Manifest Destiny

Grade Level(s):
6 - 12

Subject Area(s)
Language Arts - Reading and Writing, Civics, Geography, U.S. History

Estimated Time
Three lessons each covering one to two 45-50 minute class periods

Overview
Manifest Destiny was an extremely powerful idea in 19th century America. The essence of Manifest Destiny was that North America was intended by God to be populated and governed by white Anglos Saxon Americans. This meant that the spread of American democracy and industry was part of the Divine plan. Of course, there were other people on the North American continent who disagreed with this notion. In this lesson, students will explore the idea of Manifest Destiny in the following three lessons:

1. Manifest Destiny and the Power of Perspective
2. Manifest Destiny and the Commercial Conquest of America
3. Manifest Destiny and the U.S.-Mexican War: Then and Now
Lesson 1: Manifest Destiny and the Power of Perspective

Summary
Manifest Destiny represented the forward-looking outlook of a young expanding nation, the United States. However, some of the other inhabitants of North America (specifically, the Mexicans and the Indians) saw themselves and the world around them in very different terms. In this activity, students will examine the power of the different perspectives among the Americans, the Mexicans and the Indians. After exploring this topic through readings and video clips, students will write essays on Manifest Destiny from the perspective of the Mexicans and Indians.

Objectives
Students will:

- Learn about an idea that was one of the driving forces of the young United States.
- Explore other ideas that were at the core of the Mexican and Indian cultures.
- Analyze some of the differences in the perspectives of these cultures.
- Apply their understanding of these different perspectives by writing an essay.

Materials Needed
This activity can be completed using a computer lab where students can access the video clips and handouts themselves via "The U.S.-Mexican War" website. It can also be done by using one classroom computer with a projection device. In the second scenario, you will need to provide the students with the following handouts:

- Power of Perspective worksheet
- Video Clips Library (http://www.pbs.org/usmexicanwar/resources/video_library.html)

Procedure
Pre-viewing Activity: Introduce the idea of Manifest Destiny and explain a bit about its importance in the 19th century United States. Discuss with students the idea that a nation or a culture can have beliefs that help its people understand their worlds. Have the students brainstorm sets of beliefs that may be prevalent among modern-day nations and/or cultures.

Have the students read the following short article from the U.S.-Mexican War site, Manifest Destiny: An Introduction. Ask the students to discuss some of the differences between the 19th century U.S. and Mexico as described in the article.

For additional background, you can reference the other excellent articles on Manifest Destiny on the 'U.S.-Mexican War' site.

Go over the questions on the Power of Perspective worksheet with students before they watch the video clips.
**Viewing Activity:** Tell students to go to The U.S.-Mexican War website to access the video clips for this activity (or display the videos with a projection device in your classroom). Explain to students that the clips will give them some insights into the origin of the idea of Manifest Destiny, but that the clips will also help them better understand the perspectives of the Mexicans and the Indians who lived in North America in the 19th century. Have the students use the Power of Perspective worksheet to guide them through the videos. Have students make notes on the various questions on the worksheet in preparation for the upcoming group activity.

(Also, give students a head's up since there are a couple of names mentioned in the third clip that they may have not encountered yet. "Kearny" is Col. Stephen Kearny who led the American Army of the West that marched across the western half of North America, claiming land for the United States. "Emory" is Lt. William Emory who led Kearny's search parties.)

**Post-viewing Activity:** After students have watched the videos, have them discuss their responses to what they have learned. Try to focus the conversation on the differences among the Americans, Mexicans and Indians in terms of how they looked at the world generally (and it's probably a good idea to remind the students that they are discussing generalities here). If the students have difficulty with the comparisons, simplify things a little for them: the Americans looked forward; the Mexicans looked to the past; the Indians looked to the land. Ask the students to explore what these perspectives might have meant in terms of what these people valued and how they actually lived their lives.

Now that the students have a grasp of these differing perspectives, remind them again of the meaning of Manifest Destiny: it is the belief that North America was meant by God to be settled and governed by white Anglo Saxon Americans. Then have the students write a short one or two-page essay on Manifest Destiny from the perspective of either the 19th century Mexicans or Indians. Tell the students that the perspective from which they are writing should be made clear in their essays, meaning that they should incorporate what they have learned about the Mexican or Indian perspectives rather than simply treating Manifest Destiny from a generic outlook.

When the students are done writing, have them share their essays with the class; then have the students offer each other feedback on their work.

**Classroom Assessment**
To assess the students' work, consider the following:

- Did the students show an understanding of the material about Manifest Destiny and the perspectives of the Mexicans and Indians (consider giving them a short quiz on the topics from the worksheet to find out)?
- Did the students present their ideas clearly in their essays?
- Did the students show their understanding of the Mexican or Indian perspective in their essay on Manifest Destiny?
- Did the students show their understanding of the material in the feedback they offered their classmates?
Extensions and Applications
Have the students explore the relationship between American romanticism and Manifest Destiny by reading the following article on the U.S.-Mexican War site: A Go-Ahead Nation (http://www.pbs.org/usmexicanwar/prelude/md_go-ahead_nation.html)

Have students examine this connection in the literature of the time, for instance in the "Leatherstocking" novels of James Fenimore Cooper.

Another possibility would be to look at the original article by journalist John C. O'Sullivan, in which the term "Manifest Destiny" was first coined: http://web.grinnell.edu/courses/HIS/f01/HIS202-01/Documents/OSullivan.html. This article, written in the language of the time, may be challenging for many students, so you might consider reading it (or parts of it) in class as a group activity.

For younger students: This activity can also be adapted for younger students. Rather than having the students write essays, have them spend more time actually writing out answers to the questions on the worksheet. Then explore the three historical perspectives in a classroom discussion as you review the students’ answers. Use the simplified concrete examples cited above: the Americans looked forward; the Mexicans looked to the past; the Indians looked to the land.

National Standards
McRel K-12 Standards Addressed:

Language Arts

- Standard 1: Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process.
- Standard 2: Uses the stylistic and rhetorical aspects of writing.
- Standard 3: Uses grammatical and mechanical conventions in written compositions.
- Standard 4: Gathers and uses information for research purposes.
- Standard 5: Uses the general skills and strategies of the reading process.

Civics

- Standard 1: Understands ideas about civic life, politics and government.
- Standard 14: Understands issues concerning the disparities between ideals and reality in American political and social life.
- Standard 25: Understands issues regarding personal, political and economic rights.

Geography

- Standard 6: Understands that culture and experience influence people’s perceptions of places and regions.
- Standard 9: Understands the nature, distribution and migration of human populations on Earth’s surface.
- Standard 12: Understands the patterns of human settlement and their causes.
Standard 13: Understands the forces of cooperation and conflict that shape the divisions of Earth's surface.
U.S. History

- Standard 9: Understands the United States territorial expansion between 1801 and 1861, and how it affected relations with external powers and Native Americans.
- Standard 11: Understands the extension, restriction and reorganization of political democracy after 1800.

Online Resources

Below are the links for sites referenced in this activity:

- The U.S.-Mexican War (1846 - 1848)
- O'Sullivan's article which first used the term "Manifest Destiny"
Power of Perspective Worksheet

Use this worksheet to focus your learning as you watch the video clips. Make notes on each question as you watch. You will use these notes in the upcoming classroom activity. (And of course, the questions are meant to be answered in a general way; for example, not all 19th century Americans valued exactly the same things, but there was something of a consensus generally.)

1. What are some of the major components of the idea of Manifest Destiny?

2. What did the 19th century Americans value? Where did they look for their national identity?

3. How would you describe the Mexican perspective described in the clips? What did the Mexicans most value? Where did they look for their national identity?

4. What was the Indian perspective? What did the Indians value? Where did they look for their national identity as a people?

5. Think about ways that these different perspectives may have contributed to conflicts among these peoples.
Lesson 2: Manifest Destiny and the Commercial Conquest of America

Summary
When historian Tony Mares says that "the mercantile conquest of what would become the southwestern part of the United States was the real conquest," the implication is clear. The American march to fulfill Manifest Destiny in western North America was not achieved by the military alone, but also by businessmen who explored what were then Mexican territories and served people and markets that were being ignored by the far-away Mexican government. In this activity, students will learn about the commercial conquest of America via readings and video clips. Then the students will create their own "commercial conquest"! They will work in groups to write hypothetical commercials that could have been made by the American entrepreneurs of the time to reach out to their potential Mexican customers.

Objectives
Students will:

- Learn about the importance of commerce in the American effort to fulfill Manifest Destiny.
- Explore the ways that American businessmen filled a gap in the marketplace that had been created by Mexico's neglect of its territories.
- Examine the ways that commerce and the military worked together to conquer western North America for the United States.
- Think about the ways that American businessmen had to reach out to Mexican customers to gain their trust.
- Apply some of their knowledge in a fun activity where they will write commercials that could have been made by the American entrepreneurs of the time.

Materials Needed
This activity can be completed using a computer lab where students can access the video clips and handouts themselves via "The U.S.-Mexican War" website. It can also be conducted by using a one classroom computer with a projection device. In the second scenario, you will need to provide the students with the following handouts:

- Commercial Conquest worksheet
- Manifest Destiny (http://www.pbs.org/usmexicanwar/foreword/md_manifest_destiny.html)

Procedure
Pre-viewing Activity: Briefly review the previous activity by engaging students in a discussion about it. Then ask students to consider how they think Manifest Destiny actually became real for the United States. After all, we know that in the early 19th century, the U.S. did not extend west of the Mississippi; now, though, it reaches the Pacific Ocean and beyond. How do the students think this happened? Was it all a matter of military conquests? Ask students to brainstorm some potential answers.

Have the students read the article Manifest Destiny by Sam W. Haynes from the U.S.-Mexican War site. Ask the students to discuss some of the issues the article raises: the importance of technology in America's spread
to the Pacific: the concern about Britain and Mexico working together and keeping the U.S. from gaining lands it wanted; the belief of many in Manifest Destiny.

For additional background, you can reference the [other excellent articles on Manifest Destiny](http://www.pbs.org/usmexicanwar) on the U.S.-Mexican War site.

Briefly go over the questions on the [Commercial Conquest worksheet](http://www.pbs.org/usmexicanwar) with students before they watch the video clips:

- Why were New Mexico and California considered so important by the U.S. government?
- How did the central Mexican government treat its citizens in the outlying territories of New Mexico and California?
- What was U.S. President John Polk's attitude toward acquiring New Mexico and California from the Mexican government?
- How did the U.S. first gain influence in the territories of New Mexico and California?
- What was the main trade route that the Americans used to reach New Mexico? What kinds of products did they sell to the people who lived in New Mexico?
- Mexico had invited American settlers to come to Texas and then ultimately lost control of that territory to those very same settlers. In the videos, there is discussion about how some of the Mexicans in New Mexico and California distrusted the new American businessmen who were coming to their territories. They may have feared that history would repeat itself and the Americans would take their territories as well. What do you think may have been some strategies that the American businessmen used to reach out to their potential Mexican customers?

**Viewing Activity:** Tell students to go to [The U.S.-Mexican War website](http://www.pbs.org/usmexicanwar) to access the video clips for this activity (or display the videos with a projection device in your classroom). Explain to students that the clips will give them some insights into how commerce and military power combined to help the U.S. ultimately gain the lands of New Mexico and California from Mexico. Have students answer the questions on the [Commercial Conquest worksheet](http://www.pbs.org/usmexicanwar) after they have watched the videos.

**Post-viewing Activity:** Go over the content of the videos with the students, focusing particularly on the subjects addressed in the worksheet. Then read the previously mentioned quote from historian Tony Mares to the students:

"The mercantile conquest of what would become the southwestern part of the U.S. was the real conquest."

Ask students to discuss what they think that quote means and whether they believe it to be true.

Remind students that technological advances like the steamboat, railroad and the telegraph greatly helped with the American move westward. One technological advance that the Americans did not have access to yet was television. However, in the following activity, you are going to give the students the opportunity to do some time travel and bring TV back to the 19th century!
Break the class into groups of 4-5 students each. Tell the students that they are to assume the role of the mid-19th century American entrepreneurs trying to ply their wares to the Mexican settlers in New Mexico… in a television commercial. Each group will work together to:

1. Identify a product that real Mexican settlers would have been eager to buy.
2. Develop a sales pitch that will reach out to potential Mexican customers who, for some very good reasons, may not have trusted the new American settlers/businessmen.
3. Use the above to write a 30-second TV commercial for their product.

The students should have fun with this activity; encourage them to be creative with it while displaying their knowledge about the topic. When the students have written their commercial scripts, have them read and/or perform them for their classmates. Have the students give each other feedback on their work.

Classroom Assessment
To assess the students' work, consider the following:

- Did the students show an understanding of the commercial conquest of America in their answers on the worksheet?
- Did the students show an understanding of these issues during the classroom discussion?
- Did the students work well together in their groups?
- Did the students' scripts show a grasp of the content?
- Did the students' scripts exhibit a creative approach to the material?

Extensions and Applications
If you have access to video production equipment, follow up on this activity by having the students videotape the scripts for their commercials.

Students could also use the interactive timeline on the U.S.-Mexican War site to do map work on the Santa Fe Trail and/or to look at the great distances between Mexico City and some of Mexico's territories, particularly New Mexico and California. These great distances, and Mexico's relative neglect of its territories, gave U.S. entrepreneurs the opportunity to get a commercial foothold in these areas.

Another possibility is to have students use the timeline to do a population study of California and Texas in the second half of the 19th century. What percentage of the total U.S. population lived in these two states in 1850? 1860? 1870? What does the data say about the population shift in the U.S. during that time? What percentage of the U.S. population lived in these states according to the most recent census (2000)? What does the minority population of these states tell us about what America might look like in the coming years?

Students could also explore some of the excellent related articles on the PBS site, "The West":

- [http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/program/episodes/two/whatacountry.htm](http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/program/episodes/two/whatacountry.htm)
- [http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/program/episodes/two/sowedie.htm](http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/program/episodes/two/sowedie.htm)
- [http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/program/episodes/two/continentalnation.htm](http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/program/episodes/two/continentalnation.htm)
For younger students: This activity could also be used by middle school students with little adaptation. They would certainly enjoy the challenge of coming up with ideas for a television commercial. You may need to simplify or omit some of the questions on the worksheet and/or answer the questions with the students as part of a classroom discussion.

National Standards

McRel K-12 Standards Addressed:

Language Arts

- Standard 1: Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process.
- Standard 2: Uses the stylistic and rhetorical aspects of writing.
- Standard 3: Uses grammatical and mechanical conventions in written compositions.
- Standard 4: Gathers and uses information for research purposes.
- Standard 5: Uses the general skills and strategies of the reading process.
- Standard 8: Uses listening and speaking strategies for different purposes.

Civics

- Standard 13: Understands the character of American political and social conflict and factors that tend to prevent or lower its intensity.
- Standard 14: Understands issues concerning the disparities between ideals and reality in American political and social life.
- Standard 23: Understands the impact of significant political and nonpolitical developments on the United States and other nations.

Geography

- Standard 1: Understands the characteristics and uses of maps, globes and other geographic tools and technologies.
- Standard 6: Understands that culture and experience influence people's perceptions of places and regions.
- Standard 9: Understands the nature, distribution and migration of human populations on Earth's surface.
- Standard 12: Understands the patterns of human settlement and their causes.
- Standard 13: Understands the forces of cooperation and conflict that shape the divisions of Earth's surface.

U.S. History

- Standard 9: Understands the United States territorial expansion between 1801 and 1861, and how it affected relations with external powers and Native Americans.
- Standard 11: Understands the extension, restriction and reorganization of political democracy after 1800.
Online Resources
Below are the links for sites referenced in this activity:

- The U.S.-Mexican War (1846 - 1848)  
  http://www.pbs.org/usmexicanwar/

- Additional readings on Manifest Destiny and the American trek westward  
  http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/program/episodes/two/whatacountry.htm  
  http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/program/episodes/two/sowedie.htm  
  http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/program/episodes/two/continentalnation.htm
Commercial Conquest Worksheet
Answer the following questions after you have watched the videos for this activity.

1. Why were New Mexico and California considered so important by the U.S. government?

2. How did the central Mexican government treat its citizens in the outlying territories of New Mexico and California?

3. What was U.S. President John Polk's attitude toward acquiring New Mexico and California from the Mexican government?

4. How did the U.S. first gain influence in the territories of New Mexico and California?

5. What was the main trade route that the Americans used to reach New Mexico? What kinds of products did they sell to the people who lived in New Mexico?

6. Mexico had invited American settlers to come to Texas and then ultimately lost control of that territory to those very same settlers. In the videos, there is discussion about how some of the Mexicans in New Mexico and California distrusted the new American businessmen who were coming to their territories. They may have feared that history would repeat itself and the Americans would take their territories as well.

What do you think may have been some strategies that the American businessmen used to reach out to their potential Mexican customers?
Lesson 3: Manifest Destiny and the U.S.-Mexican War: Then and Now

Summary
At the time of the U.S.-Mexican War (and the height of the popularity of Manifest Destiny), there were some Americans who spoke out against what they regarded as a war of aggression. However, for the most part, the American public supported the war and the idea of Manifest Destiny itself. Today most historians see things differently. Historian David Pletcher writes of the U.S.-Mexican War: "This war was an aggressive war in which we attacked a neighbor and however much we won from the war, we do not like to look at the way in which we won it." Pletcher's idea may be borne out by the following two facts: there is still not a federally-funded memorial to the veterans of the U.S.-Mexican War and this war is so little studied and known about in the United States.

In this activity, students will explore different American opinions about the U.S.-Mexican War (and by extension, Manifest Destiny) from both the 19th century and today. Students will then apply their knowledge by having a debate on the topic.

Objectives
Students will:

- Consider the elements of Manifest Destiny that were attractive and exciting to Americans.
- Learn about some of the voices that at the time opposed the U.S.-Mexican War and the idea of Manifest Destiny.
- Research American historical perspectives (then and now) on the war and Manifest Destiny.
- Work in a team to prepare their research to be used in a debate.
- Participate in a debate with their classmates, with one side representing the consensus mid-19th century view on Manifest Destiny and the other representing the consensus modern-day perspective.

Materials Needed
This activity can be completed using a computer lab where students can access the video clips and handouts themselves via The U.S.-Mexican War website. It can also be conducted by using one classroom computer with a projection device. In the second scenario, you will need to provide the students with the following handouts:

- Then and Now worksheet
- An Ideal or a Justification
  (http://www.pbs.org/usmexicanwar/prelude/md_an_ideal_or_a_justification.html)

Procedure
Pre-viewing Activity: Briefly review the previous activity. Then ask students to read the brief article An Ideal or a Justification from the U.S.-Mexican War site. Discuss the complexity of Manifest Destiny with the students. Reference the dichotomy cited in the article, in which Pletcher discusses how Manifest Destiny was both racist and idealist.
Briefly review the two quotations on the **Then and Now worksheet** and go over the following questions with students before they watch the video clips:

- What do you think was the general view of both the war and the idea of Manifest Destiny in mid-19th century America?
- What do you think Americans liked about the idea of Manifest Destiny then?
- While opponents to the war and Manifest Destiny were in the minority at the time, what were some of their arguments?
- What is your sense of how many historians look at Manifest Destiny today?
- How do you think that the American public would respond today if the U.S. army invaded Mexico?
- Why do you think that the U.S.-Mexican War is so little studied today?

Explain to the students that after they have done their research, they will be engaging in a debate about the idea of Manifest Destiny, with one side representing the consensus mid-19th century view and the other representing the consensus modern-day perspective of the historians they have read. Break the students into the two groups now or after the viewing activity.

**Viewing Activity:** Tell students to go to The U.S.-Mexican War website to access the video clips for this activity (or display the videos with a projection device in your classroom). Ask students to pay special attention to the content about people's attitudes toward the war and Manifest Destiny. Have the students use the **Then and Now worksheet** to focus their viewing as they watch the videos.

**Post-viewing Activity:** Have the two groups get ready for their debate. Ask each group to prepare a two-minute opening statement for their side of the debate. Also ask them to create a list of four points that they would like to address during the debate and to share that list with the other group. Once the groups have completed their preparations, have the students begin the debate by making their opening statements. Then have the groups go back and forth presenting each of their four main points, always allowing the opposition to respond to each point. Finally, have one person from each group summarize their side’s position.

After the debate, ask the students to share their responses to the experience. Ask them to consider how attitudes toward Manifest Destiny and the U.S.-Mexican war have changed through time. Ask them to consider a popular modern-day ideal and question whether attitudes toward that ideal might also change over time. What might account for those changes? Is it easy or hard to imagine those changes?

**Classroom Assessment**

To assess the students' work, consider the following:

- Did the students show that they had a good grasp of the historical perspectives on the war and Manifest Destiny?
- Did the students make their arguments clearly and persuasively?
- Did the students on each side work well together as a team?
- Did the students show an understanding of the material in the questions that they asked the other side?

To further assess the students' work, you might use the questions on the worksheet (and any additional ones you would like to add) as a graded assessment.
Extensions and Applications
Have students research more of the articles on the U.S.-Mexican War site to more deeply explore Mexican and Indian attitudes toward Manifest Destiny. These articles are a good starting point:

- The Power of an Idea
- Native American Displacement Amid U.S. Expansion

Have the students read the Declaration of Independence (especially the 2nd paragraph) and analyze whether Manifest Destiny was a realization of the American ideal or a betrayal of it. They can find the Declaration of Independence here: [http://www.archives.gov/national-archives-experience/charters/declaration_transcript.html](http://www.archives.gov/national-archives-experience/charters/declaration_transcript.html)

Another possibility is to have students use the interactive timeline on the U.S.-Mexican War site as a starting point for research on the history of slavery in the United States. Further research could also be done here: [http://www.pbs.org/wnet/aaworld/timeline/early_01.html](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/aaworld/timeline/early_01.html)

For younger students: Much of this activity can be taught to younger children as it is. However, you may consider having a classroom discussion rather than a debate around the different historical perspectives. Another possibility would be to have younger students look at the painting "Westward Angel," which can be found here: [http://www.accd.edu/pac/history/hist1302/WestwardAngel.jpg](http://www.accd.edu/pac/history/hist1302/WestwardAngel.jpg)

Ask the students to think about the components of the painting and what they represent in terms of Manifest Destiny. Can they imagine such a painting being created today? Why or why not? (A study of this painting could also be successfully incorporated into the main activity for older children.)

National Standards
McRel K-12 Standards Addressed:

Language Arts

- Standard 4: Gathers and uses information for research purposes.
- Standard 5: Uses the general skills and strategies of the reading process.
- Standard 8: Uses listening and speaking strategies for different purposes.

Civics

- Standard 14: Understands issues concerning the disparities between ideals and reality in American political and social life.
- Standard 23: Understands the impact of significant political and nonpolitical developments on the United States and other nations.
Geography

- Standard 6: Understands that culture and experience influence people's perceptions of places and regions.
- Standard 9: Understands the nature, distribution and migration of human populations on Earth's surface.
- Standard 12: Understands the patterns of human settlement and their causes.
- Standard 13: Understands the forces of cooperation and conflict that shape the divisions of Earth's surface.

U.S. History

- Standard 9: Understands the United States territorial expansion between 1801 and 1861, and how it affected relations with external powers and Native Americans.
- Standard 10: Understands how the industrial revolution, increasing immigration, the rapid expansion of slavery, and the westward movement changed American lives and led to regional tensions.
- Standard 11: Understands the extension, restriction and reorganization of political democracy after 1800.

Online Resources
Below are the links for sites referenced in this activity:

- The U.S.-Mexican War (1846 - 1848)
  http://www.pbs.org/usmexicanwar/

- The Declaration of Independence
  http://www.archives.gov/national-archives-experience/charters/declaration_transcript.html

- An American slavery timeline
  http://www.pbs.org/wnet/aaworld/timeline/early_01.html

- The painting "Westward Angel"
  http://www.accd.edu/pac/history/hist1302/WestwardAngel.jpg
Then and Now Worksheet

Think about these two quotes while you watch the video clips:

"We love to indulge in thoughts of the future extent and power of this Republic - because with its increase is the increase of human happiness and liberty. . . . What has miserable, inefficient Mexico - with her superstition, her burlesque upon freedom, her actual tyranny by the few over the many - what has she to do with the great mission of peopling the New World with a noble race? Be it ours, to achieve that mission!"

– Walt Whitman, Editorial, Brooklyn Daily Eagle, July 7, 1846

"This war was an aggressive war in which we attacked a neighbor and however much we won from the war, we do not like to look at the way in which we won it."

– David Pletcher, American Historian, 1998

Consider these questions as you watch the videos. You will address some of them in the debate.

1. What do you think was the general view of both the war and the idea of Manifest Destiny in mid-19th century America?

2. What do you think Americans liked about the idea of Manifest Destiny then?

3. While opponents to the war and Manifest Destiny were in the minority at the time, what were some of their arguments?

4. What is your sense of how many historians look at Manifest Destiny today?
Then and Now Worksheet continued

5. How do you think that the American public would respond today if the U.S. army invaded Mexico?

6. Why do you think that the U.S.-Mexican War is so little studied today?