

Study Guide

Chapter 12, Section 1



For use with textbook pages 356–360

THE OREGON COUNTRY

KEY TERMS

joint occupation	The agreement allowing both the United States and Britain to settle in the Oregon territory (<i>page 357</i>)
mountain man	A person who spends most of his time in the mountains (<i>page 357</i>)
rendezvous	A meeting (<i>page 357</i>)
emigrant	People who leave the United States to live in another country (<i>page 358</i>)
Manifest Destiny	The idea that the United States had a special purpose to extend its boundaries from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean (<i>page 360</i>)

DRAWING FROM EXPERIENCE

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to live away from people for a long time, such as in the mountains? What supplies would you need to survive? What would be some dangers? What would be exciting?

This section focuses on how the United States obtained land in the Northwest. It also explains about some of the first settlers in that area.

ORGANIZING YOUR THOUGHTS

Use the chart below to help you take notes as you read the summaries that follow. Think about the countries that sought possession of the Oregon country and how the United States was able to ultimately gain possession of the area.

Claim to Oregon		Result of Claim
Spain		
Russia		
Britain		
United States		

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READ TO LEARN

- **Rivalry in the Northwest** (pages 356–358)

In the early 1800s, four countries wanted to claim the Oregon country as their own. The area consisted of present-day Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and sections of Wyoming, Montana, and Canada's British Columbia. The countries seeking to possess this area were the United States, Great Britain, Spain, and Alaska. The United States claimed entitlement to the land because they discovered the Columbia River and supported the Lewis and Clark expeditions. Britain conducted explorations of the Columbia River. Spain owned present-day California and some northern portions. Russia owned present-day Alaska and some southern portions.

President John Quincy Adams arranged an agreement with Spain, called the Adams-Onís Treaty. In this treaty Spain and the United States compromised on the northern border of California. As a result of the compromise, Spain relinquished its claim to the Oregon country. Later, Russia withdrew its claim for the land south of Alaska. An agreement with Great Britain proved to be more difficult. Rather than divide the land between Great Britain and the United States, the two nations agreed to **joint occupation** in 1818. This agreement allowed people from both countries to settle in the Oregon country. Adams later tried to divide the land at the 49° N line. Britain refused Adams's proposal. Joint occupation continued between the two countries.

The earliest American settlers in the Oregon country were fur trappers called **mountain men**. These men made their living by trapping beaver and living in the harsh wilderness. Often, they adopted the ways of the Native Americans, wearing skins and moccasins. Many also took Native American women as their wives. They lived alone most of the year until late summer. At that time they would meet, or **rendezvous**, with the merchants and other traders. The yearly rendezvous was a time for traders to sell the beaver skins and obtain supplies, food, drink, and presents for their families. Stories were shared and competitions were held between the traders. Tales of their struggles and explorations were a source of pride for the mountain men. Explorations of the South Pass, a large break in the Rockies, would be valuable information for future settlers. When the beaver population declined, some mountain men turned to farming. Others became guides for the settlers moving to the Oregon country.

1. In what way did the United States and Britain compromise in their claim for Oregon?

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- **Settling Oregon** (page 358)

Dr. Marcus Whitman, a missionary, and his wife built a mission among the Cayuse people in 1836. Their goal was to bring Christianity into the area. New settlers brought disease. An outbreak of measles spread among the Cayuse people, killing many Native American children. The Cayuse blamed the Whitman's mission. The Whitmans and 12 others were attacked and killed.

The growth to the Oregon country continued. Over 1,000 people left Missouri in 1843 to start a new life in Oregon. More **emigrants**, people who leave the United States to live in another country, soon followed. They traveled more than 2,000 miles in covered wagons, called prairie schooners. They followed the Oregon Trail across the plains and through the mountains to reach the territory of Oregon.

2. What effect did the first American settlers have on the Native Americans?

- **The Division of Oregon** (pages 359–360)

Though still maintaining joint ownership of the Oregon country, the American settlements grew dramatically, while the British settlements remained the same. At this time many Americans strongly believed that the purpose of the United States was to possess the land from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean. John O'Sullivan, a newspaper editor, named that belief **Manifest Destiny**, meaning that the United States was destined to possess the full continent. In the election of 1844, James Polk beat Henry Clay by actively supporting America's ownership of Oregon. His slogan was "Fifty-four Forty or Fight," referring to the latitude of desired ownership. Great Britain compromised and agreed to the 49°N line for the division of Oregon.

3. On what issue did James Polk defeat Henry Clay in the election of 1844?
