One of the major themes of eighth-grade American history is the expansion of the nation, both geographically and economically. Population growth, a desire for new land for farmers along with markets for their agriculture, and a belief that God intended Americans to occupy the land between the Atlantic and the Pacific combined to drive American expansion. As early as 1811, John Quincy Adams wrote to his father:

The whole continent of North America appears to be destined by Divine Providence to be peopled by one nation, speaking one language, professing one general system of religious and political principles, and accustomed to one general tenor of social usages and customs. For the common happiness of them all, for their peace and prosperity, I believe it is indispensable that they should be associated in one federal Union.

Many other Americans wrote and produced art about the issue. In this lesson, students will analyze evidence of this belief in order to answer the focus question: How did leading American thinkers (such as artists, intellectuals, religious and government leaders) justify America’s westward expansion in the 19 century?

This lesson includes a number of strategies designed to improve student reading comprehension, writing ability, and critical thinking, such as the ability to cite specific textual evidence to support analysis, to integrate visual information with print and visual texts, and writing explanations. It also supports the development of interpretative and productive English Language development.
Standards

California History-Science Content Standards

8.8 Students analyze the divergent paths of the American people in the West from 1800 to the mid-1800s and the challenges they faced.

2. Describe the purpose, challenges, and economic incentives associated with westward expansion, including the concept of Manifest Destiny...and the territorial acquisitions that spanned numerous decades.

Common Core State Standards

RH 6-8.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

RH 6-8.7 Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and visual texts.

WHST 6-8.2 Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures / experiments, or technical processes.

b. Develop the topic with relevant, well-chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.

California English Language Development Standards for Grade 8

B. Interpretive

6: Reading closely literary and informational texts and multimedia to determine how meaning is conveyed explicitly and implicitly through language.

C. Productive

10: Writing literary and informational texts to present, describe, and explain ideas and information.

Sources


Procedures

**Step 1**
Distribute **Student Handout 1, Investigating Western Expansion**. Students should use the table to collect and organize evidence detailing the reasons for western expansion throughout this lesson. Preview the writing task at the bottom of the first page.

**Step 2**
Distribute **Student Handout 2, Letter from John Quincy Adams**. In pairs, have students read and discuss this excerpt from John Quincy Adams’ letter to his father. Ask students to first discuss in pairs what reasons Adams’ gives for western expansion. Draw students’ attention to the early date of this document and note how it predates much of the expansion and national discussion about expansion. Circulate during the discussion to make sure students understand the quote. As a full class, complete the first row of **Student Handout 1**, using suggestions from the class.

**Step 3**
Distribute **Student Handout 3, “Annexation”** by John O’Sullivan. Follow the directions on each page listed in the handout to deconstruct the text and ensure comprehension. Circulate during these discussions and in review of their written responses to make sure students understand Sullivan’s definition of manifest destiny, the evidence he cites in support of this destiny, and the causal relationships that O’Sullivan articulates in support of his argument. Make sure that students also understand the context of the annexation debate. As a full class, complete the second row of **Student Handout 1**, using suggestions from the class.

**Step 4**
Distribute **Student Handout 4, American Progress** by John Gast. In pairs or groups of three, have students discuss the painting using the discussion questions listed. Circulate during these discussions and in review of their written responses to make sure students have carefully analyzed the picture and discussed what the image represents, what it doesn't, and how representative the image was. As a full class, complete the third row of **Student Handout 1**, using suggestions from the class.

**Step 5**
Distribute **Student Handout 5, Turner’s Frontier Thesis**. Go over the background section with students. Tell students that they will *corroborate* or compare Turner’s argument with Gast’s painting (**Student Handout 4**). Have students complete Student Handout 5 in pairs. As a full class, complete the fourth row of **Student Handout 1**, using suggestions from the class.
**Procedures**

**Step 6**

Distribute Student Handout 6, Josiah Strong, Our Country. Go over the background section with students. Strong’s writing is particularly dense, but his perspective is important, as it makes an argument that connects Protestantism, racial superiority, and what critics would later call America’s empire. Students should read and re-read these two paragraphs carefully, following the directions on the handout. Circulate to 1) support their literal understanding of the text; and 2) encourage their analysis of the significance of the text, using the discussion questions. As a full class, complete the final row of Student Handout 1, using suggestions from the class.

**Step 7**

Tell students highlight or underline the major reasons provided for western expansion on Student Handout 1. Have them discuss these reasons with a partner. Circulate during the discussion to make sure that students understand and identify the roles of race, religion, population growth, and the concept of American exceptionalism, as detailed in each source.

**Step 8**

Distribute Students Handouts 7 (Writing Assignment), 8 (Writing a Thesis Statement), 9 (Integrating Evidence into your Writing), and 10 (Writing a Conclusion). Starting with Student Handout 7, which provides the overall directions for the writing assignment, review each document to make sure students understand the process for developing their argument, the role of the primary sources (Student Handouts 2-6) and Student Handout 1 (which contains their notes from the lesson), and the lesson’s focus question. Working in pairs or groups of three, have students complete Student Handouts 8, 9, and 10. For each handout, go over the introductory paragraph(s) with the class to ensure comprehension, before having them complete the writing detailed in the directions portion.

**Step 9**

Using Student Handouts 1-10, tell students to write their essay response, either for homework or as an in-class essay. Before final drafts are submitted, give students the opportunity for either peer or instructor review.
Directions: In order to understand how America’s leaders justified western expansion, or the movement to extend America’s borders west of the Mississippi River, we will consider five primary sources produced in the 19th century:

- a letter from John Quincy Adams to his father, John Adams, in 1811. Both Adams served as US Presidents.
- an excerpt from columnist John O’Sullivan’s essay “Annexation,” which advocated for Texas’ admission into the Union.
- a copy of American Progress, an 1872 painting by John Gast, who was hired to create the painting by George Crofutt, a publisher of western travel guides.
- an excerpt from “The Significance of the Frontier of American History” by historian Frederick Jackson Turner
- an excerpt from Our Country: Its Possible Future and Its Present Crisis by Josiah Strong, a Congregational Minister

For each source, complete the related row in the attached chart by listing any reasons the source provides for western expansion. After you complete the chart, you’ll be ready to answer the following: How did leading American thinkers (such as artists, intellectuals, religious and government leaders) justify America’s westward expansion in the 19th century?

### Investigating Western Expansion (Page 2 of 2)

*Directions: As you review each of the five primary sources, take note of any evidence or reasons the authors give to justify western expansion.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Why should the US expand westward? (Relevant Evidence &amp; Quotes from Primary Sources)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John Quincy Adams letter to his father (excerpt)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John L. O'Sullivan's Essay “Annexation” (excerpts)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Gast’s Painting: “American Progress”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frederick Jackson Turner's Essay, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” (excerpts)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josiah Strong, <em>Our Country</em> (excerpts)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
North America appears to be destined by Divine Providence to be peopled by one nation, speaking one language, professing one general system of religious and political principles, and accustomed to one general tenor of social usages and customs. For the common happiness of them all, for their peace and prosperity, I believe it is indispensable that they should be associated in one federal Union.

**Note:** “Divine Providence” is a term that describes the belief that God is in control of all things.

“...general tenor of social usage and customs” can be described to mean that people behave similarly in society and have similar values and traditions.

"Annexation" by John L. O'Sullivan (Page 1 of 4)

Background: In an essay entitled “Annexation” in the Democratic Review, influential journalist John L. O'Sullivan was the first to use the phrase Manifest Destiny. This phrase referred to what O'Sullivan and others believed was the nation's obvious fate or future. The article urged the U.S. to annex the Republic of Texas (which at the time had separated from Mexico), because it was "our manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions." O'Sullivan articulated what many 19th-century Americans believed about the nation's destiny to expand.

Directions: O'Sullivan's writing is dense and includes many pronouns and substitutes that refer back or forward to other nouns. Consider all the bolded words. For each, write in who or what, specifically, that O'Sullivan was referring to. The first one is done for you.

1. “Texas is now ours [belongs to the United States]...It is time then that all

[__________________________] should cease to treat her [__________________________] as an

alien...The next session of Congress will see the representatives of the new young

state [__________________________] in their [__________________________] places in both our

[__________________________] halls of national legislation.”

True or False: O'Sullivan believes Texas is part of the United States. Discuss the reasons for your answer with your group.
“Annexation” by John L. O'Sullivan (Page 2 of 4)

2. “Other nations have undertaken to intrude themselves ...in a spirit of thwarting our policy and hampering our power, limiting our greatness and checking the fulfillment of our manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions.”

- This excerpt has been organized into the chart below to clarify the author’s meaning. Using this organization and the definitions provided as necessary, discuss the bolded questions in the last column.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Circumstance / Connection</th>
<th>Noun / Noun Phrase</th>
<th>Verb / Verb Phrase</th>
<th>Who, What, Where</th>
<th>Definitions and Questions for Discussion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other nations</td>
<td>have undertaken</td>
<td>themselves</td>
<td>Who or what does “other nations” refer to?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in a spirit of</td>
<td></td>
<td>to intrude</td>
<td></td>
<td>“thwarting” = preventing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>thwarting</td>
<td>our policy</td>
<td>Given the subject of this essay, what policy do you think O'Sullivan is referring to?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and</td>
<td></td>
<td>hampering</td>
<td>our power</td>
<td>“hampering” = getting in the way of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>limiting</td>
<td>our greatness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and</td>
<td></td>
<td>checking</td>
<td>the fulfillment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of</td>
<td>our manifest destiny</td>
<td>to overspread</td>
<td>the continent</td>
<td>Who is the “our” in “our manifest destiny?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What continent does O'Sullivan refer to?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>According to O'Sullivan, what is the United States’ fate or future?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>by Providence for</td>
<td>the free development of our yearly multiplying millions</td>
<td>allotted</td>
<td></td>
<td>“allotted” = given to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Providence” = God, or under the guidance of God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Consider “…our yearly multiplying millions.” Who is “our?” What is multiplying by the millions each year?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. *It is wholly untrue...that the Annexation has been a measure of military conquest...* She [Texas] was released...from all Mexican allegiance...by the acts and faults of Mexico herself, and Mexico alone...California [will] probably next fall away from the loose adhesion [connection] which, in such a country as Mexico, holds a remote province...Imbecile and distracted, Mexico can never exert any real governmental authority over such a country...The Anglo-Saxon foot is already on its borders.

- In this excerpt, O'Sullivan makes a cause and effect argument about why Mexico cannot hold onto Texas and California. In the left-hand column below, you'll find causes and in the right column, effects. Use arrows to explain what cause leads to what effect. More than one cause can lead to an individual effect and effects can sometimes become causes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causes (Because...)</th>
<th>Effects (this happened...)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>the acts and faults of Mexico</td>
<td>[Texas] was released...from all Mexican allegiance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Mexico is] Imbecile and distracted...</td>
<td>California [will] probably next fall away from the loose adhesion...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Anglo-Saxon foot is already on its borders</td>
<td>Mexico can never exert any real governmental authority</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- The term “Anglo-Saxon” is generally defined as someone from English ancestry. In this context, who is O'Sullivan referring to? What does he mean when he says their “foot is already on its borders?”

- Why does O'Sullivan believe that Mexico couldn't really control Texas or California?

4. According to O'Sullivan, what is America's *Manifest Destiny* and why does he believe the country will achieve that destiny?

American Progress by John Gast, 1872

Directions: In your groups, discuss your answers to the following questions about this painting:

- What do you see? Explain what is in the painting.
- What part of the painting is of most interest to you? Why?
- Divide the painting into four parts equally. Explain what is going on in each part.
- This painting was created for a publisher of western travel guides. What do you think readers of those guides would think of the West after seeing this image?

Student Handout 5

Turner’s Frontier Thesis

Background: Historian Frederick Jackson Turner presented a paper entitled, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” to the American Historical Association at the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago, Illinois. Turner’s frontier thesis attributed America’s unique history and the American “character” (including strength, energy, and individualism) to the influence of citizens constantly moving west to new frontiers and pursuing new opportunities. His assessment of the frontier’s significance was the first of its kind and revolutionized American intellectual and historical thinking.

Directions: Read and discuss each excerpt from Turner’s Frontier Thesis below with your partner. Evaluate Turner’s claims against those made visually by John Gast in his painting American Progress (Student Handout 4). Look for evidence that supports, confirms, or validates Turner’s view. Historians call this process of comparing evidence from two or more sources corroboration. In the space below each quote, describe any evidence you see in the painting that corroborates Turner’s argument.

1. “This perennial rebirth, this fluidity, of American life, this expansion westward with its new opportunities…” (Note: “perennial” = continual; “this fluidity” refers back to (or describes further) the term “perennial rebirth.”)

2. “…the frontier is the meeting point between savagery and civilization.”

3. “Long before the pioneer farmer appeared on the scene, primitive Indian life had passed away. The farmers met Indians armed with guns.”

4. “…three classes…rolled one after the other…First comes the pioneer, who depends…on…implements of agriculture…he builds a cabin…The next class of emigrants purchase the land…put up…houses with glass window…build mills, schoolhouses…Another wave rolls on. The men of capital and enterprise come…a spacious town or city…”

Josiah Strong, *Our Country*

**Background:** Josiah Strong, a Congregational Minister wrote *Our Country* in 1885. Strong was a leader of the social gospel movement, which advocated Protestant Christian values as a way to curb social problems created by industrialization. Because Strong’s writing is dense and at times confusing, his meaning may not be clear from your first reading. As you unpack his language, however, you’ll discover that he makes a powerful and, at the time, popular argument for western expansion. As you read and discuss, be prepared to answer the following: **According to Strong, why should the US expand to the west?**

**Directions:** As a class, read the excerpt, underlining any words that are unfamiliar. After defining those terms, read the excerpt again in your groups, stopping to answer the discussion questions in the right hand column before moving onto the next section.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Excerpt</th>
<th>Discussion Questions &amp; Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“It seems to me that God… is training the Anglo-Saxon race for an hour sure to come in the world’s future. Heretofore there has always been in the history of the world a comparatively unoccupied land westward, into which the crowded countries of the East have poured their surplus populations. …, There are no more new worlds. The unoccupied terrible lands of the earth are limited, and will soon be taken. The time is coming when the pressure of population on the means of subsistence will be felt here as it is now felt in Europe and Asia. Then will the world enter upon …- the final competition of races, for which the Anglo-Saxon is being schooled.”</td>
<td>What groups of people or races does Strong mention in this first excerpt? Strong suggests that God favors one race or people in particular. Who? Strong suggests that the time has come for a competition between races. Why now? Who does Strong argue will win this race?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... this race of unequaled energy, with all the majesty of numbers and the might of wealth behind it – the representative… of the largest liberty, the purest Christianity, the highest civilization …will spread itself over the earth. ... this powerful race will move down upon Mexico, down upon central and South America, out upon the islands of the sea, over upon Africa and beyond. And can any one doubt that the results of this competition of races will be the “survival of the fittest”?</td>
<td>In the first sentence, Strong refers to “…this race of unequaled energy.” What race is Strong referring to? What advantages does this race allegedly have over others, according to Strong? According to Strong, what will the outcome be of this competition between races?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Writing Assignment

*Context:* In the 1800s, the United States expanded its borders to the west. The conquest of this territory benefitted many Americans, by providing them with more land, resources, and wealth. However, there was also a cost for these benefits, especially to several groups of people already living in the newly acquired territory, especially native Americans. In addition, the question of whether or not slavery should exist in these new territories soon led to a very bloody civil war.

*Question:* How did leading American thinkers (such as artists, intellectuals, and religious and government leaders) justify westward expansion in the 19th century? In other words, what reasons did these leaders give to defend the conquest of territory that later becomes the western United States?

*Directions:*

- Review **Student Handout 1, Investigating Western Expansion.** Organize the specific reasons into categories by highlighting similar themes with the same color.
- Construct a written explanation in a multi-paragraph essay in which you:
  o In the first paragraph, clearly identify the major reasons (or categories of reasons) American leaders offered to justify westward expansion in the first paragraph. See **Student Handout 8** for guidance on developing a thesis statement to answer the question. Organize this first paragraph around that thesis, or the answer to the question.
  o Explain each major reason in separate individual paragraphs that follow, using specific and relevant evidence from the five primary sources (**Student Handouts 2-6**) you have already analyzed. (Consult **Student Handout 9, Integrating Evidence in Your Writing** for guidance).
  o In the final paragraph, summarize the major reasons for expansion and give your own opinion of these reasons. Were they valid? Why or why not? (Consult **Student Handout 10, Writing a Conclusion**, for guidance).
Student Handout 8

Writing a Thesis Statement

A thesis is the primary or all-encompassing argument in a piece of historical writing. This sentence typically comes at the end of your introductory paragraph. It must be supported by evidence and analysis in the body paragraphs. The thesis is often the answer to an historical question. To develop your thesis for this essay on westward expansion, first rewrite the question in your own words, next list your evidence, then evaluate that evidence, and finally form an argument based on what you can prove.

Directions:

1. Rewrite the question in your own words.
   a. Original Question: How did leading American thinkers (such as artists, intellectuals, and religious and government leaders) justify westward expansion in the 19th century? In other words, what reasons did these leaders give to defend the conquest of territory that later becomes the western United States?
   b. My version of the question:

2. List your evidence.
   a. Review Student Handout 1, Investigating Western Expansion, as well as Student Handouts 2-6. Highlight or underline the major reasons that the authors gave to support western expansion.
   b. List these reasons, briefly, below:

3. Categorize and evaluate your evidence in order to form an argument based on what you can prove.
   a. Consider the list you made in Step 2. Group any similar reasons together to consolidate your list.
   b. Eliminate any reasons that do not seem relevant or significant.
   c. List the major reasons that remain. What do they tell you about the question?

   a. Consider the major reasons that you listed in Step 3. Write a one- or two-sentence thesis statement that incorporates these reasons to answer the question:
Integrating Evidence into Your Writing

There are two main ways for presenting other people’s ideas: paraphrasing or quoting.

**Paraphrase:** to reproduce someone else’s ideas in different words and in a different order.

- Paraphrasing allows you to capture the main idea without having to reproduce an entire quote. This is especially helpful when the quote is long, or perhaps not important enough to be included exactly.
- **When to Paraphrase:** You should paraphrase when the specific wording is less important than the idea.
- You still must give credit to the source for ideas that are not your own, even when you paraphrase.

**Quote:** to duplicate someone else’s ideas exactly as they were written.

- Quoting an author can lend authority or credibility to your writing. It also often can help capture the spirit or voice of an author.
- **When to Quote:** You should use quotes carefully, and use the least amount of a quote as needed. Don’t quote full sentences – phrases are enough.
- When using quotations, consider using one or more of the following verbs (or others that indicate thinking, saying or feeling): explained, acknowledged, testified, denied, compared, added, endorsed, argued, proposed, observed, announced, emphasized, claimed, wrote, asserted, remarked, replied, commented, predicted, declared, noted, stated, admitted, confessed, disputed, and exclaimed.

No matter if you choose to paraphrase or quote, you must explain the significance of your evidence. In addition to identifying the speaker and writing out the quote, you need to explain why or how the example or quote relates to the rest of the sentence, paragraph, and paper as a whole. Consider the following two passages. Which one explains the significance of the quote?

- As Josiah Strong explained, “...can any one doubt that the results of this competition of races will be the “survival of the fittest”? Strong was a Congregational Minister.
- As Josiah Strong explained, “...can any one doubt that the results of this competition of races will be the “survival of the fittest”? This excerpt shows how Strong believed that the “Anglo-Saxon” race was destined to dominate North America.

**Directions:**

a. Begin each body paragraph in your essay by restating one of the major reasons you identified as a justification for western expansion in the introduction.
b. Next, you’ll want to include specific quotes (or descriptions of Gast’s painting) from one of the primary sources that you examined to give emphasis and explain the reason further. Consider using one of the verbs listed above to incorporate the quote into your writing. Make sure that the quote relates directly to this reason and supports your overall thesis.
c. After the quote, make sure to explain the significance of that particular selection. How does this quote explain the reason for western expansion?
d. Finish the paragraph with a restatement of the reason for western expansion.
Writing a Conclusion

Your conclusion is a summary of your argument and the supporting evidence. It is your last chance to prove your point to your reader, to convince him or her that your argument is correct and important. It also provides you with a last opportunity you will have to make sure that you have answered the question: How did leading American thinkers (such as artists, intellectuals, and religious and government leaders) justify westward expansion in the 19th century?

Directions:

1. **Rephrase your thesis.** Restate your thesis in different words to reinforce the main idea of your essay. What exactly have you proven or argued?

2. **Rephrase all of your main points of evidence.** What major reasons were given for western expansion?

3. **Insert your perspective.** Were the reasons given for western expansion valid? Why or why not? Briefly speculate about the future impact of western expansion. No matter what reason American leaders gave for expanding to the west, expansion impacted the people who lived in the west and those that moved westward. The movement also impacted the natural environment. Did the reasons for expansion justify any potential negative impact, on people and/ or the environment?