

## Lesson Plan 1:

### **The Demise of the Great American Frontier: Westward Spread of American population from 1790 to 1900**

#### **Grades**

6-8, 9-12, College 100 level

#### **Description**

In this lesson students are introduced to Frederick Jackson Turner and how early Census data, when combined visually with maps, effectively demonstrated the end of the frontier. By reading Turner's essay and discussing this phenomenon, students learn why this was a significant turning point for America. Students also learn how to display data visually by developing a series of shaded maps using Census data to show the moving frontier.

#### **Learning Objectives**

By fully participating in this lesson, students will be able to:

- (1) interpret statistical data sets;
- (2) create visual devices using data to demonstrate population changes over time; and
- (3) explain how cultures can be affected by changes in demographics by comparing statistical representations of data with changes in cultural behavior.

#### **Time Required**

This lesson is expected to require approximately 3 hours of class time.

#### **Materials and Resources**

NOTE: You will need to have Adobe Acrobat installed on your computer to access the Student Worksheets. You may download Adobe Acrobat free of charge at <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep.html>.

For this lesson you will need:

1. Computers connected to the internet for conducting research and to access "The First Measured Century" website.
2. Television, VCR, and videotape of the first hour of "The First Measured Century," which can be purchased at <http://www.shop.pbs.org>, ordered by phone by calling 1-800-PLAY-PBS, or recorded during the broadcast:

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**The First Measured Century Premieres on PBS Wednesday December 20th, 2000 from 8:30 to 11:30 PM Check your local listings at:**  
<http://www.pbs.org/whatson/index.html>

Schools are permitted to tape The First Measured Century and use the program for educational purposes for one year following each PBS broadcast. Additional information about teacher taping rights can be found at PBSTeachersource:

[http://www.pbs.org/teachersource/copyright/copyright\\_trights.shtm](http://www.pbs.org/teachersource/copyright/copyright_trights.shtm)

3. The spreadsheet containing population and population density data for each state from the 1st census in 1790 through 1900. This data is provided in spreadsheet form in the file [state\\_data.xls](#) or in printable format in the file: [lesson1handout3.pdf](#).

4. 12 maps for each student or group of students of the continental United States showing present outlines of states. (Outline maps of U.S. are available at: <http://www.usgs.gov/education/outlineMap.pdf>.)

5. Crayons or colored pencils in varying shades of one color (for example, light blue, blue, and deep blue).

6. Frederick Jackson Turner's article: "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" (chapter one of Turner's book The Frontier in American History). This is available on the web at <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/TURNER/chapter1.html>.

## Teaching Strategy

### Class Session 1

1. Prepare for this lesson by queuing "The First Measured Century" tape 1 to the [Closing of the Frontier](#) segment of the program. This is the first segment of the program after a brief introduction. It begins with the Chicago World's Fair and lasts for about 11 minutes including the introduction.

2. Once the video is set to begin, prepare students for learning by discussing

- concepts of the frontier,
- early Census data,
- visual representations of data, and
- the beginnings of history as more than anecdote.

3. You may wish to pause the video where it shows Turner's maps to discuss the effectiveness of the visual representation of data using maps even in the crude forms used at the time. Inform students that they will be creating their own data maps in one of the next class sessions.

4. You will recognize the end of the "Closing of the Frontier" segment when you see Ben Wattenberg in Little Italy at the beginning of the next segment. At this point, stop the tape and reinforce concepts with a post-viewing discussion.

- Discuss the use of maps to show data and geographical influences on the westward migration in America.

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- Discuss how the census data was used to determine that the frontier line no longer existed and why that realization was historically important.

5. Provide students with copies of Frederick Jackson Turner's "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" (1893) for reading before the next class session. If time allows, they may begin at the end of this class.

### **Class Session 2**

1. Begin the second class session with a discussion of the Turner essay and student responses to the worksheet. Discussion topics may include:

- How did westward expansion change the lives of Americans?
- Did westward movement create regional tensions?

2. Provide students with [handout 1](#) to fill out based on their understanding of the essay. In this worksheet, students list and summarize the reasons why the concept of the frontier was important in shaping an American character different from European character.

3. You may direct students to the FMC website for more information. Here you will find the [transcript](#) from the "Closing of the Frontier" segment and [interviews](#) with experts on Turner in the Program section. You will also find information about [Turner](#) and his [essay](#) in the Timeline in the Interactivity section.

### **Class Session 3**

1. Introduce students to the next exercise by relating what they are about to do with what they have seen in the program and/or on the website. Recall Turner's use of shaded maps to represent population data.

2. This exercise may be conducted with individual students or by pairing students together.

3. Provide students with [handout 2](#), data sets from the [spreadsheet](#) or from the [pdf file](#) online or printed and twelve copies of the US map with the states outlined.

4. Have students label each map with the year of decennial census from 1790 onward (1790, 1800, 1810 and so forth to 1900).

5. Conduct a discussion with the students to ensure understanding of the state data on population density by covering the following topics:

- How does the data vary over time?
- How does it vary by state?
- What is population density?
- Why are some states missing data?

6. Assign colors to different ranges of population density. For example, use light blue for 2 - 8; blue for 9 - 32; and dark blue for 33 and higher. Leave areas with less than 2 people per square mile uncolored.

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7. On the first outline map (for 1790) color each state according to its population density as an example for the class.
8. Have students color the other maps in the same way for each census from 1800 to 1900. If you have divided the class into pairs or small groups, the students may split the maps among themselves. If necessary you may have the students take the maps to complete as a homework assignment.
9. Examine the westward progression of the U.S. population by looking at the sequence of maps you have created.

### Assessment Recommendations

- Students should all participate in the discussion. You may wish to call on students who do not volunteer questions or responses during the discussion. Students should be able to provide thoughtful responses to the discussion questions.
- For reading assignments, assess whether or not students have read the assignment through the follow-up discussion and through the worksheet. Responses for both should reveal how much or how well students read the assignment.
- You may gather from the map assignment how well students have understood the application of population data.
- Neatness, thoroughness and accuracy in the shading of the maps should be considered when assessing this assignment.
- If students are required to work together, observe how well they communicate, resolve differences and work together to accomplish the task.

### Related Links

Historical census data of the U.S. can be found on the web at:  
<http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/census/>

Statistical atlas of the United States, based upon the results of the eleventh census by Henry Gannett: Go to <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amhome.html> and search using the terms eleventh census. Results will show this in the map collection.

### Extensions

You may expand this exercise by having students conduct research on the internet to find the data used in this lesson instead of providing it.

You may also use advanced spreadsheet programs with maps to shade in the data electronically.

For upper-level high school or college courses, have students read the [interviews](#) of William Cronon, John Milton Cooper, and Seymour Lipset on The First Measured Century website: [www.pbs.org/fmc](http://www.pbs.org/fmc) . Use these readings for more in-depth discussions and understandings of

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Frederick Jackson Turner and the concepts of Americanism, early social science and the relationship of geography and data.

Students could use the information provided, visual representations of data and additional research to write a short research paper.

### **Adaptations**

For a shorter lesson or for younger students, you may reduce the amount and depth of the discussion. You may also reduce the number of maps and corresponding data to cover only a few sets of census data (such as 1850, 1870 and 1890) to achieve a similar demonstration.

### **Relevant Standards**

#### **National Geography Standards**

From the National Council for Geographic Education (<http://www.ncge.org>)

1. How to use maps and other geographic representations, tools, and technologies to acquire, process, and report information.
3. How to analyze the spatial organization of people, places, and environments on Earth's surface.
6. How culture and experience influence people's perception of places and regions.
9. The characteristics, distribution, and migration of human populations on Earth's surface.
7. How to apply geography to interpret the past.

#### **Standards for School Mathematics**

From the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (<http://www.nctm.org>)

#### Communication

Instructional programs from prekindergarten through grade 12 should enable all students to—

- organize and consolidate their mathematical thinking through communication;
- communicate their mathematical thinking coherently and clearly to peers, teachers, and others;
- analyze and evaluate the mathematical thinking and strategies of others;
- use the language of mathematics to express mathematical ideas precisely.

#### Connections

Instructional programs from prekindergarten through grade 12 should enable all

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students to—

- recognize and use connections among mathematical ideas;
- understand how mathematical ideas interconnect and build on one another to produce a coherent whole;
- recognize and apply mathematics in contexts outside of mathematics.

### Representation

Instructional programs from prekindergarten through grade 12 should enable all students to—

- create and use representations to organize, record, and communicate mathematical ideas;
- select, apply, and translate among mathematical representations to solve problems;
- use representations to model and interpret physical, social, and mathematical phenomena.

### **National Standards for History**

From the National Center for History in the Schools (<http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/nchs>)

Era 4: Expansion and Reform (1801-1861)

Standard 2: How the industrial revolution, increasing immigration, the rapid expansion of slavery, and the westward movement changed the lives of Americans and led toward regional tensions