

## James K. Polk

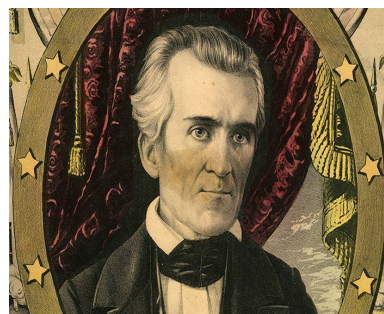
Lesson plans for primary sources at the Tennessee State Library & Archives

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**Grade Level:** 4<sup>th</sup> grade

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Visit <http://sos.tn.gov/tsla/education> for additional lesson plans.



### Introduction:

This lesson seeks to integrate the Tennessee Language Arts and Social Studies standards with a lesson tailored to 4th grade students. Students will make connections to current events, listen and participate in reading an article, practice speaking and listening skills, evaluate primary sources, and write a postcard as a visitor at the James K. Polk Museum.

### Guiding Questions

1. Who was James K. Polk?
2. What leadership roles did he hold before his presidency?
3. Why was Polk referred to as the “dark horse” candidate for the presidency?
4. What promises did he make when he was elected president?
5. What was the outcome of his presidency?
6. What is westward expansion?
7. What is Manifest Destiny?
8. What was James K. Polk’s view of Manifest Destiny?
9. What opposition to Manifest Destiny existed and why?
10. What impact did Manifest Destiny have on the United States?

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## **Lesson Terminology:**

1. **James K. Polk:** James Knox Polk was an American politician who served as the 11th President of the United States. He previously was Speaker of the House of Representatives and Governor of Tennessee.
2. **Dark horse candidate:** Politically, the concept came to the United States in the nineteenth century when it was first applied to James K. Polk, a relatively unknown Tennessee politician who won the Democratic Party's 1844 presidential nomination over a host of better-known candidates.
3. **Westward Expansion:** <https://www.history.com/topics/westward-expansion>
4. **Manifest Destiny:** The belief that the expansion of the US throughout the American continents was both justified and inevitable.

## **Learning Objectives:**

In this lesson, students will use informational text, TSLA primary sources, and group activities to examine the impact of President James K. Polk's Manifest Destiny on Westward Expansion.

## **Curriculum Standards:**

### **Social Studies**

**4.23** Explain the impact of President James K. Polk's view of Manifest Destiny on westward expansion.

### **Reading:**

**4.RI.KID.1** Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly; refer to details and examples in the text when drawing inferences from the text.

### **Writing:**

**W.4.8** Recall relevant information from experience or gather relevant information from print and digital sources; take notes and categorize information, and provide a list of sources.

### **Speaking and Listening:**

**SL.4.1** Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 4 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

## **Materials Needed:**

- Tennessee State Library Archives Website link- <http://sos.tn.gov/tsla>
- James K. Polk- <https://www.history.com/topics/us-presidents/james-polk>
- James K. Polk portrait 1846  
<http://cdm15138.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/p15138coll43/id/1/rec/5>
- Short biography and video of James K. Polk  
<http://www.presidential-power.org/president-james-knox-polk.htm>
- Printed copies and the description, "Political Cartoon depicting the election of 1844."  
<http://teva.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/p15138coll43/id/6/rec/1>
- Printed copies and the description, "The Republic of Texas."  
<http://teva.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/ref/collection/p15138coll43/id/7/rec/2>
- Copies of James K. Polk coloring sheet and letter template (found at end of lesson plan)

## **Background:**

**Source:** The Tennessee Historical Society

<https://www.tennesseehistory.org/james-k-polk/>



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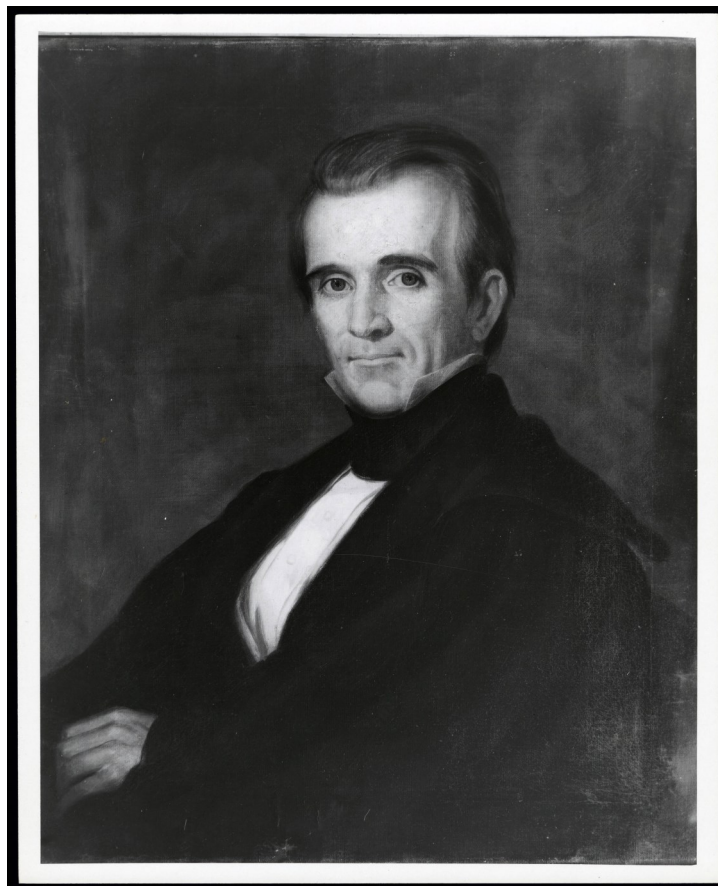
## Lesson Activities:

1. Examine the impact of President James K. Polk's view of Manifest Destiny on westward expansion.

2. Introduce the lesson by distributing copies of the photograph of James K. Polk, images of the political cartoon and the Republic of Texas to table groups of 4-5 students.

3. Allow students to review the images and discuss in small groups then begin to ask and answer questions to prompt student interest.

4.. Distribute copies of the [History.com article](#) with biographical information on James K. Polk.



5. Demonstrate a close read of the introductory paragraph and ask students to highlight unknown words, phrases, or ideas. Write James K. Polk on the board and add student responses. Generate a group discussion around the introductory paragraph.

6. Ask students to turn to their shoulder partner and work in groups of two. Each partner will take turns reading a paragraph aloud and highlighting unknown words from the article.

7. After each paragraph, stop and discuss questions and big ideas with students while adding words and phrases to the list under the heading of the paragraph James K. Polk's Early Years. Continue this throughout the article to help students read and comprehend higher level text.

## Lesson Activities Continued:

8. Continue the class reading and discussions by adding new words and phrases to the board under the paragraph titles. Ask students to listen to the read aloud and pay close attention to any unknown words. After reading a section allow students to share the words they didn't recognize from that portion of the text. List the words on the board under that heading. Discuss the meaning of the words as you write them on the board.

### ***For example:***

James K. Polk

tenure

continent

Democrat

political circles

tariffs

boundary dispute

9. At the conclusion of the reading ask students to share their knowledge about today's lesson. After reading each section aloud, writing unknown words on the board and discussing the meanings with students, ask them to summarize with a partner. Each student will turn to a partner and summarize the reading while trying to use each of the words from the list.



## Lesson Activities Continued:

### Small Group Activity:

View the James K. Polk Home and Museum virtually.

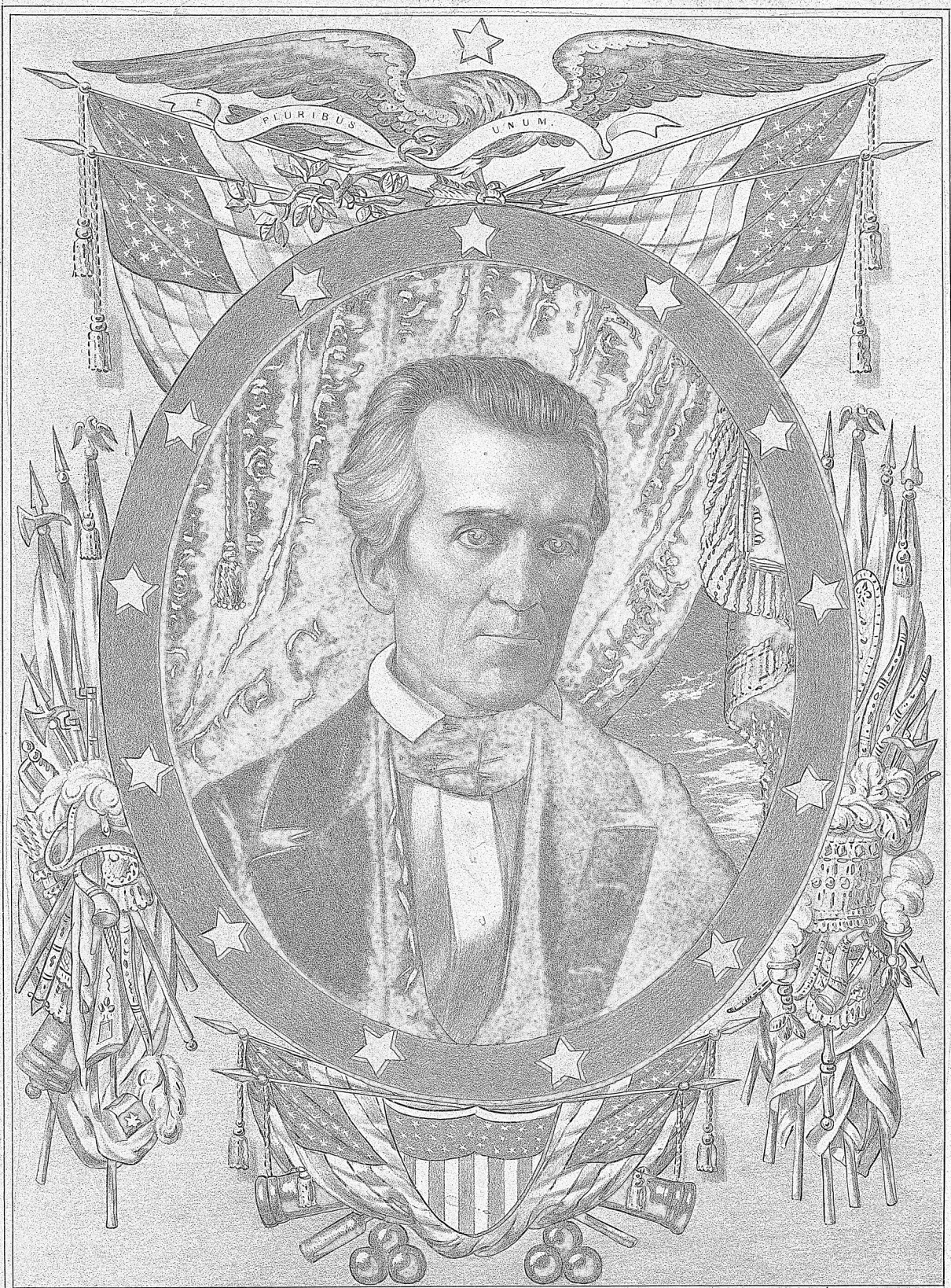
<http://www.jameskpolk.com/>



Talk with students about visiting the President's home in Columbia, TN and point out the location on a classroom map. Allow students to take a tour by watching the videos listed on the website and reading about James K. Polk.

After students have researched Polk further provide them with a copy of a the coloring sheet and letter template. Students will work in small groups to color and write a letter as if they were visitors at his childhood home. After researching the site and coloring the sheet, ask students to write to a friend describing Polk's view of Manifest Destiny on westward expansion.





LITH. & PUB. BY N. CURRIER,

*Entered, according to Act of Congress in the year 1846 by N. Currier, in the Clerk's office of the District Court of the Southern District of N.Y.*

2 SPRUCE ST. N.Y.

**JAMES K. POLK,**  
**Eleventh President of the United States.**

FROM A DAGUERRETYPE BY PLUMBE.



**Assignment:** Write to a friend and explain James K. Polk's view on westward expansion.

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ ,

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Sincerely,

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