

The Experience: Engage With a Real-World Parallel (5-10 minutes)

Mr. Rodriguez shows **before-and-after images** of a historic apartment complex in the community that is being redeveloped. Families who lived there for decades are being displaced.

He asks students:

“Who has the right to decide what happens to this land?”

Students are given **think-time**, then **turn and talk**, while Mr. Rodriguez listens, records responses, and confirms ideas publicly.

Example Student Responses

Student Response 1:

“The people who own the land probably get to decide because it’s their property.”

Student Response 2:

“The city should decide because they’re thinking about what’s best for everyone, not just one group.”

Student Response 3:

“The families who live there should have a say because it’s their homes and they’re the ones being affected.”

Teacher “Stamping the Idea” (Naming the Thinking) (1-2 minutes)

Mr. Rodriguez affirms and elevates student thinking:

“I’m hearing you think about ownership, government power, and who is impacted by decisions. That’s important.”

“What you just did is evaluate *power, justice, and perspective*—that’s exactly what historians do when they study the past.”

(This stamps the thinking as historical work, not just opinion.)

Transfer: Connecting to the Historical Content (15-20 minutes)

Mr. Rodriguez bridges students’ thinking to the text:

“Now let’s take that same thinking and apply it to the past.”

“As we read about westward expansion, we’re going to ask: Who had the power to make decisions about land? Who benefited? And was it just for everyone involved?”

Students then read a primary or secondary source related to westward expansion.

Close: Writing and Discussion Task (5-7 minutes)

Student Task:

Students write a short claim answering:

“During westward expansion, who had the power to decide what happened to land, and was that use of power just?”

Students must support their claim with **textual evidence**.

Closing the Loop: Sharing and Refining Thinking (3-5 minutes)

Mr. Rodriguez selects 1–2 student responses to share (either aloud or anonymously).

Example Student Claim 1:

“The U.S. government and settlers had the most power during westward expansion. This was not just because Native Americans were forced off their land even though they already lived there.”

Example Student Claim 2:

“Westward expansion benefited settlers because they got land, but it was unjust because Native Americans did not get a choice and lost their homes.”

Sample Teacher Language to Close the Lesson (3-5 minutes)

Mr. Rodriguez intentionally **selects a response that reflects the lesson goal** (power + justice) and explains why:

“I want to pause on this response because it clearly explains *who had power* and *who was harmed*. That shows strong historical thinking.”

He then invites students to confirm or extend the idea:

“Turn and talk: Do you agree with this claim? What would you add or revise using evidence from the text?”

Example Student Responses When Closing the Loop

Student Response 1:

“I agree, but I would add that the government made laws like the Homestead Act that helped settlers get land.”

Student Response 2:

“I would add a quote from the text that shows Native Americans were forced to move, not given a choice.”

Student Response 3:

“It’s similar to the apartment example because the people with less power didn’t get to decide.”

Final Teacher Wrap-Up (1-2 minutes)

Mr. Rodriguez closes by reinforcing the transfer:

“Today, you used modern examples to understand historical decisions. Historians don’t just memorize facts—they analyze power, justice, and perspective across time.”