

# Online Resources for Westward Expansion Research

*As always, please preview these resources (and any web-based comments accompanying online materials) before giving them to your students to make sure they are best-suited for your particular class.*

## The Erie Canal

- National Geographic—Creating Canals (video):  
<http://channel.nationalgeographic.com/the-link/videos/creating-canals/>
- History.com—videos: Building the Erie Canal (2:39):  
<http://www.history.com/topics/us-states/new-york/videos/building-the-erie-canal>

## The Gold Rush

- PBS.org—map of the largest strikes:  
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/goldrush/map/index.html>
- History.com—videos: Gold Rush (2:37):  
<http://www.history.com/shows/america-the-story-of-us/videos/gold-rush>

## The Homestead Act

- PBS.org—Frontier House video clips:  
<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/frontierhouse/multimedia/video.html>

## Lewis and Clark

- Discovering Lewis and Clark:  
<http://www.lewis-clark.org/>
- National Geographic:  
<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/lewisandclark/>
- Kids Know It: Educational video with quiz:  
<http://www.kidsknowit.com/flash/animations/lewis-clark.swf>
- National Geographic: Sacagawea:  
<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/ngm/0302/feature4/index.html>
- Louisiana Purchase: History.com—videos:  
<http://www.history.com/topics/louisiana-purchase>
- Lewis and Clark Expedition (2:00):  
<http://www.history.com/topics/lewis-and-clark/videos/lewis--clark-expedition-charts-new-territory>
- Lewis and Clark Campsite (3:00):  
<http://www.history.com/topics/lewis-and-clark/videos/lewis-and-clark-campsite-at-pompeys-pillar>

## The Louisiana Purchase

- Louisiana Purchase Timeline, 1802–07 (from Louisiana Purchase Bicentennial):  
<http://www.louisianapurchase2003.com/history/timeline/index.htm>
- Library of Congress—Primary documents:  
<http://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/ourdocs/Louisiana.html>
- Avalon Project at Yale Law Library—Primary documents:  
[http://avalon.law.yale.edu/subject\\_menus/fr1803m.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/subject_menus/fr1803m.asp)
- WatchKnowLearn.org: Louisiana Purchase in a Nutshell (1:11)  
<http://www.watchknowlearn.org/Video.aspx?VideoID=25166&CategoryID=5420>
- Louisiana Purchase: History.com—videos:  
<http://www.history.com/topics/louisiana-purchase>
- Jefferson Expands Presidential Power (4:00):  
<http://www.history.com/topics/louisiana-purchase/videos/jefferson-expands-executive-power>

## The Oregon Trail

- WatchKnowLearn.org—videos: In the Wake of Lewis and Clark (5:39):  
<http://www.watchknowlearn.org/Video.aspx?VideoID=10352&CategoryID=1889>

## The Pony Express

- National Geographic—map and photographs:  
[http://education.nationalgeographic.com/education/news/pony-power/kd/?ar\\_a=3&ar\\_r=3](http://education.nationalgeographic.com/education/news/pony-power/kd/?ar_a=3&ar_r=3)

## The Trail of Tears

“We Shall Remain” (5:27) from PBS Learning Media:  
<http://www.pbslearningmedia.org/content/akh10.socst.ussh.exp.trail/>

## The Transcontinental Railroad

- PBS.org—photo gallery:  
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/photo-gallery/tcrr-gallery/>
- History.com—videos:
  - The Transcontinental Railroad (4:00):  
<http://www.history.com/topics/inventions/transcontinental-railroad/videos/transcontinental-railroad>
  - Evolution of Railroads (4:20):  
<http://www.history.com/shows/modern-marvels/videos/modern-marvels-evolution-of-railroads#modern-marvels-evolution-of-railroads>

## The U.S.–Mexican War

- PBS.org:
  - Interactive timeline:  
[http://www.pbs.org/kerawar/ushistory/timeline\\_flash.html](http://www.pbs.org/kerawar/ushistory/timeline_flash.html)
  - 24 short video clips:  
[http://www.pbs.org/kerawar/resources/video\\_library.html](http://www.pbs.org/kerawar/resources/video_library.html)
  - America’s Story—Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo:  
[http://www.americaslibrary.gov/jb/reform/jb\\_reform\\_guadalup\\_1.html](http://www.americaslibrary.gov/jb/reform/jb_reform_guadalup_1.html)
- Library of Congress—Photographs from the conflict with Mexico:  
<http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/list/picamer/paMexican.html>
- History.com—videos:
  - America: The Story of Us: The Alamo (2:37):  
<http://www.history.com/shows/america-the-story-of-us/videos/the-alamo#the-alamo>
  - Deconstructing History: Alamo (3:00):  
<http://www.history.com/topics/alamo/videos/deconstructing-history-alamo>

## Helpful Search Terms and Tips for Students

- History.com is a great place to start for short information; try searching for your Westward Expansion terms under “This Day in History”
- The Library of Congress is one of the best sources for online primary source documents.  
<http://www.loc.gov>
- The American Memory page from the Library of Congress is a great place to search for primary source documents and maps  
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/index.html>
- The Smithsonian’s History and Culture Collection is another great resource for primary documents from American History:  
<http://www.si.edu/Encyclopedia/Search/History%20and%20Culture>  
(for example: see Lewis and Clark, “Mapping the West” <http://www.mnh.si.edu/education/lc/lcmapping/>)
- You will probably find that a lot of your search terms overlap—as you have learned, all these ideas are connected. For instance, if you search “Louisiana Purchase,” you will also find information on Lewis and Clark. Or, if “Westward Expansion” is not giving you the results you want, try searching “Manifest Destiny.” When searching “Trail of Tears,” you should also search “Indian Removal Act.”
- Search the presidents. Thomas Jefferson was president when he bought the Louisiana Territory and hired Lewis and Clark to explore it. Andrew Jackson ordered the Indian Removal Act. James K. Polk ran for president with the Manifest Destiny platform and provoked Mexico into a war over Texas.
- Some subtopics are very popular and have a lot of information. For instance, under “Lewis and Clark,” you will find a lot of information about Sacagawea; or when researching the U.S.–Mexican War, you will find that the subject of the Alamo is very popular.

- Due to the popularity of the computer game “Oregon Trail,” you will have better luck finding scholarly information on that topic if you search “Oregon Territory.” You can also try searching terms like “Wagoneers” or “Homesteaders.”

## **Additional Notes on Videos**

### **The Erie Canal**

- National Geographic—Creating Canals (video) from National Geographic  
<http://channel.nationalgeographic.com/the-link/videos/creating-canals/>

This is a great video about canals in general. The video begins by explaining the difficulty of inland travel across vast stretches of the country and how building canals was vital to trade. It also connects canals/trade to the burgeoning industrial movement. In the second half, the focus is on the Erie Canal—the size and the difficulty engineers had in constructing it. It delves a little bit into locks and the science behind waterproof concrete, but nothing that a fifth grader could not easily understand (and find interesting).

- Building the Erie Canal (3:00) from History.com  
<http://www.history.com/topics/us-states/new-york/videos/building-the-erie-canal>

This video presents the building of the Erie Canal as a turning point in American history. It emphasizes both that the canal was an extraordinary feat, one that many people doubted. Furthermore, it does a great job of driving home how the canal changed the country—by linking East and West, two formerly separate sets of colonies, and opening up the heartland. With goods able to travel back and forth, communities no longer had to be self-sufficient—they could specialize.

### **The Gold Rush**

- Gold Rush (2:37) from History.com:  
<http://www.history.com/shows/america-the-story-of-us/videos/gold-rush>

This video is actually a behind-the-scenes look at making the Gold Rush series for the History channel, so there is some talk of what went into making the show. However, there are voiceovers about the ramifications of the Gold Rush (California becoming a state, the U.S. becoming a world power, etc). Also, the re-enactors talk about getting into character and what life would have been like—the difficulty of the work, what the trail looked like, etc. Students might find that interesting and it could help them imagine what life was like for the settlers.

### **Lewis and Clark’s Expedition**

- Lewis and Clark Expedition (2:00) from History.com:  
<http://www.history.com/topics/lewis-and-clark/videos/lewis--clark-expedition-charts-new-territory>

This video touches on the major reasons for the Lewis and Clark expedition: the mystery of what the vast new territory held, the need for maps of the territory, and Jefferson’s desire to locate a Northwest Passage waterway to allow for easy trade. It gives a few quick details on the Corps of Discovery (numbers and dates, the route they took) and what they collected along the way. It also serves as a great introduction for the topic of Westward Expansion.

- Lewis and Clark Campsite at Pompey’s Pillar (3:00):  
<http://www.history.com/topics/lewis-and-clark/videos/lewis-and-clark-campsite-at-pompeys-pillar>  
 This video is not a documentary-style clip like the others. It focuses on one monument, Pompey’s Pillar, which has the only remaining physical evidence that the Lewis and Clark Expedition passed through (Lewis’ signature carved into the rock). Fun fact: the name “Pompey” was a nickname the Corps of Discovery gave Sacagawea’s son. This video is mostly a tour of the monument—it is not as broad an overview of the expedition, but it is interesting to focus on one particular object.

## The Louisiana Purchase

- Louisiana Purchase in a Nutshell (1:11) from WatchKnowLearn.org  
<http://www.watchknowlearn.org/Video.aspx?VideoID=25166&CategoryID=5420>  
 This video focuses mostly on the cost of the Louisiana Territory and what a great deal that was for the U.S. It also mentions Lewis and Clark and Sacagawea.
- Louisiana Purchase Doubles U.S. (1:24): (from History.com)  
<http://www.history.com/topics/louisiana-purchase>  
 This clip has a quick examination of why Jefferson wanted to buy New Orleans and why France was so eager to get rid of the entire territory, even though it meant the U.S. could acquire vast territory for mere pennies per acre. It also touches on the fact that the U.S. and France brokered this deal without consideration of the many Native Americans who populated the territory.
- Thomas Jefferson Expands Presidential Power (4:00) from History.com  
<http://www.history.com/topics/louisiana-purchase/videos/jefferson-expands-executive-power>  
 This clip is mostly about how Jefferson, despite being a small government advocate, greatly increased the power of the executive office through brokering the Louisiana Purchase and the political philosophy he used to justify it. It is interesting in terms of the political implications of the Louisiana Purchase (as opposed to just the physical ramifications), but might be quite challenging for many fifth graders, as it is really about Jefferson’s presidency and political theory.

## The Trail of Tears

- “We Shall Remain” (5:27) from PBS Learning Media:  
<http://www.pbslearningmedia.org/content/akh10.socst.ussh.exp.trail/>  
 This video is very powerful—it does not shy away from the poor treatment of the Indians (shown in reenactments with commentary voiceover). It begins with the early promise that the U.S. government had made to the eastern tribes, telling them that if they assimilated to the American way of life, they would be equal to whites (with a quote from Jefferson). However, the government policy turned decidedly racist under Andrew Jackson, who gave his voters what they wanted and ordered the Indian Removal Act. The Cherokee, of course, did not want to leave their ancestral lands and were brutally forced out. The Trail of Tears was full of hardship, suffering, and many deaths. The video ends by saying what the U.S. government gained in vast lands, they lost in honor because of their inhumane treatment of the tribes. Overall this video covers more the process of the Indian Removal Act and the reasons behind it than the Trail of Tears, and does not address what happened once the Cherokee were resettled.

## The Transcontinental Railroad

- Transcontinental Railroad (4:00) from History.com:  
<http://www.history.com/topics/inventions/transcontinental-railroad/videos/transcontinental-railroad>  
This video is packed with information. The first part covers why the Transcontinental Railroad was so important—as an image of bringing the country together, as the answer to the promise that the west held, and as a method of cheap, convenient travel. The railroad transformed everything in its path, turning the West into an urbanized metropolis, and allowing people to think beyond their local community, allowing the American economy to expand. It also explains how the government gave the railroad companies land grants and how they used them in turn.
- Evolution of Railroads (4:20) from History.com:  
<http://www.history.com/shows/modern-marvels/videos/modern-marvels-evolution-of-railroads#modern-marvels-evolution-of-railroads>

This video is a great overview of the importance of railroads, though it covers them well into the 20th century, so the relevant information for our time period is the first two and a half minutes. It explains how steel allowed railroads to pull heavier loads more easily, making them far faster than buggies and horses. It also explains how railroads became competitors with the canals and, due to their speed, quickly replaced them. Entrepreneurs were quick to realize the wealth railroads could bring them and, because railroads were all privately owned, made huge fortunes. The Transcontinental Railroad was especially profitable. Moreover, railroads changed the American landscape, creating towns where there had been none and bringing building supplies and manufactured goods to the West while sending new crops back east.

## The U.S.–Mexican War

- 24 short video clips from PBS.org:  
[http://www.pbs.org/kera/usmexicanwar/resources/video\\_library.html](http://www.pbs.org/kera/usmexicanwar/resources/video_library.html)
- Deconstructing History: Alamo from History.com:  
<http://www.history.com/topics/alamo/videos/deconstructing-history-alamo>

This video is just text set to music with no voice narration (though it is professionally done). It is very Alamo-specific: details about the physical building and a rundown of the battle. This could be a good resource for a student who wants to delve into the Alamo as a more narrow topic.