**INTRO:** At about fourteen years of age, Lewis H. Garrard, read John C. Fremont’s *Report of the Exploring Expedition to the Rocky Mountains*, an account published in U.S. newspapers in 1843. Fremont’s descriptive account enticed Lewis to venture West by himself only three years later. Garrard wrote his own book of experiences lasting from 1846-1847 titled *Wah-to-yah and the Taos Trail*. “Wah-to-yah” is a Comanche word meaning “double peaks,” which described the mountainous Spanish Peaks found in southeastern Huerfano County, Colorado. As Lewis set off, Ceran St. Vrain, the founding partner of the Bent, St. Vrain, & Company, guided his wagon from Independence, Missouri to the trading operation along the Arkansas River, known as Bent’s Fort, in September of 1846.

This lesson on intercultural kinship explores how marriages and unions outside of one’s culture had impact on the success of one’s business. A note to add to this emphasis is the fact that William Bent, who managed Bent’s Fort, married the daughter of a prominent Cheyenne named White Thunder, the Keeper of the Arrows. Garrard does not make mention of this union, but it adds fullness to the idea that kinship ties, no matter the culture involved, are crucial to one’s livelihood in the Borderlands during this time.

**LESSON 4: INTERCULTURAL KINSHIP:** When Lewis Garrard visited Charles Bent’s home two hundred miles south of Bent’s Fort, he described meeting “Mr. Bent himself, who is married to a New Mexican lady” (179). In 1835, Charles had married Maria Ignacia Jaramillo from Taos, New Mexico, then a Mexican territory. This was Charles first marriage, but Maria’s second. Her first husband, Jose Rafael Luna was the head of customs in Taos in 1829. He died just a couple years later. Taos is about 70 miles north of Santa Fe where the southern end of the famous Santa Fe Trail ended. Maria came from a prominent family of merchants in northern New Mexico, giving Bent’s trading post in Taos an advantageous local connection.

Ceran St. Vrain, Charles’ business partner, born in St. Louis, also married a woman from New Mexico. Garrard describes Señora St. Vrain as a “dark-eyed, languidly handsome woman” who greeted him by extending one arm around his shoulder, stepping back, and giving a handshake with the words “Comme la va” [como le va – how are you?] (168). Lewis enjoyed this friendly mode of greeting and determined that it would suit ladies back in America as well. Both the Bent and St. Vrain families would have regularly exchanged these and other Mexican cultural greetings, customs, and languages in their homes and while conducting business.