

Document A: John O’Sullivan (Modified)

This is an excerpt from an article written by influential journalist and editor, John O’Sullivan, who first coined the term “manifest destiny.”

We are the nation of progress, of individual freedom, of universal **enfranchisement**. Our future history will be to establish on earth the moral dignity and salvation of man — the undeniable truth and goodness of God. America has been chosen for this mission among all the nations of the world, which are shut out from the life-giving light of truth. Her high example shall put an end to the **tyranny** of kings and carry the happy news of peace and good will to millions who now **endure** an existence hardly better than that of beasts of the field. Who, then, can doubt that our country is destined to be the great nation of the future?

Source: John O’Sullivan, "The Great Nation of Futurity," published in *The United States Democratic Review*, 1839.

Vocabulary

enfranchisement: the right to vote

tyranny: cruel and oppressive government

endure: suffer

Document B: *The American Review* (Modified)

This passage is from an article in The American Review, a publication run by supporters of the Whig Party. The Whigs generally opposed the actions of President James K. Polk, a Democrat.

It is manifest to us that the [purpose of the war with Mexico] has been the acquisition of territory. Fifteen hundred miles of territory with several of the richest mines in all Mexico. And if Upper California, with Monterey, and the fine harbor of San Francisco, could be **clutched** at the same time, no doubt the President has thought that his administration would be praised as among the most glorious in history.

The Constitution has been trampled upon in this business [in Texas and Mexico]. [President Polk] manifests a reckless disregard of Constitutional restraints, and of his own **solemn** oath, which he leaves far behind him.

Source: "Our Relations with Mexico," *The American Review*, 1846.

Vocabulary

clutched: grabbed, taken

solemn: deeply sincere

Document C: Parker Sermon (Modified)

This is an excerpt from a sermon delivered at a Congregationalist church in Boston by Theodore Parker, an influential abolitionist and minister, in 1848.

We treated Mexico **contemptuously** before **hostilities** began. [We] sent an army to invade her soil, to capture her cities, and seize her territory. It has been a war of **plunder**, undertaken for the purpose of seizing Mexican territory and extending [slavery over the territory]. It was not enough to have Louisiana a slave territory; not enough to make that institution **perpetual** in Florida; not enough to extend this **blight** over Texas—we must have yet more slave soil, one day to be carved into slave states. ...

The war was unjust at its beginning; mean in its motives, a war without honorable cause, a quarrel between a great boy and a little **puny** weakling who could not walk alone and could hardly stand... Our contest has been like the English seizure of Ireland. All the Justice was on one side—the force, skill, and wealth on the other.

Source: Theodore Parker, *A Sermon on the Mexican War*, 1848.

Vocabulary

contemptuously: in a way that shows disdain or dislike

hostilities: war

plunder: violent and dishonest taking of property

perpetual: permanent, continuing forever

blight: something that spoils or damages

puny: small and weak

Document D: *American Progress*

John Gast completed this painting, titled American Progress, in 1872. Gast was hired to create the painting by George Crofutt, a publisher of popular travel books about the American West.



1. What message was the artist trying to convey with this painting?
2. Is this good evidence for learning what motivated American territorial expansion in the 1840s? Explain.

Guiding Questions

Document A: John O'Sullivan

1. (Close Reading) What does this document suggest about why America pursued expansion in the 1840s?
2. (Corroboration) Does this document support or refute the textbook account? Explain.

Document B: *The American Review*

1. (Sourcing) Who ran *The American Review*?
2. (Contextualization) How might the perspective of the people who ran *The American Review* have influenced the content of this article?
3. (Close Reading) What does this document suggest about why America pursued expansion in the 1840s?
4. (Close Reading) What does the article accuse President Polk of having done?
5. (Corroboration) Does this document support or refute the textbook account? Explain.
6. (Corroboration) How does this document compare to Document A?

Document C: Parker Sermon

1. (Sourcing) Who created this document?
2. (Contextualization) How might the author's background have influenced the content of the document?
3. (Close Reading) What does this document suggest about why America pursued expansion in the 1840s?
4. (Corroboration) Does this document support or refute the textbook account? Explain.
5. (Corroboration) How does this document compare to Documents A and B?