



OwlTeacher
Teaching with Movies & Literature

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Good for the following school subjects:

- ✓ American History
- ✓ The American West

Directed by Sydney Pollack
1972; Rated PG; Western Drama; 116 minutes; Color;
Available from www.OwlTeacher.com bookstore

Synopsis: Jeremiah Johnson is a man trying to satisfy an inner need by choosing the solitary life of a mountain man in the late 1800s. He battles the elements, Native Americans, and the advance of civilization to find inner peace.

Educational Benefits of this movie: This film is excellent when teaching a unit on the Mountain Men of the West, Westward Expansion, and would also be beneficial to the study of the relationship between the white man and the Native American. The film also gives students a good idea of what life was like for the Mountain Men of the late 1800s and does an excellent job of getting the history right.

Historical Background: In the mid to late 1800s, many trapping and fur companies in the East were hiring men to live and hunt in the untamed mountains of the west. The film is set in the 1830s and provides an overview of the difficulties facing mountain men and other early explorers of the west. After the fur trade collapsed, the mountain men became guides for explorers of the western frontier as well as guides for the army and the white settlers. One of the guides of the Lewis & Clark expedition had been a mountain man years earlier.

Map Activity:

On a [blank map provided](#), label the following:

- ✓ The Rocky Mountains
- ✓ The Judith River
- ✓ Gila
- ✓ The Musselshell River
- ✓ Colorado
- ✓ Canada

Study Questions:

Think about the following concepts and questions carefully as you view the film. Then, in **two complete sentences**, either answer the question or explain how this concept is shown and defined in the movie:

1. Manifest Destiny
2. Christianity vs. tribal religion
3. bartering

4. combining cultures
5. outdoor survival in winter
6. co-existence with other cultures
7. How do you learn the things you need to know to survive?
8. What is a mountain man?
9. How do the Crow's beliefs differ from the white men's?
10. How would you have helped the people in the stranded wagon train?
11. What things do you think you would need to survive in the mountains?
12. How did the arrival of the settlers change the west?
13. How would you have felt about the arrival of the mountain men and the settlers if you were an Indian in those days?
14. What is scalping? Why was it done?

Project:

Using Microsoft Word or your own artistic abilities, create a Mountain Man Want Ad. Imagine that you work for a Fur Trapping Company and have been assigned the job of recruiting mountain men to come work for the company. You must create a Want Ad to be displayed throughout the cities of the east coast, enticing men to join the company. In your Want Ad, you must list the advantages and disadvantages of being a Mountain Man. Describe the job, its pay, and its dangers. At the same time, you must attract recruits. Use bold lettering, images, etc. Use a small poster board to create your Want Ad.