

TEACHER'S GUIDE

Document Based Activity

Epilogue

MISSION 3: "A Cheyenne Odyssey"

Manifest Destiny: When Is a T-Shirt More Than a Fashion Statement?

A NOTE TO THE EDUCATOR

This activity is designed to summarize some of the issues surrounding westward expansion addressed in MISSION US: "A Cheyenne Odyssey." The activity focuses on the concept of Manifest Destiny.

The Document Based Activity for Part 3 of "A Cheyenne Odyssey" also addresses the concept of Manifest Destiny. You may wish to modify this activity slightly if your students have already completed that activity.

As a class, read the "Manifest Destiny Historical Background" section, which provides a brief overview of the term's meaning and its role in American history.

Then, divide your class into groups, and assign each group one of the four images or documents. Students should prepare to share their documents and analyses with their classmates, debate whether or not Manifest Destiny is a positive or negative term, and if the Gap's recent t-shirt should have been marketed.

An optional post-debate activity asks students to write letters to the authors of the documents, explaining what Manifest Destiny means to them, and persuading the authors to maintain or alter their original points of view. Students should draw upon their experiences as Little Fox in "A Cheyenne Odyssey" to inform their arguments.

This activity is best used after students have completed the game, as it encourages students to consider the pros and cons of westward expansion from opposing viewpoints.



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Manifest Destiny: Historical Background

Newspaper editor John O'Sullivan first used the term "Manifest Destiny" in 1845, but the idea that the United States had a God-given right to expand westward was not a new concept. The roots of the idea originated in the colonial era, as young colonies sought new lands for a growing population.

Colonists had a variety of reasons to justify their expansion. English settlers in Jamestown expanded westward for economic reasons, needing more land to cultivate tobacco, Virginia's highly profitable crop. Puritans who established the Massachusetts Bay Colony had religious reasons to expand; they wanted to build a growing community of like-minded religious believers. The belief that westward expansion was right, profitable, and supported by God encouraged settlers to push the frontier further and further into lands previously unexplored by Europeans. It also resulted in conflicts with American Indians, like Little Fox and the Northern Cheyenne, who already inhabited these lands, and had for centuries.

By the mid-19th century, Americans were filled with a sense of optimism and pride. The Louisiana Purchase of 1803, the War of 1812, and the Mexican-American War (1846-1848) added to the nation's territory and seemed to prove the idea that the United States possessed a mission to expand westward. Technological advances, such as railroads, steamships, the telegraph, and the cotton gin, made access to the western frontier easier and even more economically valuable. The 1849 Gold Rush attracted thousands of pioneers to California. To most Americans, it was clear (or "manifest") that the fate (or "destiny") of the United States was to stretch "from sea to shining sea." Many Americans believed that their government represented a noble experiment in democracy, and that they should spread their way of life, especially to American Indians like Little Fox and the Northern Cheyenne, who were viewed as inferior. By the end of the 19th century, Manifest Destiny was being used to justify America's expansion beyond its continental borders, even into the Caribbean and the Pacific Ocean.

While the term "Manifest Destiny" fell out of favor during the 20th century, the underlying idea of "American Exceptionalism"—that the United States is a special country because of its history and institutions—continues to shape debates over the role that the United States should play in the world today. While the goal of territorial expansion no longer drives the US, the exportation of American culture and economic investment abroad raises questions as to whether or not the United States is still an expansionist nation.

Sources Consulted:

"Manifest Destiny." *The History Channel*. 2013. <http://www.history.com/topics/manifest-destiny>.

"Manifest Destiny." *US History: Pre-Columbian to the New Millennium*. 2012.

<http://www.ushistory.org/us/29.asp>



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When Is a T-Shirt More Than a Fashion Statement?

Student Directions:

In September 2012, the Gap clothing store introduced a new line of men's clothing in collaboration with *GQ Magazine*. Called "Gap x GQ," the clothing line included a black t-shirt, created by designer Mark McNairy, which displayed the term "Manifest Destiny" in bold, capitalized white letters.

As you already know, the term "Manifest Destiny" has a particular meaning in American history. However, the designers and marketers of the t-shirt may not have had this historical interpretation in mind. What are some other possible meanings of the term? What might it mean to "manifest your destiny" as an individual? Can "manifest destiny" mean that you are the master of your own fate? Do you think this interpretation of the term might be attractive to people today who buy clothing in stores like the Gap?

Regardless of the intentions of the t-shirt's creators, the Gap announced in October 2012 that it would pull the t-shirts from its stores and discontinue the line, in response to negative publicity in the press and strong opposition from American Indian groups.

Source: Mackay, James. "Gap's 'manifest destiny' t-shirt was a historic mistake." *The Guardian*. 16 October 2012.
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/oct/16/gap-manifest-destiny-t-shirt>.



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Source: Misener, Jessica. "Gap 'Manifest Destiny' T-Shirt Pulled After Huge Outcry." *The Huffington Post*. 16 October, 2012. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/10/16/gap-manifest-destiny-t-shirt_n_1970659.html.

Directions: Examine the document assigned to your group. Answer the following questions based on your interpretation of the document, and what you think the term "Manifest Destiny" means. As you prepare your responses, take into consideration what you learned about the impact of Manifest Destiny on the Northern Cheyenne through your playing of "A Cheyenne Odyssey," and how Indians such as Little Fox would have interpreted the term. Be prepared to share your document with your classmates and to participate in a classroom debate.

1. Describe the document. What is it, and who created it?
2. What does "Manifest Destiny" mean to the creators of the document?
3. Is Manifest Destiny presented from a positive or negative point of view? How do you know?
4. Prepare to debate the following statements:
 - a. Manifest Destiny is a positive term.
 - b. The Gap should not have marketed the Manifest Destiny t-shirt, because it is offensive.
5. Compose a Tweet response (140 characters) to the author of your document about the Gap T-Shirt, indicating whether or not you feel the use of the term "Manifest Destiny" is appropriate.

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Document 1:



John Gast. *American Progress*.

John Gast was an American painter from Brooklyn, New York. He was hired to paint this image for a series of Western travel guides. The painting is not a realistic depiction of actual events, but represents the idea of Manifest Destiny.

Source: http://picturinghistory.gc.cuny.edu/item.php?item_id=180

Document 2:

"It is with great sadness that I notify you I will not be shopping at your store until you remove the 'Manifest Destiny' t-shirts available at your stores. Manifest Destiny was the catch phrase which led to the genocide of millions of my people, millions of indigenous people throughout this country. I am also inviting the more than 1,700 people on my Facebook page to boycott your stores and inviting them to shop with their conscience."

--Renee Roman Nose, activist and actress; descendant of the Sand Creek Massacre and Battle of the Washita survivors; enrolled Member of the Cheyenne & Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma

Source: "Gap and 'Manifest Destiny' T-Shirt Sparks Outrage in Indian Country." *Indian Country*. 15 October 2012.
<http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/article/gap-%E2%80%98manifest-destiny%E2%80%99-t-shirt-sparks-outrage-in-indian-country-140007>.

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Document 3:

In response to negative tweets he had received, Mark McNairy, designer of the "Manifest Destiny" t-shirt, posted the following tweet on October 13, 2012 at 6:15pm:

Manifest Destiny. Survival of the Fittest.

McNairy tweeted the following message on October 15, 2012 at 7:08pm in response to press coverage and tweets he had received calling him a racist because of his October 13 tweet:

I am sorry for my survival of the fittest comment. It hurt me deeply to be called a racist as that is not me. I reacted without thinking.

Source: Rivas, Jorge. "Gap Pulls 'Manifest Destiny' Shirts After Outrage, Twitter Responses." Colorlines: News for Action. 15 October 2012.

http://colorlines.com/archives/2012/10/designer_behind_gaps_manifest_destiny_shirt_tweets_inflammatory_response.html.



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Document 4:



Gregg Deal, an artist and member of the Pyramid Lake Paiute tribe, tweeted this image in response to the Gap "Manifest Destiny" t-shirt.

Glossary: *assimilation* – integration of one group into another; the assimilated group usually adopts the culture of the other group; *imperialism*– empire building, achieved by taking over and dominating other groups; *romantic* – idealistic; *nationalism* – patriotism; *genocide* – murder of an entire ethnic group.

Source: Rivas, Jorge. "Gap Pulls 'Manifest Destiny' Shirts After Outrage, Twitter Responses." *Colorlines: News for Action*. 15 October 2012.

http://colorlines.com/archives/2012/10/designer_behind_gaps_manifest_destiny_shirt_tweets_inflammatory_response.html.

Optional Post-Debate Activity:

Choose one of the documents that you did not analyze as part of the group activity. Write a letter to the author in which you:

1. Explain what Manifest Destiny means to you.
2. Describe how Manifest Destiny impacted the Plains Indians, and cite examples from your experiences playing "A Cheyenne Odyssey."
3. Critique the author's perspective on Manifest Destiny as presented in the document, encouraging the author to maintain or change his/her point of view on Manifest Destiny.