



Westward Expansion through Postage Stamps:

Oklahoma's Centennial and USA Geography in Postage Stamps

Introduction

In this lesson, students learn how physical features (land forms) in what is now the United States affected the settlement patterns of early citizens. Prompt a class discussion using the following question: *When people choose to settle somewhere, what are some of the things that influence the decision?* Ask students to consider, more specifically, where the first

Europeans settled in North America and why these areas were desirable. (Students might mention proximity to point of arrival, presence of water sources for nourishment and travel, abundance of fish and game, condition of soil for farming, and proximity to other people.) Record the students' responses on chart paper.

Now continue the discussion by asking: *What characteristics of the land in North America might have made some areas less desirable places to settle?* (Students might mention mountains, deserts, etc.) Record the students' responses on chart paper.

Using information gathered in the discussion, ask students to predict which of the United States was settled last. Record the responses on chart paper.

On an overhead projector, show students the U.S. stamp that commemorates the state of Michigan. Draw students' attention to the information that is available on the stamp (i.e., the value, the country of origin, details of the illustration, and the date). Explain that the date indicates the year the state was admitted to the Union. (Tell students that they will be examining other stamps commemorating statehood, some of which will include two dates. On these stamps the first date that appears is the date of that state's admittance into the Union.)

Divide the class into three groups. Give each group an envelope that contains enlarged copies of ten different stamps commemorating U.S. statehood. Students will examine each stamp with their lenses to identify the date on the stamp, which indicates when the state was admitted to the Union. They will then create a "stamp timeline" by putting the stamps in chronological order from the earliest admission to the latest.

Ask students to mark their maps with the numbered stickers to indicate the order in which the states were admitted to the Union. They should use the "stamp timeline" as a reference. After they have placed all the numbered stickers on the map, they should identify a pattern in the sequence of the numbers. (For example, statehood tends to move from east to west.)

Ask students to refer to the information gathered in the discussion (desirable areas for--or barriers to--settlement) to speculate about the reasons for this pattern and to compare the pattern with the predictions they made.

Give each student a map with two states shaded. These should be states not included in the lesson so far. One of the states should be farther west than the other. Ask students to answer the following question in writing: *Which of the two states was admitted to the Union first?* Students should use what they've learned in this lesson to support the answer.

Ask students to compare and contrast the three postage stamps representing the state of Oklahoma. Inform students that the last stamp was issued in commemoration of the centennial of Oklahoma's statehood, in 2007. In what ways does this stamp celebrate the past and future of Oklahoma?



1957



2002



2007



Dec 7, 1787

USA

Delaware

22



29 USA

Kentucky
1792

My Old Kentucky Home State Park







