders sold their goods upriver to people who brought the goods to New Orleans. From there, the goods were transferred to seagoing ships and shipped to eastern states and to Europe where the goods were sold. Money from the sale of goods was used to buy goods that people in the United States wanted. These goods were shipped back to ports on the Atlantic seaboard and New Orleans. (Note: Food was probably a larger source of river traffic than fur.)

11. Explain that students are going to become economic explorers as they learn more about the Louisiana Territory. To help them remember all that they have learned, they will keep a special folder. Inside the folder, they will also have a journal.

12. Give a pocket folder, ten to twelve sheets of white paper, a sheet of construction paper, art supplies, and a copy of Activity 1.3 to each student. Review the instructions on Activity 1.3 with the students.

13. Have students put their maps and journal from this lesson in their folders so they can refer to them later.
Closure

1. Discuss the following.

   a. What are some incentives that lead people to explore new places or new ideas? (fame, wealth, excitement, adventure)

   b. How did Americans’ definition of “west” change over time? (As the boundaries of the United States changed, “west” was further and further from the Atlantic seaboard.)

   c. Why were the Mississippi River, Spanish Louisiana, and New Orleans so important to the United States? (People in the United States needed the river for trade. They wanted to transport goods to the Atlantic seaboard and to Europe. They also wanted to bring goods back from Europe and the Atlantic seaboard. They needed the port of New Orleans to accomplish a lot of trade.)

   d. Why was trade important? (People in North America wanted goods produced in Europe. Europeans wanted furs and other products from North America.)

2. Point out that what Americans meant by “west” changed as the settlers moved westward from the eastern seaboard. As settlers moved westward, the Mississippi River became very important for transporting goods.

3. Tell students to begin a list of economic vocabulary in their journals. (incentives)

4. Tell students to write the first entry in their journals. Remind them to write today’s date before writing the entry. Topics might include the following.

   • When my family traveled west from our community, we saw . . . .
   • The Mississippi River and the port of New Orleans were important because. . . .
   • A time an incentive I was given really worked. . . .
   • My reactions to the surprise box in our classroom are. . . .
In 1783, the Treaty of Paris was signed by England and the United States. England gave the United States all lands south of Canada, north of the Floridas, and east of the Mississippi River. The Mississippi River became the boundary between Spanish Louisiana and the United States. Because the Mississippi River was part of Spanish Louisiana, it was governed by Spain. But the Treaty of Paris said that “the navigation of the river Mississippi, from its source to the ocean, shall remain forever free and open to . . . the citizens of the United States.”

Before the Revolutionary War, few Americans traveled beyond the Appalachian Mountains. Land beyond the mountains was considered the frontier or the west. After the peace treaty, many more Americans headed west. Some were farmers; others were hunters, traders, and adventurers.

American settlers traveled across what are now Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois to settle on land along the Mississippi in Spanish Louisiana. Other settlers from Virginia, Georgia, and other southern states, headed for what is now Kentucky and Tennessee. For all these travelers, the Mississippi River became the highway of commerce. This means that they moved themselves and their products for sale along the river to New Orleans, then out to ports on the Atlantic Ocean. The river also became the dividing line between the east and the west.

Water transportation was very important. It was the fastest way to move goods. It took six weeks or more for people or mail to travel over land from the Mississippi River to the Atlantic seaboard. Any good heavier than a letter took at least two months. Bushels of grain, bales of fur, or other big items had to be moved by wagons that were pulled by horses, oxen, or mules. If goods moved by riverboat to New Orleans and then by seagoing vessel to the Atlantic seaboard, it took much less time.
Dear Economic Explorer:

To help you remember everything that you’ve learned in this unit, you must have an Economic Explorer Folder and Journal.

- The folder is your Economic Explorer Folder. Write the following title on the folder: (Your Name) is an Economic Explorer. Decorate the cover.

- Please keep handouts, pictures, time lines, and so forth in the folder.

- Make a journal to put in the folder.

- Use construction paper and art supplies to create a cover for your journal.

- You must write the following title on the cover: (Your Name)’s Economic Explorer Journal. Decorate the cover.

- Staple the white paper to the cover.

- You must keep your Economic Explorer Journal in your folder.

- Any time that you make a journal entry, write the date and then your entry.