



# Pressing West

A Page In History



## Companion Teaching Activities to the historical fiction serialized story "Pressing West: A Page in History"

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Foundation



# **Elementary Teacher Guide**

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“Pressing West: A New Page in History” is an historical fiction story about the birth of the first St. Louis newspaper. The story is packed with many great teaching opportunities involving the history of the newspaper and the early 1800s. The following Constructed Response Items and Performance Tasks were written to assist teachers and parents. The questions are suitable for most elementary students and can be adapted to other grade levels.

**Directions:** Answer the questions in complete sentences.

1. Gabe is described as “a testament to manual labor.” What does that mean? Use details from the story to support your answer.

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2. Why did Gabe have adult responsibilities? Name at least two adult responsibilities you have.

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3. List 4 words or phrases from the chapter that give you a feeling of what it was like in 1808.

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2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

4. Look through the Classified ads in the newspaper to find three jobs that a 12 year old would be capable of doing. Cut and paste them on the back of this page and give reasons for your choices.

**Directions:** Answer the questions in complete sentences.

1. What country was Charless from and why did he travel to America?

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2. Before Charless settled in St. Louis, he started newspapers in two other states. Name the states and locate them in an atlas.

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3. How would a weekly newspaper affect St. Louis?

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4. Why would citizens of St. Louis be interested in news from Europe?

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5. Look through your local newspaper. What information is most helpful to your family? Why?

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**Directions:** Answer the questions in complete sentences.

1. Would you trust Jacob Hinkle? Use details from the story to explain your answer.

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2. What was the price for the Gazette in 1808? How have the prices of newspapers changed over the years?

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3. What is a prospectus? Use context clues from the story to explain your answer.

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4. The word “breadwinner” is a compound word used to describe Gabe. What is a breadwinner?

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Locate at least 5 compound words in your local newspaper. Cut and paste the words on the back of this page, then write the meaning of each word.

**Directions:** Answer the questions in complete sentences.

1. Explain what “setting type” means.

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2. How did Charless learn about printing?

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3. When Charless tells Gabe, “Maybe there’s ink in your blood as well,” what does he mean?

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4. How does Gabe feel about the newspaper business? Use details to explain your answer.

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5. Look through the Help Wanted section of the Classified ads in the newspaper. Locate a job that interests you, then cut and paste the ad on a separate sheet of paper. Write a paragraph explaining why your personality is suited for that particular job.

**Directions:** Answer the questions in complete sentences.

1. How was the mail delivered in 1808? Why was mail service unreliable?

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2. What simile is used to describe Gabe's feelings about his mother leaving? What does it mean?

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3. Why is being a newspaperman so important to Joseph Charless? Use details from the story to explain your answer.

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4. List 3 responsibilities of running a newspaper business in 1808.

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2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

5. Search the Help Wanted section of the Classified ads in the newspaper for words or phrases that describe characteristics of a good employee. Use your words to create a HELP WANTED poster for a newspaper apprentice.

**Directions:** Answer the questions in complete sentences.

1. The author uses the simile “managing felt like a drowning man trying to keep his head above water” to describe Charless. What does that mean?

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2. Describe the process of making paper in 1808.

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Contrast the way paper was made in 1808 to the way it is made today. Record your answers in the chart below.

<b>Making Paper in 1808</b>	<b>Making Paper Today</b>

3. What do you think the expression “none the worse for wear” means? Use details from the story to explain your answer.

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4. Do you think Gabe will get the apprenticeship? Explain your answer.

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**Pressing West: A New Page in History**  
**Extension Activity for Chapter 6**  
**Make Your Own Paper**

It's time to recycle your old newspapers by making new paper. This activity uses the basic concepts of how paper is produced in a mill. Like paper in 1808, your paper will be much thicker and rougher than paper made today with elaborate machines.

**Materials needed:**

- Blender or food processor (use an old one)
- Mixing bowl
- Flat pan or tub (to put under the screen)
- Rolling pin
- Non-rusting screen attached to a frame the size you'd like your paper
- Cloth for blotters
- Newspaper
- Hot water
- Starch (optional)

**Directions:**

1. Tear the old newspaper into small pieces.
2. Combine 2 cups of hot water with ½ cup of shredded paper (add 2 teaspoons of liquid starch if you plan to write on the paper later).
3. Blend
4. Pour the pulp into the flat pan or tub
5. Slide the screen into the bottom of the pan and move it around until it is completely and evenly covered with pulp.
6. Lift the screen carefully, hold it level, and let it drain.
7. Place screen on top of blotter and newspaper.
8. Place another blotter (cloth) on top of pulp
9. Roll jar or rolling pin over the cloth to smooth the pulp and get rid of excess water.
10. Carefully flip the blotter and the screen and let it dry on cloth overnight (Don't pour unused pulp down the drain).



*Pressing West: A New Page in History*  
Chapter 7

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** Answer the questions in complete sentences.

1. Name one positive and one negative affect of the absence of Gabe's mother.

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2. Name the pros and cons of Gabe taking a newspaper apprenticeship.

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3. Do you think Gabe has what it takes to be a good apprentice? Use details from the story to support your answer.

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4. Compare and contrast the *Missouri Gazette* with your newspaper.

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**Directions:** Answer the questions in complete sentences.

1. Why does the *Missouri Gazette* read that it was printed in St. Louis, Louisiana, instead of St. Louis, Missouri?

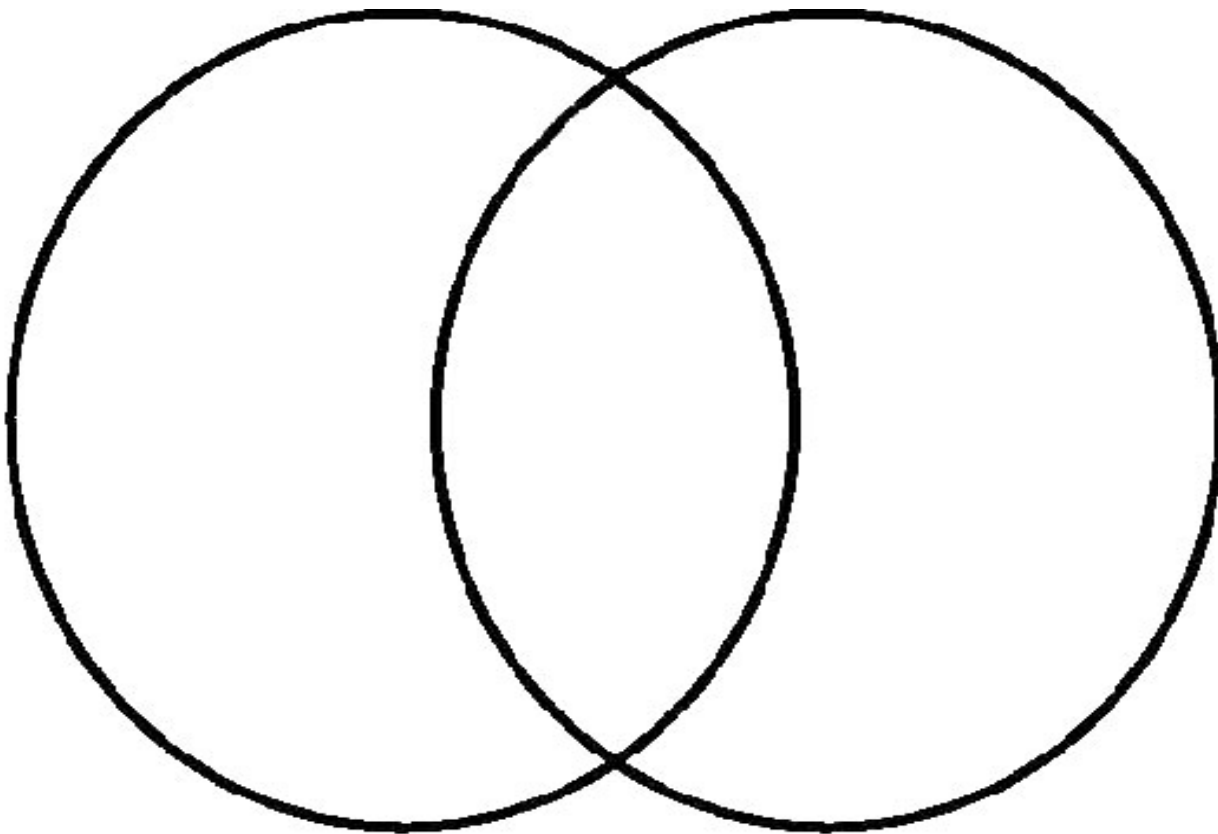
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2. Use a Venn diagram to compare and contrast the *Missouri Gazette* to your local newspaper.



3. In the July 26, 1808, issue of the *Gazette*, there is an excerpt from a letter written by an officer. Can you rewrite a sentence in modern language? \_\_\_\_\_

4. According to today's standards, in what section of the newspaper would you most likely find this type of letter? Why?

5. Examine the type style used in the *Missouri Gazette*. How are the letters different than what your newspaper typically uses? Give at least two examples.

6. The Editor's Note explains differences in this story and the known history of Joseph Charless and the *Missouri Gazette*. Based on this letter, complete the chart below giving 2 differences between "Pressing West" and what really happened based on this Editor's Note.

<b>Historical Fiction</b>	<b>Historically Accurate</b>

# **Secondary Teacher Guide**

**Created by: Jennifer Wirthwein, Gifted Education  
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Pressing West is an exciting work of historical fiction that describes the process of creating St. Louis' first newspaper, the *Missouri Gazette*. It is a story of struggle, hardship, and tenacity.

The secondary guide has four constructed response questions for each chapter, as well as an extension activity and a newspaper activity. This format will aid in comprehension and will allow the reader to make connections and extend their thoughts.



*Pressing West: A New Page in History*  
**Chapter One**

1. How would you describe Gabe Martin? Use specific examples from the text to support your answer.

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2. Why does Gabe need to work at such a young age?

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3. The author states that the rope fell, “peppering his face and sandy hair...” What does that mean? How do you know?

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4. What are your predictions for this story?

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**Extension:** What is yellow fever? Research this disease and create an informational brochure.

**In the News:** In this chapter, the city of St. Louis is excited about the creation of its first newspaper. Study your newspaper. How many sections does it have? How many pages? What types of stories can you find? What do you like best about your newspaper? With a partner, list 10 reasons why people need newspapers. Share your answers with the class.

*Pressing West: A New Page in History*  
**Chapter Two**

1. How would you describe Gabe’s mother, Josephine? Support your answer with details from the text.

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2. Why was Gabe so excited about the newspaper?

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3. What experience did Charless have in the newspaper business?

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4. The only reading materials in Gabe’s house were the Farmer’s Almanac and the Bible. What types of reading materials are in your house?

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**Extension:** What is the Farmer’s Almanac? When was it created? What is its purpose? Find the answers to these questions and share an excerpt from a Farmer’s Almanac with the class.

**In the News:** In this chapter, you’ll find the simile “like snowflakes in a blizzard.” Use your newspaper to find a simile. Cut and paste the simile on the back of this page and illustrate it.

*Pressing West: A New Page in History*  
**Chapter Three**

1. Use a graphic organizer to compare and contrast Charless and Hinkle.

2. Why do you think Gabe and Robert were such good friends?

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3. Charless describes Hinkle as a “shifty scalawag.” What does that mean? How do you know?

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4. What obstacles did Charless face in this chapter? How did they affect him?

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**Extension:** Imagine you were hired to persuade the citizens of St. Louis to buy the *Gazette*. How would you do so? Write a brief persuasive speech.

**In the News:** Subscriptions for the *Gazette* were \$3 per year. What is the cost of your newspaper? How much would it cost per year? Is there a discount for subscribers?

*Pressing West: A New Page in History*  
**Chapter Four**

1. What did Gabe learn about the printing press?

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2. What is the tone of this chapter? Support your answer with details from the text.

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3. Compare and contrast Josephine and her sister, Margaret.

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4. List the pros and cons of Gabe working for the *Gazette*.

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**Extension:** Find a picture of an early printing press. Create an informational poster, containing the picture, a title, and ten facts. Be sure to include labels and make your poster look as neat as possible.

**In the News:** Many different jobs were listed in this chapter. A newspaper is a great way to find employment. Use the newspaper to find the help wanted section. How many jobs are listed? How many of the jobs require a high school diploma, a college education, or specialized training?

*Pressing West: A New Page in History*  
**Chapter Five**

1. Explain Gabe’s responsibilities. What are your responsibilities at home, school, and in your community?

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2. In Gabe’s time, families had to wait a long time to receive letters. How has communication changed in the last 200 years? List some advantages and disadvantages to these changes?

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3. How do you think Gabe’s father would respond if he read Gabe’s journal?

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4. What do you think will happen in the next chapter? Support your answer with details from the text.

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**Extension:** Imagine you are Charless. What would you write in your journal? Create three entries based on your reading.

**In the News:** In this chapter, Charless mentioned using stories printed in other newspapers. Today, newspapers often respond to a wire service, such as the Associated Press (AP) and can print stories from all over the world. Find a story in your newspaper that was printed from a wire service.

*Pressing West: A New Page in History*  
**Chapter Six**

1. Why did Gabe say his mother would be proud of them?

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2. What is the mood of this chapter? Support your answer with specific details from the text.

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3. Gabe said he “still felt convoluted” about his mother’s return. What does this mean?

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4. Charless still had many obstacles to face. Describe the challenges he faced in this chapter.

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**Extension:** Making paper was a complex and tedious process. Now, there are many different methods. Research one of those methods and try it!

**In the News:** Newspaper headlines need to catch the reader’s attention and give clues about the story. Study the headlines in your newspaper. Imagine you were a news reporter in St. Louis in 1808. Write a headline for one of the first newspaper printings.



*Pressing West: A New Page in History*  
**Chapter Seven**

1. Why was Gabe's Dad reluctant about the apprenticeship?

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2. Why did Charless have mixed feelings about Gabe's return? If you were in the printer's position, how would you have reacted?

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3. What is the turning point in this story?

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4. What is the climax of this story?

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**Extension:** Rewrite this chapter from Charless' point of view.

**In the News:** Most newspapers feature an editorial section. This section allows readers to share ideas, challenge beliefs, and inspire change. Find the editorial section in your newspaper. Choose a letter or column to analyze. Underline the facts and circle the opinions. Now write a letter to the editor about an issue in your school or community.

*Pressing West: A New Page in History*  
**Chapter Eight**

1. What is the author's purpose in writing this story? Support your answer with specific examples.

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2. How have newspapers changed since the *Missouri Gazette*?

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3. What is the main idea of this story? How do you know?

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4. What is your favorite part of the story? Why?

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**Extension:** Now that you have learned a little about the history of St. Louis' first newspaper, and became more familiar with your newspaper, create a newspaper together as a class. Assign roles and decide what sections to include. *Pressing West* was set in the early 1800s, so your newspaper should be set in that time period, as well. Remember to include interviews, too!

**In the News:** Find an editorial cartoon in your newspaper. What is the message? Who is the intended audience? What symbols are used? Is it persuasive? Why or why not? Create an editorial cartoon that encourages people to read the newspaper.

***Pressing West: A New Page in History***  
**Classroom Extension Activities**

After reading the serial story, here are some group activities to try.

1. **Newspaper Scavenger Hunt:** Create a list of ten things for your students to find in the newspaper: a funny picture, a fraction, a number greater than 100, an adjective, a simile, a map, etc. This will encourage your students to explore different sections of the newspaper and give them a sense of appreciation for all their newspaper has to offer.
2. **Charades, anyone?:** Students can act out their favorite events or pretend to be their favorite character.
3. **Calling All Illustrators:** Allow students to illustrate their favorite scene or character.
4. **Puzzle Power:** Encourage students to create riddles, vocabulary games, or crossword puzzles to quiz their classmates.
5. **Read to me, I'll read to you:** Have your students practice oral reading fluency by reading story to younger students.
6. **Catchy Costumes:** After researching clothing trends in the 1800s, encourage students to design a costume to wear in class.
7. **5 stars:** Try your hand at writing a book review and create a "book" review for *Pressing West*.
8. **Pressing West Soundtrack:** Create a soundtrack to accompany the chapters of this book. Explain why your music choices would accentuate the text.
9. **Great Inventors:** Students can research pioneers of journalism and study the evolution of the printing press.
10. **On Broadway:** Students can turn the serial story into a screenplay and have a dramatic reenactment.
11. **The Classic Essay:** Students can practice their five paragraph essay by creating an answer to this prompt: "Many sacrifices were made to create the early newspapers. Do you feel newspapers are taken for granted? Why are newspapers valuable to society?"
12. **Take a Tour:** Contact your local newspaper and take a tour. Students will be amazed at the process and will learn to value their local newspaper.