Unit 5

Title: Ghost Towns of the American West

Suggested Time: 5 days (45 minutes per day)

Common Core ELA Standards: RI.5.1, RI.5.3, RI.5.4; W.5.2, W.5.4, W.5.6; SL.5.1; L.5.1, L.5.2, L.5.4

Teacher Instructions

*Refer to the Introduction for further details.*

**Before Teaching**

1. Read the Big Ideas and Key Understandings and the Synopsis. Please do **not** read this to the students. This is a description for teachers, about the big ideas and key understanding that students should take away **after** completing this task.

Big Ideas and Key Understandings

Exploring the many ghost towns in the United States gives us insight into the past.

Synopsis

Ghost Towns of the American West, an expository text, depicts how the Westward Expansion left a lasting impact on America. Settlers pushed westward over three centuries from the 1600’s to the 1900’s. The massive migration of people to the American West during the gold rush required building towns to house people. However, when all the gold and other resources in an area were depleted, the towns were often deserted. These deserted towns were called ghost towns.

1. Read entire main selection text, keeping in mind the Big Ideas and Key Understandings.
2. Re-read the main selection text while noting the stopping points for the Text Dependent Questions and teaching Vocabulary.

**During Teaching**

1. Students read the entire main selection text independently.
2. Teacher reads the main selection text aloud with students following along. (Depending on how complex the text is and the amount of support needed by students, the teacher may choose to reverse the order of steps 1 and 2.)
3. Students and teacher re-read the text while stopping to respond to and discuss the questions and returning to the text. A variety of methods can be used to structure the reading and discussion (i.e.: whole class discussion, think-pair-share, independent written response, group work, etc.)

Text Dependent Questions

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| **Text-dependent Questions** | **Evidence-based Answers** |
| The author states that, “Virtually every ghost town has untold stories of people who longed for a chance at a better life.” Analyze this statement and explain what it means. | Ghost towns stand as evidence of high adventure, hopes of striking it rich, and the sudden loss of fortune-or life. |
| What motivates many people to move to the lonesome American West? | Many people were motivated to move to the lonesome American West because they wanted a better life, wanted to be rich, or sought adventure. |
| What kinds of towns became ghost towns and settlements? Why did people abandon these towns and settlements? | Ghost towns were originally mining camps, cowboy towns, or settlements of the sprawling westward frontier. One main cause for abandoning a town was that prospectors gave up looking for gold near the town or that gold was depleted. Also, settlements were abandoned because the miners did not make a fortune, the crops had failed, their sources of income or wealth disappeared, or they just gave up. |
| Where are ghost towns located today? | Ghost towns are located throughout the world. However, in the United States most are found in the Midwest and West. |
| Are ghost towns easy to find? How are ghost towns usually discovered today? | Ghost towns are not easy to find. Today ghost towns are usually discovered when historians research and explore to find them, often hiking into the isolation of the countryside. |
| What can you conclude about life in the American West during the 1800’s based on the information provided in the text? Which clues support this conclusion? | Life was often difficult, risky, and unsuccessful. The fact that so many ghost towns exist and the descriptions of the fleeting prosperity led to that conclusion. |
| Mark Twain’s quote states that “nothing is left of it all but a lifeless, homeless solitude.” What does this quote refer to? | Mr. Twain was referring to a mining camp that he returned to 20 years after going there to seek his fortune. Nothing was left of the town or the 2,000 people that lived there. It had become a ghost town. |
| Why is John Sutter’s sawmill referred to as “Sutter’s Folly”? What are “squatter’s rights”? Explain how “squatter’s rights” led to the demise of Sutter’s discovery of gold. | John Sutter’s sawmill is referred to as “Sutter’s Folly” because gold was found there, but Sutter did not make any money. People took over his land without paying for it claiming “squatter’s rights.” |
| According to Charles B. Gillespie, what types of men were attracted to the California Gold Rush? Why did immigrants join in the search for gold? | The California Gold Rush attracted the following types of men: young, energetic, ragged but good natured men from all walks of life and immigrants from several countries. The immigrants joined in the search for gold because all the men were gold seekers and wanted a better life. |
| Re-read the first-hand account of J. D. Borthwick. How does his description help to paint a picture of a typical Western mining town? | Borthwick’s description helps the reader to see that the knee- deep mud streets were littered with rubbish of all sorts. There was a cacophony of noise always prevalent, 24 hours a day. The one way street created a tunnel of traffic enclosed by high hills. Wooden–plank sidewalks snaked in front of all worn, sun bleached stores and businesses. |
| How did the presence of a railroad in a town affect that town? | The effect of the presence of the railroad on a Western town meant the town would grow. If the railroad did not go through a town then that town would likely become a ghost town. |
| When did the waves of migration reach a peak? Describe what happened to the mining towns because of the migration peak. | The waves of migration reached a peak between 1860 and 1880. Some towns grew into large cities, such as Denver and Phoenix, while many others were abandoned and forgotten. |
| What does the author describe “as difficult as the search for gold”? | Finding a ghost town today Is as difficult as the search for gold. People often travel by four-wheel-drive vehicles and then hike several miles up rocky slopes or over cactus-studded deserts to locate the remains of a ghost town. |

Vocabulary

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|  | **KEY WORDS ESSENTIAL TO UNDERSTANDING** | **WORDS WORTH KNOWING**  General teaching suggestions are provided in the Introduction |
| **TEACHER PROVIDES DEFINITION**  not enough contextual clues provided in the text | Relics  Territory  Economic failure  Inhabitants | Ghost towns  Grubstakes, strike, tattered, crusty, cantankerous, crevices  Frontier  Lifeless, homeless, solitude, resourceful  Forty-niners, Squatter’s rights  Simpering, stalwart, dauntless  Transcontinental  False front |
| **STUDENTS FIGURE OUT THE MEANING**  sufficient context clues are provided in the text | Longed for, pull up stakes, evidence  Tumbleweeds  Faint outline  Immigrants | Trough, weathered, centuries  Minerals, prosperity  Prarie sod  Skirted  Migration  Vacant |

Culminating Task

* *Using technology, create a brochure describing a ghost town. Include historical facts that show why visiting a ghost town gives insight into the past. The facts on this brochure should be based on your reading of the text and the class discussions over the past couple of days.*

Answer: Example:

* + Ghost towns show settlements of the Western frontier.
  + Mining towns were full of men seeking their fortune.
  + Mining towns became ghost towns.
  + People from all walks of life went west.
  + Ghost towns include wooden buildings of banks, general stores, mercantile stores, blacksmith shops, livery stables, telegraph offices, newspaper offices, Pony Express stations, and corrals for animals.
  + Ghost towns are located in isolated locations where gold was mined and depleted.
  + Ghost towns show a past long gone but evidence still stands of once booming, mining towns.
  + Visit a Ghost Town for a startling discovery!!

Additional Tasks

* *Create a causal chain of events that depicts why a mining town became a ghost town.*

Answer: Gold was discovered---People rushed west to find their fortunes---Towns sprang up quickly---Natural resources of an area were exhausted---Towns were abandoned and became ghost towns.

* Analyze the picture book, “Ryolite: The True Story of a Ghost Town”. Compare and contrast Ms. Diane Siebert’s book with the illustrations and text found in the story, “Ghost Towns of the American West”. Explain the similarities and differences within a cooperative learning group.

Answer: A deeper understanding of the before and after of a ghost town should be incorporated into the discussion.

Name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**“Ghost Towns of the American West”**

1. The author states that, “Virtually every ghost town has untold stories of people who longed for a chance at a better life.” Analyze this statement and explain what it means.
2. What motivates many people to move to the lonesome American West?
3. What kinds of towns became ghost towns and settlements? Why did people abandon these towns and settlements?
4. Where are ghost towns located today?
5. Are ghost towns easy to find? How are ghost towns usually discovered today?
6. What can you conclude about life in the American West during the 1800’s based on the information provided in the text? Which clues support this conclusion?
7. Mark Twain’s quote states that “nothing is left of it all but a lifeless, homeless solitude.” What does this quote refer to?
8. Why is John Sutter’s sawmill referred to as “Sutter’s Folly”? What are “squatter’s rights”? Explain how “squatter’s rights” led to the demise of Sutter’s discovery of gold.
9. According to Charles B. Gillespie, what types of men were attracted to the California Gold Rush? Why did immigrants join in the search for gold?
10. Re-read the first-hand account of J. D. Borthwick. How does his description help to paint a picture of a typical Western mining town?
11. How did the presence of a railroad in a town affect that town?
12. When did the waves of migration reach a peak? Describe what happened to the mining towns because of the migration peak.
13. What does the author describe “as difficult as the search for gold”?