

**UNIT: HISTORY IS A SHAPE**

**Created by Amy Scott: Coral Reef High School**

**Overall Unit Question:** Does history move in a circle, an upwards progression, a downwards spiral, or a straight line?

**1. Topic:** History—in particular an examination of historical progress as it relates to time period and social setting. This unit will follow a discussion of “How to Think About Progress,” chapter 46 of Mortimer Adler’s The Great Ideas. The students will debate philosophically whether or not human societies experience real change, either physically or morally. Additionally moving from the world perspective to a specific American historical era, the student will project themselves back in time to “virtually” experience the economic and physical hazards of homesteading in the 1880’s. Through a series of pre-and-post film activities (based on the PBS film Frontier House) the student will consider whether or not “progress” necessarily leads to the overall betterment of men and their societies. Ultimately by looking at the merits and demerits of modern life compared to prairie life they will answer (at least for this time period) whether history moves upwards, circularly, downwards, or on a straight line.

**2. Goals and Objectives:** The student will learn how to think about progress as a concept of history. He will become familiar with the contrasting ideologies of Aristotle, Hegel, Kant, Marx, Spencer, Kant, and Toynbee. The student will also consider what conditions are indispensable to progress and try to clarify and isolate a specific definition of progress **beyond the material realm**. Finally, the student will debate the possibility that human nature or human societies experience real change, either physically or morally.

**3. Time Available:** This unit will cover two weeks, a span of 4 two-hour blocks.

Day 1: Discussion of chapter 46 of Mortimer Adler’s The Great Ideas and Excerpts from Loewen’s Lies My Teacher Told Me

Day 2: Episode 2 “The Promised Land” Frontier House

Day 3: Episode 4 “Survival” Frontier House

Day 4: Episode 5 and 6 (excerpts) “A Family Affair” Frontier House

**4. Learning Activities:**

**Day 1 Drawing and Reading:** The teacher asks 5 students to go to the board and simultaneously draw their concept of the shape of history (sans words). When they are finished, each student in turn explains his/her choice and its significance to the idea of progress. This becomes the segue to discuss progress as an idea of history. After the class enters into the discussion, the teacher hands out a printed article for the students to read, “Chapter 26” of Mortimer Adler’s The Great Ideas entitled “How to Think About Progress.” During the second hour, students discuss the philosophical concepts of history detailed in Adler’s book offered by Aristotle, Hegel, Marx, Spencer, Kant and Toynbee. Students also take a history test and discuss excerpts from Loewen’s Lies My Teacher Told Me.

**Day 2:** In order to consider the abstract philosophy of historical change discussed in the preceding class lesson, the students will pragmatically project themselves backwards into history, specifically the 1880’s American Frontier. They will consider the economic and physical hazards of homesteading and plan for their survival for at

least a six-month period. Additionally they will look at the merits and demerits of modern life compared to prairie life.

**Procedure Role Play:** Girls pick a husband and the pairs decide that they are going to leave St. Louis Missouri and travel to the Montana territory to acquire land under the Homesteading Act of 1862. (If there is an unequal number of boys and girls, the remaining students can play the part of spinster sister or aunt or children of the homesteaders). They have three choices of transportation and must budget their trip, select supplies, and consider the perils they might face. After each couple or grouping reads to the class their list of supplies and projections, they study an actual list provided by an 1880's homesteader to note what provisions they forgot and what perils they failed to consider. Following this activity, they view a one-hour excerpt "The Promised Land", "Home Sweet Home," and "Meltdown" from the PBS series Frontier House in which three modern families go back in time.

**Day 3: Simulating an Economic Community:** Continuing the "real-life" experience, newlyweds, families, or groups are told that they have arrived in Montana and have established a homestead, but are dangerously short of supplies and food. They may not make it through the winter. Have them brainstorm to generate money to trade at the general store or to shore up their cattle and crop reserves. After 30 minutes, student groups report to the general class their creative solutions. During the second hour, students watch the 1 hour excerpt from the PBS Frontier House DVD entitled "A Bride Comes West; Do or Die; All Work and No Play."

**Day 4: Brainstorming and Debate:** Before viewing clips from the remaining 3 hours of Frontier House, students will plan for a school and predict which families will exhibit necessary survival skills to make it through the winter.

**Procedure:** Students (acting as homesteaders) will (theoretically) build and structure a community school for their children. First they must hire a schoolteacher considering which classmate is best suited for this job. What will they pay him or her? How will they be housed? Of what will the curriculum consist? What will serve as the schoolhouse? During what months will school be in session? What supplies will be needed? Lastly, since children of varying ages will attend in a one-room schoolhouse, how should the teacher be expected to manage and plan for such a diverse group?

The students will debate which family (from the film) will survive the winter based upon their knowledge of the family's prior patterns and behavior and how they will respond to their departures back to the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

View remaining clips from the series: "Downhill to Winter"; "The Final Reckoning" "New Frontiers."

During the last 10 minutes of the block, the class will discuss whether or not the three families in the PBS series Frontier House made their transition from the past to the present successfully. Additionally was the move from the 1880's to the 21<sup>st</sup> century an upwards progression, a circle, a downwards spiral, or a flat line?

## 5. Assessment:

1. Supply list, projected cost of move, mode of transportation, and anticipated hardships to be turned in as a group on day one.
2. Day 3 will require a list of at least 5 brainstorming ideas for creatively raising money and shoring up livestock.
3. Day 4 will require a detailed plan for setting up a community school which addresses all seven questions provided by the teacher. Additionally, selected students will debate the pro's and con's of which families will fare better during their 6 month stay on the prairie.

**6. Supplies/Materials:**

1. The PBS DVD **Frontier House**
2. Three worksheets that specifically spell out each day's activities.
3. A Xeroxed list of an actual homesteader's supply list (on PBS website listed below)
4. An historical cost sheet for supplies, transportation, and livestock during the 1880's that the students may use as reference when calculating their move. (Found on the PBS website below)
5. DVD player and projector
6. Computer for PowerPoint presentations with projector
7. CD Rom Drive for playing music or portable boom box
8. Invaluable resource/historical reference: the PBS website for **Frontier House** that contains interactive games and activities, video clips, and historical maps and documents as primary sources for research:  
<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/frontierhouse/>
9. A chapter Xeroxed with permissions from Mortimer Adler's The Great Ideas, Chapter 46 "How to Think About Progress."
10. A handout with excerpts from James Loewen's *Lies My Teacher Told Me*.

**Day 5: Will and Ariel Durant Handout.** Read the class before and answer the accompanying handout before coming to class today.

In class discussion of answers and ideas contained within handout.

## Frontier House

The Homestead Act, passed by Congress on May 20, 1862, declares that any citizen of the United States can claim 160 acres of surveyed government land. **After payment of a nominal filing fee, homesteaders are to "improve" their land by living on it, building a dwelling, and planting crops. If the settlers fulfill these requirements, and remain on their homestead for a period of five years, the land becomes their property.**

Via the Homestead Act, vast amounts of the public domain -- 270 million acres, or 10% of the continental United States -- were opened up to private citizens.

Over the 124-year history of the Act, more than 2 million individuals filed claims. Of these, only 783,000 -- less than half -- ultimately obtained the deeds for their homesteads.



Despite the odds, thousands of settlers from all walks of life -- including single women, recently freed slaves, and newly arrived immigrants -- went to the frontier to meet the challenge of "proving up" their claims and keeping their "free" land. A popular camp song of the 1870s cheered:

"Come along, come along, don't be alarmed;

Uncle Sam is rich enough to give us all a farm!"

You currently live in St. Louis. It is the 1880's and you have decided (along with your wife or husband) to seek a new life in the Montana Territory. There are preparations to be made, supplies to be bought, and possibly wagons to be loaded. Use the planning sheet below to prepare for your journey. Choose your method of travel and consider any skills you may need to acquire. Predict or anticipate any perils, physical and psychological, you may face.

Into which half of the 783,000 settlers will you be classified, the half that fails or the half that succeeds?



**Transportation:** You have three choices.

1. You may travel by steamboat. Cabin fare is \$300.00 and cabin freight costs 12 cents a pound. Your trip is approximately 2,200 miles up the Missouri River from St. Louis. The Missouri is navigable for only a few short weeks each summer, and the boats frequently run aground, sink, or burn after their boilers explode.
2. You may travel instead by prairie schooner, a lighter form of covered wagon that weighs about one ton, is 14 feet long, 4 feet wide, and 2 feet deep. The wagon and

oxen cost about \$400. Once on the road, you can expect to travel 12 to 20 miles a day, under the best conditions. In the immense open spaces of the Great Plains, this frequently means that you will stop for the night within sight of your previous day's campsite. In poor conditions -- when the ground is muddy or rocky, when there are rivers to be crossed, or when there are hills to be climbed -- you might toil all day long to progress less than five miles.

- 3. A new method of travel only recently available in the 1880's is by rail. The train will cost you \$3.00 a day per person, but when you get to Montana (in about 2 weeks) supplies will be very expensive if you can find them. On the train, you can rent thin straw mattresses at \$3.00 apiece that you may place under the seats where other passengers sit and sleep upright. There is a common toilet and a cook stove shared by 30 immigrants. Wealthier settlers can rent out entire boxcars, in which to transport not only their family members, but also their household goods, farming equipment, and up to six heads of cattle.

Which method of transportation will you choose? Why?

---



---

**Now decide**

- 1. How much money will you need for everything: transportation, supplies, and homesteading?

---



---



---



---



---

- 2. If traveling by prairie schooner, will you travel alone or with 2 or more couples? Why? Additionally estimate the time it will take to make the trip from St. Louis to The Montana territory.

---



---



---



---



---



---

- 3. What supplies in what specific amounts will you take with you or buy when you get to Montana?

---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---

---

---

---

---

4. What skills will you need to develop to survive?

---

---

---

---

5. What might prove to be your greatest hardships?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Related PBS Websites: Changing Landscape

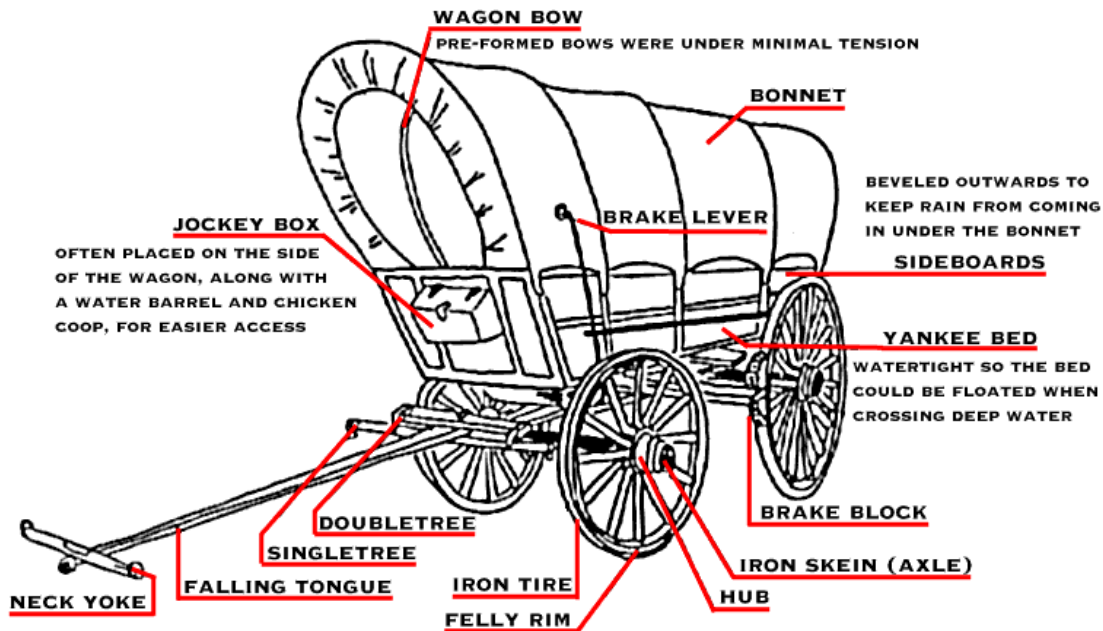
<http://www.sprocketworks.com/shockwave/load.asp?SprMovie=ustimemapweb>

Take a journey

[http://www.pbs.org/wnet/frontierhouse/resources/lp1\\_step2.html](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/frontierhouse/resources/lp1_step2.html)

Sing a prairie ballad

<http://www.contemplator.com/folk2/betsey.html>



### 3 Routes to Montana

Prairie schooner, wagon and oxen = \$400.00

Alternative= Train boxcar (will hold family and 6 head of cattle)= \$50.00 (2 week trip)

**Steamboat** = 2,200 miles up the Missouri River from St. Louis to Montana. Stop over in Chicago. Cabin fare for the trip was around \$300, with a rate of 12 cents a pound for freight. A cow generally weighs about 1,800 lbs.

#### Livestock and Supplies

ox	\$30-35
milk cow	\$70-75
cattle	\$8-20
mule	\$10-15
pack horse	\$25
riding horse	up to \$75
bridle & blinders	\$3
tack & harness	\$5
mule collar	\$1.25
horse blanket	\$2
whip	\$1
pack saddle	\$2.50
saddle &	\$5

saddle bags	
bucket	\$1
woolen blanket	\$2.50
tent	\$5 - 15
nails	\$0.07 per pound
soap	\$0.15 per pound
sheet iron stove	\$15 - 20
coffee mill	\$1.00
coffee pot	\$0.75
frying pan	\$1.50
stew kettle	\$0.50
bread pan	\$0.25
butcher knife	\$0.50

tin table settings	\$5
candles	\$0.15 per pound
10-gallon wash tub	\$1.25
bucket	\$0.25
axe/shovel/hoe	\$1.25
hand tools	\$2.50
rope	\$2.50
<b>Weapons</b>	
rifle	\$15

shotgun or musket	\$10		gallon	lard	\$0.25 per pound
Colt revolver	\$25	saleratus	\$0.12 per pound	butter	\$0.60 per pound
single-shot pistol	\$5	tea	\$0.60 lb	flour	\$0.06 per pound
powder & shot	\$5	rice	\$0.05 per pound	coffee	\$0.20 per pound
hunting knife	\$1	beans	\$0.06 per pound	sugar	\$0.10 - 0.16/lb
<b>FOOD</b>				rice	\$0.06 per pound
flour	\$0.02 per pound	<b>Expenses restocking on the way</b>		dried peaches	\$0.12 per pound
corn meal	\$0.05 per pound	Indian moccasins	\$0.50	apples	\$0.12 per pound
bacon	\$0.05 per pound	tanned buffalo hide	\$4.00	saleratus	\$0.25 per pound
sugar	\$0.04 per pound	crossing bridges	from \$0.15 to \$0.50 per wagon	salt	\$0.03 per pound
coffee	\$0.10 per pound	ferrying rivers	\$2 - \$5 per wagon	wheat	\$1.03 per bushel
dried fruit	\$0.06 per pound	oxen and cows	\$50 - 100	oats	\$1.25 per bushel
salt	\$0.06 per pound	wagon	\$100 - 200	onions	\$2.50 per bushel
pepper	\$0.08 per pound	bacon	\$0.25 per pound	potatoes	\$0.75 per bushel
lard	\$0.05 per pound	pork	\$0.125 per pound	beans and peas	\$1.50 per bushel
vinegar	\$0.25 per	beef	\$0.10 per pound	chickens	\$1
		tallow	\$0.15 per pound	turkeys	\$2 - 2.50
				nails	\$0.17 per pound
				tobacco	\$0.25 per pound
				candles	\$0.75 per pound



plow iron	\$62.50
lumber	\$25 per thousand board feet



### Survival: Worksheet # 2 Frontier House

Settlers on the 19<sup>th</sup> century frontier were faced with the need to keep hungry mouths fed. Your gardening skills along with your knowledge of livestock, hunting, fishing, gathering, salting, smoking, canning and drying are essential to your survival.

You have been on your claim now 3 months; your housing is completed, but your food supply and money is dangerously low. The children as well as your partner are markedly thin. You call a family meeting to discuss the crisis.

The bulk of your homesteader diet must be harvested from your own claim or gathered from the wilderness that surrounds you. It is possible to make the 2-day trip to Hop-Sing's store to buy supplies, but first you must creatively think of new ways to raise money, increase your livestock, or enlarge, protect, and preserve your garden.

First let's check your knowledge of such basic skills as gardening, hunting, fishing, and animal husbandry and poultry care.

#### Cattle:

1. Your cow just had a new calf. How long will it be before you can count on a milk supply from her? \_\_\_\_\_
  2. If you increase your herd, how much grass needs to be available daily for each cow? \_\_\_\_\_
  3. There is a limited water supply available and it is quite a distance from your cabin. How many gallons of water does a cow need to produce 1 gallon of milk?  
\_\_\_\_\_
  4. On average, how much milk does a healthy cow produce in one day?  
\_\_\_\_\_
  5. Based on this figure, how much water will you need to provide daily for each milk cow? \_\_\_\_\_
  6. Your oxen won't breed. What might be the problem?  
\_\_\_\_\_
-

7. Your claim has no nearby water source so you decide to dig a well. How far must you dig, on average, to hit water?  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. You dig down the appropriate depth but find the water too alkaline to drink. What else might you try? \_\_\_\_\_
9. You have built an outhouse (privy) with a hole beneath it six feet deep. The hole however is filling fast and the hot summer months have made the smell almost unbearable. What can you do? \_\_\_\_\_
10. You need a table and a bed but had no room in your prairie schooner to bring furniture from St. Louis. Additionally, to complicate matters, there is nowhere nearby to purchase such furniture and your claim has no trees at your disposal. What could you do? \*\*\* Remember you also need a mattress
11. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. It gets very cold during the winter and there are icy drafts that waft through your log cabin. How might you insulate your dwelling?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
13. 13. When the first blizzard came you were in the barn and found the visibility so bad that you could not find the way to the house. Disoriented you headed in the wrong direction and almost froze to death since no one was home. What can you do to keep this from happening in the future?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 
14. You want to plant a "kitchen garden" that would supply greens, peas, radishes squash, potatoes, bean, and pumpkins. Which of these do you plant in the spring? Which of these must be planted in the summer?
- |        |        |
|--------|--------|
| Spring | Summer |
|--------|--------|
- 15 What can you do to keep your milk, cheese, and eggs from spoiling?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 16 How will you know when your cast- iron oven is ready for baking pastries? Not too hot or too cold? \_\_\_\_\_
17. If you build a log ice house with cut blocks of ice from winter creeks, separated by layers of straw and sawdust, how long can you expect your ice to last? \_\_\_\_\_
- 18 You have received a letter from a nearby cattle rancher that they will be conducting a drive through your property. What must you do to prepare?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 19 Your horse is fond of eating nails. He just ate two or three that were dislodged from the barn and days later you notice he seems to be suffering from acute indigestion and pain. What can you do to keep him from dying? \_\_\_\_\_

**Chickens:**

20. Your hens have stop laying for some time, what could be causing this?

- A. You moved them to a different location
- B. You changed their feed
- C. They are getting 10 hours of light a day.
- D. Their feed has 10% protein.
- E. Your rooster died
- F. Your family dog keeps barking at them.

21. How many eggs might you expect a healthy chicken to lay in one day?

---

22. Is it all right to just let chickens range free?

---

**Preserving Food:**

23. Since many fruits and vegetables perish quickly, what are some techniques you could use to preserve your apples, potatoes, and onions during the hot summer months?

---

---

---

24. You've decided to raise bees, rabbits, pigs, sheep, or goats for personal food stock and for future revenue. Which endeavor will guarantee the greatest return for your investment and effort? Why?

---

---

25. Think of some innovative ways to raise money? What service can you provide? What can you trade or make to generate money?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Activity Day #3: The Frontier Schoolhouse

You have been 5 months on your claim and are now prospering. Your butter and egg business is doing well and you are able to barter or provide services to neighboring homesteaders. The profits from these activities not only sustain you but also leave you with a slight surplus. You must now decide how to best use these extra funds. After thinking it over and considering all the options, both you and your spouse realize that you still have one unmet need, education. Your children along with those from other families on the prairie lack schooling. In addition to what you perceive as a pressing need, Montana passed a law earlier this year (1883) that made education compulsory throughout the Montana territories. This responsibility cannot be put off any longer.

Although you need the helping hands around the farm, you feel the children's education must come first. You call a meeting with other nearby homestead couples, the purpose of which is to **gain support, raise funding, procure a schoolhouse, hire a teacher (set his/her salary), procure necessary supplies and furniture, devise a workable school calendar, and suggest an appropriate curriculum.** First send out a notice of the proposed schoolhouse meeting agenda so that each family can consider their wishes before they meet. After a "week" has passed (20 minutes for class purposes) bring all the prairie families together in a "town-hall" meeting at your house to discuss and vote on the proposed agenda.

Remember to keep in mind several considerations:

- your proposed "schoolhouse" must meet the needs of diverse students ranging in age from 6 to 15
- married women are not allowed to teach
- there are no textbooks
- the average annual salary for teachers in Montana during the 1880's is \$54.50 for female teachers and \$71.40 for male teachers.

**Agenda consideration #1.** How much money will you need to raise collectively to house and furnish the school with appropriate supplies? You must also consider the annual teacher salary that must come collectively from your pockets.

---



---

**Agenda consideration #2:** Where should the school house be located and what will be the school calendar (months of year and daily hours)?

---



---

**Agenda consideration #3:** What subjects should be taught?

---



---



---



---

**Agenda consideration #4:** Since there is a teacher shortage out West and no one outside the territories has answered your request for the position, who amongst the homesteaders (your fellow classmates) would make the best schoolteacher? Outline their daily duties, find them housing, and set the rules by which they must abide.

---

---

---

---

---

**Agenda consideration #5:** Since you will have students ranging from grades one through 8 in your one-room schoolhouse, how will you instruct the teacher to divide the day and plan for his/her diverse students?

---

---

---

**Agenda consideration #6:** In 1883 over 45 % of the children did not attend school in Montana. What are the positives and negatives of the children attending school

For the Children?

---

---

---

For the Parents?

---

---

---

### Activity Day # 4: Frontier House: Reckoning

It is harvest time in Montana. You have just finished putting up the hay, chopping wood for winter, slaughtering your pigs and cattle, and pickling and preserving your food. You decide to have a celebration much like early pioneers and plan a harvest festival. You plan to invite 20 to 50 people from farms 10 to 20 miles from your settlement. How will you feed them and what games, activities, and competitions will you host? The purpose of your fair is to celebrate a bountiful harvest, show off your skills and accomplishments, and develop a sense of social community with the surrounding homesteaders.

What foods in what quantities will you prepare to feed 50 people?

---

---

---

Devise three games/activities in which the children can participate.

---

---

---

Create three games/competitions in which the men can participate.

---

---

---

Create one activity in which husband/wife teams can compete?

---

---

---

How can you show off your homesteading skills and possibly win a ribbon to boot?

---

---

---

According to historical research gathered on the homestead pioneers, on average, only one family out of the three will be successfully prepared for winter. Based upon your knowledge of the three families up to this point, the Klune's, the Glenn's, and the Brooks', which two families do you think will fail? Which one will survive? Provide reasons for your assessments of the three families.

The Kluns

---

---

---

---

The Glens

---

---

---

---

The Brooks

---

---

---

---