Was Manifest Destiny Justified?

Destiny: Choice or Chance?

Our objectives

- See yourself as a historian, knowing that you can create stories of the past just as the experts do.
- Be skeptical about facts of the past, recognize that the information has been collected, interpreted, and presented by people who have varying points of view.
- Be able to generalize about similar aspects of the past while still recognizing the uniqueness of each event.
- See purpose in studying history; see how knowing the past affects the present and the future.
- Discover new things about the past, new ways of thinking, new ideas, and new interpretations that amaze us all.

What questions should we ask to help decide if Manifest Destiny was justified?

- What was Manifest Destiny?
- Where/when/who/how . . . What are the details concerning Manifest Destiny?
- How did the expansion of the nation contribute to the philosophy of Manifest Destiny?
- How was the Mexican War (1846-1848) connected to Manifest Destiny?
- How did social and economic factors contribute to Manifest Destiny?

How can you find answers to those questions?
Read primary sources

- Read journals, letters, biographies, autobiographies, such as:
  - Kit Carson’s Autobiography
  - The Letters and Journals of Narcissa Whitman
  - Across the Plains in 1844 by Catherine Sager Pringle

- Read sources that reflect the thinking of the time, such as:
  - John L. O’Sullivan’s 1845 article in The New York Democratic Review that first used the phrase “manifest destiny.”
  - The “Spot Resolutions” authored by Congressman Abraham Lincoln of Illinois, 1847, that challenged President James K. Polk to show the exact spot where American blood had been shed on American soil (by the hand of the Mexican army)
Examine other primary sources

**ARTIFACTS**  
**PHOTOGRAPHS**  
**MAPS**

Trail Ruts  
Trail ruts near Guernsey, Wyoming
The Register Cliffs

Platte County, Wyoming

About one day west of Fort Laramie

"Map of Lewis and Clark’s Track, Across the Western Portion of North America."

This map was published in the first published account of Lewis and Clark’s journals, edited by Nicholas Biddle (yes, that Nicholas Biddle).
The Ox Team, or the Old Oregon Trail 1852–1906, by Ezra Meeker

Strictly speaking, this is not a primary source – not a map used during the era, but one used later in a history book about the Oregon Trail migration.

S.M. Marshall died of cholera and was buried near Baldwin Creek, Kansas (facing Kentucky, or so legend had it). His wagon train was not very far down the trail when he met his . . .

destiny.

Cholera is spread through contaminated food and water.
Pistol Powder Flasks

- In Hagerman Valley Museum
- Hagerman, Idaho

Gloves

- Leather gloves of Artinecia Riddle Chapman Merriman (1830-1917). Her family migrated on the Oregon Trail in 1851.
Shoes

- In Hagerman Valley Museum
- Hagerman, Idaho

How else can you find information?
Read secondary sources

Read books by historians and other writers, such as:

- *The Oregon Trail* by David Dary
- *The Cheyenne Indians* by George Bird Grinnell
- *The American Indian Wars* by John Tebbell and Keith Jemmison

Read articles and essays by historians and other writers, such as:

- “Born Modern: An Overview of the West” by Stanford historian Richard White
- “When Myth and Meaning Overshadow History: Remembering the Alamo” by Linda K. Salvucci, historian at Trinity University in San Antonio
What is a tertiary source?

- A tertiary source is a third-level source. That is, it is two levels removed from learning about history through primary sources.
- Tertiary sources include encyclopedias and textbooks.
- Can you use a tertiary source? Should you?
  - Can use it to help locate reliable sources
  - Confirm using another source
  - Use it for general introduction
  - Not useful to in-depth study
- Example: *United States History to 1877* by Applebly et. Al.

What should I do to read like a historian?

- Consider who wrote a document as well as the circumstances of its creation (Sourcing)
- Locate a document in time and place and to understand how these factors shape its content (Contextualization)
- Consider details across multiple sources to determine points of agreement and disagreement (Corroboration)
- Evaluate sources and analyze rhetoric (Close reading)