

## Americana: Word and Image

### Changing Landscapes, Changing Communities

Grades 3- 8

#### Summary

We often take for granted the convenience of modern infrastructure, but the roads, railways, and power lines that crisscross our nation haven't always existed. What did the land look like before they were built? What mark has westward expansion had upon American vistas? Students will create a collage in which they layer a fictional network of roadways and structures onto landscapes in the West.

#### Time Frame

45-60 Minutes

#### Curriculum Ties

- Social Studies Grades 3, 5, 7, and 8
- Fine Arts – Visual Arts Grades 3-8
- English Language Arts Grades 3-8

#### Intended Learning Outcomes

- Visualize significant historical changes in America and its landscape by creating a layered artwork showing transformation of the land over time.
- Understand how people impact the landscape and how geography impacts people.
- Understand the ways in which various communities in America's history have valued, used and modified the land over time (should include: indigenous communities, European explorers, English settlers, pioneers, and contemporary communities).

#### Key Terms

Students should have existing or working knowledge of the following concepts.

- Collage
- Landscape
- Geography
- Community

- Indigenous cultures of the Americas/Native Americans
- European explorers
- Settlers/colonists
- Pioneers
- Manifest Destiny
- The West

#### Where to Find Additional Information and Resources:

- David Walbert, *Who Owns the Land*: [www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/nchist-colonial/2027](http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/nchist-colonial/2027)
- Teaching Tolerance, *This Land Is Ours*: [www.tolerance.org/activity/land-ours](http://www.tolerance.org/activity/land-ours)
- Lesson, *Heritage: How Did the Pioneers Impact Utah's Environment*: [www.uen.org/Lessonplan/preview.cgi?LPid=1104](http://www.uen.org/Lessonplan/preview.cgi?LPid=1104)
- National Archives, *Photographs of the American West*: [www.archives.gov/research/american-west/#towns](http://www.archives.gov/research/american-west/#towns)
- Michael Pecirno, *Minimal Maps*: [www.michaelpecirno.com/minimal-maps](http://www.michaelpecirno.com/minimal-maps)

#### Materials

- Photographs of the American West from the 1800s, printed on heavy paper
  - *Early Landscape Photography of the American West*: [digitalcollections.nypl.org/collections/early-landscape-photography-of-the-american-west#/?tab=navigation](http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/collections/early-landscape-photography-of-the-american-west#/?tab=navigation)
  - *The Wilderness Society*: [wilderness.org/11-incredible-wilderness-photographs-1800s](http://wilderness.org/11-incredible-wilderness-photographs-1800s)
- Collage materials (one or both of the following)
  - Different color or patterned paper, scissors and glue
  - Landscape elements printed on sticker paper or vinyl (wickiups, farm crops, homes, trading posts, military forts, railroad tracks, roads, fences, power lines, mines, irrigation, dams, industry, towns, cities, billboards, etc.)

#### Instructional Procedures

Communities who have lived in the geographic area that is now the United States have had different concepts of what it means to own and use land. How has the American landscape changed over time as these different communities have occupied the land? How did westward expansion in the United States physically change the land? How could we visualize the many layers of change this landscape has experienced? What does this visualization communicate about the history of people in these spaces?

Divide your students into small groups. Pass out paper and have each group choose a recorder. Focusing on the western United States, ask each group to brainstorm the different kinds of people who have lived on, traveled through, used or modified the land in some way. Their answers can be groups of people (such as Native Americans or railroad companies) or individuals (such as Lewis and Clark). Have each small group record as many different

communities or individuals as they can, thinking about those who have occupied or used the land in vastly different ways.

Have each group share their lists with the class. Use this discussion to reinforce people and events significant to the current unit. Next, each group should return to their brainstorm and add to their paper the ways in which each of the communities or people have altered the landscape. Encourage students to be as specific as possible.

- Who would have planted crops?
- Who built temporary or permanent homes?
- Who constructed railroads, roads, or power lines?
- When were the first military forts built?
- What about towns and cities?
- What structures reflect industry and technology?

Provide each student with a photograph of a landscape in the American West, as well as collage materials. Use the earliest photographs of a place that can be found; typically, these have been taken in the 1800s. Note that while these photographs depict landscapes in the West with little or no alteration made by Europeans, indigenous cultures have been living in and changing the land of North America for thousands of years. Have students think about the different groups of people who have moved across and occupied this site. They should then use their collage materials to begin altering the landscape from what is shown in the ways each group would have left their mark upon the land. Students should build up their collage in physical layers that emulate layers of time, starting with the most distant past and moving forward.

- What landscape features change due to human intervention?
- What human-made structures are added?
- Are any structures or features destroyed or covered up again as more time passes?
- What do you think the place pictured in your photograph looks like today? What will it look like in the future?

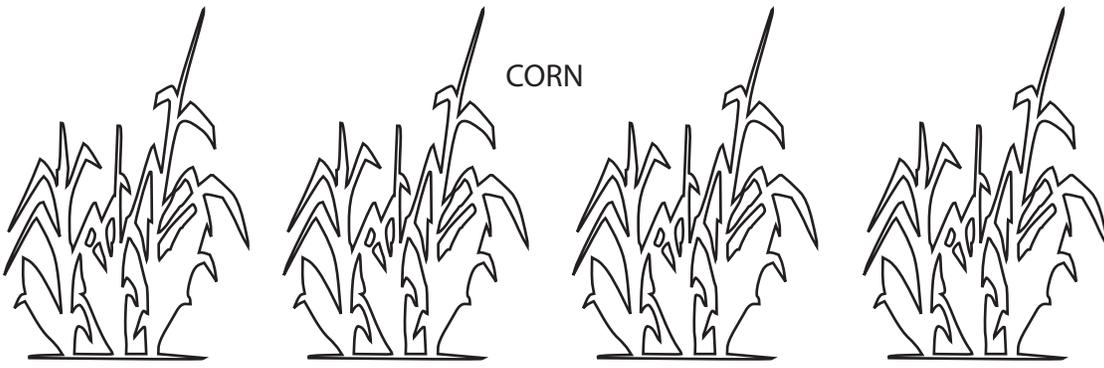
### **Extension: Narrative**

Have students write a story taking place over hundreds of years from the perspective of the site pictured in their collage, or another site in the American West. What kind of personality would that place have if it could speak? What would that place say about the people who live on it or travel through it? What happens during that time? What people, events or structures come and go? What does the landscape think or feel about what happens there over the years? Students can display their collages and stories side-by-side.

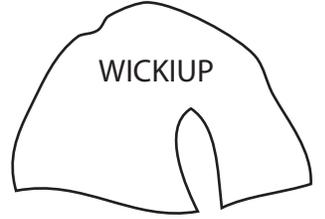
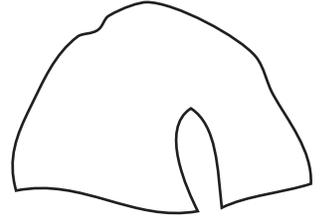
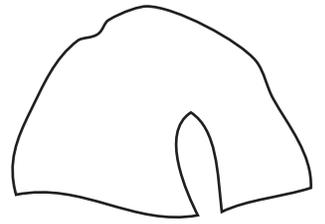


Jackson, William Henry. (1899) *Marshall Pass, Colorado*. Los Angeles, CA: The Getty.

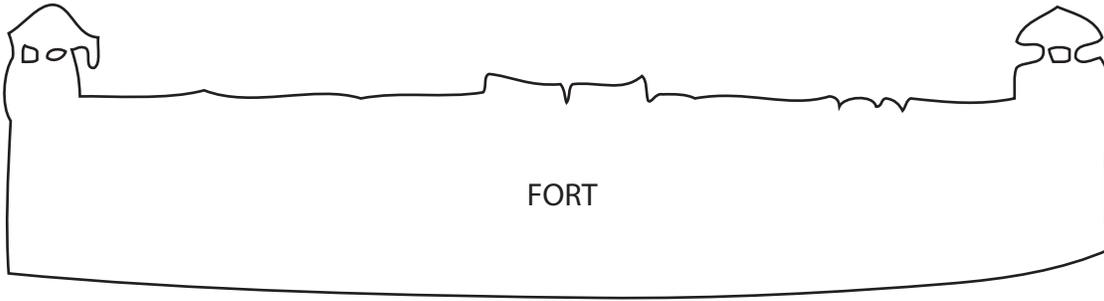
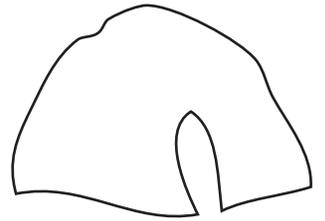
From: [wilderness.org/11-incredible-wilderness-photographs-1800s](http://wilderness.org/11-incredible-wilderness-photographs-1800s)



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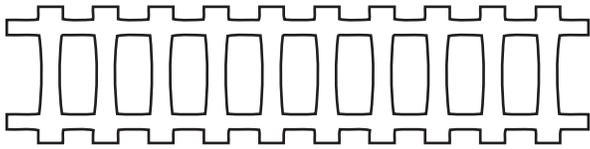
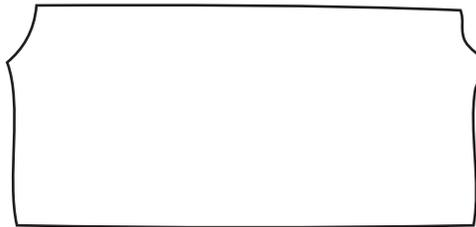
WICKIUP



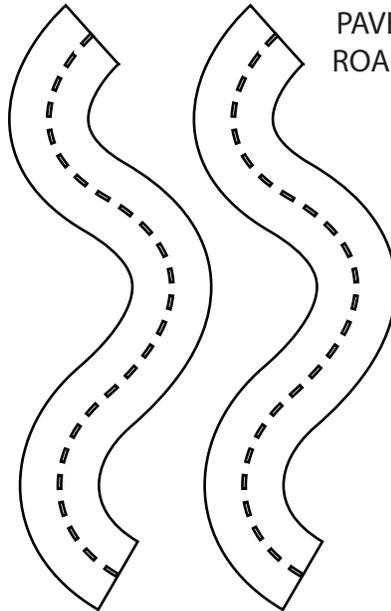
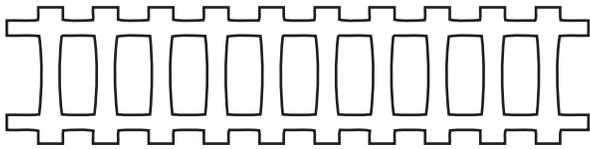
FORT



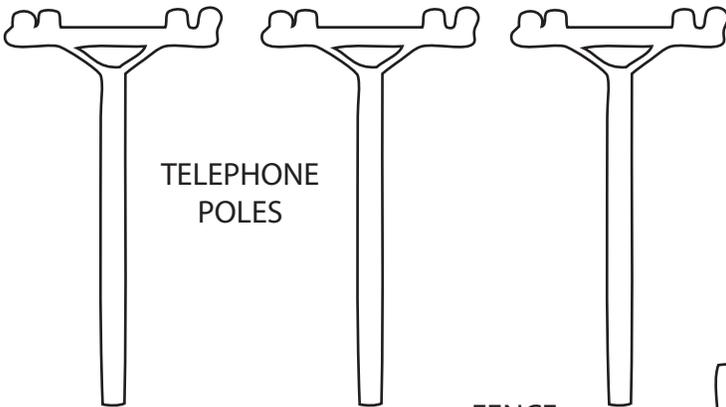
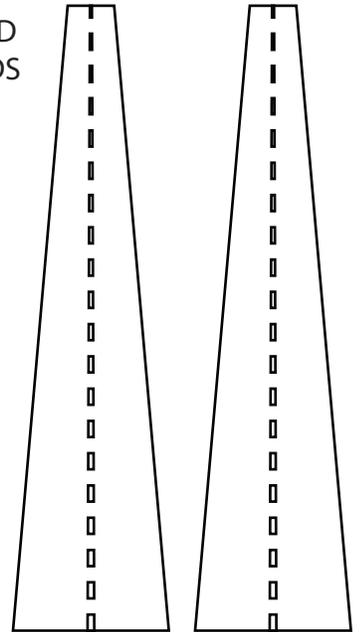
TRADING POST



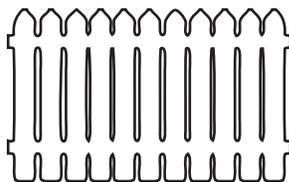
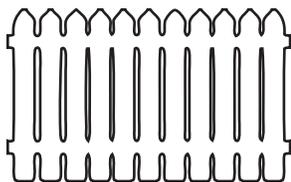
RAILROAD TRACKS



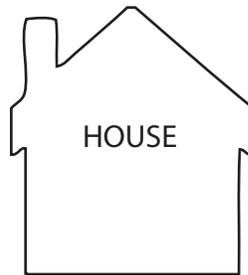
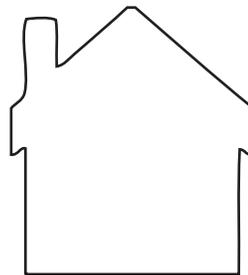
PAVED ROADS



TELEPHONE POLES



FENCE



HOUSE

