Unit Three—Learning Through Reading: Westward Expansion

*October 15th to November 8th (Reading Benchmark Level 3: S/T)*

Welcome to the Unit

In this unit students see that they can read to learn and undertake inquiry through reading. At its heart, this unit is about helping students read with purposeful intention, deciding what information is most important to hold onto and how to organize that information, comparing and contrasting information from different texts and finally, deciding how to synthesize their learning to teach others.

This unit has been purposefully developed in conjunction with the writing calendar as well as the content area calendar. We want to unpack these connections so that you get a sense of how the three units connect and work in combination with each other. In the second unit of the content area calendar, in the very beginning of October, students began studying Westward Expansion. Thus, as this reading unit starts, students have been studying Westward Expansion for about a week or two in the content area and likely have gotten a broad understanding of some of the basic information related to Westward Expansion (some of the major events, for example, and a sense of the different groups and perspectives involved). Now in this unit, they will build on that general orientation to the Westward Expansion and begin to study particular aspects (related subtopics) of it in more depth. The unit is written in such a way that you could alter the social studies content, switching in a different topic--but in doing so, much of the specificity of this unit would be lost.

At the same time as this reading unit starts, students will begin to write Research Reports on the Westward Expansion during writing workshop (a unit based on the new Units of Study Book in Research-Based Information Writing for Grade 5 by Lucy Calkins and Emily Butler Smith). In the first bend of that unit, students will write about the Westward Expansion in broad strokes, drawing on their learning from the content area work. Then as the writing unit moves on, students will write about subtopics relating to Westward Expansion, likely, the same ones they will have been studying in reading workshop during this unit. Thus, each of the three units rely on and build on each other. The goal is for
students to be transferring and applying their learning from one subject to another seamlessly.

Students come to this unit with their previous learning in reading informational texts. They have been reading high interest nonfiction for a little less than two weeks. In the high interest unit, students devoured high interest nonfiction, sharpened their abilities to determine main idea by considering multiple main ideas and worked to stay close to the text through summarizing and beginning to compare and contrast the underlying structures of texts. Students worked to synthesize their learning across pages and across books and to grow ideas. In this unit they will build on and extend that prior learning about reading informational texts as they engage in reading nonfiction on a topic (in this case, different aspects of Westward Expansion) to learn all they can about that topic.

Overview

**Essential Question:** How can I use all that I know about nonfiction reading and research to learn about westward expansion?

- **Bend I: Learning about An Aspect of the Westward Expansion through Reading**
  *How can I organize a learning life that allows me to read across multiple texts, studying an aspect of west expansion from multiple perspectives (approximately a week and a half)*

- **Bend II: Building Theories and Reading Critically**
  *How can I build theories from studying multiple perspectives on a topic? How can I start to see how different authors approach the same topic differently, swaying their readers to think in particular ways? How do I want to sway people learning from me? (approximately a week and a half)*

In Bend One of this unit students will form research teams on sub-topics of interest related to Westward Expansion and set forth on an inquiry. They will survey their materials, drawing on all they know about going through research to organize their learning lives As students use what they have learned of note taking strategies, they will hold onto and organize information and teach others what they have learned so far.

In Bend Two of the unit, you will charge students to raise the level of their work to new heights. As they begin to learn what is most important to know about a subtopic relating to Westward Expansion, they will come to see that different authors have chosen to present information in similar and different ways. You will support them in continuing to look more
closely at how authors present information, including helping students to see how the point of view of an author influences how information is presented. Students will consider when views are more and less nuanced and reread more critically.

CCSS/LS Standards Addressed in this Unit:

This unit addresses multiple standards and there are a few we want to especially highlight. As students will be strengthening their skills at comparing and contrasting, examining multiple authors’ points of view, they will be addressing RI Standard 5.6. Students will also be considering the relationships of events, including their causes and consequences, which is expected by Standard 5.3. Throughout the unit, students will be working to ground their ideas in text-based evidence, quoting from the text, as expected by Standard 5.1 and integrating different texts to speak and write about a topic, as expected by Standard 5.9. In addition, this unit also addresses Researching to Build Knowledge Standards. Students will be conducting short research projects to research different aspects relating to the Westward Expansion to build their knowledge of that topic (Standard 5.7). They will also be taking notes, summarizing, and paraphrasing which addresses a major part of Standard 5.8.

Getting Ready

Here are some tips to help you get ready to teach this unit:

- Study the curricular calendar write ups and the U of S books (Volume II of Navigating Nonfiction, and The Lens of History) and especially note how the three units work together
- Ensure Students Have at Least a Basic Orientation to Westward Expansion prior to launching this
- Gather Resources (Including Texts Students Can Read) on Different Aspects of Westward Expansion
- Form Research Teams Prior to the Start of the Unit
- Choose read aloud(s)

Study the curricular calendar write ups and the U of S books (Volume II of Navigating Nonfiction and The Lens of History) and especially note how the three units work together
As mentioned in the beginning of this write up, this study of Westward Expansion has been designed to unite three subject areas in your curriculum--but it can also be self-standing, as long as your class had already studied the topic (Westward Expansion) for at least two weeks prior to this unit’s start. The units in reading, writing and the content areas have been developed in conjunction with each other and are strengthened by a reliance on each other. Thus, we highly encourage you to familiarize yourself with the Grade 5 *Lens of History* book from the new *Units of Study in Opinion, Information and Narrative Writing*, as well as with the content area calendar so that you take full advantage of the opportunities for interdisciplinary work. Know that the content area work will have started about a week or two before this reading unit starts and that the writing unit will be starting at the same time as this reading unit starts.

**Ensure Students Have at Least a Basic Orientation to Westward Expansion**

This unit has been designed to work hand in hand with the unit on Westward Expansion happening in the content area--but the really essential thing is that your students enter the unit already knowing something about Westward Expansion. We’ve purposefully timed this unit so that students have an orientation to Westward Expansion and the whole class has at least some common knowledge.

As you review the resources, you will no doubt see that bend 2 of this reading unit is intended to occur at roughly the same time as bend 2 of the writing unit.

**Gather Resources on Different Aspects Relating to Westward Expansion**

You will need to gather books that your students can read and other materials on Westward Expansion (presumably, you already have quite a bit gathered for the content area work). In the content areas, students will hopefully have been studying video clips and maps, lists of statistics, images, and so on. They can bring all of the thinking and note taking they have done around those texts to bear on their new work but the primary thing you want them to do in the reading workshop is to read. That is, they should be reading books, articles (digital or print), book chapters, etc. Students will not tend to read entire books from cover to cover but instead, they will pursue a subtopic across a collection of books. That is, any given student will be apt to read one chapter of one book and then move to another chapter in another book, following a subtopic that the student is researching (say the Pony Express.) Although students will read texts other than books, because this is the reading workshop you will probably emphasize that during this time, students need to marshal their attention. It can’t be the norm for a student to pore over a few photographs for an entire reading workshop as that student’s rate and stamina and volume of reading...
will begin to slip. The value of a simultaneous social studies unit is that students will have a
time and place, elsewhere in the day, to learn from film, video, photography, maps, the
study of artifacts and the like—all valuable forms of research.

**Form Research Teams Prior to the Unit Starting**

In the days leading up this unit, you might talk up the teamwork aspect of it, leading
students know that they are about to embark on an exciting research project and that will
have the opportunity to work in teams. Before the unit, you may want to post topics of
interest and let students begin to choose which one they want to research. Some teachers
let students pick their top three choices and then make a final decision, doing their best to
take student wants into account. The point is that you might have to engage in a little
“behind the scenes engineering” before teams launch to give the impression that readers
have had some hand in forming the teams.

Some possible topics of inquiry might include:

- Pony Express
- Erie Canal
- Lewis and Clark
- Oregon Trail
- Gold Rush
- Trail of Tears

Of course your list may look longer and/or different. The important part is to have the
resources to support inquiries on this topic.

Ideally, you’ll want your students to be taking notes on only one side of the paper so they
can scissor apart and categorize what they have learned. Some teachers have stapled
looseleaf together to make little research booklets for students.

**Choose Read Aloud(s)**

You’ll want your read alouds to mirror the work your students are doing so you’ll want to
choose a few texts about Westward Expansion. We suggest that you might read from *The
Split History of Westward Expansion* in the United States by Nell Musolf. This book is
actually part of a perspectives flip book series (each of which show an aspect of American
History through two perspectives). In this instance, one part of the book tells the story of
Westward Expansion from the perspective of the white settlers. When you flip the book
over the next part of the book tells the story of Westward Expansion from the perspective of the American Indians. We have chosen the book for many reasons but primarily, we suggest it as a central read aloud because it will offer a nuanced understanding of Westward Expansion--and the sense that any version of history is just that--one version. *The Split History of Westward Expansion* is a Lexile Level of 1030L so those who are hypersensitive to Lexile will be more than satisfied. To model the kind of work the students are doing, we suggest that you don’t read the text cover to cover. Instead you can show students how you are purposefully choosing sections to learn more about a specific aspect of the Westward Expansion (say the Transcontinental Railroad). You’ll note that this subtopic becomes the focus of the teacher’s demonstration text in the second bend of *Research Reports*. In addition, to this text we also suggest that you might read parts from *Who Settled the West?* by Bobbie Kalman. *Who Settled the West?* (Lexile level 830L/ Guided Reading level P), *The Story of America: Westward Expansion* by Roza (No Lexile).

If you want to read aloud texts which are just on the Transcontinental Railroad, we suggest:

- *Ten Mile Day: And the Building of the Transcontinental Railroad* by Fraser (890L/No Guided Reading Level)
- *Coolies* by Yin (picture book--historical fiction) (660L/Guided Reading Q)
- *True Books: The Transcontinental Railroad* (910L/No Guided Reading Level)

**Assessment**

You’ll need to decide what you want to assess in this unit. Presumably, you’ll continue to track students’ progress up the gradient of text difficulty so you will continue to give students running records, checking to see indications that they are ready to move up levels of text difficulty. You need to have an eye for approximately how many levels you hope particular students are apt to progress through while in your care. Those who entered fifth grade reading below the benchmark levels for your grade will hopefully progress up something like six levels within this year, and others will progress up more like four levels. Children don’t have a chance to tackle more challenging texts if you are vigilant about assessing them, and willing to ‘give it a try’ by supporting them in more challenging books to see if they can fare well with those texts.

You will probably also want to use the *Informational Reading Learning Progression* to track students’ progress with skills that are important to the CCSS. Remember that you have likely just given the lengthy Performance Assessment (about two weeks ago) so you can
use that as your formative assessment. You’ll want to study this data again before this unit starts to inform your planning.

Bend I: Learning About an Aspect of Westward Expansion Through Reading

The main goal of this bend is to support students in creating a research project for themselves, taking notes and organizing information and paying attention to when different sources give different information. This bend is intended to last for about a week or so in order for students to spend more time in the second part of the unit when they will be building theories and reading more critically.

To start this work off, then, on the first day of the unit, you might gather students in the meeting area and ask them to sit with their teams. You’ll want to issue a generous invitation, welcoming students into the worthy work of research. You might say something like, “You’ve been working to get a big picture of Westward Expansion over the past few weeks. So, you know some basics about it—like some of the major causes and some of the pivotal turning points. And that’s a pretty good start, but it’s only a start. To really try to understand any topic, you have to dig deep, right? You can’t really dig deep in a topic as HUGE as all of Westward Expansion!” (Here you might spread your arms wide to demonstrate how vast of a topic Westward Expansion is). “Instead of trying to get their arms around HUGE topics, researchers often try to become experts on a part or aspect of the huge topic, in this case—of Westward Expansion. Then they become experts enough to teach others about the subtopic they’ve studied. A few days ago, I asked you to choose an aspect of Westward Expansion that you wanted to study more and you got into teams. You’re sitting in those teams now and today is the day you get started digging deep, working with your team to learn as much as you can about your sub-topic so your team can teach others about it.” After a connection/orientation like that, you could name your first teaching point: “So today I want to teach you that when readers get started on a research project, they figure out how to get themselves set up for reading in ways that let them learn all they can about their topic. One way they do that is by getting a lay of the land of their texts and making a plan for what to read.” Then you might demonstrate this work to students by using the topic that will become the class research topic.
We suggest that you might engineer things so that the topic the whole class studies (the Transcontinental Railroad, for example) is also the topic that readers who need more support also research. That way, your demonstration can scaffold their work. So you might lay out the texts you have gathered for the class demonstration set and show students how you take a broad survey of them. “So I’ve decided that we as a class might study the Transcontinental Railroad so let’s look through these books to decide what parts we should read that will help us to learn more about that event.”

You might leaf through a few of the books and then put a table of contents up from The Split History of Westward Expansion (settler’s perspective side) on the document camera. “Hmmm...uh oh...no chapters called ‘The Transcontinental Railroad.’ Okay, so, one option is to go to the Index and look for ‘railroad’ or ‘Transcontinental Railroad’ there, but let’s just take a minute to look at these chapter headings again and see where the Transcontinental Railroad might be mentioned in this book.” You might continue to muse about where to locate the information you want, tucking in information about skimming and scanning as you go, “So I know that often, history book are set up in chronological order so that means the railroad probably wouldn’t be mentioned in the beginning chapters...Hmmm...well, look here how one of the chapters is called ‘Connecting the East and the West?’ That seems like it might mention the Transcontinental Railroad, right? I mean, that’s one of the purposes for the railroad, right--to connect the east and the west?” You might flip to that chapter and skim a bit to confirm that this section will be about the Transcontinental Railroad...

“Hmmm...wait, this is about the Erie Canal, so far. Wait, the bottom of this page (page 21) mentions railroads. Let’s flip to the next page--Ah ha! Here’s a photo of the Transcontinental Railroad being built and the section is called “A Massive Undertaking” Yes, it’s definitely about the Transcontinental Railroad. That feels like it will be really important to read. Maybe I should even start writing down some book titles and page numbers so I have a plan for what to read.”

After you model this for a bit longer, you might give each club the chance to do some preliminary work on the rug, giving them the opportunity to start leafing through the books and articles in their bins and beginning to plan what to read. You might keep students on the rug for a bit longer during this lesson than usual (be sure to explain that you are doing this) so that you can ensure each team is getting itself readied for a strong start. After you listen in and coach teams, you might call students back and highlight some of what you heard. You might emphasize that readers are making plans for what to read so that they learn the most they can about their topics. As part of that, they’re looking for texts that will be easy for them to read, knowing that after reading the easier texts, they’ll be more able to tackle the harder ones. You might pick up The Story of America: Westward Expansion by Roza and show students. “This one seems a bit easier than the others so
maybe I’ll start with that. That way I think I can get some basic background and maybe learn some of the vocabulary. Then I’ll move to some of the harder books.” You can send readers off to begin this work.

As readers form into their teams, they will have already made some decisions so you can expect them to start moving immediately into reading. You’ll want to watch how students get themselves started and how they hold onto information they are learning. You’ll expect to see them using what they know of note-taking strategies from previous content area and informational reading units. Remember that they will likely have done a research project before, when they were in third grade. They should be accustomed to looking through texts, laying out a plan for research, and for getting themselves started. You’ll want to take some time to watch them working and considering what they are holding onto from previous units and years. Are they getting themselves started, creating a plan for reading and then choosing what seems like slightly easier and perhaps broader texts first? Do they automatically set up their notebooks for notetaking? Do they jot the title and author of the book they are reading? This is all previous learning and if you don’t see it happening, you’ll want to coach into this work right away. A series of whole class voiceovers and table compliments will go a long way for helping you touch base with as many members of the class as possible while ensuring that all are getting started. So you might for instance, voiceover what you see students doing well that can help the rest---

“Oh, I love that Jess already has some notes in her notebook!” you might announce to the class. “Look at her go. She’s listing information she’s already learned about the Oregon Trail from our social studies work. Fabulous! I hope everyone here is also thinking about how what you have already learned about Westward Expansion might be useful!”

“Wow--AJ has a very efficient system for planning his reading,” you might share a little later. “He’s marked different pages of books he wants to read and numbered the order. He’s really set himself up for success. I hope that the rest of you have been thinking about the best way to set up a plan for yourself.”

You might also compliment a child at a table, making sure the rest of the members of the table are within earshot. “I love that I see you looking back at the timeline we made in social studies. I hope that everyone is also thinking about what resources we used in social studies can help with this new work!”

You can also pull up to a student who seems to be doing something well at a table and compliment the student, making sure the others at the table are well within earshot. In this way, you’ll help all of the students get on track and start working. In what is likely to be the
share on the first day, you’ll want to help all of the students recall their previous learning about Westward Expansion and remind them that all of that learning they did in social studies can help them with this new work. You might point to all of the charts you have out about Westward Expansion and remind students that all of these resources can also help them. You might demonstrate looking at a timeline: "So, if I am studying about the Transcontinental Railroad--I am looking at this timeline to see where in the course of events related to Westward Expansion the event that I am studying fits in. Wow, so late in the timeline. One of the last events considered part of Westward Expansion. Actually, the last major event. So this event must be very different from the Building of the Erie Canal, because that didn't end Westward Expansion. Hmm...this is making me think more about the completion of the building of the Transcontinental Railroad's relationship to other events on the timeline. It seems like it was sort of a culmination—that means it is the result of many events—but it's the start of something too. It’s the start of a new era of American History--what comes after Westward Expansion. You know I'm starting to think that maybe I'll need to do a bit of reading about the events that came before and after the Transcontinental Railroad to really think more deeply about its causes, consequences, and significance in history. I'm going to try to read the sections in my books that come right before the Transcontinental Railroad for example, to try to figure out what led to it happening."

You can give students some time to think about their own topics in light of the class’ timeline—and then nudge them to scan the room for other charts that could help them and to begin immediately using another resource as well. Of course, you could have begun with an entirely different share session. For example, during one share or mid-workshop you might teach your students, “Readers think about all they know when they are learning about a topic. If you are learning about penguins, you review all you know about birds because that can help you think about penguins. And if you are learning about Lewis and Clark, you think of all you know about Westward Expansion, because that all relates to Lewis and Clark.” You might, then, channel children to pull out their social studies notebooks and scan old notes, asking how to code the old notes (perhaps about Westward Expansion in general) that are also relevant to their new subtopic.

Students will find it to be a heady and sometimes daunting endeavor to research a subtopic with their small group. You’ll want to find ways to help them keep their energy high throughout the process. So you might teach students, saying, “Today I want to teach you that it helps for researchers to think not only about their topic but also about their work, talking together about questions such as, ‘How can we keep our energy high during this process?’ Students can offer suggestions which you can chart (you can see Navigating Nonfiction Volume II for some examples of charts about how to keep energy high during
research) and you can let them go back to work again.

During another share or mid-workshop you might also have students pull out their social studies notebooks to look back at their old notes and ask them to decide what they want to include in their new notes.

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Over the next few days, as students research and take notes, you’ll likely see there are predictable ways that you’ll need to teach into this work. Chris Lehman reminds us in his book *Energize Research Reading and Writing* that one such concern might be that you see students copying large sections of text. If this is the case for your students, you’ll want to teach a lesson in which you teach students some tips about note-taking. “Today I want to teach you that researchers choose only what seems most important to jot down, and they jot mostly in their own words, quickly, without full sentences.” You might model this by showing students how you read a chunk of text then look up from the book and try to summarize what you read by listing the major points (You can hold up your hand and list the points on your fingers as a model for students to follow) then come up with an idea those points support. You might then show students how you quickly jot down what you wrote and then decide on a heading for the points you have listed. So you might read the first few paragraphs of the section “A Massive Undertaking” in Musolf’s *The Split History of Westward Expansion* (pgs. 22-23), and might model listing these major points:
Building the railroad was a huge undertaking

- Work started in two places (Omaha, Nebraska--Union Pacific Company//Sacramento, California--Central Pacific Company)--would meet in the middle and make one line
- would have to be built over all types of land--prairies, through mountains, over rivers and gorges (Promontory Trestle in Utah--450 feet high)
- 1000s of workers needed (12,000 Chinese worked for Central Pacific//10,000 men worked for Union Pacific--(including Irish Immigrants + African Am.)
- Harsh conditions--blizzards, windstorms, “blazing sun and the bitter cold”, accidents, illnesses, death, fear of attacks by Native Americans

You can then offer students a chance to try this work with another chunk of text--pushing them to decide whether they need to create a new category to record the new information or whether it can fit be incorporated into the notes you have already taken. You can also talk with students about whether or not to include details that seem tangential in your notes. (For example, on these pages, you might talk about the textbox about the Mormon Settlement in Utah. While interesting, this detail doesn’t seem to be as important to helping you understand how Transcontinental Railroad was a huge undertaking.) As you watch students go off to work, you may also need to remind them to read over their notes to see if they have included the names of key people, key places, key events.
You might now add to your notes so they look like this:

23) Building the railroad was a huge undertaking

- Work started in two places (Omaha, Nebraska--Union Pacific Company//Sacramento, California--Central Pacific Company)--would meet in the middle and make one line
- would have to be built over all types of land--prairies, through mountains, over rivers and gorges (Promontory Trestle in Utah--450 feet high)
- 1000s of workers needed (12,000 Chinese worked for Central Pacific//10,000 men worked for Union Pacific--(including Irish Immigrants + African Am.)
- Harsh conditions--blizzards, windstorms, “blazing sun and the bitter cold”, accidents, illnesses, death, fear of attacks by Native Americans
- Finished in 1869--so took 6 years to build-- seen as “transforming the United States”
- Anyone could West--if they could afford a ticket--no more wagons

You’ll want to point out to your students how you quote within your notes, using quotation marks when you do so that you can then go back to incorporate quotes into your writing and conversation about your topic. Remember, that fifth graders need to quote accurately.

Students will also likely need help categorizing their notes on their subtopics. You may see a student, for example, taking down notes from one book on one page then moving to another book and starting a new page for those notes. If that is the case, you’ll want to intervene and help that reader see that he/she can incorporate new learning into old notes. (You might demonstrate how you can read a section on the Transcontinental Railroad and add new notes to the ones you have already taken.)

You might also have students cut their notes up so they can practice grouping notes that see similar together and then tape these into their notebook (or a booklet). Or, you might provide index cards and let students take notes on these, then sort and categorize them.
To support students in synthesizing their learning right away, you can involve them in teaching others about the importance of their subtopic. Students will need to see that they can integrate all that they have learned about their topic across their texts. You might ask them to take a minute and consider questions like:

- Why was my topic significant to American History? Why do we still care about this topic today? Why have authors taken the time to write books on it?
- How does my topic change American History or life in America?

Children might first talk about the Transcontinental Railroad. You might overhear them saying (and if you don’t, you might want to coach them to think about) how the railroad connected two sides of America and helped food, clothes, tools, animals and even people to travel faster from one side of the country to the other. Students might also start to think about how the railroad could help America rely on its own natural resources more--it didn’t have to buy stuff from other countries as much. The railroad also helped more people to communicate--letters were put on the railroad and people could hear from each other much faster! Big cities popped up around railroad stations. And the railroad helped create the “wild west” towns where railroad workers stayed while they were building. Students might also talk about the different groups of people who helped to build the railroad--Chinese and Irish Immigrants and African Americans, among others.

Then students might now take some time to consider what they have learned about their own topics across the books and articles they have been reading--what they have learned--in what will likely be your share on the second or third day of the unit (you can see the Teaching Share in Session XIV of Navigating Nonfiction, starting on page 108 for further support on how this work might be taught).

Likely, you will hear during this share that students are not using the domain specific vocabulary they are encountering in their texts. If that is the case, then you’ll next want to show students that they can use the “lingo of experts” when talking and writing about their topics. (You can see Session XV in Navigating Nonfiction for further support in how to teach that lesson.) “Today I’m going to teach you that when you become an expert on a topic, it is important to begin using the technical vocabulary of that subject. Even if you are just really beginning to learn about a subject, you can accelerate your learning curve by ‘talking the talk.’” As Calkins and Tolan suggest in that session, you might even have each team begin to invent ways to record new terms which seem important to the topic and to begin to make mini word walls or glossaries and keep these in the middle of their tables when they teach each other.
You can also help students to see that while the names of people, places, and events matter, other terms matter as well. One way to know a term is important is if the author repeats it. You might show students that they can actually lift terms from the text and raise their writing and speaking to new heights by trying to use more of the words that the author has used. So if one author has repeated a term like grueling or if a few different authors have pointed out that the journey West on a covered wagon was grueling, then students should try to use the word grueling in their own speaking and writing. Encourage them to use the term and then unpack it and analyze its significance to what they are learning. So, students might explain why the journey West was grueling and what motivated settlers to go despite the grueling conditions. Helping students to acquire academic vocabulary is as essential as helping them to acquire domain specific terms. You’ll want them to notice and begin to lift terms like disregard, progress, perilous, terrain, resentment, distributed, expansion, commerce, exploited in addition to terms like settlers, pioneers, Union Pacific Company, Sacajawea, Manifest Destiny and so on.

Another session in this part of the unit will likely be about helping students to see that note-taking can involve not only recording information but also growing ideas. To support this work, you might remind them of the prompts they have used to grow their thinking in other units and help them to see that they can do that same work here. You might say, “Today I want to remind you that readers don’t only use writing to record information, readers also write to grow ideas. And to do that, readers sometimes rely on the same ‘thought prompts’ as they use to grow ideas when talking.” So, if you go back to your notes on Building the railroad was a huge undertaking, you might now use some prompts to grow some ideas off these notes and show students how you might create a new page for thinking. You might write something like “When I think about why the building of the Transcontinental Railroad is important, I think about how now all those people could go to see other parts of the country that they could never have seen before. It’s faster than going on wagon and safer. Before the railroad, you had to spend months traveling on a wagon and sometimes people died. Now, you could get across the country in a few hours! I bet people got to see the Pacific Ocean for the first time and were amazed. It’s like airplanes. People could never have gone to other countries but now they can. New inventions allow people to see more of the world.” You’ll note that in this demonstration, you’ll be putting forth multiple ideas and making multiple inferences, as fifth graders are expected to do.

You can point out that maybe this work has helped you to go on a journey of thought and has begun to help you understand what ideas and events might be underlying the building of the Transcontinental Railroad as well as larger theories about American history. You might ask students to push themselves to think about details the authors of their texts have
included and if these details spark any surprising ideas or questions or might help students to think about causes, consequences, and/or significance of previous information. As students continue to work, you can push them to continue to make these kinds of key connections and go on journeys of thought to come to new ideas.

Some prompts that might help:

- I used to think...but now I realize...
- At one point I thought...and now I think...
- My ideas about...are complicated. One the one hand, I think...While on the other hand, I think...

(You can see Session XVI of Navigating Nonfiction for more prompts and ideas for teaching a lesson about writing to think.)

Students can also ask themselves and others questions of the information they are learning to push themselves to consider causes, consequences, and the relationships of events in history.

- Does that remind you of anything you have already learned?
- What might be a result of ___?
- What might that lead to?
- What do you think caused ___?

Encourage students to constantly go back to research further to find the answers to these questions and to jot these questions in their notes.

Your read aloud will be of key importance during this part of the unit. You won’t have time during each reading workshop to demonstrate note-taking but during your read aloud you can continue to read sections of the class text set and model taking notes. During your read alouds, you’ll demonstrate going back to notes you have already taken to include new information. Show students how you add headings to your notes to organize them. You can also model taking notes using different text structures, showing students how you consider which structure of note taking will best help you hold onto the information in a section. Students will continuously see an exemplar model of this work which can give them a vision for what they should be doing in their teams.

As you watch students take notes and teach each other, you will likely see ways that students can make better use of their notebooks. You might see, for example, that students
seem to put their notes aside when they begin teaching others about their topics. If this is the case, you'll want to help students see their notes as tools that can help them teach others. You can coach them to quote from their notes as well as from other texts when they teach. In addition, students can quote facts they have jotted down and their own ideas after they hear another student’s teaching session and want to extend or challenge that students’ ideas.

Students can also raise their work to new heights by see their notes as a living document that can be revised and strengthened. They can do more with their notes then simply add on to them. Here a few ways you might raise the level of note taking and thinking about notes in your room:

- Researchers are interested in each others’ studies. They sometimes swap notebooks and take notes on each others’ notes. That helps not only the person reading and learning from someone’s notes, but also the note-taker, because the note-taker can note what others find interesting.
- Researchers find it interesting when a different researcher has different information or ideas on a topic. Researchers stop and challenge other researchers. “Right here, you wrote...I’m just not sure about that, because that wasn't my understanding of it. In my notes, I wrote....Let’s go back to that section of text and look at it again together.” In this way, by challenging each other, researchers can help each other revise information that may be inaccurate or misleading, and can also think about why different sources might include different information on a topic.
- Researchers can also notice that when reading the same book, listening to the same video-tape, different things will seem important to different researchers. It is helpful to talk about why one person or another thinks something is especially important.

As students gain a stronger background on their topics, you might teach them that they will often find they can progress to harder texts. “Readers, once a researcher has read a bunch of easier texts on a topic and started knowing more about that topic, it is often possible to read and understand texts that would at first have seemed too hard. Also, when you tackle the hard texts with another person, sometimes you can have more success.” You might also teach students that there are particular strategies they can use when tackling harder texts. For example, show students how right at the start of a text, it helps to you preview quickly and then--even before reading the text--to try making a quick summary of the text. Then as you read on, when parts get confusing, it can help to push yourself past them.

“Readers, once a researcher has read a bunch of easier texts on a topic and started knowing more about that topic, it is often possible to read and understand texts that would at first have seemed too hard. Also, when you tackle the hard texts with another person, sometimes you can have more success.”
continuing to summarize what you are able to glean, even if you know you aren’t grasping everything. By channeling students to continue to summarize, you help them hold onto the major points of a text. To show students how to do this you might put a super complex text on the document camera and show students how, even when a reader doesn’t know every word, the reader can still continue to summarize what he or she does know and hold onto the gist of a text.

There are other strategies that some reading researchers recommend for helping students tackle complex text and you can try them out and see if they work for your students. For example, some people think it help to suggest that when reading a text that is a bit overwhelming, it works to read the first and last line of every paragraph, summarizing what you can from just those lines in an effort to figure out of main idea(s) and key details as you go. No matter what, you will want to help students recognize when they feel a text is too hard--when they start to feel overwhelmed or lose focus, for example--and so they don’t just plow along, but instead try to alter their reading--perhaps using one of the strategies we’ve just described--so they work hard to hold onto understanding. You can also continue to do lessons on dealing with unfamiliar terms and on decoding, in small groups throughout this bend and throughout the unit, if you find your students need this.

Likely, before this bend is over, you’ll want to teach a lesson in which you say something like this, “Readers, today I want to teach you that researchers push themselves to draw on all they have learned from anywhere about the topic they are researching, and they read across texts, thinking, ‘How are the lessons I am learning from these different texts the same and different?’ You will want to channel your students to rely on learning they have been doing in the content areas and even to bring some of those resources into reading workshop to enhance their research. You can lay different bits of text against each other and spark new ideas. You might lay a photo showing the celebration of the “Golden Spike Ceremony” when the railroad was completed against a bit of text and model using some thought prompts. “Hmmm...so this is showing the celebration when the railroad was finished but all I see are white men. Where are the 12,000 Chinese workers who helped to build the railroad? I’m thinking that maybe they were excluded from this celebration. They did all of the hard work and when the time came to celebrate, they were left out.” Students can begin to try out juxtaposing some previously read texts against each other and growing new ideas. They can also look back at their notes on their first subtopic with their new learning in mind and annotate their notes with new thinking.
As the bend ends, students can again take some time to consolidate their notes and prepare to teach others. You can teach them by saying, “Researchers and writers need to think, ‘What are the most important idea that I want to forward?’ and to think, ‘How can I pop out the really big ideas, making by writing or saying more about them, maybe by using text features to help make those ideas more important to people reading and listening to me.’

Help student to think about why the subtopic they have focused upon seems interesting and important to them. Why should people care about this subtopic? How does it change/add to a person’s understanding of Westward Expansion? Students can consider the essential questions raised in social studies to think about how what they have studied helps them to think about any of those questions:

- What were the wants and needs of the new nation?
- How did these needs and wants lead to conflict among groups? What were the troubles experienced in the new nation? What were the perspectives of conflicting groups?
- What were the results of the movement West?

As students are reading through texts and taking notes, you might teach them that one way readers synthesize their learning is by talking through--and teaching-- what they are learning to others. Then you can channel students to teach the other members of their group what they are learning. This work can support students’ abilities to summarize and help them to determine importance (remember that the Informational Reading Learning Progression can help students self-assess and set goals for this work.) As you listen, you may need to coach students into moving away from just reading parts of the text to each other. It will help immeasurably if you give students a few minutes to plan their teaching session before they teach, deciding on the most important information to share with group members and collecting ways to elaborate on each of those points. Students can then teach each other some key points, making sure to provide supporting evidence, details, and also to reflect on the significance of their content by developing an idea or two about that information. As part of this you can teach students that one way to develop a key point is to quote from one of their texts in ways that highlight the key point, or support it. Remind them that it is important to explain why that quote seems important. You can also encourage them to make connections between their learning by offering them some conversation prompts.

- That fits with what I’m learning because...
- That’s different from what I read because...
- What you just said is making me realize that...
- Now I’m starting to have a new idea...

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Students will be filling the pages of their research booklets with information and their ideas and teaching each other what seems most important to know about their topics.

**Bend II: Building Theories and Reading Critically**

In the previous unit on high interest nonfiction, students worked to build theories and interpret nonfiction. Now, as the unit enters the second bend (the last two weeks), they will draw on what they have already learned to build theories and interpret the historical texts they are reading with greater independence. This work is important and often difficult, thus, we are providing practice in doing it across the year. Students will synthesize their thinking about their books and push themselves to develop big ideas that they can support with inferences they have made earlier. As students are building theories, they will be considering questions such as “Who benefitted? Who lost? What were the consequences of these events?” and by doing so, they will be raising the level of their work from fourth grade.

- Why was my topic significant to American History? Why do we still care about this topic today? Why have authors taken the time to write books on it?
- How does my topic change American History or life in America?
- Who benefitted? Who lost? What were the consequences of these events?

Your students’ notebooks and books will be bursting with jottings and Post-its. You might want to begin with a session on pausing in the midst of reading to organize one’s thoughts. Children might sort Post-its into piles that are about one particular of the subtopics they have studied so far. You might then remind your students that they can look for patterns and new ideas within this stack of related Post-its. You might say something like, “Today I want to remind you that when readers look at a series of ideas about a book (or set of books) they can ask themselves, ‘What do these have in common? What is different about these ideas? and then they use the answers to create a theory.” Once children have developed a couple of theories about their topic about the Westward Expansion, they can revisit earlier parts of the text in light of their theories. They can also read forward,
gathering more evidence to support their theories, making individual theory charts. You’ll want to remind students to do the work that they learned in the writing unit: to speculate and hypothesize, using tentative language—“maybe it was...”, “it might have been the case that...” and so on.

You may want to demonstrate sorting and building theories based on these notes. As you look at these Post-its together, first help students to sort this list further, looking for ideas that go together. Then, you can coach your students to think about what these combined ideas are showing us about the topic. You can craft an example about the topic of the Westward Expansion that the class has been studying (likely, the Transcontinental Railroad). Students might build a theory, for example, such as:

*It may have been the case that the building of the Transcontinental Railroad depended largely on groups of people who faced discrimination*

Students can also begin to question and consider what larger lessons each book might be teaching about history and power and human nature and the economy and...). They can ask, as readers do, “What lessons might this book be teaching not just about Westward Expansion but about American History?” Students can, by building on their inferences, begin thinking about big lessons readers can learn from the text. In this, they will be very close to studying themes. Students might build a theory, for example, such as:

*Progress seems to mean only progress for some; other groups lose out.

*Throughout American History, it seems that one way of being powerful was to get more land.*

Now that they have grasped some of the content related to their research and begun to grow ideas and build theories, this last part of the unit aims to help them to go back to some of those sources and reread them, this time more critically. You’ll want to show students that sometimes when you start to put pieces of information together, some of those sources say different things. To demonstrate this, you might show students the pages about the Transcontinental Railroad from *The Split History of Westward Expansion* by Musolf that you have been reading during read aloud. You can remind them of some of the important points that the class has discussed this author has made and new theories the class has grown from these notes by showing them the class notes.
Building the railroad was a huge undertaking
- Work started in two places (Omaha, Nebraska - Union Pacific Company / Sacramento, California - Central Pacific Company) - would meet in the middle and make one line
- would have to be built over all types of land - prairies, through mountains, over rivers and gorges (Promontory Trestle in Utah - 450 feet high)
- 1000s of workers needed (12,000 Chinese worked for Central Pacific / 10,000 men worked for Union Pacific - (including Irish Immigrants + African Am.)
- Harsh conditions - blizzards, windstorms, “blazing sun and the bitter cold”, accidents, illnesses, death, fear of attacks by Native Americans
- Finished in 1869 - so took 6 years to build - seen as “transforming the United States”
- Anyone could go West - if they could afford a ticket - no more wagons

**new theories:
*It may have been the case that the building of the Transcontinental Railroad depended largely on groups of people who faced discrimination
*Progress seems to mean only progress for some; other groups lose out.
*Throughout American History, it seems that one way of being powerful was to get more land.

Then you might put up part of The Split History of Westward Expansion (American Indian side) by Musolf.

You can put up pages 18-19 on the document camera and engage the class in close reading of just the first paragraph, asking students what new information or what conflicting information they have gained from this text that the other text did not say. Students might notice, for example, that this paragraph of The Split History of Westward Expansion tells the reader that the railroad led to the end of a key part of the existence of the tribes living in the Great Plains. You might give students a second active involvement by reading the rest of these pages and letting students talk again. Students will likely notice that the author has forefronted the role of the buffalo and the killing of the buffalo during the construction of the transcontinental railroad. There was no mention of the buffalo in the settler’s side of

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the story. Students might talk about how details that are so major to one group’s story are ignored by another group. You can also push them to consider how both sides of this book were written by the same author so she is trying to convey ideas about Westward Expansion through telling both sides of the story. Students can go back to think about what larger ideas the author might be trying to convey and what new theories they have. They can go off to work today, considering what details the authors of their texts have included and what details might conflict with what other authors have chosen to include.

You can also provide some prompts for students to help them do more of this compare and contrast work.

- This text says but this text (does not say/also says)...
- This text conflicts with what the other text has said by...
- This text builds on what the other text has said by...

Students might even go back to look at some of the texts they have already read to more closely compare the information they provide. You can coach into this work by asking them to notice what each author has made most important. “Readers, after you have read a couple of sources on a topic, it is helpful to compare and contrast those sources, noticing how the texts portray the topic in similar ways--and how the texts are different. Then you will want to try to figure out why the authors may have made different craft decisions, thinking, ‘Does this relate to the different central ideas they are trying to get across?’” The Split History of Westward Expansion (settler’s side) seems to most want readers to know that the building of the railroad was a huge and difficult undertaking, for example, while The Split History of Westward Expansion (American Indian’s side) seems to most want readers to know that the killing of the buffalo during the construction of the Transcontinental Railroad led to the destruction of a major part of American Indians’ way of life. Students might ask each other:

- What information is in this account that is not in the other account?
- What major points is each author making? What are the key details each other is including?

As your students look for discrepancies or similarities in their sources, you’ll also want to remind them that it’s important to continue to be able to summarize or synthesize the major points and idea(s) related to your topic. So you might now show students how you do your best to summarize what you know on the topic, across all of your texts. When information conflicts, you can acknowledge that conflict in your summary. So for example, your own summary of the building of the Transcontinental Railroad might include the
acknowledgement that the event is fraught with conflict. “The building of the Transcontinental Railroad led to progress for some; loss for others. What is clear is that it changed America.”

As the unit heads toward the final days, students will reread previously read materials and this time they will consider not just the information the author wanted to teach but also the emotion or opinion about that information the author wanted to convey and how the author went about writing the text in such a way as to evoke those feelings or that opinion in the reader. You’ll want to gather students and let them know the big job ahead of them: “So far you’ve really only read the texts to learn information. What I want to teach you today is that readers don’t just think about the information in a text, they also figure out the point of view of the author of that text and how he/she might be swaying you to think a certain way about the topic.” You might then teach students that one way to figure out the author’s point of view on a topic is to look for places where the author’s opinion is coming through. You might show them two sentences:

- Settlers went west in covered wagons.
- Boldly, full of courage and determination, settlers set forth on the journey West.

You can let students know that the first statement is a fact. There are records to show that settler did go west in covered wagons. The second statement is an opinion. It is a feeling about the event. The words boldly, full of courage and determination in the second sentence are clues to the author’s opinion. You can tell the author supports the settlers.

You might now provide an active involvement and gives students a chance to try this work with multiple sources. You might keep students on the rug a bit longer for this lesson. It is likely that when they go off to work, they will not find such clear examples of overt point of view in their own texts and so the work at the rug is providing a chance to practice with supportive examples. We have found that this kind of point of view work is sometimes easier when texts are laid side by side. So you might now provide an active involvement where you type up three texts on the Transcontinental Railroad and show these to students.

“On May 10, 1869, the first transcontinental railroad in the United States was completed. The line connected the East and West, making travel easier, safer and quicker. It sped up the rate at which the West was populated, bringing more and more settlers every year. Soon travelers
could reach just about any location in the United States on newly built railroads” (pgs. 28-29 of The Story of America: Westward Expansion by Roza).

“Despite all the anti-Chinese attacks, snow and rock avalanches, fierce weather conditions, and blasting accidents, the Chinese laborers worked harder and harder. Their achievement--hammering a railroad out of hundreds of miles of treacherous and unexplored country--remains an incredible feat” (Author’s note from Coolies by Yin)

“When railroads were built in the West, travel became faster and easier for the settlers. But for the American Indians, especially the tribes living in the Great Plains, the railroads spelled the end to a vital part of their existence” (p. 18 from The Split History of Westward Expansion [American Indians’ side] by Musolf)

Likely students will notice that while one author has taken what seems to be a more “neutral” position, not mentioning any of the conflict and portraying the railroad as wholly good, while another author is more nuanced, allowing for some of the complications that came along with the building of the railroad.

As students are beginning to now discuss the kinds of language choices that the authors have made and what those language choices show about the authors’ points of view on topics and events, you will also want to help students do this work with multiple accounts (including first person and third person accounts and in different types of text structures) as the Common Core expects. So your next lesson might be a review of this one, only this time, you will be bringing in a primary document.

Students can think about how a first person account might have a very different focus and way of presenting information on a topic than a third person. To model this you might take a primary document (even just a paragraph of the song “Twelve Hundred More”) and analyze it to see the point of view. Students can notice that the songwriter says that it “grieved my heart my full sore” that another “China steamer has been landed here in town.” (Be sure to preview this primary document before you show your students--it is an example of the rampant racism which existed against the Chinese workers.) You can push students to think about who is authoring this song and how that might affect the focus and information provided.

O workingmen dear, and did you hear
The news that’s goin’ around?
Another China steamer
Has been landed here in town.  
Today I read the papers,  
And it grieved my heart full sore  
To see upon the title page,  
“O, just ‘Twelve Hundred More!’”  

O, California’s coming down,  
As you can plainly see.  
They are hiring all the Chinamen  
and discharging you and me;  
But strife will be in every town  
Throughout the Pacific shore,  
And the cry of old and young shall be,  
“O, damn, ‘Twelve Hundred More.’”

Source: “Twelve Hundred More,” in The Blue and Grey Songster (San Francisco: S. S. Green, 1877).

On this day, you might give each group of students a primary document they have already studied in social studies and let them look to do this point of view work with these documents. Some questions they might ask themselves and others:

- Suppose the ____ (person involved) wrote about the ____ (event). How would his account most likely be different than the account given by the ____ (outside observer)?
- What are the differences in focus between the two accounts?
- What is the purpose of each of the documents? How does that help you to think about the author’s point of view?
- What words or phrases best show the author’s point of view?
- How does the point of view in ____ (text #1) differ from the point of view in ____ (text #2)?
- The points of view in both texts are similar because both authors…?

Another lesson you might teach is to help students to look at how authors have chosen to structure their texts and what reasons and evidence they give to support their points. One has started with a photo of the Golden Spike Ceremony, another has started by providing statistics of how workers crossed from China to come build the railroad and how much their passage cost -- students can think about why authors choose to organize their texts in
these ways and how these choices help support their points. In this way, you will be helping students to see how authors use reasons and evidence to support points. In fifth grade, students need to figure out which reasons and evidence support which points so you’ll want them to consider: “What points is the author making? Why is that illustration included? What point does it support? What point does that example support?” Some other questions students might ask themselves and others:

- The author seems to be making the point that...Which sentence has evidence supporting that point?
- Why does the author most likely say this?
- What reason does the author give to support her point that...?
- What text structures has each author used? Why do you think those text structures were chosen to develop the accounts? Are there other text structures that could have been used?

Students might now return to their notes and reread these with a more critical lens. Now they can return to the questions they asked before and add some additional, more critical questions:

- Why was my topic significant to American History? Why do we still care about this topic today? Why have authors taken the time to write books on it?
- How does my topic change American History or life in America?
- What are the benefits and consequences related to my topic? Who benefitted? Who did not? How were different groups of people affected?

You can model this by returning to your own notes on the Transcontinental Railroad:
Building the railroad was a huge undertaking

- Work started in two places (Omaha, Nebraska--Union Pacific Company/Sacramento, California--Central Pacific Company)--would meet in the middle and make one line
- would have to be built over all types of land--prairies, through mountains, over rivers and gorges (Promontory Trestle in Utah--450 feet high)
- 1000s of workers needed (12,000 Chinese worked for Central Pacific/10,000 men worked for Union Pacific--(including Irish Immigrants + African Am.)
- Harsh conditions--blizzards, windstorms, “blazing sun and the bitter cold”, accidents, illnesses, death, fear of attacks by Native Americans
- Finished in 1869--so took 6 years to build-- seen as “transforming the United States”
- Anyone could West--if they could afford a ticket--no more wagons

“The author goes out of her way to point out certain groups of people who helped to build the Transcontinental Railroad (Chinese, Irish immigrants + African Am.). I’m wondering why she has done that. Why those three groups? What do they have in common? I guess Chinese and Irish are both immigrants but African Americans are not. I’m starting to think of what those three groups might have in common and I’m wondering if maybe the author wanted to point out groups of people who faced discrimination. Maybe she’s trying to show that the building of the railroad for rich Americans was done by the very people who were likely excluded and discriminated against by those rich Americans. This book doesn’t mention what the workers were paid but I’m betting it wasn’t that much. This makes me start to realize that so much of the history of America is about exploiting those who are in minority groups.

As your mid workshop that day, you’ll likely want to remind students that a text can offer more than one idea. So you might look back at your notes and think about what other ideas some of these key details might support and push yourself to have a new idea about those same notes. “I’m wondering about why Native Americans wanted to attack the people who were building the railroad. I’m thinking they were probably so angry that their land was being destroyed even further by this construction. This is another detail that the author has
mentioned that is making me start to realize how many conflicts were involved with the building of this railroad. I’m thinking that another idea this text might be trying to convey is that change and progress will always include conflict and it will not be progress for everyone, only some groups. Other groups will lose.

As the unit ends in reading workshop, students can take all of the writing they have done on their subtopics and bring it to writing workshop to help them develop and add more pages to their informational books.