Moving West activity

2 – 50 minute class periods

Create a large open space in the middle of the room on the floor, use masking tape to create a map like this one, as large as possible.

Place desks, in groups of three, around the perimeter of the floor map.

This floor map is an abstract outline of U.S. territorial acquisitions in the 1800s.

Using this map, we will re-create important events of U.S. expansion.

Draw or tape the map on a white king size sheet and spread it out on the floor.

For act-it-outs, either the teacher or a student may play the role of narrator.

Keep this question in mind, when we are done we will discuss as a class on whether the nation’s actions were justifiable.

Get into groups of three and sit at the desks.

You will complete a series of narrated act-it-outs.

Volunteer actors will play historical characters.

The narrator will read part of the story and at the end says “Action!”

The actors will move, act and speak as described in the narration.

The students in the audience will participate by performing an assigned action when prompted.

You will not need to rehearse or prepare for these act-it-outs, but you should give the actors some time to read over their parts, hi lite speaking parts with different colors for easy reading for actors.
Now, let’s begin our first act-it-out:
The Louisiana Purchase.

First you will need to be aware of several important locations
• Washington, D.C.
• Louisiana Territory
• Appalachian Mountains
• Mississippi River
• New Orleans
• France

Now we need volunteers!

We need two American farmers to stand east of the Appalachian Mountains. President Jefferson should stand in Washington DC. James Monroe may stay seated. And the French foreign minister should start in France.

For the rest of the class, when the narrator says, “Audience...” you need to gasp loudly and in unison. Practice one time together: “Audience....”

Now, let’s begin!

Read from the narrations!

After reading and acting out answers the following questions (either in notebook or with whole class)

1. Why were the city of New Orleans and the Mississippi River important to farmers in the early 1800s?

2. What was Napoleon’s plan for Louisiana? Why were American farmers alarmed by it?

3. What deal was made on April 30, 1803? Give two reasons why Napoleon was willing to make this deal with the United States.

4. List two pros and two cons of the Louisiana Purchase.
Now, let's begin the Florida act-it-out.
First, you need to be aware of several important locations:
• Florida
• Georgia
• Washington, D.C.

Now we need volunteers!

We need someone to play the role of a Seminole Indian in Florida.
We need someone to play the role of a slave in Georgia.
President Monroe should take his place in Washington DC
Two cabinet members and John Quincy Adams should take their places near Washington, D.C.
General Jackson should remain seated.

For the rest of the class, when the narrator says, “Audience …” you need to say, “Govern or get out!” loudly and in unison.
Practice one time together: “Audience…. ”
Now, let’s begin!

Read from the narratives!

After reading and acting out answers the following questions (either in notebook or with whole class)

1. What did President Monroe order Andrew Jackson to do in 1818?
What did Jackson do instead?

2. Explain the deal that the United States made with Spain in 1819 to end the conflict over Florida.
Now the next act-it-out: Texas

First, you need to be aware of several important locations:
- Missouri
- Texas
- Mexico City

Now we need volunteers!
We need someone to play Stephen F. Austin, who is in Missouri.
We need one volunteer to play General Santa Anna, who is in Mexico City.
We need two volunteers to play Americans/Texans, who are in Missouri.

For the rest of the class, when the narrator says "Audience..." the audience members will say "Remember the Alamo!" loudly and in unison.

Read from the narrations!

After reading and acting out answers the following questions (either in notebook or with whole class)

1. List two complaints of American settlers in Texas in 1830.
2. Then list two complaints of Tejanos in 1830.
Now, let’s begin our next act-it-out: Oregon Country.

First, you need to be aware of several important locations:
- Rocky Mountains
- Washington, D.C.
- Oregon Country

Now we need volunteer actors.

We need a volunteer to play the role of Jedediah Smith, who should stand in the Rockies. We need three settlers to stand near Washington, D.C. And we need a volunteer to play the role of James K. Polk in Washington, D.C.

For the rest of the class, when the narrator says “Audience...” the audience members will say “All of Oregon or none!” loudly and in unison. Practice one time together: “Audience....”

Now, let’s begin!
Read from the narrations!

After reading and acting out answers the following questions (either in notebook or with whole class)

1. What agreement did Great Britain and the United States make in the 1820s concerning Oregon?
2. Why Oregon was called a “pioneer’s paradise”?
3. What did James Polk mean when he declared “Fifty-four forty or fight!” in the 1844 presidential campaign? Did he follow through with this campaign promise? Explain.
Now, let's begin our final act-it-out: The Mexican-American War.

First, you need to be aware of several important locations:
- Washington, D.C.
- The Rio Grande
- Nueces River
- New Mexico
- California
- Mexico

Now we need volunteer actors.

President Polk should be in Washington, D.C.
Two Mexican officials should take their places along the Rio Grande.

Three more US soldiers will play the US Army, and they should stay seated
Two U.S. soldiers should take their places along the Rio Grande.

For the rest of the class, when the narrator says “Audience...” the audience members will say “It is our manifest destiny!” loudly and in unison.

Practice one time together: “Audience ...”

Now, let's begin!
Read from the narrations!

After reading and acting out answers the following questions (either in notebook or with whole class)

1. Why did President Polk think the Mexican government might want to sell California and New Mexico?
2. Choose two of these Mexican-American War battle locations: New Mexico, California, Monterrey, Buena Vista, or Chapultepec. Then create two historical newspaper headlines for each of your two battle locations. Write the first headline for a U.S. newspaper whose editors agreed with manifest destiny. Write the second headline for a newspaper in Mexico.
3. List three details of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Then give two reasons some U.S. senators opposed this treaty.
4. Why did the United States buy the Gadsden Purchase in 1853?
Final discussion:

Project a map on your white board, give a hard copy to each student.

As a class you will review each acquisitions of the US and answer the question: **Whether the US’s actions were justifiable.**

Ask students to justify their reasons and then vote, marking the map as you go.

Have students mark their map with notes and justifications for each acquisition. (Note: you can give student a map when you begin, but there will be a chance some might misplace it since this will take 2 50 minute class periods!)