



Dear Family Member,

For the past several days your child has been learning about the westward expansion of the United States. Over the next few days s/he will continue to learn about how and why pioneers moved west, as well as the many innovations of the time that helped make expansion possible and more convenient, including the Pony Express, the Oregon Trail, and the transcontinental railroad. Your child will also learn how the lives of the buffalo and the Plains Native Americans, namely the Lakota Sioux, were adversely affected by this expansion and innovation.

Below are some suggestions for activities that you may do at home to reinforce what your child will be learning about westward expansion.

### **1. Quilts**

Your child will continue illustrating quilt squares about what s/he learns about westward expansion to add to his/her “quilt.” Have your child recreate a favorite quilt piece to show you and ask him/her to write a sentence describing the information represented by the picture. Ask questions to encourage your child to use the vocabulary learned at school.

### **2. The Oregon Trail**

Your child has heard about the Oregon Trail, a path through the wilderness that settlers followed that began in Missouri and ended in the Oregon Territory. Show your child these states on a U.S. map, and discuss how these areas have changed since the 1800s. Ask your child to share with you what s/he remembers about the story of one wagon train’s difficulties on the Oregon Trail. Ask questions to encourage your child to use the vocabulary learned at school.

### **3. Mail Today**

Your child will learn how the transportation of mail and news in the 1800s from the East Coast to the West Coast evolved from mail delivery by ship to the Pony Express to the telegraph. Discuss with your child the vehicles and ways we now send mail and hear news, and how these changes have allowed people to live differently today than they did in the 1800s.

#### 4. I've Been Working on the Railroad

Your child will be listening to the song “I've Been Working on the Railroad” while learning about the transcontinental railroad. You may wish to find a version of this song and listen to it with your child, encouraging your child to sing the words s/he remembers.

#### 5. Words to Use

Below is a list of some of the words that your child will be learning about and using. Try to use these words as they come up in everyday speech with your child.

- *ruts*—The wagon wheels often became stuck in the deep ruts made by the many wagon trains that had already traveled the Oregon Trail.
- *venture*—The Pony Express was a risky venture for both the investors and the riders.
- *bison*—Bison, or buffalo, faced extinction during the time of westward expansion, because many people hunted them without preservation and the future in mind.
- “*iron horse*”—Nicknamed the “iron horse,” the locomotive train forever changed the way people traveled and transported freight.

#### 6. Read Aloud Each Day

It is very important that you read with your child every day. Try to set aside time to read to your child and also time to listen to your child read to you. Remember to use the recommended trade book list sent with the first family letter.

Be sure to let your child know how much you enjoy hearing about what s/he learned at school.