

# Manifest Destiny and Its Critics

by Jonathan Burack

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Each unit in *The Historian's Apprentice* series deals with an important historical topic. It introduces students to a five-step set of practices designed to simulate the experience of being a historian and make explicit all key phases of the historian's craft.

## ***The Historian's Apprentice: A Five-Step Process***

### **1. Reflect on Your Prior Knowledge of the Topic**

Students discuss what they already know and how their prior knowledge may shape or distort the way they view the topic.

### **2. Apply Habits of Historical Thinking to the Topic**

Students build background knowledge on the basis of five habits of thinking that historians use in constructing accounts of the past.

### **3. Interpret the Relevant Primary Sources**

Students apply a set of rules for interpreting sources and assessing their relevance and usefulness.

### **4. Assess the Interpretations of Other Historians**

Students learn to read secondary sources actively, with the goal of deciding among competing interpretations based on evidence in the sources.

### **5. Interpret, Debate, and Write About the Topic Yourself**

Students apply what they have learned by constructing evidence-based interpretations of their own in a variety of ways.



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# Teacher Introduction

## ★ *Teaching the Historian's Craft*

The goal of *The Historian's Apprentice* units is to expose students in a manageable way to the complex processes by which historians practice their craft. By modeling what historians do, students will practice the full range of skills that make history the unique and uniquely valuable challenge that it is.

Modeling the historian's craft is not the same as being a historian—something few students will become. Therefore, a scaffolding is provided here to help students master historical content in a way that will be manageable and useful to them.

Historical thinking is not a simple matter of reciting one fact after another, or even of mastering a single, authoritative account. It is disciplined by evidence, and it is a quest for truth; yet, historians usually try to

clarify complex realities and make tentative judgments, not to draw final conclusions. In doing so, they wrestle with imperfect sets of evidence (the primary sources), detect multiple meanings embedded in those sources, and take into account varying interpretations by other historians. They also recognize how wide a divide separates the present from earlier times. Hence, they work hard to avoid present-mindedness and to achieve empathy with people who were vastly different from us.

In their actual practice, historians are masters of the cautious, qualified conclusion. Yet they engage, use their imaginations, and debate with vigor. It is this spirit and these habits of craft that *The Historian's Apprentice* seeks to instill in students.

## ★ *The Historian's Apprentice: Five-Steps in Four Parts*

*The Historian's Apprentice* is a five-step process. However, the materials presented here are organized into four parts. Part I deals with the first two of the five steps of the process. Each of the other three parts then deals with one step in the process. Here is a summary of the four parts into which the materials are organized:

**Teacher Introduction.** Includes suggested day-by-day sequences for using these materials, including options for using the PowerPoint presentations. One sequence is designed for younger students and supplies a page of vocabulary definitions.

**Part 1.** A student warm-up activity, an introductory essay, a handout detailing a set of habits of historical thinking, and two PowerPoint presentations (*Five Habits of Historical Thinking* and *Manifest Destiny and Its Critics*). Part 1 (including the PowerPoints) deals with *The Historian's Apprentice* Steps 1 and 2.

**Part 2.** A checklist for analyzing primary sources, several primary sources, and worksheets for analyzing them. Part 2 deals with *The Historian's Apprentice* Step 3.

**Part 3.** Two secondary source passages and two student activities analyzing those passages. Part 3 deals with *The Historian's Apprentice* Step 4.

**Part 4.** Two optional follow-up activities enabling students to write about and/or debate their own interpretations of the topic. Part 4 deals with *The Historian's Apprentice* Step 5.

## INTRODUCTION

 *Suggested Five-Day Sequence*

Below is one possible way to use this *Historian's Apprentice* unit. Tasks are listed day by day in a sequence taking five class periods, with some homework and some optional follow-up activities.

**PowerPoint Presentation: *Five Habits of Historical Thinking*.** This presentation comes with each *Historian's Apprentice* unit. If you have used it before with other units, you need not do so again. If you decide to use it, incorporate it into the **Day 1** activities. In either case, give students the “Five Habits of Historical Thinking” handout for future reference. Those “five habits” are as follows:

- History Is Not the Past Itself
- The Detective Model: Problem, Evidence, Interpretation
- Time, Change, and Continuity
- Cause and Effect
- As They Saw It: Grasping Past Points of View

**Warm-Up Activity. Homework assignment:** Students do the *Warm-Up Activity*. This activity explores students’ memories and personal experiences shaping their understanding of the topic.

**Day 1:** Discuss the *Warm-Up Activity*, then either have students read or review the “Five Habits of Historical Thinking” handout, or use the *Five Habits* PowerPoint presentation.

**Homework assignment:** Students read the background essay “Manifest Destiny: The History of an Idea.”

**Day 2:** Use the second PowerPoint presentation, *Manifest Destiny and Its Critics*, to provide an overview of the topic for this lesson. The presentation applies the Five Habits of Historical Thinking to this topic. Do the two activities embedded in the presentation.

**Homework assignment:** Students read the “Interpreting Primary Sources Checklist.” The checklist teaches a systematic way to handle sources:

- Sourcing
- Contextualizing
- Interpreting meanings
- Point of view
- Corroborating sources

**Day 3:** In class, students study some of the ten primary source documents and complete “Source Analysis” worksheets on them. They use their notes to discuss these sources. (Worksheet questions are all based on the concepts on the “Interpreting Primary Sources Checklist.”)

**Day 4:** In class, students complete the remaining “Source Analysis” worksheets and use their notes to discuss these sources. Take some time to briefly discuss the two secondary source passages students will analyze next.

**Homework assignment:** Student read these two secondary source passages.

**Day 5:** In class, students do the two “Secondary Sources” activities and discuss them. These activities ask them to analyze the two secondary source passages using four criteria:

- Clear focus on a problem or question
- Position or point of view
- Use of evidence or sources
- Awareness of alternative explanations

**Follow-Up Activities** (optional, at teacher’s discretion).

Do as preferred: the DBQ Essay Assignment and/or the Structured Debate.

## ★ Suggested Three-Day Sequence

If you have less time to devote to this lesson, here is a suggested shorter sequence. The sequence does not include the PowerPoint presentation *Five Habits of Historical Thinking*. This presentation is included with each *Historian's Apprentice* unit. If you have never used it with your class, you may want to do so before following this three-day sequence.

The three-day sequence leaves out a few activities from the five-day sequence. It also suggests that you use only seven key primary sources. However, it still walks students through the steps of the *Historian's Apprentice* approach: clarifying background knowledge, analyzing primary sources, comparing secondary sources, and debating or writing about the topic.

**Warm-Up Activity. Homework assignment:** Ask students to read or review the “Five Habits of Historical Thinking” handout and read the background essay “Manifest Destiny: The History of an Idea.”

**Day 1:** Use the PowerPoint presentation *Manifest Destiny and Its Critics*. It provides an overview of the topic for this lesson by applying the Five Habits of Historical Thinking to it. Do the two activities embedded in the presentation.

**Homework assignment:** Students read or review the “Interpreting Primary Sources Checklist.” The checklist teaches a systematic way to handle sources.

**Day 2:** In class, students study some of the ten primary source documents and complete “Source Analysis” worksheets on them. They then use their notes to discuss these sources. Documents 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, and 9 are suggested.

You may wish to make your own choices of primary sources. Use your judgment in deciding how many of them your students can effectively analyze in a single class period.

**Homework assignment:** Student read the two secondary source passages.

**Day 3:** In class, students do the two “Secondary Sources” activities and discuss them. These activities ask them to analyze the two secondary source passages using four criteria.

**Follow-Up Activities** (optional, at teacher's discretion):

Do as preferred: the DBQ Essay Assignment and/or the Structured Debate.

## INTRODUCTION

 *Suggestions for Use with Younger Students*

For younger students, parts of this lesson may prove challenging. If you feel your students need a somewhat more manageable path through the material, see the suggested sequence below.

If you want to use the *Five Habits of Historical Thinking* PowerPoint presentation, this sequence takes four class periods. If you do not use this PowerPoint, you can combine **Day 1** and **Day 2** and keep the sequence to just three days. We suggest using six primary sources only. The ones listed for **Day 3** are less demanding in terms of vocabulary and conceptual complexity. For **Day 4**, we provide some simpler DBQs for the follow-up activities.

**Vocabulary:** A list of vocabulary terms in the sources and the introductory essay is provided on page 7 of this booklet. You may wish to hand this sheet out as a reading reference, you could make flashcards out of some of the terms, or you might ask each of several small groups to use the vocabulary sheet to explain terms found in one source to the rest of the class.

**SUGGESTED FOUR-DAY SEQUENCE**

**Warm-Up Activity. Homework assignment:** Students do the Warm-Up Activity. This activity explores students' memories and personal experiences shaping their understanding of the topic.

**Day 1:** Discuss the Warm-Up Activity. Show the *Five Habits of Historical Thinking* PowerPoint presentation (unless you have used it before and/or you do not think it is needed now). If you do not use this PowerPoint presentation, give students the "Five Habits of Historical Thinking" handout and discuss it with them.

**Homework assignment:** Ask students to read the background essay "Manifest Destiny: The History of an Idea."

**Day 2:** Use the PowerPoint presentation *Manifest Destiny and Its Critics*. This introduces the topic for the lesson by applying the Five Habits of Historical Thinking to it. Do the two activities embedded in the presentation.

**Homework assignment:** Students read or review the "Interpreting Primary Sources Checklist." The checklist offers a systematic way to handle sources.

**Day 3:** Discuss the "Interpreting Primary Sources Checklist" and talk through one primary source document in order to illustrate the meaning of the concepts on the checklist. Next, have students complete "Source Analysis" worksheets after studying primary source documents 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, and 9.

**Homework assignment:** Students read the two secondary source passages.

**Day 4:** Students do *only* "Secondary Sources: Activity 2" and discuss it. This activity asks them to choose the two primary sources that best back up each secondary source passage.

**Follow-Up Activities** (optional, at teacher's discretion):

Do as preferred: the DBQ Essay Assignment and/or the Structured Debate.

Here are some alternative DBQs tailored to the six primary sources recommended here:

**"Manifest Destiny was just an excuse by the slave states to expand slavery and shore up their power in American society in general." Explain why you do or do not agree with this statement.**

**"U.S. settlement would have rolled all the way to the Pacific no matter what. With or without the ideal of Manifest Destiny, nothing could have stopped the settlers." Explain why you do or do not agree with this statement.**

## Vocabulary: The Introductory Essay

- **diplomacy:** The art of conducting talks or negotiations between countries
- **Second Great Awakening:** A broad religious revival movement in the first half of the 19th century in the U.S.
- **inevitable:** Unavoidable or unstoppable
- **justification:** A reason for something, or a defense of some action taken
- **ordained:** In this case, something destined to occur or ordered to occur
- **romantic:** In this case, describes an emotional and idealized view of some action or situation

## Vocabulary: The Primary Sources

- **ascend:** To rise or go upward
- **annexation:** In this case, the act of attaching or taking control over some land
- **beneficent:** Good
- **derived:** Taken from some source
- **emigrant:** Someone who leaves his own land to move to another
- **enjoin:** To prohibit some action, usually through court order
- **jurisdiction:** The area over which an official authority has control, or the extent of that control
- **Providence:** In this case, the idea of God or some divine presence watching over and directing human affairs
- **pecuniary:** Having to do with money
- **receptacle:** A container
- **slough off:** To shed or cast off
- **unsullied:** Pure, uncontaminated

## Vocabulary: The Secondary Sources

- **adhering:** Remaining attached to something, clinging to something
- **categorize:** Classify or group under broader headings
- **colluding:** Acting together in secret
- **hierarchies:** Systems that rank people or things in order, one above the next
- **indigenous:** Native to an area
- **infiltrating:** Moving into something or some area, often slowly or secretly
- **subjugation:** The act of bringing under control or conquering
- **validate:** To confirm or back up something; to provide official sanction for something
- **perspective:** A mental point of view or outlook on something
- **terminus:** The end or limit of something

## INTRODUCTION

## Part 1: Manifest Destiny—Providing the Context

**Note to the teacher:** The next pages provide materials meant to help students develop a clear picture of Manifest Destiny. The materials also seek to teach students the Five Habits of Historical Thinking.

This section includes the following:

- **PowerPoint presentation: The Five Habits of Historical Thinking**

This presentation illustrates five habits of thought or modes of analysis that guide historians as they construct their secondary accounts of a topic. These Five Habits are not about skills used in analyzing primary sources. (Those are dealt with more explicitly in a handout in the next section.) These Five Habits are meant to help students see history as a way of thinking, not as the memorizing of disparate facts and pre-digested conclusions. The PowerPoint uses several historical episodes as examples to illustrate the Five Habits. In two places, it pauses to ask students to do a simple activity applying one of the habits to some of their own life experiences.

If you have used this PowerPoint with other *Historian's Apprentice* units, you may not need to use it again here.

- **Handout: “The Five Habits of Historical Thinking”**

This handout supplements the PowerPoint presentation. It is meant as a reference for students to use as needed. If you have used other *Historian's Apprentice* units, your students may only need to review this handout quickly.

- **Warm-Up Activity**

A simple exercise designed to help you see what students know about Manifest Destiny, what confuses them, or what ideas they may have absorbed about these men from popular culture, friends and family, etc. The goal is to alert them to their need to gain a clearer idea of the past and be critical of what they think they already know.

- **Introductory essay: “Manifest Destiny: The History of an Idea.”**

The essay provides enough basic background information on the topic to enable students to assess primary sources and conflicting secondary source interpretations. At the end of the essay, students get some points to keep in mind about the nature of the sources they will examine and the conflicting secondary source interpretations they will debate.

- **PowerPoint presentation: *Manifest Destiny and Its Critics*.**

This PowerPoint presentation reviews the topic for the lesson and shows how the Five Habits of Historical Thinking can be applied to a clearer understanding of it. At two points, the presentation calls for a pause and prompts students to discuss some aspects of their prior knowledge of the topic. The proposed sequences suggest using this PowerPoint presentation *after* assigning the introductory essay, but you may prefer to reverse this order.

# Warm-Up Activity

## *What Do You Know About Manifest Destiny?*

This lesson deals with the concept of Manifest Destiny. Whenever you start to learn something about a time in history, it helps to think first of what you already know about it, or think you know. You probably have impressions, or you may have read or heard things about it already. Some of what you know may be accurate. You need to be ready to alter your fixed ideas about this time as you learn more about it. This is what any historian would do. To do this, study this painting and take a few notes in response to the questions below it.



This painting shows Mexican soldiers evacuating Vera Cruz in 1847 after surrendering their arms to the U.S. Army, under General Winfield Scott. What do you know about the war of which this scene was a part?

What impression do you have of the Mexican War? What idea or sense of what this war was like do you get from this painting?

Have you ever heard the phrase “Manifest Destiny”? What do you think it means? What do you think the connection might be between the term “Manifest Destiny” and the Mexican War?

## ***Manifest Destiny: The History of an Idea***

In 1845, journalist John Louis O’Sullivan wrote, “Our manifest destiny is to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions.” The phrase “Manifest Destiny” soon came to sum up a view that it was inevitable and just that the United States would one day extend from the Atlantic to the Pacific, encompassing the entire continent of North America. It was the view that the United States was ordained by God or fate to spread across the continent, bringing the fruits of civilization with it everywhere. The 1840s are seen as the decade of Manifest Destiny, the turning point during which this vision of a vast United States continental empire was realized.

O’Sullivan may have coined the phrase “manifest destiny” only in 1845, but in a way the idea itself is as old as the republic, if not older. After all, the very first colonists settling in Jamestown and New England were Protestant English subjects who were the front line in a battle with Catholic Spain for control of vast new lands of the Americas. Later, during the American Revolution, many of the Founders already envisioned a new nation of vast extent. Thomas Jefferson described a growing population that would one day “cover the whole northern if not southern continent, with people speaking the same language, governed by the same forms, and by similar laws.” At first, the young nation was hemmed in on all sides by lands claimed by Spain, England, and France. However, the American spirit of independence was deeply ingrained in thousands of individual settlers who pushed westward, apparently determined not to be thwarted by any group, either European or Native American. As president, Jefferson would take a huge step in realizing his own vision of American expansion with the Louisiana Purchase of 1803.

If a sense of inevitable growth was part of the nation’s thinking from the start, why are the 1840s seen as a special time for the triumph of the spirit of Manifest Destiny?

The Louisiana Purchase of 1803 did add millions of square miles to the nation’s territory, yet even then, many Americans still regarded the Rocky Mountains as a likely barrier to any future expansion. Moreover, Spain, Britain, and even Russia in the far west still made land claims that stood in the way of U.S.

expansion. The many powerful Native American tribes and nations still populating and controlling large areas both east and west of the Mississippi River also posed an obstacle to expansion.

Starting with the War of 1812, however, a greater feeling began to set in that continent-wide expansion was a real possibility. That war with Great Britain may not have resolved many differences, but it did give Americans a huge boost in confidence. Several factors fueled a growing sense of patriotic pride and a heady feeling that the U.S. would become master of the continent. The early stages of industrial development had begun. Reports from explorers stirred interest in the western lands. Political democracy was expanding. The Second Great Awakening fostered a new spirit of reform, missionary zeal, and sense of perfectibility. All these factors convinced Americans that they were destined to play a unique role on the stage of history. A less easily romanticized factor was the equally relentless drive to spread slavery and cotton farming ever farther westward. The very survival of slavery seemed to many Southerners to depend on continually expanding the number of states committed to defending it.

These general trends still clashed with several key obstacles. For one thing, a newly independent Mexico stood squarely in the way of expansion into the Southwest. The British still claimed part of Oregon Country in the Northwest, and even on the eastern side of the Mississippi, powerful Native American communities stood in the way of a mushrooming land hunger driving thousands of settlers ever farther west. President Andrew Jackson’s ruthless Indian removal policies solved that problem in the 1830s, at a horrendous cost. Creeks, Choctaws, Cherokees, and other powerful tribes were forced hundreds or thousands of miles to homelands across the Mississippi River in Indian Territory (what is today Oklahoma). Death tolls on these forced marches were horrifying. In his defense, Jackson claimed that masses of land-hungry settlers would in the end flood onto Indian lands and destroy native ways of life anyway. Whatever the truth of that claim, the removal policies were a tragic aspect of Manifest Destiny that the supporters of the concept rarely acknowledged as such.

The final factor standing in the way of Manifest Destiny was Mexico and its refusal to agree to grant Texas independence or sell California to the United States. When the U.S. annexed Texas in 1845, war became all but inevitable. It took that war, along with diplomacy with the British, to give expansionists the final victory and proving to them that Manifest Destiny was a reality and not merely an idea.

The concept of Manifest Destiny today is often seen negatively as a justification for ruthless conquest and empire, or more specifically, as the result of racist views about African Americans, Spanish-speaking Mexicans, and Native American tribes—a triumphal sense of the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon people over them all. That is surely one aspect of it.

However, for many at the time, it was also linked with the idealism and romantic individualism of mid-1800s America. The idea of expansion was so bound up with notions of American individual liberty it is hard to see how it could not have developed. The settlers who continually pushed westward rarely asked anyone's permission. Was Manifest Destiny a result of deep flaws that the nation could and should have overcome, or was it an inevitable part of what was both flawed and admirable about American society? Manifest Destiny's admirers and critics have long debated such questions and will undoubtedly continue to do so in the future.

## Points to Keep in Mind

### Historians' Questions

Most historians agree that the concept of Manifest Destiny swept the nation in the 1840s. They do not agree as to how deep or powerful a guiding idea it was before or after that decade. Nor do they agree about its causes, or how to judge or evaluate it.

Some see it as a purely dishonest justification for land hunger, greed, and imperial ambition. In this view, Manifest Destiny was based on a growing view of humanity as divided into superior and inferior races, with Americans as the noble Anglo-Saxon bearers of higher civilization. In this view, superior Americans were destined by God and nature to spread across the continent, replacing and/or civilizing all others in their path.

Other historians say the concept had an idealistic side. They point to those who promoted the idea of Manifest Destiny as the way to ensure the triumph of America's democratic heritage of freedom.

Along with this argument, historians also argue about how much choice the government had to either foster or resist Manifest Destiny and the expansion it justified. Did America's very freedom make such expansion inevitable as settlers simply headed west on their own? These and many other aspects of the concept are still debated today.

### The Primary Source Evidence

For this lesson, you will study ten primary source documents on Manifest Destiny and related topics, such as Andrew Jackson's Indian removal policies, the Mexican War, or the expansion of slave states and free states. Together, these sources will give you evidence to help you better understand and evaluate the concept of Manifest Destiny. They will also enable you to make some informed judgments of your own about what two historians say about this decade.

### Secondary Source Interpretations

After studying and discussing the primary sources, you will read two short passages from two books that deal with the place of Manifest Destiny in the nation's history. The two historians who wrote these passages agree about most of the facts, but they make different overall judgments about the causes of Manifest Destiny. You will use your own background knowledge and your ideas about the primary sources as you think about and answer some questions about the views of these two historians.

## Five Habits of Historical Thinking

History is not just a chronicle of one fact after another. It is a meaningful story, or an account of what happened and why. It is written to address questions or problems historians pose. This checklist describes key habits of thinking that historians adopt as they interpret primary sources and create their own accounts of the past.

### *History Is Not the Past Itself*

When we learn history, we learn a story about the past, not the past itself. No matter how certain an account of the past seems, it is only one account, not the entire story. The “entire story” is gone. That is, the past itself no longer exists. Only some records of events remain, and they are never complete. Hence, it is important to see all judgments and conclusions about the past as tentative or uncertain. Avoid looking for hard-and-fast “lessons” from the past. The value of history is in a way the opposite of such a search for quick answers. That is, its value is in teaching us to live with uncertainty and see even our present as complex, unfinished, open-ended.

### *The Detective Model: Problem, Evidence, Interpretation*

Historians can’t observe the past directly. They must use evidence, just as a detective tries to reconstruct a crime based on clues left behind. In the historian’s case, primary sources are the evidence—letters, official documents, maps, photos, newspaper articles, artifacts, and all other traces from past times. Like a detective, a historian defines a very specific problem to solve, one for which evidence does exist. Asking clear, meaningful questions is a key to writing good history. Evidence is always incomplete. It’s not always easy to separate fact from opinion in it, or to tell what is important from what is not. Historians try to do this, but they must stay cautious about their conclusions and open to other interpretations of the same evidence.

### *Time, Change, and Continuity*

History is about the flow of events over time, yet it is not just one fact after another. It seeks to understand this flow of events as a pattern. In that pattern, some things change while others hold steady over time. You need to see history as a dynamic interplay of both change and continuity together. Only by doing this can you see how the past has evolved into the present—and why the present carries with it many traces or links to the past.

### *Cause and Effect*

Along with seeing patterns of change and continuity over time, historians seek to explain that change. In doing this, they know that no single factor causes change. Many factors interact. Unique, remarkable and creative individual actions and plans are one factor, but individual plans have unintended outcomes, and these shape events in unexpected ways. Moreover, individuals do not always act rationally or with full knowledge of what they are doing. Finally, geography, technology, economics, cultural traditions, and ideas all affect what groups and individuals do.

### *As They Saw It: Grasping Past Points of View*

Above all, thinking like a historian means trying hard to see how people in the past thought and felt. This is not easy. As one historian put it, the past is “another country” in which people felt and thought differently, often very differently from the way we do now. Avoiding “present-mindedness” is therefore a key task for historians. Also, since the past includes various groups in conflict, historians must learn to empathize with many diverse cultures and subgroups to see how they differ and what they share in common.

## Part 2: Analyzing the Primary Sources

**Note to the teacher:** The next pages provide the primary sources for this lesson. We suggest you give these to students after they read the background essay, after they review the *Five Habits of Historical Thinking* handout, and after they watch and discuss the PowerPoint presentation for the lesson.

This section includes the following:

- **Handout: “Interpreting Primary Sources Checklist”**

Give copies of this handout to students and ask them to refer to it when analyzing any primary source.

- **Ten Primary Source Documents**

The Documents are as follows:

- Document 1. An 1839 article by John Louis O’Sullivan
- Document 2. An 1856 campaign poster for John C. Fremont
- Document 3. Andrew Jackson on his Indian removal policy, 1830
- Document 4. An Andrew Jackson proclamation on public lands, 1830
- Document 5. “We’ll Conquer All Before Us,” an 1846 song
- Document 6. J. H. Ingraham on the spread of cotton culture in Mississippi
- Document 7. O’Sullivan coins the phrase “Manifest Destiny,” 1845
- Document 8. Cartoon on the Mexican War and the Whig candidate of 1848
- Document 9. President Polk on Oregon territory, 1845
- Document 10. Illustration of settlers pouring into Oklahoma, 1889

- **Ten “Source Analysis” Worksheets for Analyzing the Primary Sources**

Each worksheet asks students to take notes on one source. The prompts along the side match the five categories in the “Interpreting Primary Sources Checklist.” Not every category is used in each worksheet, only those that seem most relevant to a full analysis of that source.

You may want students to analyze all of the sources. However, if time does not allow this, use those that seem most useful for your own instructional purposes.

Students can use the notes on the “Source Analysis” worksheets in discussions, as help in analyzing the two secondary sources in the next part of this lesson, and in follow-up debates, DBQs, and other activities.

## Interpreting Primary Sources Checklist

Primary sources are the evidence historians use to reach conclusions and write their accounts of the past. Sources rarely have one obvious, easily grasped meaning. To interpret them fully, historians use several strategies. This checklist describes some of the most important of those strategies. Read the checklist through and use it to guide you whenever you need to analyze and interpret a primary source.

### *Sourcing*

Think about a primary source's author or creator, how and why the primary source document was created, and where it appeared. Also, think about the audience it was intended for and what its purpose was. You may not always find much information about these things, but whatever you can learn will help you better understand the source. In particular, it may suggest the source's point of view or bias, since the author's background and intended audience often shape his or her ideas and way of expressing them.

### *Contextualizing*

"Context" refers to the time and place of which the primary source is a part. In history, facts do not exist separately from one another. They get their meaning from the way they fit into a broader pattern. The more you know about that broader pattern, or context, the more you will be able to understand about the source and its significance.

### *Interpreting Meanings*

It is rare for a source's full meaning to be completely obvious. You must read a written source closely, paying attention to its language and tone as well as to what it implies or merely hints at. With a visual source, all kinds of meaning may be suggested by the way it is designed, and by such things as shading, camera angle, use of emotional symbols or scenes, etc. The more you pay attention to all the details, the more you can learn from a source.

### *Point of View*

Every source is written or created by someone with a purpose, an intended audience, and a point of view or bias. Even a dry table of numbers was created for some reason, to stress some things and not others, to make a point of some sort. At times, you can tell a point of view simply by sourcing the document. Knowing an author was a Democrat or a Republican, for example, will alert you to a likely point of view. In the end, however, only a close reading of the text will make you aware of point of view. Keep in mind that even a heavily biased source can still give you useful evidence of what some people in a past time thought. However, you need to take the bias into account in judging how reliable the source's own claims really are.

### *Corroborating Sources*

No one source tells the whole story. Moreover, no one source is completely reliable. To make reasonable judgments about an event in the past, you must compare sources to find points of agreement and disagreement. Even when there are big differences, both sources may be useful. However, the differences will also tell you something, and they may be important in helping you understand each source.

## The Primary Sources for the Lesson

### Document 1

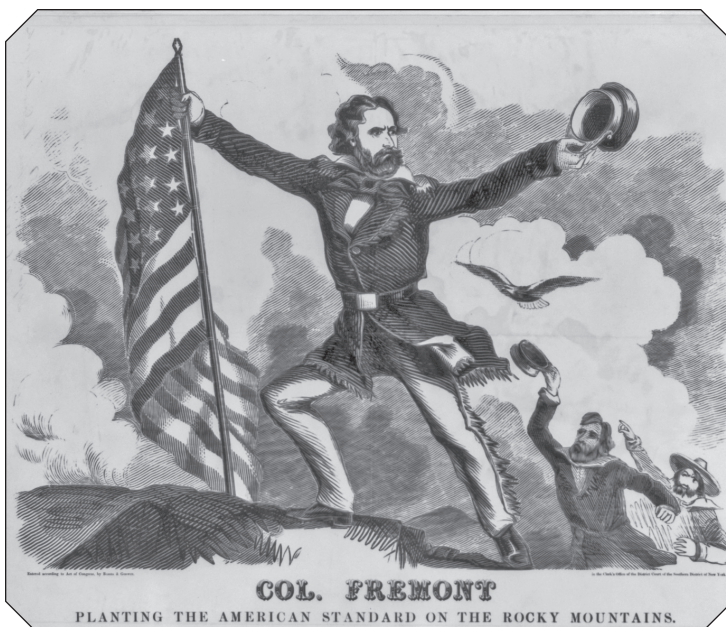
**Information on the source:** John Louis O’Sullivan, editor of *The United States Magazine and Democratic Review*, coined the phrase “manifest destiny” in 1845. Even earlier, however, he had begun expressing the idea in very similar terms, as he does in these passages from “The Great Nation of Futurity,” from *The United States Magazine and Democratic Review*, November 1839.

*The American people having derived their origin from many other nations, and the Declaration of National Independence being entirely based on the great principle of human equality, these facts demonstrate at once our disconnected position as regards any other nation; that we have, in reality, but little connection with the past history of any of them, and still less with all antiquity, its glories, or its crimes. On the contrary, our national birth was the beginning of a new history...and so far as regards the entire development of the natural rights of man, in moral, political, and national life, we may confidently assume that our country is destined to be the great nation of futurity . . .*

*We have no interest in the scenes of antiquity, only as lessons of avoidance of nearly all their examples. The expansive future is our arena, and for our history. We are entering on its untrodden space, with the truths of God in our minds, beneficent objects in our hearts, and with a clear conscience unsullied by the past. We are the nation of human progress, and who will, what can,*

*set limits to our onward march? Providence is with us, and no earthly power can. We point to the everlasting truth on the first page of our national declaration, and we proclaim to the millions of other lands, that “the gates of hell”—the powers of aristocracy and monarchy—“shall not prevail against it.”*

*The far-reaching, the boundless future will be the era of American greatness. In its magnificent domain of space and time, the nation of many nations is destined to manifest to mankind the excellence of divine principles; to establish on earth the noblest temple ever dedicated to the worship of the Most High—the Sacred and the True. Its floor shall be a hemisphere—its roof the firmament of the star-studded heavens, and its congregation an Union of many Republics, comprising hundreds of happy millions, calling, owning no man master, but governed by God’s natural and moral law of equality, the law of brotherhood—of “peace and good will amongst men.”*



### Document 2

**Information on the source:** A large woodcut campaign poster for John C. Fremont, Republican presidential contender in 1856. Fremont is shown here planting an American flag on a mountain peak. He is clad in fringed trousers and military coat and waves a visored cap in the air. Below, at right, are a bearded trapper or fellow explorer and a Mexican wearing a wide-brimmed hat. An eagle soars in the air beyond them. This scene seems designed to evoke heroic memories of Fremont’s famous exploring expeditions to the Rocky Mountains in 1842 and 1843.

## Document 3

**Information on the source:** Part of Andrew Jackson's Second Annual Message to Congress, December 6, 1830, justifying his Indian removal policy. Against strong opposition, Jackson was able to carry out this plan, which forced many of the most powerful Indian tribes and confederations to move from areas east of the Mississippi to lands set aside for them in what is now Oklahoma.

*The consequences of a speedy removal will be important to the United States, to individual States, and to the Indians themselves. The pecuniary advantages which it promises to the Government are the least of its recommendations. It puts an end to all possible danger of collision between the authorities of the General and State Governments on account of the Indians. It will place a dense and civilized population in large tracts of country now occupied by a few savage hunters. By opening the whole territory between Tennessee on the north and Louisiana on the south to the settlement of the whites it will incalculably strengthen the southwestern frontier and render the adjacent States strong enough to repel future invasions without remote aid. It will relieve the whole State of Mississippi and the western part of Alabama of Indian occupancy, and enable those States to advance rapidly in population, wealth, and power . . .*

*The tribes which occupied the countries now constituting the Eastern States were annihilated or have melted away to make room for the whites. The waves of population and civilization are rolling to the westward, and we now propose to acquire the countries occupied by the red men of the South and West by a fair exchange, and, at the expense of the United States, to send them to land where*

*their existence may be prolonged and perhaps made perpetual. Doubtless it will be painful to leave the graves of their fathers; but what do they more than our ancestors did or than our children are now doing? To better their condition in an unknown land our forefathers left all that was dear in earthly objects. Our children by thousands yearly leave the land of their birth to seek new homes in distant regions. Does Humanity weep at these painful separations from everything, animate and inanimate, with which the young heart has become entwined? Far from it. It is rather a source of joy that our country affords scope where our young population may range unconstrained in body or in mind, developing the power and facilities of man in their highest perfection. These remove hundreds and almost thousands of miles at their own expense, purchase the lands they occupy, and support themselves at their new homes from the moment of their arrival. Can it be cruel in this Government when, by events which it can not control, the Indian is made discontented in his ancient home to purchase his lands, to give him a new and extensive territory, to pay the expense of his removal, and support him a year in his new abode? How many thousands of our own people would gladly embrace the opportunity of removing to the West on such conditions!*

## Document 4

**Information on the source:** Andrew Jackson's March 30, 1830, "Proclamation on Public Lands Near Huntsville, Alabama."

*Now, therefore, I, Andrew Jackson, President of the United States, have thought proper to issue this my proclamation, commanding and strictly enjoining all persons who have unlawfully taken possession of or made any settlement on, or who now unlawfully occupy, any of the public lands within the district of lands subject to sale at Huntsville, in the State of Alabama, as aforesaid, forthwith to remove therefrom; and I do hereby further command and enjoin the marshal, or officer acting as marshal, in that State,*

*where such possession shall have been taken or settlement made, to remove, from and after the 1st day of September, 1830, all or any of the said unlawful occupants; and to effect the said service I do hereby authorize the employment of such military force as may become necessary in pursuance of the provisions of the act of Congress aforesaid, warning the offenders, moreover, that they will be prosecuted in all such other ways as the law directs.*

## Document 5

**Information on the source:** Part of the lyrics for “We’ll Conquer All Before Us,” an 1846 song by George Washington Dixon, a popular blackface minstrel.

*The Mexicans are on our soil,  
In war they wish us to embroil;  
They’ve tried their best and worst to vex us,  
By murdering our brave men in Texas.*

*Chorus*

*We’re on our way to Rio Grande,  
On our way to Rio Grande,  
On our way to Rio Grande,  
And with arms they’ll find us handy.*

*We are the boys who fear no noise,  
We’ll leave behind us all our joys,  
To punish those half savage scamps,  
Who’ve slain our brethern in their camps.*

## Document 6

**Information on the source:** J. H. Ingraham grew up in New England, but in 1830, he moved to Natchez, Mississippi. In 1835, he wrote about the region in his book *The South-West*. This short passage on the rapid spread of cotton culture is from that book.

*Cotton and negroes are the constant theme—the ever harped upon, never worn out subject of conversation among all classes. But a small portion of the broad rich lands of this thriving state is yet appropriated. Not till every acre is purchased and cultivated—not till Mississippi becomes one vast cotton field, will this mania, which has entered into the very marrow, bone and sinew of a Mississippian’s system, pass away. And not then, till the lands become exhausted and wholly unfit for farther cultivation.*

## Document 7

**Information on the source:** O’Sullivan actually first used the exact phrase “manifest destiny” in an editorial supporting annexation of Texas in the July–August 1845 edition of the *United States Magazine and Democratic Review*. In that same editorial, O’Sullivan specifically sought to answer charges that Texas was annexed solely to allow the spread of slavery and ensure its survival.

*Nor is there any just foundation for the charge that Annexation is a great pro-slavery measure—calculated to increase and perpetuate that institution . . . The greater value in Texas of the slave labor now employed in [the northern tier of Slave States], must soon produce the effect of draining off that labor southwardly, by the same unvarying law that bids water descend the slope that invites it. Every new Slave State in Texas will make at least one Free State from among those in which that institution now exists—to say nothing of those portions of Texas on which slavery cannot spring and grow—to say nothing of the far more rapid growth of new States in the free West and North-west, as these fine regions are overspread by the emigration*

*fast flowing over them from Europe, as well as from the Northern and Eastern States of the Union as it exists. On the other hand, it is undeniably much gained for the cause of the eventual voluntary abolition of slavery, that it should have been thus drained off towards the only outlet which appeared to furnish much probability of the ultimate disappearance of the negro race from our borders. The Spanish-Indian-American populations of Mexico, Central America and South America, afford the only receptacle capable of absorbing that race whenever we shall be prepared to slough it off—to emancipate it from slavery, and (simultaneously necessary) to remove it from the midst of our own.*

## Document 8

**Information on the source:** This cartoon criticizes the Whig Party's presidential candidate for 1848. Here the "available candidate" is either General Zachary Taylor or General Winfield Scott, both of whom were seeking the nomination. The skulls and sword allude to the bloody but successful Mexican War campaigns waged by both Taylor and Scott. This made them popular with many Whigs, but not with this artist. The figure is usually identified as Taylor, but may have been Scott, whose support was rising before the party's convention on June 7, 1848. Taylor won that nomination.



## Document 9

**Information on the source:** In this part of his inaugural address on March 4, 1845, President James K. Polk speaks of the need to acquire the Oregon territory.

*Nor will it become in a less degree my duty to assert and maintain by all constitutional means the right of the United States to that portion of our territory which lies beyond the Rocky Mountains. Our title to the country of the Oregon is "clear and unquestionable," and already are our people preparing to perfect that title by occupying it with their wives and children. But eighty years ago our population was confined on the west by the ridge of the Alleghanies. Within that period—within the lifetime, I might say, of some of my hearers—our people, increasing to many millions, have filled the eastern valley of the Mississippi, adventurously ascended the Missouri to its headsprings, and are already engaged in establishing the blessings of self-government in valleys of which the rivers flow to the Pacific. The world beholds the peaceful triumphs of the industry of our emigrants. To us belongs the duty of protecting them adequately wherever they may be upon our soil. The jurisdiction of our laws and the benefits of our republican institutions should be extended over them in the distant regions which they have selected for their homes.*

## Document 10

**Information on the source:** Settlers in 1889 rush into the "Unassigned Lands" in what was then the Indian Territory, on the day the government finally opened these lands up for settlement. At noon on April 22, 1889, settlers would be able to enter these lands and choose 160 acres for a homestead. The illustration is dated 1905.



## Source Analysis: Primary Source Document 1

An 1839 article by John Louis O'Sullivan.

### Contextualizing

O'Sullivan wrote the article of which this passage is a part in 1839. He actually used the specific phrase "manifest destiny" in another article in 1845. Sum up the events of those years that might add to the enthusiasm of someone who believe America was destined to expand into a huge continental nation.

### Interpreting meanings

O'Sullivan says in his first paragraph that "our national birth was the beginning of a new history." How does the rest of this paragraph explain what he means?

O'Sullivan says the nation is "entering on its untrodden space . . . with a clear conscience unsullied by the past." Why do you think he believed this? Do you think he was right to think of American society as "unsullied by the past"? Why or why not?

One historian says, "Much of O'Sullivan's forceful optimism in this article seems to rest on his view of the Declaration of Independence and its central place in national life." Can you explain?

## Source Analysis: Primary Source Document 2

An 1856 woodcut campaign poster for John C. Fremont, Republican presidential contender in 1856.

### Contextualizing

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Fremont was famous for the accounts of his exploring expeditions to the vast lands of the far west. However, by 1856, he was engaged in political pathfinding of a very different sort. Can you explain what that was and why this poster would have helped him in that effort?

### Interpreting meanings

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Notice the way Fremont is dressed, his posture and gestures, the objects in the air and on the ground around him. How do all of these details combine to create a sense of Fremont as a heroic figure?

How do all these features also help to give a sense of what the western territories were like? Does this image of Fremont and the American West support the idea of “Manifest Destiny” as you understand it? Why or why not?

### Corroborating sources

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Does this source back up O’Sullivan’s view of America as predestined to expand, as expressed in Primary Source Document 1? Why or why not?

## Source Analysis: Primary Source Document 3

Part of Andrew Jackson's Second Annual Message to Congress, December 6, 1830, justifying his Indian removal policy.

### Contextualizing

Jackson justifies Indian removal in the Southeastern states by saying it “will place a dense and civilized population in large tracts of country now occupied by a few savage hunters.” What do you know about the tribes he forced to move west of the Mississippi? Based on what you know, assess the accuracy of Jackson's description here of what removal would mean.

### Interpreting meanings

Jackson says of the tribes he wants to force out, “Doubtless it will be painful to leave the graves of their fathers; but what do they more than our ancestors did or than our children are now doing?” Do you think this is a fair comparison? Why or why not?

Jackson says that “waves of population and civilization are rolling to the westward.” Later he speaks of Indians made discontent by “events which it [the government] can not control.” What point does Jackson seem to make about westward settlement with these phrases? Do you think he is right, or is he just making excuses?

### Point of view

At a number of points, Jackson seems to express real concerns about the Native American tribes he is removing. Do you think he was sincere about this? What was his point of view about Native Americans and their cultures?

## Source Analysis: Primary Source Document 4

Andrew Jackson's March 30, 1830, "Proclamation on Public Lands Near Huntsville, Alabama."

### Contextualizing

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This proclamation was issued at a time when Jackson was preparing to remove all the Indians in this region to west of the Mississippi, and at a time when westward settlement both from Northern and Southern states was surging.

How do these facts help to understand this proclamation?

### Interpreting meanings

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How can you tell from the proclamation that Jackson's concern is about a large number of settlers, not just a few here and there?

If the concept of Manifest Destiny meant the inevitable expansion of the U.S. across the continent, who was more an agent of Manifest Destiny: Andrew Jackson, or the squatters and settlers this proclamation was meant to stop?

### Corroborating sources

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What other primary sources for this lesson back up the view of westward settlement you get from this source?

## Source Analysis: Primary Source Document 5

Part of the lyrics of “We’ll Conquer All Before Us,” an 1846 song by George Washington Dixon, a popular blackface minstrel.

### Contextualizing

The date of this song is 1846. Briefly summarize the events that year that are referred to in the parts of this song shown here.

The song claims that “the Mexicans are on our soil” seeking to embroil the U.S. in a war. Briefly explain why this claim was not accepted either by the Mexicans or even by a number of Americans, including Abraham Lincoln.

### Interpreting meanings

How would you describe the tone of this song? That is, do you think it is bellicose, angry, excited, arrogant, confident, jaunty, carefree, etc.? What spirit seems to be behind it?

### Point of view

What bias or point of view is expressed by the song when it refers to the Mexicans as “those half savage scamps”? Why do you think the Americans who liked this song viewed Mexicans this way?

Some who fought for Texas’s independence in 1835–36 might have said that the Mexicans they fought deserved to be described as they are in this song. Can you explain why they would have felt this way? Did they have a point? Why or why not?

## Source Analysis: Primary Source Document 6

A short passage on the rapid spread of cotton culture, from J. H. Ingraham's 1835 book *The South-West*.

### Contextualizing

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Indian removal in Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and elsewhere took place around the time when Ingraham wrote his book. How does what he describes help you to understand this historical context, and how does this historical context help add to your understanding of this passage?

Ingraham speaks of a “mania” to expand cotton and slavery across the state. From what you know about cotton culture in these decades, can you explain why its spread could appear to be a mania?

### Interpreting meanings

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Ingraham says that “not till Mississippi becomes one vast cotton field, will this mania...pass away.” Do you think this attitude might be related to the idea of Manifest Destiny in any way? Could this mean that support for Manifest Destiny and for slavery were linked to some degree? Why or why not?

### Point of view

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Does Ingraham seem happy about the relentless spread of “cotton and negroes,” as he puts it? Does he seem unhappy about it, or is he simply describing it without a strong point of view?

## Source Analysis: Primary Source Document 7

The 1845 editorial in which O'Sullivan coined the phrase "Manifest Destiny." In this passage, he argues that Texas was not annexed solely to allow the spread of slavery.

### Contextualizing

This editorial was written in support of the move to annex Texas in 1845. Why might a writer in favor of annexation have felt a need to reassure readers about the slavery issue, as O'Sullivan does here?

### Interpreting meanings

O'Sullivan was sure that annexing Texas would not increase the power of the proslavery states in the federal government. His reasoning was based on the hope for a "draining off" of slave labor southward. Explain what he meant by this. How realistic do you think his hope was?

### Point of view

Why do you think O'Sullivan saw it as "simultaneously necessary" to emancipate the slaves and remove them from the nation? What does this reveal about his attitude toward racial differences?

## Source Analysis: Primary Source Document 8

A political cartoon criticizing the Whig Party's presidential candidate for 1848.

### Sourcing

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This cartoon appeared during the heat of a presidential election campaign. How might that help to explain the dramatic style it uses to express its critical opinion of the Whig's "available candidate"?

### Contextualizing

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The context for this cartoon is the recently completed Mexican War. Briefly explain the connection between Zachary Taylor or Winfield Scott (the figure in the cartoon might be either one) and the Mexican War.

In 1848, Taylor and Scott both sought the Whig nomination for president. The Democrats, however, had no reason to complain about their actions in the Mexican War. Can you explain?

### Interpreting meanings

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This cartoon expresses a bitterly angry criticism of both the Whigs and the U.S. prosecution of the Mexican War. It does this by sharply contrasting key objects in the image. Can you explain what the contrast is? Why is this contrast effective in expressing anger both about the Mexican War and the Whig candidate?

## Source Analysis: Primary Source Document 9

Part of President James K. Polk's inaugural address, March 4, 1845.

### Contextualizing

Polk says the U.S. claim to the Oregon territory is "clear and unquestionable," yet it still was being questioned. Who else was still claiming title to all or parts of this territory?

Polk justifies his claim in part by saying that "already are our people preparing to perfect that title by occupying it with their wives and children." What do you know about settlers and the use of the Oregon Trail? How does this knowledge help to understand what Polk is referring to here?

### Interpreting meanings

In what ways does this statement fit with or seem similar to the views expressed by John Louis O'Sullivan in Primary Source Document 1? Choose two or three sentences or phrases that seem closest in thought and feeling to O'Sullivan's views in that document. Explain your choices.

### Point of view

Polk says, "The world beholds the peaceful triumphs of the industry of our emigrants." Do you think this statement is just Polk's biased and inaccurate point of view? Do you think it is both partly true and partly false, or do you think it is largely true and accurate? Explain your answer.

## Source Analysis: Primary Source Document 10

An illustration of settlers pouring into Oklahoma, 1889.

### Contextualizing

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The “Boomer movement” in the late 1800s was an effort by settlers to move onto certain so-called “Unassigned Lands” in what was then Indian Territory. Can you explain why this area was called Indian Territory, and name the state it finally became?

Before the Unassigned Lands were opened to settlement, several Boomer attempts to move onto them were actually halted by U.S. troops. Why do you think the federal government at first tried to stop the Boomers?

### Interpreting meanings

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What ideas about the Boomer movement does this depiction of it suggest to you? How reliable do you think this illustration is of the events on April 22, 1889?

### Corroborating sources

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What other primary sources for this lesson seem to fit with this one in the impression they give of the westward movement of settlers in the 19th century? How do these sources help you better understand the appeal of the concept of Manifest Destiny?

## Part 3: Analyzing the Secondary Sources

**Note to the teacher:** This next section includes passages from two secondary source accounts dealing with Manifest Destiny, along with two activities on these sources. We suggest you first discuss the brief comment “Analyzing Secondary Sources” just above the first of the two secondary sources. Discuss the four criteria the first activity asks students to use in analyzing each secondary source. These criteria focus students on the nature of historical accounts as 1) problem-centered, 2) based on evidence, 3) influenced by point of view and not purely neutral, and 4) tentative or aware of alternative explanations.

Specifically, this section includes the following:

- **Two secondary source passages**

Give copies of these passages to students to read, either in class or as homework. The two passages are from *Throes of Democracy: The American Civil War Era, 1829–1877*, by Walter A. McDougall (New York: HarperCollins, 2008), and *Manifest Destiny*, by David S. Heidler and Jeanne T. Heidler (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2003).

- **Two student activities**

Activity 1

Students analyze the two passage taking notes on the following questions:

- How clearly does the account focus on a problem or question?
- Does it reveal a position or express a point of view?
- How well does it base its case on primary source evidence?
- How aware is it of alternative explanations or points of view?

Activity 2

In pairs, students select two of the primary sources for the lesson that best support each author’s claims in the secondary source passages. Students discuss their choices with the class.

## The Secondary Sources for the Lesson

### Analyzing Secondary Sources

Historians write secondary source accounts of the past after studying primary source documents like the ones you have studied on Manifest Destiny. However, they normally select documents from among a great many others, and they stress some aspects of the story but not others. In doing this, historians are guided by the questions they ask about the topic. Their selection of sources and their focus are also influenced by their own aims, bias, or point of view. No account of the past is perfectly neutral. In reading a secondary source, you should pay to what it includes, what it leaves out, what conclusions it reaches, and how aware it is of alternative interpretations.

\* \* \* \*

### Secondary Source 1

**Information on the source:** The passage in the box below is an excerpt from *Throes of Democracy: The American Civil War Era, 1829–1877*, by Walter A. McDougall (New York: HarperCollins, 2008), p. 232.

If expansionist ambitions and argument were as old as the republic, why did the mania of Manifest Destiny sweep the nation in the 1840s rather than before or after? One answer was the near disappearance of doubt concerning the possibility of a continental republic. Even the expansionist Thomas Hart Benson of Missouri had once thought the Rocky Mountains the abode of “the fabled God, Terminus,” and some New Englanders thought even the Great Plains too remote to govern. The westward march of constitutional government, supported by steamboats, railroads, and telegraphs, dissolved such fears by the 1840s. A second answer was

that American trappers, farmers, ranchers, planters, loggers, merchants, whalers, and missionaries were already infiltrating the Great North Woods, Great Plains, Rockies and Pacific Rim. By 1840, the federal government had little choice but to extend its protection over them. A third answer, the one that caused Manifest Destiny to melt into “manifest design,” was a fear that Britain and France were colluding in a sort of “containment policy” against the upstart Yankees. This made expansion a matter of urgency. A fourth answer was simply that Democrats beat the expansionist drum as an electoral ploy in 1844.

## The Secondary Sources for the Lesson

### Secondary Source 2

**Information on the source:** The passage in the box below is an excerpt from *Manifest Destiny*, by David S. Heidler and Jeanne T. Heidler (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2003), p. 24.

From another perspective, evolving concepts of racial uniqueness clearly figured into the rhetoric and meaning of Manifest Destiny. Reginald Horsman has shown that assigning hierarchies according to racial identity existed as early as the eighteenth century. By the mid-1800s, both science and philosophy categorized the different races almost as different species. Americans were adhering to historical trends when they justified expansion with claims of Anglo-Saxon racial superiority.

Believing that indigenous people (Indians or blacks) or inhabitants of neighboring countries (Mexicans) were fated by the natural order for subjugation, Americans without guilt could justify perpetuating slavery, acquiring land for agricultural increase, and securing markets for commercial growth. Manifest Destiny could thus validate the interests of empire without acknowledging the corruption of imperialism.

## The Secondary Sources: Activity 1

In this exercise, you read two short passages from much longer books dealing with Manifest Destiny. For each secondary source, take notes on the following four questions (you may want to underline phrases or sentences in the passages that you think back up your notes):

1. How clearly does this account focus on a problem or question? What do you think that problem or question is? Sum it up in your own words here.

*Throes of Democracy*, McDougall

*Manifest Destiny*, Heidler and Heidler

2. Does the secondary source take a position or express a point of view about Manifest Destiny? If so, briefly state that point of view or quote an example of it.

*Throes of Democracy*, McDougall

*Manifest Destiny*, Heidler and Heidler

3. How well does the secondary source seem to base its case on primary source evidence? Take notes about any specific examples, if you can identify them.

*Throes of Democracy*, McDougall

*Manifest Destiny*, Heidler and Heidler

4. Does the secondary source seem aware of alternative explanations or points of view about this topic? Underline points in the passage where you see this.

*Throes of Democracy*, McDougall

*Manifest Destiny*, Heidler and Heidler

**In pairs, discuss your notes for this activity.**

## The Secondary Sources: Activity 2

This activity is based on the passages from *Throes of Democracy: The American Civil War Era, 1829–1877*, by Walter A. McDougall, and *Manifest Destiny*, by David S. Heidler and Jeanne T. Heidler. From the primary sources for this lesson, choose two that you think best support each author's point of view about Manifest Destiny. With the rest of the class, discuss the two secondary source passages and defend the choice of sources you have made.

1. From this lesson, choose two primary sources that best back up McDougall's interpretation of Manifest Destiny. List those sources here and briefly explain why you chose them.
2. From this lesson, choose two primary sources that best back up Heidler and Heidler's interpretation of Manifest Destiny. List those sources here and briefly explain why you chose them.
3. Does your textbook include a passage describing or summing up the idea of Manifest Destiny? If so, with which of the two secondary sources (McDougall, or Heidler and Heidler) does it seem to agree most? What one or two primary sources from this lesson would you add to this textbook passage to improve it?

**Discuss your choices with the rest of the class.**

## Part 4: Follow-Up Options

**Note to the teacher:** At this point, students have completed the key tasks of *The Historian's Apprentice* program. They have examined their own prior understandings and acquired background knowledge on the topic. They have analyzed and debated a set of primary sources. They have considered secondary source accounts of the topic. This section includes two suggested follow-up activities. Neither of these is a required part of the lesson. They do not have to be undertaken right away. However, we do strongly recommend that you find some way to do what these options provide for. They give students a way to write or debate in order to express their ideas and arrive at their own interpretations of the topic.

Two suggested follow-up activities are included here:

- **Document-Based Questions**

Four document-based questions are provided. Choose one and follow the guidelines provided for writing a typical DBQ essay.

- **A Structured Debate**

The aim of this debate format is not so much to teach students to win a debate, but to learn to listen and learn, as well as speak up and defend a position. The goal is a more interactive and more civil debating process.

## Document-Based Questions

Document-based questions (DBQs) are essay questions you must answer by using your own background knowledge and a set of primary sources on that topic. Below are four DBQs on Manifest Destiny. Use the sources for this lesson and everything you have learned from it to write a short essay answer to one of these questions.

### Suggested DBQs

**“Manifest Destiny was a completely dishonest justification for imperial expansion. It rested above all on a racist contempt for anyone who was not a white Anglo-Saxon Protestant member of a supposedly superior civilization.” Assess the validity of this statement (that is, explain why you do or do not agree with it).**

**Was government the key active agent fostering a spirit of Manifest Destiny, or did government merely go along with and seek to manage a spirit of Manifest Destiny that the public was determined to follow anyway?**

**“O’Sullivan was right. The slavery issue had nothing to do with the spirit of Manifest Destiny. Oregon was as crucial as Texas to the expansionists inspired with this spirit.” Assess the validity of this statement (that is, explain why you do or do not agree with it).**

**Assess the following as factors fueling the spirit of Manifest Destiny: Land hunger, fear of foreign powers, ethnocentric prejudice, democratic idealism.**

### Suggested Guidelines for Writing a DBQ Essay

- **Planning and thinking through the essay**

Consider the question carefully. Think about how to answer it so as to address each part of it. Do not ignore any detail in the question. Pay attention to the question’s form (cause-and-effect, compare-and-contrast, assess the validity, etc.). This form will often give you clues as to how best to organize each part of your essay.

- **Thesis statement and introductory paragraph**

The thesis statement is a clear statement of what you hope to prove in your essay. It must address *all* parts of the DBQ, it must make a claim you can back up with the sources, and it should be specific enough to help you organize the rest of your essay.

- **Using evidence effectively**

Use the notes on your “Source Analysis” activity sheets to organize your thoughts about these primary sources. In citing a source, use it to support key points or illustrate major themes. Do not simply list a source in order to get it into the essay somehow. If any sources do *not* support your thesis, you should still try to use them. Your essay may be more convincing if you qualify your thesis so as to account for these other sources.

- **Linking ideas explicitly**

After your introduction, your internal paragraphs should make your argument in a logical or clear way. Each paragraph should be built around one key supporting idea and details that back up that idea. Use transition phrase such as “before,” “next,” “then,” or “on the one hand . . . but on the other hand,” to help readers follow the thread of your argument.

- **Wrapping it up**

Don’t add new details about sources in your final paragraph. State a conclusion that refers back to your thesis statement by showing how the evidence has backed it up. If possible, look for nice turns of phrase to end on a dramatic note.

## A Structured Debate

**Small-group activity:** Using a version of the Structured Academic Controversy model, debate alternate interpretations of this lesson's topic. The goal of this method is not so much to win a debate as to learn to collaborate in clarifying your interpretations to one another. In doing this, your goal should be to see that it is possible for reasonable people to hold differing views, even when finding the "one right answer" is not possible.

Use all their notes from previous activities in this lesson. Here are the rules for this debate:

1. Organize a team of four or six students. Choose a debate topic based on the lesson *Manifest Destiny and Its Critics*.

(You may wish to use one of the DBQs suggested for the Document-Based Questions activity for this lesson, or you may want to define the debate topic in a different way.)

2. Split your team into two sub-groups. Each sub-group should study the materials for this lesson and rehearse its case. One sub-group then present its case to the other. That other sub-group must repeat the case back to the first sub-group's satisfaction.
3. The two sub-groups then switch roles and repeat step 2
4. Your team either reaches a consensus which it explains to the entire class, or it explains where the key differences between the sub-groups lie

## Answers to “Source Analysis” Activities

### Source Analysis: Document 1

*Contextualizing:* Rapid settlement in the Oregon territory, the annexation of Texas, etc.

*Interpreting meanings:* The focus is on how unique America is, how unburdened by past history, etc.

Answers will vary and should be discussed.

Much of the passage rests on the phrases in the Declaration about equality and rights, seeing this as making America a nation based on ideas and not on past traditions, aristocratic elites, monarchs, etc.

### Source Analysis: Document 2

*Contextualizing:* He became the first presidential candidate of the newly formed Republican Party, representing those opposed to extending slavery into the territories and new states.

*Interpreting meanings:* Answers will vary but should make specific reference to features in the image.

Answers here might vary, but should focus on the rugged and empty environment, almost waiting to be conquered and tamed, etc.

*Corroborating sources:* Answers will vary and should be discussed.

### Source Analysis: Document 3

*Contextualizing:* These were known as the Five Civilized Tribes. They included the Cherokee who engaged in agriculture and had adopted many European ways, a written alphabet, a formal government, etc. In this sense, Jackson’s description could be seen as wildly inaccurate.

*Interpreting meanings:* Answers will vary but should deal with the differences between immigrants entering America voluntarily and Indians forced to leave lands without choosing to.

He is suggesting westward settlement is unstoppable by anyone, including the government.

*Point of view:* Answers will vary and should be discussed.

### Source Analysis: Document 4

*Contextualizing:* They make clear how intense the drive was to open up lands to settlement; they suggest Jackson really did want this land for settlers, but did not want the process to be uncontrolled.

*Interpreting meanings:* His readiness to use military force to remove these settlers.

Answers will vary to this question and should be discussed.

*Corroborating sources:* Documents 10 is especially relevant, as might be several others. These all should be discussed.

### Source Analysis: Document 5

*Contextualizing:* After annexing Mexico, war broke out with Mexico in 1846. The song refers to the events that year in which Mexican and U.S. forces clashed, leading to the declaration of war.

The Polk administration claimed the Texas boundary went to the Rio Grande, farther south than the Nueces River boundary claimed by Mexico. The initial clash took place in that contested region and so some claimed U.S. troops were on Mexican soil, not Mexican soldiers on U.S. soil.

*Interpreting meanings:* Answers will vary. Use a discussion about this to focus on the broader issue of the American public’s confidence and self-assurance and its possible sources at this time.

*Point of view:* The idea of people divided by racial characteristics was strengthening in these years due in part to the arguments over slavery, etc.

Mexican brutality at the Alamo and the Goliad massacre had united Texans in anger.

### Source Analysis: Document 6

*Contextualizing:* Rapid settlement was driving Indians from the land. Land hunger was especially intense with regard to growing cotton, etc.

British and New England textile mills demanded ever-increasing supplies of cotton. Cotton wore out the soil in a particularly rapid way, resulting in a constant need to open up new lands.

*Interpreting meanings:* This is a key question for students to debate. It will come up again with respect to Document 7.

*Point of view:* Answers to this may vary and should be discussed.

### Source Analysis: Document 7

*Contextualizing:* Texas was sure to be open to slavery, which was spreading rapidly westward across the South. Most Americans assumed Texas would give proslavery forces at least one more slave state, and its senators would tip the balance in favor of slavery there.

*Interpreting meanings:* He believes slavery is not profitable in border slave states like Kentucky or Maryland and new demand for slavery in Texas will cause these states to sell off their slaves and end slavery in their borders. It will seem unrealistic to most in that the border states did not willingly give up slavery, but of course O'Sullivan could not know that.

*Point of view:* The assumption the two races could never live together and mix in equality was widespread, even among opponents of slavery.

### Source Analysis: Document 8

*Sourcing:* Political campaigns were typically full of exaggerated or extreme claims against opponents, more so at times even than now.

*Contextualizing:* These men had been the two key generals throughout the entire war. Both were seen by Whig supporters as heroes of that war.

Both generals had acted under orders from Democratic President James K. Polk.

*Interpreting meanings:* The horrifying mountain of skulls is contrasted sharply with the elegant military dress of the candidate.

### Source Analysis: Document 9

*Contextualizing:* Great Britain.

Throughout the 1840s, an ever-increasing stream of settlers was using the trail to go to Oregon.

*Interpreting meanings:* Choices will vary to this question and should be discussed.

*Point of view:* Answers will vary and should be discussed.

### Source Analysis: Document 10

*Contextualizing:* Jackson's Indian removal policies had sent many tribes to new lands in this area, which would one day become part of the state of Oklahoma.

Answers to this will vary. These actions do provide evidence the government wanted to protect Indian lands or at least prevent violent confrontations between Indians and settlers, etc.

*Interpreting meanings:* The illustration conveys the sense of land-hungry settlers barely able to be contained from sprinting to their new lands. The illustration is dated from 1905 and may be questioned for this reason as to its accuracy.

*Corroborating sources:* Several sources could be used, especially Documents 1, 2, 4, 6, and 9.

## Evaluating Secondary Sources: Activity 1

**These are not definitive answers to the questions. They are suggested points to look for in student responses.**

1. How clearly does this account focus on a problem or question? What do you think that problem or question is? Sum it up in your own words here?

*McDougall* here summarizes a series of possible answers to the question of why Manifest Destiny seemed to “sweep the nation” in the 1840s and not earlier or later.

*Heidler and Heidler* seek to understand how Americans could come to accept the idea of Manifest Destiny and use it to spread over the continent “without guilt,” as he says, about conquering other peoples.

2. Does the secondary source take a position or express a point of view about Manifest Destiny? If so, briefly state that point of view or quote an example of it.

*McDougall* explains the triumph of the spirit of Manifest Destiny in the 1840s by referring to economic and diplomatic factors, and the determined movement of masses of settlers that all came together in that decade.

*Heidler and Heidler* in this passage explain the triumph of Manifest Destiny as due to shifting racial theories and ideas, which convinced Americans they were right to expand based on their society’s Anglo-Saxon racial superiority.

3. How well does the secondary source seem to base its case on primary source evidence? Take notes about any specific examples, if you can identify them.

*McDougall* only refers directly to a statement by Thomas Hart Benton in support of economic, social, and other factors he describes. *Heidler and Heidler* refer only to other secondary sources in summing up the ideas about race they describe.

However, both of these passage are based on primary source documents that the authors reference elsewhere.

4. Does the secondary source seem aware of alternative explanations or points of view about this topic? Underline points in the passage where you see this.

Neither *McDougall* nor *Heidler and Heidler* refer directly here to alternate views. However, they do imply that their own explanations are some “answers” (as *McDougall* says) among other possible answers, or “perspectives,” as *Heidler and Heidler* put it.

