

In this unit, students will learn about an important period in the history of the United States—the time of westward expansion during the 1800s.

What's the story?

Students will explore what **life was like** for families on the frontier and why **pioneers** decided to **move westward**.

What will my student learn?

Students will learn why pioneers were willing and eager to **endure hardships** to **move westward**. They will also learn about important **innovations** in both **transportation** and **communication** during that time, such as Fulton's steamboat, the Erie Canal, the transcontinental railroad, and the Pony Express.

In writing, students will take part in a fun experience that conveys what they have learned throughout the unit by **writing informational text** in the format of a **Westward Expansion Quilt**.

Conversation starters

Ask your student questions about the unit to promote discussion and continued learning:

1. Why did families decide to travel west on the Oregon Trail in the 1800s?
Follow up: What was the Oregon Trail? What were some of the difficulties they had during their travels?
2. What did you learn about the importance of the invention of the steamboat?
Follow up: What were the advantages of a boat that was powered by steam rather than by people or wind? What were the disadvantages?
3. Tell me about Sequoyah.
Follow up: What did you learn about him? Why was his invention important? Why was he so important to the Cherokee people?
4. You have been learning about the word *territory* during this domain.
Follow up: What does it mean? Can you use it in a sentence for me? What is something you have learned about the Oregon Territory?
5. What was the Pony Express?
Follow up: How did it operate? Why did it only last eighteen months?