Independent Analysis
Rivers & Westward Expansion

Overview

This assignment will require you to search for primary sources in our digital library to answer questions about the role rivers played in Westward Expansion.

Before beginning: Make sure you’ve watched:

a) Part 1 - introductory tour video
b) Part 2 - video explaining how to use our digital library
c) Part 3 - westward expansion primary source analysis video

Instructions

On the next pages you will find three “big concept” questions. Each question is followed by instructions that guide you through using a primary source to develop your answer. You will break down the big questions by answering smaller questions. Then you will return to the big question and develop your answer using what you’ve learned. You will select two of the big concept questions to complete. Write your answers on a separate sheet of paper or in a word document.

To access our digital library, open a web browser and navigate to https://dl.mospace.umsystem.edu/umsl/

You can also find the link on the right side of the Anniversary Educational Series webpage.

*It is easiest to print these instructions so you can use your web browser to access the digital library. If you don’t have access to a printer, you will need to switch back and forth between two tabs in your web browser- one tab for these instructions and the other for the digital library.
Question 1: Geography

How did rivers influence where people settled in Missouri in the early 19th-century? Be specific and use examples.

Develop Your Answer

Historic maps are one of our best sources for understanding where cities developed in relation to natural resources, like rivers.

- Type “Map of Missouri” in the search bar in the top right hand corner of our digital library home page.
- Missouri became a state in 1820, so let’s narrow our search to the period just after statehood. On the left bar labeled “Narrow Your Search” scroll down until you see “Time Period”. Select “1820-1829”. You may have to expand the menu by clicking “show more”.
- Select the second search result “Map of the State of Missouri and Territory of Arkansas”

Use the map to answer the following questions:

1. When was this map made?
2. According to this map, what was the total population of Missouri in 1820?
3. Which county had the highest total population? Can you find that county on the map? Use the zoom button to zoom in on this county as far as you can.

The curvy line bordering the south of the county is the Missouri River. If you look closely at this area, you’ll notice two cities straddling the river, Franklin and Boonville.

- Look for a faint line running from Franklin east, along the north bank of the river, to Columbia, on to Elizabeth, and onward to St. Charles. This is the Boonslick trail, a major early road that allowed settlers to access the lands acquired in the Louisiana Purchase. The road was named after "Boone’s Lick Spring" in Franklin. This salt spring drew thousands of people to harvest its salt, including the Boone family.
- Look to the right of Franklin for a faint line that runs west, up along the curve of the river, through Jefferson, and then along the south bank to Fort Osage. This is the Santa Fe Trail, a major early trail that connected Missouri to New Mexico.
These two trails cut across Missouri, following the river, with Franklin connecting them. Early trails usually followed rivers because they provided a point of reference to navigate by, plenty of fresh drinking water, and game for hunting.

4. What businesses do you think developed to support travelers passing through and settling in Franklin? (Consider the different ways they might travel, the supplies they might need for their journey or to build their homes, and where they might stay or spend their time)

5. Using your last answer and the information above, why do you think Howard County had the highest population in Missouri in 1820?

6. Which county had the second highest total population? Can you find it on the map?

7. What two major rivers border this county? Find where they meet on the map.

8. Why do you think so many people were drawn to this county?

9. Using the statistical table in the bottom right corner, locate other counties with high populations. Look for town and city markers. Do you notice a pattern about their locations?

Now try to answer the first big concept question using what you’ve just learned.

**Question 1: Geography**

How did rivers influence where people settled in Missouri in the early 19th-century? Be specific and use examples.
Question 2: Commerce

What was the significance of the Mississippi River to the US economy in the late 19th-century? Be specific and use examples.

Develop Your Answer

Let's try an advanced search this time.

- Click the yellow tab “advanced search” on our digital library home page.
- Use the dropdown menu to change the field to Title and enter “Mississippi River” as your search term.
- Hit the + button and add a second search
- Use the dropdown menu to change the second field to Description and enter “trade” as your search term.
- Run your search and select the search result “A Memorial to Congress to Secure an Adequate Appropriation for a Prompt and Thorough Improvement of the Mississippi River”

Use the document to answer the following questions:

Read pages 3-4.

1. When was this piece written?
2. What was its purpose?
3. How many different states were represented at the convention?
4. At the bottom of page 4, the author included a table with figures representing the wealth and productiveness of the Mississippi Valley. What were the top four most valuable products transported on the river?
5. Use a calculator to add the numbers in the “value” column to discover the total value of goods shipped on the Mississippi River in 1870.
The memorial goes on to make five arguments asking the federal government for funding (appropriations). There is an appendix beginning on page 11 that provides additional arguments and supporting data. These include:

- The cost of travel delays due to low water, including burning coal, crew wages, and damage to boats and cargo
- The relative cheapness of transporting goods by water vs railroad
- The superior carrying capacity of river barges compared to railroad
- Highly profitable trade ideal for river transport, like wheat, lumber, and iron

Flip ahead to the last two pages of the appendix (pg. 38-39). Read the first two paragraphs under "Reasons for Immediate Action". (The second paragraph continues over onto page 39)

6. What does this passage tell us about employment and labor in the midwest at the time?
7. What role did the river play as a provider of jobs?
8. What steps does the author propose be taken to improve the Mississippi River?

Now try to answer the second big concept question using what you’ve just learned.

**Question 2: Commerce**

What was the significance of the Mississippi River to the US economy in the late 19th-century? Be specific and use examples.
Question 3: Art

How did art reflect the lives of rivermen in the 19th-century? What can it tell you about the cultural changes triggered by steamboats in the industrial age?

Develop Your Answer

This time, let's try browsing collections.

- Click the yellow tab “collections” on our digital library home page.
- Scroll down and select “St. Louis Mercantile Library Art Museum”.
- Scroll down and select “M-265: Prints, Photos, and Drawings (Art Collection)”.  
- Select the third entry “Bound Down the River”.

Use the print to answer the following questions:

1. When was this piece made?
2. What does it depict? What is the overall tone of the image (how does it make you feel)?
3. The foreground of an image is the area closest to the viewer (you). Describe the boat in the foreground, what you see on deck, and the crew. What is the attitude of the boatmen and what are they doing?

This boat is called a flatboat. Flatboats were rectangular flat-bottomed boats used to transport cargo and passengers. They were often built by farmers to carry their harvest downriver to New Orleans. The boats couldn't travel back upriver though, so they were usually scrapped after reaching their destination.

- The boatmen could enjoy a relaxing float downriver. They would pass time playing cards or dancing to music. They had a long and difficult journey back upriver though. They either traveled over land or by keelboats pushed along by poles or oars. Their return trip could take weeks or months, depending on how far upriver they had to travel.

- Common products shipped on flatboats include corn, wheat, potatoes, hay, tobacco, and cotton. Livestock, like chickens, cows, and pigs, were also common cargo.
4. Use the zoom button to examine the two steamboats in the top right corner. How do they differ from the flatboat?
5. Compare and contrast the crew on the flatboat to the passengers on the steamboat. What do you notice about how the artist chose to depict them? (hint: are they standing, sitting, lying down, working, relaxing, etc.)
6. How many steamboats do you see on the river? How many flatboats do you see? What can the artist’s choice to fill the scene this way tell us?
7. Describe the activity on shore in the upper right corner. What do you see and what do you think the people are doing?

At first, the arrival of steamboats caused the flatboat trade to boom. Flatboatmen could reduce the cost and time of their overall trip by taking a steamboat back upriver. What once might have been a three month hike home through wilderness, was now a pleasant 3 day cruise.

- Sometimes steamboats would drag flatboats carrying cargo back upriver, allowing flatboat operators to profit on the return journey as well.
- Records of flatboats arriving in New Orleans reveal the steady growth of flatboating in the early 19th-century. There were 598 arrivals in 1814 and 2,792 arrivals in 1847.

Eventually, steamboats overtook flatboats, making them obsolete. The steamboats were able to carry cargo both up and downriver, had a larger carrying capacity, and could travel more quickly. By 1857, only 541 flatboats reached New Orleans. This was down 80% from just 10 years earlier.

Now try to answer the third big concept question using what you’ve just learned.

**Question 3: Art**

How did art reflect the lives of rivermen in the 19th-century? What can it tell you about the cultural changes triggered by steamboats in the industrial age?