



TERMS TO KNOW:

Before or after watching this episode, encourage students to define and review the terms below. Students may also want to make their own lists of new vocabulary words and identification terms as they watch.

- Commodity
- Convulsion
- Cumberland Gap
- Decree
- Exploits
- Frontier
- Keelboat
- Toil
- Uncharted



America The Story of Us is useful for American History, Social Studies, and Media courses. It is appropriate for 7th grade students and above, and is an excellent resource for professional development.

EPISODE 3: WESTWARD

INTRODUCTION

After the Treaty of Paris is signed in 1783 and the new American nation is born, a vast continent lies to the west of the mountains, waiting to be explored. This land is not empty – Native American Indians are spread across the land mass, as are Spanish colonists and French explorers.

The conquest of the West by pioneers and trailblazers is a story marked by courage and hardship. Armed with knowledge from hardened mountain men like Jedediah Smith, millions of Americans keep heading westward in the hopes of claiming lands and finding prosperity.



Their journeys by wagon train are fraught with danger, but the allure of adventure, opportunity and economic gain is strong. While some struggle to create new lives on the frontier, others are rewarded with riches as hundreds of thousands of people rush to mine California's gold in the mid-19th century.

America now stretches from “sea to shining sea.” The consequences for Native Americans on the plains are severe.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How would you describe Jedediah Smith? What do you think were his most important characteristics?
2. Who was Susannah Dickinson, and what role did she play in the Alamo conflict?
3. What was the significance of Daniel Boone's clearing of the Cumberland Gap? How do you think this affected the Shawnee Indians and other native groups?



4. How did the Louisiana Purchase change the United States? Why was Thomas Jefferson eager for Lewis and Clark to explore the West?
5. What were the most important items for trade during the time period covered in this episode? Why do you think those items had value?

Primary Source:

FROM JEDEDIAH SMITH'S JOURNAL SECOND EXPEDITION TO CALIFORNIA

13 Jul 1827 - 3 Jul 1828

20th I went with the Trappers within a mile of the place where I struck the river on the last Apl. Above that there was no Beaver sign but considerable from the camp up to that place.

I saw some indians on the opposite side of the river but they ran off. The river was quite rapid and the rushing of the water brought fresh to my remembrance the cascades of Mt. Joseph and the unpleasant times I had passed there when surrounded by the snow which continued falling.

My horses freezing, my men discouraged and our utmost exertion necessary to keep from freezing to death. I then thought of the vanity of riches and of all those objects that lead men in the perilous paths of adventure.

It seems that in times like those men return to reason and make the true estimate of things. They throw by the gaudy baubles of ambition and embrace the solid comforts of domestic life. But a few days of rest makes the sailor forget the storm and embark again on the perilous Ocean and I suppose that like him I would soon become weary of rest.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What are some of the notable things Smith describes in this entry?
2. Based on this reading, how would you describe Smith's personality?

FURTHER EXPLORATIONS:

What else was going on during this time period? Educators and students can explore the sites below to learn more about the era of U.S. history covered in this episode.

The War of 1812 and the Star-Spangled Banner

<http://americanhistory.si.edu/starspangledbanner>

The Second Great Awakening and links about this era

<http://memory.loc.gov/learn/collections/faw/history8.html>

Andrew Jackson and the Bank Veto

www.neh.gov/news/humanities/2008-01/KingAndrewandtheBank.html

PLACES TO VISIT:

Interested in what you saw in this episode? Visiting historic sites is a great way for teachers, students, and families to learn more about the past. Explore these historic sites, or look for local historic sites in your town or city to visit.

The Alamo

www.nps.gov/history/nR/travel/tx/tx29.htm

The Tall Grass Prairie National Preserve

www.nps.gov/tapr/index.htm

The Cumberland Gap

www.nps.gov/cuga/index.htm

