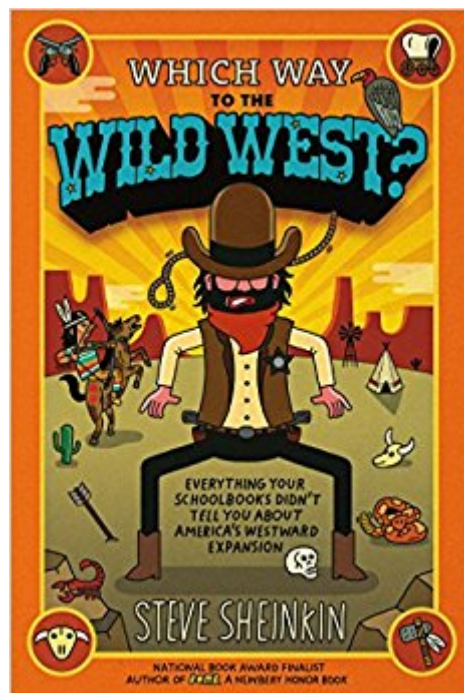




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Which Way To The Wild West?: Everything Your Schoolbooks Didn't Tell You About Westward Expansion



Synopsis

History--with the good bits put back. Welcome to the thrilling, tragic, and downright wild adventure of America's westward expansion. 1805: Explorer William Clark reaches the Pacific Ocean and pens the badly spelled line "Ocian in view! O! the joy!" (Hey, he was an explorer, not a librarian.) 1836: Mexican general Santa Anna surrounds the Alamo, trapping 180 Texans inside and prompting Texan William Travis to declare, "I shall never surrender or retreat." 1861: Two railroad companies, one starting in the West and one in the East, start a race to lay the most track and create a transcontinental railroad. With a storyteller's voice and attention to the details that make history real and interesting, Steve Sheinkin's *Which Way to the Wild West?* delivers America's greatest adventure. From the Louisiana Purchase (remember: if you're negotiating a treaty for your country, play it cool.) to the gold rush (there were only three ways to get to California--all of them bad) to the life of the cowboy, the Indian wars, and the everyday happenings that defined living on the frontier. *Which Way to the Wild West?* Everything Your Schoolbooks Didn't Tell You About America's Westward Expansion by Steve Sheinkin, National Book Award Finalist Author of *Bomb*, a Newbery Honor Book, is a fun, funny way for young readers to learn about a chapter of American history. "An engaging . . . medley of anecdotes about the Wild West in nine lively chapters starting with the Louisiana Purchase and ending with the Lakota massacre at Wounded Knee in 1890. Casual vignettes of famous figures and ordinary people come to life. . . ."

School Library Journal "Super illustrations, fresh stories, thoughtful insights with a light touch, this is fun for kids and parents alike."

Travelforkids.com "Sheinkin builds his conversational narrative around stories of the men and women who peopled the west, with particular attention given to African Americans, Chinese workers, and everyday farmers and cowboys. There's plenty of humor here, but Sheinkin's strength is his ability to transition between events."

The Horn Book

Book Information

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Age Range: 10 - 14 years

Grade Level: 3 - 8

Customer Reviews

Grade 5— If Bill Bryson wrote history books for middle graders, they might read something like Sheinkin's offering. The former textbook author claims to have included all the "funny, amazing, inspiring, surprising, and disgusting stories" that his previous editors made him omit. The result is an engaging (though not necessarily introductory) chronological medley of anecdotes about the Wild West in nine lively chapters starting with the Louisiana Purchase and ending with the Lakota massacre at Wounded Knee in 1890. Casual vignettes of famous figures and ordinary people come to life in an almost irreverent way. For example, a primary quote outlines Union Pacific vice president Thomas Durant's plan to get rich off the railroad: "Grab a wad of money from the construction fees—and get out." Sections on the Donner Party's tragic fate in the Sierra Nevada are entitled "Beware of Shortcuts" and "You Call This a Party?" A "What Ever Happened To—?" chapter follows up on notable individuals and lesser-known folks such as Biddy Mason (a former slave) and Catherine Sager (an orphaned pioneer child). The useful source notes include interesting suggestions for further reading on subjects such as territorial expansion, the gold rush, and Native Americans, and humorous black-and-white cartoons and caricatures decorate many pages.—Madeline J. Bryant, Los Angeles Public Library

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—“An engaging chronological medley of anecdotes about the Wild West in nine lively chapters starting with the Louisiana Purchase and ending with the Lakota massacre at Wounded Knee in 1890.— School Library Journal—“Super illustrations, fresh stories, thoughtful insights with a light touch, this is fun for kids and parents alike.—

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strength is his ability to transition between events. [The Horn Book](#) "An accessible and engaging historical overview." [Kirkus Reviews](#)

WOW! I LOVED this wacky and wonderful book of American history detailing the westward expansion that is so engrossing you won't put it down - one surprise after another as you learn how the western states were acquired (Sheinkin's maps are so original and helpful), how, when, and why the settlers traveled to the Pacific coast despite the Rocky Mountain and Sierra Nevada ranges, wide rivers, Indian territories, desert heat, deep snow and so on. You never really learned about the plight of the native Americans either, in quite this way in your history classes! There are source notes, quotation notes and an index in back of the book - the book is a marvel and I enjoyed it from cover to cover. You will also. Share it with your kids and friends. This book is about America, especially after the Civil War - the good, the bad, and the ugly. Next time you think of a native American Indian or a buffalo, or take a train or drive a car out west - you'll remember this book for sure. Yes there are movies, TV series (Gunsmoke comes to mind), memoirs (think "Vanishing Arizona", but "Which Way to the Wild West" is an original retelling of our American story you don't want to miss.

In 8th grade, I learned about the wild west and I loved learning about it. When I found out how good this book was from other people, I had to read it. The book taught me so much more about the wild west than my 8th grade textbook did. I loved the book and the illustrations. I gave the book such a good review because I loved reading it and I had a wild west adventure of my own imagining how life would be if I lived in that time period. This book is a best seller in my mind and history teachers everywhere would be happy to have this book added to the textbooks they are teaching from. Once again, I have to say I loved this book!

Oh my goodness- we loved all these "textbooks!" Funny, interesting, incredibly educational. We read them aloud for homeschool and they wanted more every time!

This is a well-written, fast-paced book which gives one a good overview of this period in history with enough details and anecdotes to help make the time come alive. Reading this book one comes to an understanding of why so many people were willing to take the arduous journey across America or around Cape Horn in South America in order to reach the American west. One also gets a sense of the hardships involved in these travels as well as the uncertainty of the "rewards" for all the effort.

The book is written at a middle school level and would be an excellent overview book for anyone studying this period in history. I would recommend it as a supplement to whatever history program you are using. Homeschoolers in particular would find it a good resource to use as a "hinge text" to organize and unify the historical fiction titles read in the program and thereby to more fully develop the student's understanding of Westward Expansion.

I wish I had this book available when I was in school!! I absolutely love it! The stories are fun and interesting and I was immediately drawn into the book. I am getting more of his books because I hated history in school and have found a renewed interest in it. Who ever thought History could be so much fun!!!

Everything you want to know in a very entertaining way: putting the facts straight, making heroes human again, and regular people heroes. I also recommend his other books.

I love all of Steve Shenkin's books, and now I own all three. Instead of focusing on a war, this time Mr. Shenkin wrote a book about the wild west. It is great, and follows his funny and intriguing style. His ability to find wacky stories is very much appreciated, and it makes his books many times more interesting than if they had simple, standard, stories. All in all, this book was great and I loved it, as I have with all of Mr. Shenkin's books.

Like all of Steve Sheinkin's clever historical depictions, this book about Westward expansion captures the excitement of the time period and balances it with honest accounts of the struggles individuals experienced. I plan to use it as the textbook for a class I'm teaching this summer.

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