

TEACHING AMERICAN HISTORY PROJECT

Lesson Title – What is Manifest Destiny?

Grade - 11

Length of class period – 45 minutes

Inquiry – What is *Manifest Destiny*?

Objectives

1. Understand circumstances and attitudes that contributed to American westward expansion and forced Indian Removal
2. Analyze philosophy of *Manifest Destiny* and its impact on U.S. territorial expansion

Materials

1. John O’Sullivan quote in which he defines *Manifest Destiny* (copies may be distributed to students or this could be shown on board by way of an overhead transparency, etc.)
2. Overhead transparency of painting *American Progress*, John Gast, 1872

Activities

1. Students will analyze O’Sullivan’s text and develop a definition of *Manifest Destiny* (individual, pairs, small group, whole class)
2. Students will analyze Gast’s *American Progress* (small group, whole class)

Assessment

Students will be assessed on individual analysis and participation in small group/whole class discussion

On a written test, students will define *Manifest Destiny* and identify its implications for United States policy of expansion in a short essay

Connecticut Framework Performance Standards

Historical Thinking:

Comprehending and analyzing historical literature
Develop an understanding of major historical periods and trends

John O'Sullivan was born in November, 1813. He became a journalist and was the founder and editor of the *United States Magazine and Democratic Review* (1837-1846). He was also the editor of the *New York Morning News* (1844-46).

In an editorial the in *United States Magazine and Democratic Review* in July 1845, O'Sullivan became the first person to use the term "manifest destiny" to encourage the spirit of expansionism. Over the following years the Manifest Destiny doctrine claimed that it should be the objective of the United States to absorb all of North America. This expansionism eventually ended in the acquisition of Texas, Oregon and California.

In 1854 O'Sullivan became minister to Portugal. A post he held until 1858. John O'Sullivan died on 24th February, 1895.

John L. O'Sullivan on *Manifest Destiny*, 1839

Excerpted from "The Great Nation of Futurity," *The United States Democratic Review*, Volume 6, Issue 23, pp. 426-430.

Accessed from: <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/osulliva.htm>

America is destined for better deeds. 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." Who, then, can doubt that our country is destined to be the great nation of futurity?



American Progress, 1872 by John Gast

John O'Sullivan Analysis

1. Individual activity: Read the quote by yourself and list key words or phrases
2. Pairs: Compare your lists; combine them into one shared list. Write a definition of "Manifest Destiny" based on your shared list.
3. Join two or three pairs to form small groups: Share definitions; develop a common definition for the group.
4. Whole class: Share group definitions; reach consensus for class definition; post this on board

American Progress Analysis

Small groups:

What do you see in the painting? List the people, animals, objects, colors. What do you notice about each of these components?

What is the painter's message?

How does the painting relate to John O'Sullivan's quote?

Look at the class definition of "Manifest Destiny." How does the painting relate to the class definition? Does it add to it, or detract from it?

Whole Class: discuss small group analysis of painting. Is class still satisfied with their definition of "Manifest Destiny"? Does it need to be changed?