

Land Grant Signed by Stoddard



Elementary

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Student Activities

- Have your students look up the Homestead Act. Discuss why Lincoln would have enacted it in 1862. Discuss what impact it had on American settlers. Elementary students often have problems understanding that it takes money, equipment, etc. to get a start in life. Discuss how early settlers could get free land to start their own farms and why that was important.
- Little House on the Prairie Laura Ingalls Wilder's father, Charles Ingalls, was motivated to move west because of the Homestead Act. Although he had to move several times until he found his farm, he did finally succeed in 1886 in becoming a farmer. Have your students read one of Wilder's books, or read one aloud to them. Although these take place slightly after the Civil War, they give a good indication of the impact of the Homestead Act on American families.
- Settling of the West. Have students compare population maps of the western United States prior to the 1862 Homestead Act and after it. What impact did this act have on settlement patterns in the US?
- Invite a local surveyor to your classroom to compare and contrast the method of land measurement and allotment described in the 1862 Homestead Act to that of today. Ask the surveyor to bring a plat book and Sidwell Map book as well as his surveying tools. With the surveyor present, introduce the terms acre, block, section, township, and range. Research and discuss the difference in the size of land area in each of these expanded measurements. To demonstrate the increase in size of each measurement, create a visual to scale using wood blocks, Legos, or some other unit of measurement. Ask the surveyor to discuss the purpose of a plat book and to demonstrate how to find the school address in the Sidwell map book. To culminate the survey activity, ask the surveyor to take the class

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outside the school building to demonstrate the surveying tools.

- Additional surveying information can be found at the National Museum of Surveying website at www.surveyingmuseum.org

Vocabulary: acre, block, section, township, range, plat

Middle School

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Research: Westward expansion caused problems even before the American Revolution. Have students research the problems that complicated westward expansion prior to the Civil War and create a timeline of the major problems that hampered expansion. Have them examine why the Homestead Act could be passed in 1862 and not before.

Research: Have students research the requirements of the Homestead Act in order to claim territory. Have them determine how much land could be obtained and what was needed to claim the land.

Research: Have students research the views of the three areas of the country (North, South and West) on homesteads and expansion between 1840 and 1860. Identify major problems and conflicts between regions.

Further Study: The following link provides a detailed overview of the Homestead Act, actual documents that lead students through the process Daniel Freeman went through to receive his homestead and lesson plans to use with the documents. <http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/homestead-act/>

High School

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Research: Westward expansion caused problems even before the American Revolution. Have students research the problems that complicated westward expansion prior to the Civil War and create a timeline of the major problems that hampered expansion. Have them examine why the Homestead Act could be passed in 1862 and not before.

Research: Have students research the requirements of the Homestead Act in order to claim territory. Have them determine how much land could be obtained and what was needed to claim the land.

Research: Have students research the views of the three areas of the country (North, South and West) on homesteads and expansion between 1840 and 1860. Identify major problems and conflicts between regions.

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