

LESSON ONE

“The march of civilization”

I. OBJECTIVES

- ◆ To interpret documents in their historical context.
- ◆ To explain the ideology of Manifest Destiny.
- ◆ To analyze the perspectives of different individuals regarding Manifest Destiny and the annexation of California.
- ◆ To compare and contrast competing historical narratives and demonstrate how an emphasis on different perspectives contributes to different interpretations.

II. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

“Manifest Destiny” refers to an ideology prevalent in the United States during the mid-nineteenth century. On September 15, 1845, an editorial by journalist John L. O’Sullivan appeared in the New York *Herald* expressing the belief that the United States was destined to expand beyond its present territorial boundaries. O’Sullivan framed the vision of “Manifest Destiny” in an editorial on the 1845 annexation of Texas. O’Sullivan wrote that it was “the fulfillment of our manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions. . . . American patriotism takes a wider and loftier range than heretofore. Its horizon is widening every day. No longer bounded by the limits of the confederacy, it looks abroad upon the whole earth, and into the mind of the republic daily sinks deeper and deeper the conviction that civilization on the earth—the reform of the governments of the ancient world—the emancipation of the whole race, are dependent, in a great degree, on the United States.”

The expression “Manifest Destiny” became an affirmation of American self-confidence and a manifestation of the nation’s power. Mexico, our neighbor to the south and west, looked upon Manifest Destiny as simply a veiled attempt to acquire territory. The United States, before the outbreak of war with Mexico over the Texas boundary, sought the acquisition of California. President Polk, in his third annual message to Congress on December 7, 1847, called for the annexation of New Mexico and California. The President notified Congress that he had instructed Nicholas

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Trist, a special envoy sent to Mexico to negotiate an end to the war, to insist upon New Mexico and California as a condition for peace. "The commissioner of the United States was authorized . . . to obtain a cession to the United States of the provinces of New Mexico and the Californias and the privilege of the right of way across the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. The boundary of the Rio Grande and the cession to the United States of New Mexico and Upper California constituted an ultimatum which our commissioner was under no circumstances to yield."

The president further stated that California would be open to settlement by "a hardy, enterprising, and intelligent portion of our population. The bay of San Francisco and other harbors along the Californian coast would afford shelter for our navy, for our numerous whale ships, and other merchant vessels employed in the Pacific Ocean, and would in a short period become the marts of an extensive and profitable commerce with China and other countries of the East."

Once gold was discovered, many of the argonauts who migrated from the eastern United States began their journey clothed in the mandate of heaven as participants in fulfilling the destiny of the nation. They "brought Manifest Destiny to the gold fields, and with it all the term implied for the superiority of white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant peoples" (Rohrbough, 221). With a dramatic increase in population, California applied for admission to the Union, a process held hostage to the political debate over slavery. With the Compromise of 1850, California entered the Union as a free state. The nation which had its origin on the eastern seaboard now stretched across the continent.

III. Materials

- ★ **Document 1**—*The Emigrants' Guide to Oregon and California . . .*, Lansford W. Hastings, 1845
- ★ **Document 2**—*Narrative of a Journey Round the World . . .*, Sir George Simpson, 1847
- ★ **Document 3**—*Life in California Before the Conquest . . .*, Alfred Robinson, 1846
- ★ **Document 4**—Proclamation of the Bear Flag Revolt, June 15, 1846
- ★ **Document 5**—The Official Protest of Governor Pico to Consul Larkin . . ., June 29, 1846
- ★ **Document 6**—*Hasting to be Rich. A Sermon . . .*, Rev. E. L. Cleaveland, 1849
- ★ **Document 7**—*California. Outlines of an Address . . .*, Rev. Samuel Worcester, 1849

IV. Lesson Activities

Note to Teacher: When working with documents students often have difficulty with vocabulary. A suggested vocabulary list is provided with each lesson. You may wish to review vocabulary with your students before having them read assigned documents or have students develop their own personal glossary listing words that they do not know from their readings.

- A. Assign text readings relating to “Manifest Destiny” and develop a working definition of the expression.
- B. Distribute *The Emigrants’ Guide to Oregon and California* (**Document 1**) and ask students to follow along as you read it to the class. Ask students to assume one of the following roles and write a journal entry, dated 1845, explaining the appeal of *Hastings’ Emigrants’ Guide*.
 - a worker in a New England factory
 - a merchant involved in foreign trade
 - a shopkeeper
 - a farmer who owns a small farm in Western Pennsylvania
- C. Discuss how effectively the author expressed his feelings about the potential of California. What passages of the reading indicate a belief in Manifest Destiny? To what extent would the book have encouraged people to emigrate to Mexican California in 1845?
- D. Divide the class into six small groups and assign each a different document to examine. Discuss the document in the group and select a spokesperson to assume the identify of the author of the document in a public forum. The six roles are: George Simpson (**Document 2**), Alfred Robinson (**Document 3**), William Ide (**Document 4**), Governor Pio Pico (**Document 5**), Rev. E. L. Cleaveland (**Document 6**), and Rev. Samuel Worcester (**Document 7**).
- E. Convene a public forum in which the selected spokesperson, assuming the persona of the author of the document, delivers a short oration (approximately 3 minutes) summarizing the reading for the entire class. Open the forum to questions from the class. Students should direct questions relating to Manifest Destiny to specific individuals on the panel; however, the other five members of the panel are free to respond, supporting or rejecting the initial speaker’s answer.

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- F. Conclude by having students write a brief position paper on Manifest Destiny in which they express their personal views.

V. Vocabulary

aggrandizement	ignominious
albeit	inveterate
atrocious	inviolable
exultation	prodigious
exuberance	rectitude
despotism	tenacious
indolence	unscrupulous

VI. Extended Lesson Ideas

- A. Research the life of Consul Thomas O. Larkin, John C. Frémont, or Governor Pio Pico and write a character sketch of the individual.
- B. Commodore Thomas ap Catesby Jones landed at Monterey, California in October 1842 under the mistaken notion that the United States was at war with Mexico and claimed California for the United States. Research the incident and prepare an oral report to the class. What does it show about the desire of the United States to obtain California? How does it reflect the concept of Manifest Destiny?
- C. Prepare a debate on the topic Manifest Destiny. What arguments would you use to either support or reject Manifest Destiny.
- D. Compile a list of prominent leaders of the 1840s such as Daniel Webster, Henry Clay, Abraham Lincoln, Rev. Theodore Parker, Henry David Thoreau. Research the political views of the selected leaders and explain how each regarded Manifest Destiny. What may account for the position the individual took on the subject? Explain.

The Emigrants' Guide, to Oregon and California
Lansford W. Hastings, 1845

Lansford Hastings led a group of American emigrants to Mexican California in 1842.

Considering the very short space of time, which has elapsed, since the different governments have turned their attentions to this country, and the very little which is, as yet, known in reference to it, its present commerce is scarcely paralleled Fifteen or twenty vessels are, not unfrequently, seen in many of the various ports at the same time, displaying the national flags of all the principal powers of the world. Merchant vessels of the United States, England, France, Russia, and Mexico, as well as the ships of war, and the whale ships of the four former governments, are to be seen, at almost any time, in the different ports of this country, and of all of which, there are frequent arrivals and departures. . . .

The foregoing will enable us to form very correct conclusions, in reference to the present and future commerce of this infant country, the former of which, considering the newness of the country, and the sparseness of the population, is scarcely equaled, and, if the present may be considered as a prelude to the future, the latter is destined, in a very few years, to exceed, by far, that of any other country of the same extent and population, in any portion of the known world. We are necessarily driven to this conclusion, when we consider the vast extent of its plains and valleys, of unequalled fertility and exuberance; the extraordinary variety and abundance, of its productions, . . . its unexhausted and inexhaustible resources, as well, as its increasing emigration, which is annually swelling its population, from hundreds to thousands, and which is destined, at no distant day, to revolutionize the whole commercial, political, and moral aspect of all that highly important and delightful country. In a word, I will remark that in my opinion, there is no country, in the known world, possessing a soil so fertile and productive, with such varied and inexhaustible resources, and a climate of such mildness, . . . ; nor is there a country, in my opinion, now known, which is so eminently calculated, by nature herself, in all respects, to promote the unbounded happiness and prosperity, of civilized and enlightened man.

. . . [W]e are also led to contemplate the time, as fast approaching, when the supreme darkness of ignorance, superstition, and despotism, which now so entirely pervade many portions of those remote regions, will have fled forever, before the march of civilization, and the blazing light of civil and religious liberty; when genuine *republicanism*, and unsophisticated *democracy*, shall be reared up, and tower aloft, even upon the now wild shores of the great Pacific; where they shall forever stand forth, as enduring monuments to the increasing wisdom of man, and the infinite kindness and protection of an all-wise overruling *Providence*.

Narrative of a Journey Round the World
Sir George Simpson, 1847

Sir George Simpson was Governor-in-Chief of the Hudson Bay Company's territories in North America. In his book, *Narrative of a Journey Round the World During the Years 1841 and 1842*, he described California as an ideal land.

What a splendid country, whether we regard its internal resources or its commercial capabilities, to be thrown away on its present possessors—on men who do not avail themselves of their natural advantages to a much higher degree than the savages whom they have displaced, and who are likely to become less and less energetic from generation to generation and from year to year!

The English race . . . is doubtless destined to add this fair and fertile province to its possessions on this continent—possessions which, during the last eighty years, have grown with unexampled rapidity. . . . [I]n the first quarter of the present century, the younger branch of the race [the United States] extended its dominion to the Rocky Mountains, while the elder [Britain], carrying its commerce across this formidable barrier, occupied with its trading post a country of a thousand miles in length, as far as the shores of the Pacific Ocean. In this state of things, the south alone remained to its ancient possessors; and, as Texas has been wrested from Mexico on the one side of the continent, so will California be speedily lost to her on the other; either province, too, being only the first step in a march, of which the rate of progress appears to be merely a question of time.

The only doubt is, whether California is to fall to the British or to the Americans. The latter, whether one looks at their seizure of Texas or at their pretensions to the Oregon, have clearly the advantage in an unscrupulous choice of weapons, being altogether too ready to forget that the fulfilment of even the most palpable decrees of Providence will not justify in man the employment of unrighteous means.

Questions to consider

1. Why does George Simpson believe that California will not remain under the control of Mexico?
2. What does he seem to be saying regarding British and American expansion on the continent?
3. What is Simpson's view of the U.S. acquisition of Texas? The U.S. claim to the Oregon territory?

Life in California before the Conquest
Alfred Robinson, 1846

Alfred Robinson, a United States merchant in the Mexican territory of Alta California, published *Life in California before the Conquest* in 1846

The resources of California, its magnificent harbors, climate, and abundance of naval stores, would make it the rendezvous for all the steamers engaged in the trade between Europe and the East Indies, as well as those from the United States, and the facilities for emigration would be such that soon the whole western coast of north America would be settled by emigrants, both from this country and Europe.

During the anarchy which existed in past years throughout this fertile country, there were many of the native Californians who would have been thankful for the protection of either England or America, and indeed a great many desired it, in preference to the detested administration of Mexico. Perhaps there are many who still feel as they did then, and in this age of "annexation" why not extend the "area of freedom" by the annexation of California? Why not plant the banner of liberty there, in the fortress at the entrance of the noble, the spacious Bay of San Francisco? It requires not the far-reaching eye of the statesman nor the wisdom of a contemplative mind to know what would be the result. Soon its immense sheet of water would become enlivened with thousands of vessels, and steamboats would ply between the towns which, as a matter of course, would spring up on its shores, while on other locations along the banks of the rivers would be seen manufactories and sawmills. . . .

All this may come to pass, and indeed it must come to pass, for the march of emigration is to the West, and naught will arrest its advance but the mighty ocean.

Questions to consider

1. What is the appeal of California?
2. Why does Alfred Robinson believe that "native Californians" (Californios) would favor U.S. annexation of California?
3. To what extent does this selection from Robinson's book support the belief in Manifest Destiny?

Proclamation of the Bear Flag Revolt

From his headquarters in Sonoma, William B. Ide proclaimed the Bear Flag Revolt against the Mexican government of California on June 15, 1846.

To all persons, citizens of Sonoma, requesting them to remain at peace, and to follow their rightful occupations without fear of molestation.

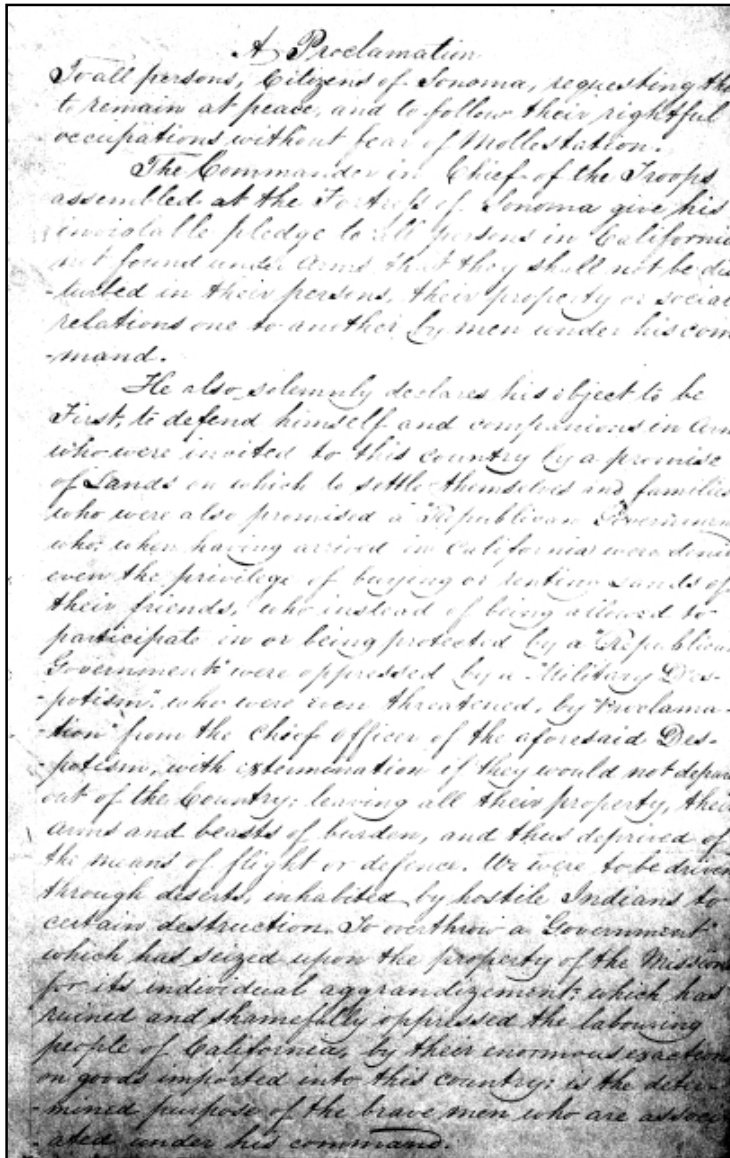
The Commander in Chief of the Troops assembled at the Fortress of Sonoma gives his inviolable pledge to all persons in California not found under arms that they shall not be disturbed in their persons, their property or social relations one to another by men under his command.

He also solemnly declares his object to be First, to defend himself and companions in arms who were invited to this country by a promise of Lands on which to settle themselves and families who were also promised a "republican government," who, when having arrived in California were denied even the privilege of buying or renting Lands of their friends, who instead of being allowed to participate in or being protected by a "Republican Government" were oppressed by a "Military Despotism," who were even threatened, by "Proclamation" from the Chief Officer of the aforesaid Despotism, with extermination if they would not depart out of the Country, leaving all of their property, their arms and beasts of burden, and thus deprived of the means of flight or defence. We were to be driven through deserts, inhabited by hostile Indians to certain destruction. To overthrow a Government which has seized upon the property of the Missions for its individual aggrandizement; which has ruined and shamefully oppressed the labouring people of California, by their enormous exactions on goods imported into this country; is the determined purpose of the brave men who are associated under his command.

He also solemnly declares his object in the Second place to be to invite all peaceable and good Citizens of California who are friendly to the maintenance of good order and equal rights (and I do hereby invite them to repair to my camp at Sonoma without delay) to assist us in establishing and perpetuating a "Republican Government" which shall secure to all: civil and religious liberty; which shall detect and punish crime; which shall encourage industry, virtue and literature; which shall leave unshackled by Fetters, Commerce, Agriculture, and Mechanism.

He further declares that he relies upon the rectitude of our intentions; the favor of Heaven and the bravery of those who are bound to and associated with him, by the

principle of self preservation; by the love of truth; and by the hatred of tyranny for his hopes of success.



He further declares that he believes that a Government to be prosperous and happyfying in its tendency must originate with its people who are friendly to its existence. That its Citizens are its Guardians, its officers are its Servants, and its Glory their reward.

William B. Ide
Head Quarters Sonoma
June 15, 1846

Questions to consider

1. What are the grievances listed in the Bear Flag proclamation?
2. Was the establishment of the Bear Flag Republic an aspect of Manifest Destiny?

The Official Protest of Governor Pico to Consul Larkin June 29, 1846

Pio Pico was the Mexican governor of California at the time of the Bear Flag Revolt. In his protest to the U.S. Consul General Thomas O. Larkin, Pio Pico states that he suspects that the United States promoted the revolt as a means of annexing California.

The undersigned constitutional Governour of the Department of California has the deep mortification to make known to Don Thomas O. Larkin Consul of the U.S. of North America, that he has been greatly surprised in being notified by official



communications of the Comandancia General of this Department and the Prefecture of the 2d District, that a multitude of foreigners of the U.S. of America, have invaded that frontier, taken possession of the fortified town of Sonoma, treacherously making prisoners of the Military Commandant Dn. Mariano G. Vallejo, Lieut. Colonel Victor Prudon, Captain Salvador Vallejo and Mr. Jacob P. Leese, and likewise have stolen the personal property of these individuals.

The undersigned can do no less than make known to the Consul of the U.S. that acts so extraordinary and alarming have caused very great grief. Until the present the Departmental Governour is wanting the least positive information that would give him to understand of a declaration of war between Mexico and the U.S., and

without such information, he judges the course pursued at Sonoma, the most atrocious and infamous that can be imagined, so much so, that the like is not seen even among barbarians. They have attacked the rights of the people, breaking the established social compacts, profaning the sacred soil of another nation, indeed scandalously usurping an integral part of the Mexican Republic, and what is more provoking still as an ignominious libel is the folly of the principle of this multitude of foreigners, Wm. B. Ide, the separation of the Mexican Union. This act tends to excite the mind of the undersigned and causes him to suspect that the Government of the U.S. is concerned in this matter, which certainly would increase his regrets.

Don Thomas O. Larkin will permit the undersigned to say to him frankly, that he has witnessed with extraordinary coolness the invasion of the Department . . . ; he has not been known to make any arrangement that might make the invaders recede from their abominable designs, and prevent the misfortunes which they can cause by the means of hostile provocation: misfortunes which the Departmental Government will place to the responsibility of the chief authors, before God and the entire world. Such base management as observed on this occasion highly compromises the honour of the United States, and if it shall have such a stain upon itself, there is no doubt that it will be graven eternally in the remembrances of all nations, and will cause it to be despised.

The undersigned believes that the Consul of the U.S. will agree with him, that the acts committed by this party of foreigners, americans, has the appearance of actual and downright robbery: also that the Consul will agree with him that his indifference to prevent such fatal results, seeing that they were subjects of his own nation who are violating this part of the Mexican Republic comprises [compromises] more and more both nations. . . .

Pio Pico

To Don Thomas O. Larkin, Consul of the United States North America

Questions to consider

1. How does Governor Pio Pico regard the Bear Flag Revolt?
2. What is the tone of the governor's letter to the U.S. Consul General?
3. In his view, who is responsible for the uprising?
4. Why does he believe the United States government may be behind the uprising?
5. Why is he critical of Thomas Larkin's response to the revolt?

Hasting to Be Rich.
A Sermon, Occasioned by the Present Excitement
Respecting The Gold of California
Rev. E. L. Cleaveland, 1849

The Rev. E. L. Cleaveland preached sermons in New Haven and Bridgeport, Connecticut, in January and February, 1849, on the wickedness of love of money. In his sermons, Cleaveland spoke of the annexation of California and the spread of civilization to the Pacific coast.

... Among the many great and memorable events of the year 1848, the acquisition of these territories [Mexican cession], and the discovery of the mines they contain, are by no means the least remarkable. In the hands of their late owners, they were of but little account either to themselves or to the world—but in our hands they are destined to exert a prodigious influence, both upon our own and every other nation. No other people on earth have such facilities for developing the resources of those broad lands. They will vastly augment our political, commercial, and moral power among the nations. The accession of these rich and extensive regions, will give us a commanding position on the Pacific, and turn the commerce of Asia, and the wealth of those Western seas into our own ports. While the rail-way, which must soon connect us with that distant part of the Republic, will draw the travel and trade of Europe across our country in their intercourse with Eastern Asia. Thus we shall occupy a certain position between Europe and Asia, with the riches of both pouring on our shores. Holding the finest portion of this continent, if not of the world; blest with the freest and firmest government on earth; increasing in numbers with unparalleled rapidity;—with area enough for more millions than now constitute the entire population of the globe—speaking the most influential language in the world; and as yet, substantially Protestant in religion,—this great Republic seems raised up in the providence of God, to accomplish a mighty work in elevating the human race. . . .

Questions to consider

1. According to Rev. Cleaveland, what are the unique features of Americans?
2. How does this sermon reflect a belief in Manifest Destiny?

*California. Outlines of an Address before the
Naumkeag Mutual Trading and Mining Company*
Rev. Samuel M. Worcester, 1849

Rev. Samuel Worcester spoke to members of the Naumkeag Mutual Trading and Mining Company on January 14, 1849. Worcester began his sermon with references to the mention of gold in the Bible and comments on Protestant evangelization in the Americas.

. . . I must not extend these allusions, or add to these historical associations or reminiscences. But, I love to think of them when I look out upon the present spectacle of our country and of the world. And albeit "*gain*" is not "*godliness*," they give me hope, brighter and richer than all its gold, for California, and for the continents and islands of the north and south Pacific. For, of all the signal and stupendous demonstrations of God's providence in these last days, I know of nothing more wonderful—no fact more worth of profound reflection—than the reservation of the astounding discovery of the treasures of California until its recent annexation to the united States. Why did the Spaniards, so ferocious and blood-thirsty in their search and rage for gold, never find any part of the amazing secret of those treasures? . . . Why those many, many thousands of square miles of mineral wealth, untouched until the year 1848?

It must certainly be that God has a purpose—a great moral purpose in all this. It is no small thing for a people to be moved as the American people, so many of them, now are; that the representatives of every city, and village, and almost every log-cabin beyond the Alleghenies, will soon be on the shores of the Pacific; that a nation should, as it were, be removed thither, under the protection and thrilling enthusiasm of the brightest, and ere long the mightiest banner among the nations of Christendom. . . .

Questions to consider

1. According to Rev. Worcester, what was God's plan for California and the United States?
2. How does Worcester's sermon reflect Manifest Destiny?