

Name _____ Date _____

Weekly Test Lesson 25

Read the text. Then answer the questions.

American Explorers

When the United States declared its independence in 1776, it had only 13 colonies on the East Coast of North America, but it gained land in leaps and bounds. Only 100 years later, it reached from coast to coast. The United States acquired land through purchases, treaties, and annexation. And the people moved west to fill that land!

Reasons to Go West

The reasons for moving west were different for everyone. Some wanted adventure. Others wanted homes for their families. Some were looking for economic opportunities, and some hoped to find gold.

For those who wanted adventure, moving west was like buying a lifetime ticket to a Wild West show. American animals, such as buffalo and bears, had never been seen before. An unmapped landscape that stretched as far as the eye could see was a paradise for people who needed “elbow room.” Those who felt that city life was too confining were happy to move into areas with more wildlife than people.

Miles and miles of open land that could be used for ranching or farming attracted a different type of person. These settlers wanted to make homes. The Homestead Act of 1862 encouraged these settlers by providing 160 acres of land in exchange for a small filing fee and five years of living on the land. Settlers could also buy the land for \$1.25 per acre after living on it for six months. The Homestead Act resulted in the distribution of 80 million acres between 1862 and 1900.

Other economic opportunities were also available in the West. Small towns sprang up almost overnight. General stores were needed to provide basic goods for the settlers and explorers. The first railroad connected the East and West Coasts in 1869. Towns formed along the train route to enable local residents to more easily buy what they needed and sell what they produced. As the towns expanded, they needed stores, doctors, hotels, and all of the other requirements that come with civilization. This created opportunities. For example, a doctor on the East Coast might compete with dozens of other local doctors, but many western towns had few, if any, doctors.

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Reading

Gold was discovered in 1848 in the territory that is now California. Thousands of hopeful gold miners flooded into the area. Before the Gold Rush, the California territory had about 1,000 nonnative people. Only a year later, the nonnative population of the area was about 100,000. Suddenly, towns grew and jobs were created.

Challenges

There were many pros and cons of moving west, but there were more cons than pros—beginning with the long, dangerous journey. It would also include the loss of many things—maps, knowledge, and skills, as well as medical care—that made life safer and easier in the original 13 states. Settlers were at the mercy of nature and other people.

The journey west was terrifying. Many settlers who wrote diaries about their journeys tracked the number of miles traveled each day and recorded the number of graves and dead livestock they passed. For example, in 1833, Maria Parsons Belshaw recorded, “Sept. 9: Passed 16 graves . . . 1 ox . . . made 16 miles; Sept. 10: Passed 2 graves . . . 2 horses . . . made 16 miles.”

Accurate maps of the countryside didn’t exist, and corner stores weren’t available to ask for directions. Instead, groups hired guides to lead them across the country. If water holes dried up or rivers ran too high to cross, death could be the outcome.

Few doctors traveled west with the early settlers. Without medical care, settlers often died from minor injuries and illnesses that could have been treated by a doctor.

Settlers had to be able to do everything—protect themselves and their families, hunt, cook, care for livestock, and plant and harvest crops. Few of the settlers had all of these skills. Few were even able to feed and protect themselves on the long, overland journey.

In the 1800s, Americans spread out to cover the nation. They took the few things they could transport and pitted their skills against the environment. Americans who moved west as the United States grew were courageous explorers who helped to shape America. Without them, America would not be the same today.

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Reading

- 1 What is the main idea of the “Reasons to Go West” section? Use details from the text to support your answer.

- 2 What event encouraged settlers to move west?

- (A) a Wild West show
- (B) the Homestead Act
- (C) United States independence
- (D) the creation of accurate maps

- 3 This question has two parts. First, answer part A. Then, answer part B.

Part A

Why did the author use excerpts from the diary of Maria Parsons Belshaw?

- (A) to show how the settlers enjoyed traveling to new parts of the country
- (B) to show how the Homestead Act made East Coast cities smaller
- (C) to show how dangerous it was to be a settler
- (D) to show how traveling by train was popular

Part B

Which detail from the text supports the answer to part A?

- (A) Settlers moving west frequently encountered graves and dead livestock.
- (B) Settlers were drawn to the idea of unsettled land with few people.
- (C) New towns were created for settlers to buy needed supplies.
- (D) The Homestead Act gave away millions of acres to settlers.

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Reading

- 4 Read the sentence from the text.

There were many pros and cons of moving west, but there were more cons than pros—beginning with the long, dangerous journey.

Complete the analogy.

Cons to moving west is to dangerous as pros to moving west is to _____.

- (A) family
 - (B) journey
 - (C) opportunity
 - (D) medical care
- 5 Mark the boxes to match the detail about the West with the type of settlers who were drawn by it. Each row may be used only once.

	Homestead Act	California Gold Rush	Unexplored Land
Settlers looking for adventure			
Settlers looking for homes			
Settlers looking for riches			

- 6 What is the main idea of the text?
- (A) how some Americans settled the West
 - (B) how some Americans stayed in the East
 - (C) how Americans discovered gold in California
 - (D) how Americans received medical care in the West

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Writing

- 7 Choose the sentence that contains a spelling error.
- (A) In math class, my little brother is learning subtraction.
 - (B) We could feel the tension in the room when he entered.
 - (C) The Fourth of July is a celebrasion of America’s independence.
 - (D) Those shoes are either out of style or a sign of a fashion revolution.
- 8 Which of the following sentences contains a punctuation error?
- (A) “I just can’t swim faster,” Ariel cried.
 - (B) Ginnie was so scared that she could’nt move.
 - (C) “Won’t you go to the meeting with me?” asked Levi.
 - (D) We’re going to watch closely so we do not miss anything.
- 9 Read the sentences. Underline the sentence that contains an error in grammar usage.

Team members are taking a bus to the game. They are required to board the bus 15 minutes before the departure time. To prepare for the trip, team members’ll pack only a single bag that will fit in the luggage area. They’re allowed only one bag each to discourage overpacking.

- 10 Lucas is writing a response essay about a historical fiction book he recently read. Read his essay and complete the task that follows.

I liked the story of Sarah Anderson’s first trip on the transcontinental railroad. She boarded in her hometown and traveled across the country. She had many adventures.

Rewrite the paragraph to add more details, using strong verbs and adjectives that support the opinion. Add a conclusion to the essay.
