KHS—History Knowledge Organiser—Half Term 6 - Moving West

Key Dates:

17176-1783: War of Independence - Settlers in the 13 colonies look to move west.

1836: First travellers to use the Oregon Trail.

1837: An economic crisis in the East leading to high unemployment.

1846: More than 5,000 travellers including the Donner Party use the Oregon trail.

1848: Gold discovered in California.

1849: Gold rush - 100,000 people use the Oregon trail to find their fortune.

1855: Over 300,000 people in California.

1862: Homestead Act - Government encourage settlers by offering cheap land for farming.

WEST — Central Figure — EAST

Plains Indians — Early Pioneers — Railroads — Homesteaders — Miners

By the end of this Half Term I should know:

The main reasons for white Americans moving westward across the Plains and to the west coast.

The problems facing these pioneers migrating west including the Donner party.

How the 1848 Californian gold rush led to a mass migration across the country.

How the 1848 gold rush led to an increase in law-lessness in the western towns and camps.

How the US government encouraged people to become homesteaders and populate the Plains.

Key Terms:

Expansion: The political/ deliberate strategy of extending territory (land).

Settlement: A place which has previously been uninhabited, where people establish a community.

Economic crisis: A downturn in trade and a loss of money, resulting in a loss of jobs, businesses closing and banks collapsing.

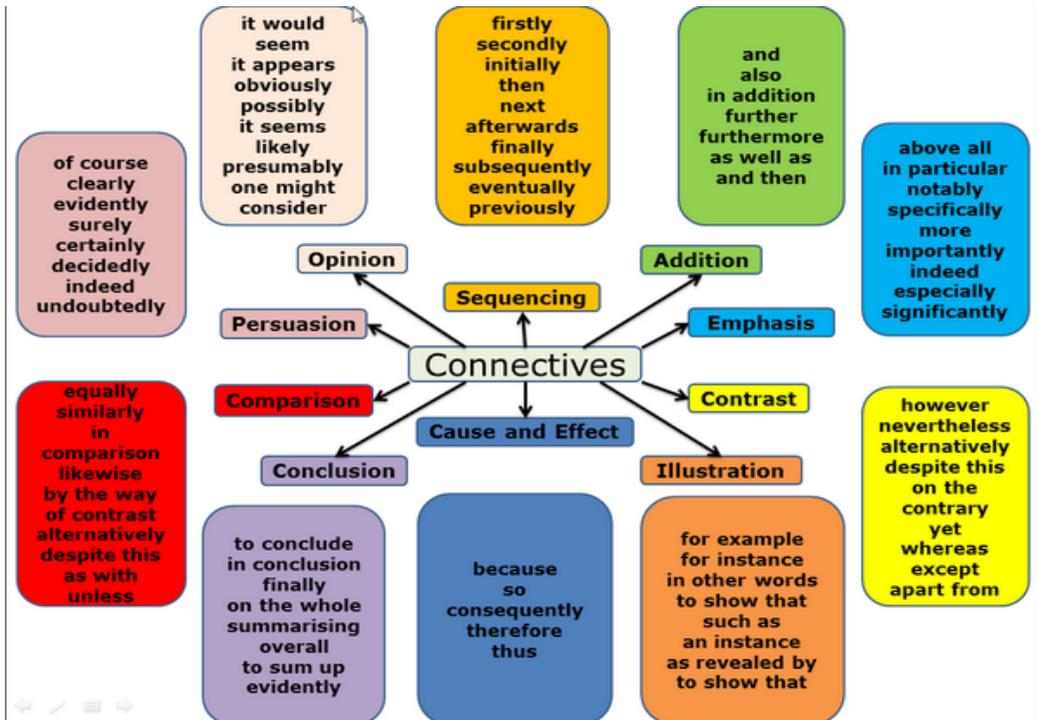**Oregon Trail:** A wagon trail from the east to the west (Oregon).

Donner party: A group of people led by a member of the Donner family on the trail from east to west.

Claim: A small plot of land for the purpose of panning for gold, that a person has made an official claim for.

Claim jumper: Someone who cheats someone out of, or steals someone else's plot.

Vigilante: someone who takes the law into their own hands.

Miner's courts: Set up in the mining towns attempting to bring law and order.

Connectives

Opinion: it would seem, it appears, obviously, possibly, it seems, likely, presumably, one might consider

Persuasion: of course, clearly, evidently, surely, certainly, decidedly, indeed, undoubtedly

Sequencing: firstly, secondly, initially, then, next, afterwards, finally, subsequently, eventually, previously

Addition: and, also, in addition, further, furthermore, as well as, and then

Emphasis: above all, in particular, notably, specifically, more importantly, indeed, especially, significantly

Comparison: equally, similarly, in comparison, likewise, by the way of contrast, alternatively, despite this, as with, unless

Contrast: however, nevertheless, alternatively, despite this, on the contrary, yet, whereas, except, apart from

Conclusion: to conclude, in conclusion, finally, on the whole, summarising, overall, to sum up, evidently

Cause and Effect: because, so, consequently, therefore, thus

Illustration: for example, for instance, in other words, to show that, such as, an instance, as revealed by, to show that

Why did white Americans want to migrate west?:

The American War of Independence (1776-83) freed the American **colonies** from British rule. The United states consisted of just 13 states along the East Coast. The rest of the continent was unknown to the to Europeans. Now free from British rule the Americans decided to spread out and gain more space. There were many reasons Americans wanted to move west including: the fact that there was a lot of **poverty in the east**, **land was very good in** some parts of **the west**, there was lots of **space in the west**, it was very **overcrowded** in the east and **gold** had been discovered in the west. However, many have stated that was no more than the white American's belief in something called **'Manifest Destiny'** A God-given right to settle the West. They saw it as their destiny.

The Gold Rush led to a rise in crime and lawlessness:

As a result of the California **Gold Rush** hundreds of thousands of people, mainly men, **crowded** together in to the small towns and **mining camps** that had sprung up in the west. Being far from the majority of people in the east meant that it was harder to keep law and order. There were **law enforcement** officers, but there just wasn't enough of them. Much of the crime was a result of violence and theft. Getting drunk, arguments over claims, racism and steeling each others belongs ended up in violence and even death. Many men formed or joined **gangs** which only made the situation worse. This led to the creation of **vigilante groups**, **vigilance committees** and **miner's courts**. Many ordinary men banded together to try to bring law and order to the west.

What problems did the migrants west face:

The **Oregon trail** was a **route across America**, from east to west. It was a very large **wagon trail**. From the mid 1830s to the end of the 1860s it was used by farmers, business owners and settlers. The **journey** took over **4 months**. It was dangerous and had many hazards including: getting **stuck** in the mountains if the trail was not completed before winter, crossing **two mountain ranges** using ropes and pulleys, **disease** and the **weather** (sandstorms, very hot, storms and quicksand). One party that attempted to cross the trail was the **Donner party**. The party was led by **Jacob and George** Donner, they started the journey in **1846 with 60 wagons and 300 people**. Part of the group took a short cut. Four wagons broke and **300 cattle died**. The group started to **eat the dead**.

The Homesteaders:

Homesteaders were white Americans who wanted to move west to get a chance of farm land to provide a living for their families. There were two main factors that made them **leave the east**. The first was the **shortage** of farmland there, as the eastern states were **overcrowded**. Young people seeking land for their families were unable to afford it in the east, the Plains offered them lots of **land** very **cheaply**. The **1862 Homestead Act** was the first act passed by the US Government to help homesteaders settle on the Plains. The US **Government** wanted settlers to move onto the Plains in huge numbers. However, land was too expensive for many, so to avoid this the government stated that all American citizens were entitled to **160 acres** of land on the Plains for a fee of just **$10**, if they farmed it for five years.

How did gold lead to people migrating west?:

Most Americans didn't know where **California** was in the 1840s. A man called **John Sutter** wanted to build a new sawmill near a Californian river. The sawmill was nearly complete when one of his men found **gold** in the river. It was not long before news of the discovery leaked out. The **gold rush** that followed was to make California the **richest state**. There were three ways to get to the other side of the country at this time (all very dangerous). Most people decided to travel the **2000 miles across land**. Very few people got rich from the gold rush. Many had **sold everything** they owned in order to **get rich quick** but lost everything, **got sick and died**. Those who did get rich done so by selling the things people would need at very inflated prices.