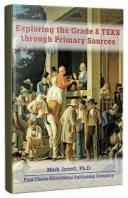
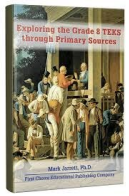


Exploring the Grade 8 TEKS through Primary Sources:
High Impact Learning Experiences: 17 The Northwest Ordinance



Framing the Lesson

Clear TEKS Alignment: This section lists the relevant Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) that the lesson addresses. It ensures instruction is standards-based and outcomes-driven. The student expectations should directly connect to the lesson objective and assessment.

Original Language

8.6A: The student understands westward expansion and its effects on the political, economic, and social development of the nation. The student is expected to explain how the Northwest Ordinance established principles and procedures for the orderly expansion of the United States.

Unpacked Standard

Know (What students need to understand)	Show (What students should be able to do)
• The **Northwest Ordinance of 1787** • The **process for statehood**: population requirement (60,000), writing a constitution, and applying for admission • The **ban on slavery** in the Northwest Territory • The **guaranteed rights**:	• **Explain** how the ordinance provided a system for adding new states to the U.S. • **Identify and describe** the steps the territories had to follow to become states • **Analyze** the ordinance's role in limiting the expansion of slavery • **Give examples** of

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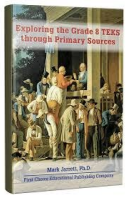

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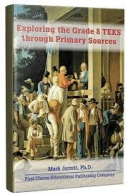

freedom of religion, trial by jury, public education • The idea of **orderly expansion**—avoiding chaos or disputes over new land • The ordinance's **influence on the political, economic, and social development** of the U.S. • The **impact on Native Americans** and land claims	rights granted to people in the new territories • **Explain** how the ordinance helped promote peaceful and structured westward growth • **Make connections** between the ordinance and the broader development of American society and government • **Evaluate** whose interests were advanced or ignored by the ordinance

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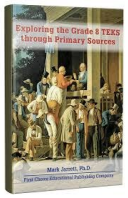

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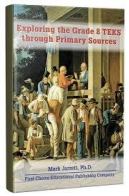

Anchor Question: A big-picture, thought-provoking question that drives the inquiry, frames the purpose of the lesson, connects to enduring understandings, and requires higher-order thinking to answer.	How did the Northwest Ordinance create a blueprint for the political, economic, and social expansion of the United States?	
Learning landmarks: Key learning targets or essential understandings that guide the lesson progression. These are measurable outcomes that indicate whether students are building the necessary knowledge and skills. They often align with the Access, Analyze, and Application phases.	**Landmarks (3-5)** 1. The Northwest Ordinance established a structured and peaceful process for territories to become states, promoting stability and equality with existing states. 2. The Northwest Ordinance guaranteed key rights such as freedom of religion, trial by jury, and voting rights for property-owning males, laying the foundation for civic participation. 3. Slavery was banned in the Northwest Territory, setting a precedent for the exclusion of slavery in future northern territories, deepening the sectional divide. 4. The Land Ordinance of 1785 and Northwest Ordinance of 1787 supported economic development through land sales and public education. 5. Compromises such as giving up state claims to western lands and adopting uniform rules for land use and governance showcased early efforts to build a united federal system.	
Possible Student Misconception: Anticipated misunderstandings or incorrect assumptions students may hold about the content. Identifying these in advance helps inform scaffolds, clarifications, and formative checks during instruction.	**Misunderstanding**	**Clarification**
	1. The Northwest Ordinance applied to the northwestern U.S. today (like Washington or Oregon).	The “Northwest Territory” referred to land *northwest of the Ohio River*—today’s Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, and part of Minnesota—not the Pacific Northwest.
	2. The ordinance gave land to individuals for free.	Most land was sold, not given away. While some veterans received land as payment, most settlers had to buy large tracts (minimum 640 acres), often through speculators.

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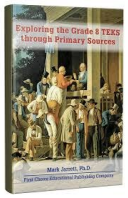

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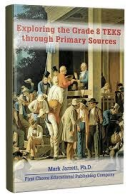
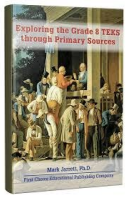


	3. The ordinance immediately ended slavery everywhere in the U.S.	It only banned slavery in the Northwest Territory, not in the existing southern states or other areas. Slavery continued elsewhere.
	4. Territories automatically became states once formed.	Territories had to go through a multi-step process, including population requirements and drafting a constitution, before being admitted as states.
	5. The ordinance had no impact on Native Americans.	The ordinance ignored Native land claims and accelerated the displacement of Native peoples as settlers moved in, even though it did not mention them directly.
	6. The national government had full power to tax these lands.	Under the Articles of Confederation, the national government could not levy taxes, so land sales were used as a major source of revenue.
	7. The ordinance was passed under the Constitution.	It was passed by the Confederation Congress in 1787, *before* the U.S. Constitution was ratified.

SAMPLE

Preparing to Teach the Lesson

Materials: A list of all materials needed to facilitate the lesson, including physical resources (e.g., atlas, scissors, placards, manipulatives) and digital tools (e.g., slideshows, websites, and web	1. Image Gallery Walk (modified lesson) 2. Ordinance Card Sort (modified lesson) 3. Blank sheet of paper (modified lesson)



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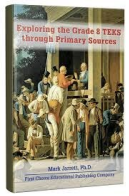

applications). Gathering in advance ensures a smooth setup and delivery.	
Student Handouts: Copies of student activities from the book, including any graphic organizers, readings, analysis tools, worksheets, exit tickets, or rubrics students will use during the lesson. Completion of these activities should align with learning landmarks and literacy supports.	1. Ordinance Overview Reading 2. An Ordinance for the Government of the Territory of the United States Northwest of the River Ohio 3. Questions 4. Authentic Assessment
Pre-class teacher preparation: Detailed notes for the teacher on what needs to be prepared before class—such as printing materials, setting up tech, reviewing the primary source, or arranging the classroom space for stations or group work.	1. Print the Image Gallery Walk placards and post them around the classroom. 2. Print, cut, and bag the Ordinance Card Sort for each pair 3. Generate a slideshow that includes the key landmarks and the images from the Tour of Knowledge for a clarifying lecture. 4. Print an authentic assessment for each student.
Behavioral routines and expectations: Guidance for managing classroom norms, including grouping strategies, noise level expectations, transitions, and participation cues. Promotes a safe, respectful, and productive learning environment.	1. Arrange the classroom in small heterogeneous groups of 2-3.

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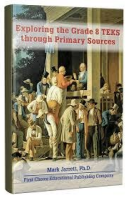
Delivering the Lesson

Instructional Framework	Original Lesson Components	Modified Lesson Components



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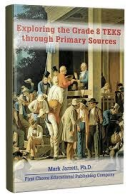
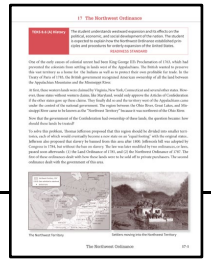
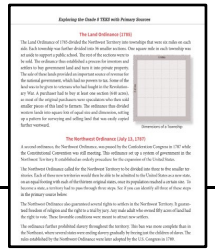
High Impact Learning Experiences: 17 The Northwest Ordinance



Activation: This opening activity introduces the topic, sparks curiosity, and activates prior knowledge. The goal is to create buy-in and set the stage for inquiry.	**Think-Pair-Share Discussion:** Select a partner. Imagine you are both members of the Confederation Congress. Discuss how you would treat the frontier territories in the Northwest that belong to the United States. Then share your ideas with the rest of the class.	**Image Gallery Walk** - Have students take a gallery walk of images in which they analyze the visuals provided and make predictions about what they will learn. During the gallery walk, have students: • Observe: Spend 2-3 minutes walking the tour. Ask Students: What overall details or patterns do you notice across these images as a group? • Reflect: Think about the collection of images. Ask Students: What do they collectively suggest about what the Northwest Ordinance is and what challenges or goals it might address? • Question: Create questions for inquiry. Ask Students: What questions did these images provoke about what you will learn?

Access (Building Background)
 	
Students explore key concepts, terms, and context through guided discovery, learning foundational content collaboratively and
	Read the Overview text provided:
	• Historical context surrounding the Northwest Territory
	• The Land Ordinance (1785)
	• The Northwest Ordinance (July 13, 1787)
		Card Sort Activity:
		Instruct students to:
		1. Read the overview text provided.
		  ○ Historical context surrounding the Northwest Territory
		  ○ The Land Ordinance (1785)
		  ○ The Northwest Ordinance (July 13, 1787)
		 
		 

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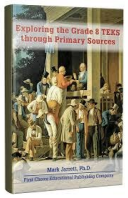

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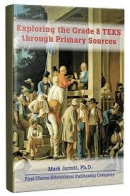
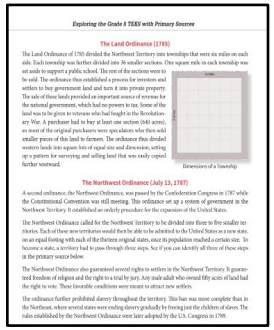
High Impact Learning Experiences: 17 The Northwest Ordinance



interactively—such as through stations, maps, visuals, manipulatives, or brief informational texts—to build background knowledge needed for deeper analysis later.	 	2. Sort the characteristics of the documents into the Land Ordinance of 1785 or the Northwest Ordinance (1787) using the card sort. **Land Ordinance of 1785** / **Northwest Ordinance of 1787** Divided the land in the Northwest Territory into 6-mile square townships / Divided the Northwest Territory into 3 to 5 future states Each township contained 36 sections of 1 square mile each / Set up a three-step process for territories to become states One section in each township was set aside to support public education / Guaranteed freedom of religion and trial by jury Established a system for surveying and selling western lands / Allowed adult males with 50 acres of land to vote 3. Ask: What generalization can you make about each document? Exemplar Responses: Generalization about the Land Ordinance of 1785: This ordinance focused on land ownership, public education, and establishing a clear method for turning public land into private property. It set a precedent for land policies used in future U.S. expansion. Generalization about the Northwest Ordinance (1787): This ordinance provided a model for expanding the United States while promoting democratic principles and equal statehood.
Awareness (Retrieval): Students consolidate new background knowledge through structured recall. Retrieval practice		Brainstorm with Think-Pair-Share On a blank sheet of paper, have students complete the following retrieval practice by: 1. Brain dumping everything they remember about the Northwest Ordinance. 2. Pairing up and sharing what they recalled. Adding gaps in their learning to their original brain dump from your partners

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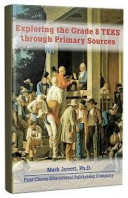

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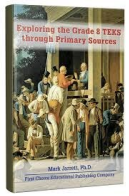

strategies—like low-stakes quizzes, card sorts, or think-pair-share—are used to reinforce what they've learned and prepare them for source analysis.		3. Coming to a consensus on the 2-3 most important things to remember about the Northwest Ordinance.
Analysis (During Reading) Students examine a primary source using a literacy scaffold (e.g., SOAPSTone, guided analysis document, annotation, close reading). This promotes source literacy and critical thinking, allowing students to uncover deeper meaning from historical documents or artifacts.	Have students analyze: *An Ordinance for the Government of the Territory of the United States Northwest of the River Ohio*. Because of the archaic language presented in many of the primary sources used in grade 8 Social Studies, multiple reads may be necessary. ● The first read should be used to interpret and evaluate the primary source. As students read, they should ask themselves five questions (See Introduction): ○ **Who** created the primary source? ○ **When** and **where** was it created? ○ **Why** was it created? ○ **What** does this primary source state or show? ○ **How** does the information in this primary source relate to other evidence? ● The second read should be used for a more in-depth analysis. As students read, they should: ● Circle or highlight in yellow those sections of the Northwest Ordinance that concern how a territory can become a state.	Have students analyze: *An Ordinance for the Government of the Territory of the United States Northwest of the River Ohio*. Because of the archaic language presented in many of the primary sources used in grade 8 Social Studies, multiple reads may be necessary. ● For the first read, model your thinking for students using a think-aloud to interpret and evaluate the primary source. ● Read the questions aloud, and then read through part of the text, asking yourself the following five questions and responding using the information gleaned (See Introduction): ○ **Who** created the primary source? ○ **When** and **where** was it created? ○ **Why** was it created? ○ **What** does this primary source state or show? ○ **How** does the information in this primary source relate to other evidence? ● The second read should be used for a more in-depth analysis.

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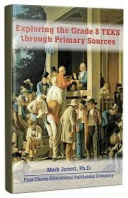

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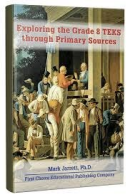
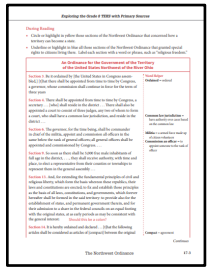
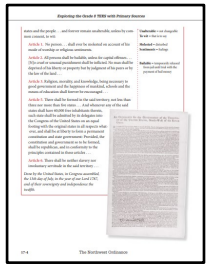
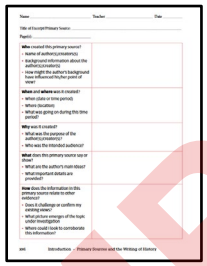
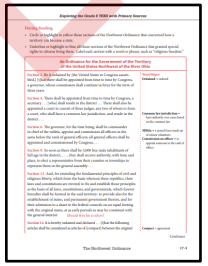
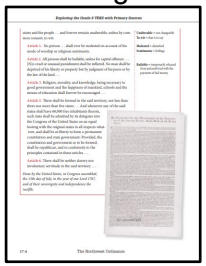
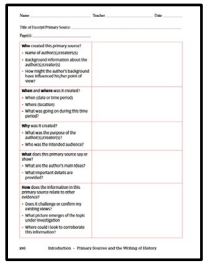
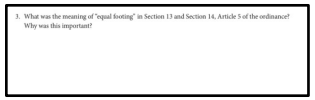


	• Underline or highlight in blue all those sections of the Northwest Ordinance that granted special rights to citizens living there.
	• Label each section with a word or phrase, such as “religious freedom.”
	   
		• Allow students to work in pairs for this part, and have them:
		  • Circle or highlight in yellow those sections of the Northwest Ordinance that concern how a territory can become a state.
		  • Underline or highlight in blue all those sections of the Northwest Ordinance that granted special rights to citizens living there.
		  • Label each section with a word or phrase, such as “religious freedom.”
		   

Students synthesize what they learned from background knowledge and source analysis to solve a problem, make a decision, or answer higher-order questions. This phase emphasizes comparison, reasoning, evaluation, and	**Application Activity** **After Reading Questions:** Use the analysis questions to allow students to dive deeper into the text: 1. What was the significance of Section 14, Articles 1 and 6 above? 2. Based on the information found in Section 3, in Section 6, and in Section 14, Article 9, make your own chart or diagram showing the three steps that a territory had to pass through in order to be admitted as a new state. 3. What was the meaning of “equal footing” in Section 13 and Section 14, Article 5 of the ordinance? Why was this important?  3. What was the meaning of “equal footing” in Section 13 and Section 14, Article 5 of the ordinance? Why was this important?	

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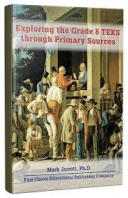

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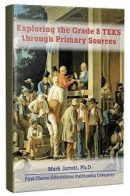
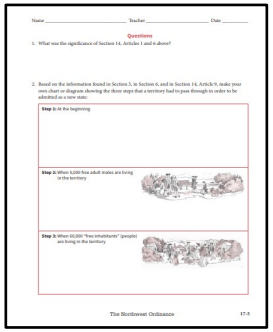


connection-making.



Name _____ Teacher _____ Date _____

Questions

1. What was the significance of Section 14, Articles 1 and 6 above?

2. Based on the information found in Section 3, in Section 6, and in Section 14, Article 9, make your own chart or diagram showing the three steps that a territory had to pass through in order to be admitted as a new state.

Step 1: At the beginning

Step 2: When 5,000 free adult males are living in the territory

Step 3: When 60,000 "free inhabitants" (people) are living in the territory

The Northwest Ordinance 17-5

Authentic Assessment

Students demonstrate their learning through a performance task or technology-enhanced assessment aligned to real-world thinking. Items may include drag-and-drop timelines, hotspot maps, matching clauses to effects, or short written responses using online tools.

Questions (continued):

4. Complete the chart below on the impact of the Land and Northwest Ordinances.

4. Complete the chart below on the impact of the Land and Northwest Ordinances.

Impact	Sections of the Northwest Ordinance	Explanation
Impact on west-ward migration		
Impact on public education		
Impact on slavery		
Impact on religious freedom		
Impact on the admission of new states		
Impact on the the expansion of the United States		

Exemplar STAAR items:

Use released or teacher-created items for an authentic assessment that allows students to show their level of mastery.

29 How did the provisions of the Northwest Ordinance affect U.S. expansion?

A By funding a transportation network in uninhabited regions
B By establishing a process for territories to govern themselves
C By promoting the growth of southern plantation economies
D By creating a national bank to loan money to land investors

13

> The ___?___ established a government . . . , outlined the process for admitting a new state to the Union, and guaranteed that newly created states would be equal to the original thirteen states. Considered one of the most important legislative acts of the Confederation Congress, the ___?___ also protected civil liberties and outlawed slavery in the new territories.
>
> —*"Primary Documents in American History," Library of Congress, www.loc.gov (accessed May 2, 2014)*

Which document completes this excerpt?

A Declaration of Independence
B Treaty of Ghent
C Northwest Ordinance
D Louisiana Purchase Treaty

This excerpt is from an important document in U.S. history.

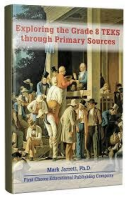
> Religion, morality and knowledge, being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged.
>
> —*Northwest Ordinance, 1787*

Why did the U.S. government encourage education as part of the Northwest Ordinance?

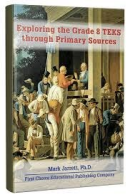
Ⓐ A belief that education was necessary to maintain an orderly society
Ⓑ A belief that education was necessary to acquire land
Ⓒ A belief that education was necessary to preserve property rights
Ⓓ A belief that education was necessary to prevent foreign wars

SAMPLE

Considerations for Varied Learners:



Exploring the Grade 8 TEKS through Primary Sources:
High Impact Learning Experiences: 17 The Northwest Ordinance



Literacy Supports: Strategies and tools that support reading and writing, including graphic organizers, vocabulary previews, annotation strategies, or chunked text to ensure all students can engage with content.	*Secondary Source (Overview Text about the Northwest Ordinance)* 1. Provide students with guiding questions for the overview text. 2. Use summary strategies such as the 5Ws or the Somebody, Wanted, But, So, Then approach to help students determine the gist of the text. 3. Consider providing students with a Word Questioning Organizer to help them synthesize the information learned about the Northwest Ordinance.
Discussion protocol/stem: Use structured protocols and sentence starters to guide academic conversations	Pose a question for discussion: *"Was the Northwest Ordinance more important for expanding land or expanding democracy?"* and have students defend their positions. Teachers can use a Take-a-Stand activity to have students debrief their positions. Take-a-Stand is an activity that allows students to express their opinions on a topic by physically positioning themselves along a continuum or in specific areas of a room, based on their level of agreement or disagreement with a statement. This active participation encourages students to consider different perspectives, share their viewpoints, and engage in an evidence-based discussion.
Technology Consideration(s): Notes on the tools and platforms used in the lesson, as well as backup plans in case of technical issues; includes device needs and links.	• Digitize the Gallery walk by providing students with digital access to the slideshow of images. • Create an authentic assessment using Microsoft Forms, Google Forms, or your LMS so that students can receive immediate feedback. • Use a polling application to have students identify their position in the Take-a-Stand activity. • Upload PDFs into your LMS and have students use an extension to highlight and/or indicate sections in the document. • Students can use an approved web application to create an infographic or storyboard that explains the three steps that a territory had to pass through in order to be admitted as a new state on an "equal footing" with the original thirteen states (Question 2).
Enrichment for Advanced Learners: Opportunities for students who grasp concepts quickly to go deeper or extend their learning. These ideas may include analyzing an additional source, completing a creative task, or	• Teachers could have advanced learners create a double-sided concept map using the overview reading to compare and contrast both documents.

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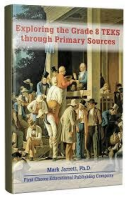

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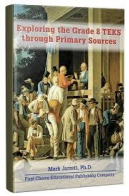

connecting content to current events or broader themes.	
Ideas for Reteach: Strategies to support students who need additional help, such as simplified texts, clarifying lectures, mini-lessons, modeling, or small group instruction. Designed to close learning gaps and ensure mastery.	• Provide a clarifying lecture using the key landmarks • Use a 3-5 minute video clip of the Northwest Ordinance, such as Publius 86, to reinforce key concepts. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vk8PKtlcgR0

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