



"Whose Destiny? Viewing America's Westward Expansion through Artful Eyes"

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"It is because of the possessive instinct and not the plough that the soil is destined for the race using the cannon rather than the bow and arrow"

—Albert Weinberg, 1935

Introduction

I have taught an integrated American Studies course for 8th graders at Thoreau Demonstration Academy for 15 years. While part of Tulsa Public Schools, we operate quite differently from the other middle schools. Opened in 1998 with the goal of building a school program around research based, best teaching practices, we were the first middle school in the district to require our students to wear uniforms, require teachers to create soothing and secure environments within their classrooms and to continuously design thematic and integrated curriculum among both vertical and horizontal teams of teachers. Each core teacher at Thoreau teaches two subjects in an integrated ninety minute block of time to rather large numbers of students, either Language Arts/Social Studies or Math/Science, and meets weekly to collaborate and plan with both same subject teachers and grade level teams. As my students' Language Arts teacher and Social Studies teacher all rolled into one, I have the unique opportunity to provide integrated, literacy- based instructional lessons for my students.

Our school serves as a "lottery" magnet for the large urban district of Tulsa Public Schools, pulling our students randomly in equal numbers from the four quadrants of the city. There are two other magnet middle schools in the district; however, they employ rigorous academic eligibility requirements that we do not, as our students are randomly drawn from the entire student pool in the district. Because of this, our school is a diverse mix of socioeconomic groups, ethnic groups, and academic abilities. Functioning as an authentic reflection of our city, our school's population is made up of Caucasian white, African American, Native American and Hispanic students. Thoreau has been quite successful and remains unique in our district due to

our continued efforts to offer a consistent academic program that is celebratory and inclusive of the diversity within. My students certainly reflect the heterogeneity of our urban landscape in every area, including the learning spectrum, which includes IEP and learning disabled, English language learners, gifted and talented, and every type of student in between. As such, I work hard to design lessons that will be highly engaging, rigorous and empowering for every student.

Rationale

Through my participation in the seminar "Understanding History and Society through Visual Art, 1776-1914", I wish to design a unit of five lessons that will engage my students and provide a depth of learning about the people and the events of the era of "manifest destiny" in the early to middle 19th century United States, while at the same time challenge them to think about the event in a more reflective and evaluative way. Our state standards include that of examining the concept of manifest destiny as a motivation and justification for westward expansion. Understanding the concept itself and its origins in a purely knowledge level way has not historically been difficult for my eighth grade students. However, the concept should not be viewed in a simplistic or rudimentary way, as most textbooks or history books have portrayed it over the centuries. Indeed, long before the term "manifest destiny" was coined by John L. O'Sullivan in 1845 this ideology was already being enthusiastically carried out, and it continued for many years after O'Sullivan gave it a name. America's westward expansion period was quite a long one, an extensive period of continuous linear westerly movement of groups of European American settlers; a population movement on the grandest scale and scope the American nation has ever witnessed. The tapestry of rich and varied characters and events that were inherent within this era of expansion are fascinating in their own right and an enormous time could well be spent on them in the classroom. The theory of manifest destiny encompassed a set of ideas that empowered European Americans to appropriate huge territories formerly occupied by Native Americans, based on the religious and nationalistic belief that this was supported by Providence. School curriculums and textbooks all include the concept of manifest destiny within their discussion of westward expansion but in the most simple and rudimentary way. European American settlers had been moving west almost since their feet touched the rocky east coast lands of the New World in the early seventeenth century. Two hundred years later, Americans, both in the east and those already on western frontiers, fully embraced the idea of manifest destiny and used it to bolster their already westward tendencies. Americans had pushed west consistently, each time a new territory was acquired. But it was under the administration of President James K. Polk, and the acquisitions of Oregon Country and Mexico's vast holdings of present day Texas, California, Oregon, added to that of the Louisiana Territory holdings of Kansas and Nebraska, that Americans would require a rationale for such rapidly acquired and vast territorial gains. Settlers of all ilks and purposes began to move west to fill in these regions and secure them for the national best interest. It would not be long before the entire United States map as we know it today, save for Alaska and Hawaii, was complete.

All of the above is true and accurate but it is not the complete story. The results of this period of rapid and unrelenting expansion were not positive ones for everyone involved, especially for those most brutally and irrevocably victimized by this national ideology, the Native Americans. In order for my students to understand the entire "big picture" of America's period of westward expansion and nation building, the profound effects and ramifications of this lengthy period of movement on the Native American must be uncovered and viewed without the constraining rhetoric that has clouded this event and that often makes it difficult for all but the

experts to truly grasp. What were the motivating factors of the European Americans? How did they justify the acquisition of land that someone else already inhabited? These questions are not answered with cut and dry facts: rather, these are the questions that must be answered after careful and critical analysis of the events that surround the era. It is important for my students to be able to look critically at the ideological statements of the period and form their own opinions about the pros and cons of this nationalistic ideology. I want my students to be able to effectively skirt around the propaganda, patriotic fervor, and sales gimmicks of this chapter in American history and connect with not only the concept and content of manifest destiny but the human failings, tragedies, and triumphs. Being able to do the above will certainly assist my students socially and politically in their everyday American lives, now and in the future.

I want my students to be able to critically evaluate the ideology with respect to not only why the nation embraced manifest destiny, but also what effect this policy had on the image of and the culture of the Native American. I find that my students almost always engage in their own learning when they can make those emotional connections. Our school is very diverse culturally, and students need to be able to engage in activities and instruction that allow them to hash through the different events of history, both joyous and tragic, without boundaries or blinders. However, although my students live in a region with a history and present that are profoundly affected by the events stemming from manifest destiny and westward expansion, they do not seem to make the necessary connections or even to care much at all. Westward expansion seems to be an isolated, long ago, event that lacks relevance to them. I want them to be able to connect personally and critically to these events, seeking out the universal themes throughout the historical event, themes that are indeed relevant today. It is frustrating to find the Native American so often marginalized, not only in history but in the present day in standards and curriculum in schools. Native American history is our history and needs to be front and center in all study of American history.

As adolescents who exist in an extremely exhilarating visual world themselves, my students are naturally attracted to the visual image in the classroom. However, I have found that they are so bombarded with visual stimuli that they aren't thinking much about any of it, certainly not viewing it in any critical fashion. I have chosen to teach the multi-layered concept of manifest destiny through numerous art works, including paintings, prints, sculpture, and photography, using some sound strategies for critical analysis. As residents of Tulsa, Oklahoma, formerly Indian Territory, we are indeed fortunate to have a nationally recognized museum of western art, one that is absolutely free to students in the area, the Thomas Gilcrease Museum. It is in this treasure trove of western art and artifacts that my students will be able to put all of the pieces together while making deep, personal connections with the art works in order to reveal the motivations and the relationships of the various groups of people involved in this extraordinary era of America's westward movement. My unit of study will focus on uncovering how the persistent and continuous westward movement of primarily white Americans impacted the relationships between and among the Native Americans and frontier settlers. Through a partnership with Gilcrease Museum, which will include a day long field study exploration of their holdings, students will employ the strategies and skills required for the critical analysis of authentic works of art within the realm of American westward expansion. Ironically it is my students that live a stone's throw away from the Gilcrease Museum of Art that have never visited and quite possibly may never visit any museum. In recent years, the museum has reached out to public schools in the area, encouraging school visits and even paying for the expenses, a wonderful incentive for our economically strained school district. With this unit of lessons, I will prepare my students better beforehand so that it is an exciting and enriching experience for all, especially them. It is my obligation to make sure that all of my students are afforded the opportunities to not only engage with fine works of art, as I believe is their right as a citizen of the community and indeed, as a human being, but also to utilize all of the tools that are within our reach for their educational growth and success.

Objectives

There are multiple skills and content that I want students to take away from this unit. The objectives for the unit are as follows:

- Students will be able to critically analyze art and image in order to make determinations about a pivotal event in American History, namely "manifest destiny" and westward expansion.
- Students will be able to determine through their analysis of multiple art works the impact of westward expansion on the American nation and on Native Americans in particular.
- Students will be able to use their knowledge and understanding of a variety of primary and secondary sources, including visuals, in order to evaluate whether manifest destiny was justified and be able to support their evaluation with evidence.
- Students will examine the concept of manifest destiny as a motivation and justification for westward expansion in the United States.
- Students will be able to experience art for its beauty and other inherent qualities and recognize art masterpieces from America's westward expansion era.

Overarching Essential Question for Unit

How was the Native American portrayed by artists during the era of manifest destiny? How was this a reflection of the concept of manifest destiny and the zealous desire for expansion west by European-Americans in the nineteenth century?

Strategies

It is important for students to arrive at our culminating field study at the Gilcrease with a proverbial tool box of strategies and skills with which to carry out their tasks. I want to begin with a fairly blank slate in that they will know very little about the westward expansion events of the nineteenth century. They need to have some base from which to launch into our topic, but I do not want to give away any bias or affective opinion about any of the subject matter: just the facts, ma'am at this juncture. This lesson unit will have greater impact if students are allowed their own inquiry and questioning as they review the art works.

Interactive Artist Journal

I want my students to be fully engaged and interacting with the content of this unit, primarily the visual images. I will have them create an interactive Artist Journal in which to collect all content and analysis notes, handouts, visual images, and their own processing of the activities. Pablo Picasso stated that "All children are artists. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up." Some students find that expressing themselves in untraditional (not verbal linguistic) ways can be threatening, the old "I can't draw" self-limitation. However, I want all of my students to have the opportunity to tap into their own unique ways of

experiencing art while at the same time learning from it. The Journal will be set up so that all of the important content and notes will go on the right hand page of their Journal and their processing of the material will go on the left hand page. It is important that my students have a consistent place to collect their "learning" and then to process it in their own unique ways. This may mean illustrations, charts, cartoons, etc. The important thing is for the interactive Journal to become a positive, powerful and personal connection to the material we are learning.

Talking Statues

Before we get into the nuts and bolts of how to view and analyze a work of art for the purpose of uncovering historical meaning and connection, I need to hook them in. To do this I will use John Gast's *American Progress* with the *Talking Statues* strategy, a form of tableau vivant. We will begin with this immediate and powerful art image that we will share together on the Smart Board. This painting is a narrative unto itself and highly detailed, and draws the viewer in with numerous, easy to "read" references to westward expansion. It is rich with color and graphic appeal and the details within are sharp and clear. It is the perfect non-threatening painting to model all of the skills and steps the students will need when critically analyzing art. It will work well with this strategy, wherein my students will be randomly assigned a character or characters in the painting. Preselected Role Cards will determine the students who will come to the front, step in front of the life-sized painting on the board, and get into a similar position as the characters in the painting. Once they have "frozen" into their character(s), I will interview them about what they are doing, where they are going, what do they see, where have they come from, etc., much like a news reporter. After I have questioned each group of students I will allow the class to pose questions or thoughts that we have not yet brought up. This strategy allows all of the students to place themselves within the art work, helping them make those important observations and connections to the work's historical and narrative value. With this strategy at the beginning of the Unit, students have been invited into a world of art that they now find interesting and relevant.

Levels of Questioning

In order to view art works critically, my students will need to learn the skill of questioning. After the initial *Talking Statues* activity, my students will return to their seats and begin this next phase of image analysis. I want my students to be able to bring the visuals and images to life in order to be able to pull out significant themes, narratives, and events of westward expansion. The use of questioning strategies will develop their visual literacy skills and will allow them to build on their own knowledge of the topic through higher-level thinking and deductive reasoning. When my students interact with visuals in this way, observing through good questioning, they will remember the relevant content in much more powerful ways.

In order to learn the questioning technique for further analysis, we will use the same painting we have been working with. I will go over the three Levels of Questioning for images with the class as well as give them a handout with all of the examples and information. I want my students to ask the types of questions that will lead them to evaluative decisions about the content and allow them to extract relevant meaning from the image. We will have already used similar Levels of Questioning for primary source texts and other activities in our class. These questions, however, are specifically tailored to image analysis. Students, in their small groups, will now work through the three levels of gathering evidence, interpreting evidence, and making hypotheses (see Activity Two below). The Level One questions will allow students to look for details that might reveal something about the visual. The Level Two questions encourage students to begin making inferences from the physical details they discovered in Level One. Finally, the Level Three questions will require that students use the evidence and inferences to make a hypothesis about what is happening and why, using their

higher level critical thinking skills.

Collaborative Jigsaw Puzzle

Another strategy I will use is a version of the collaborative activity known as jigsaw. In a jigsaw collaborative activity students are placed in small groups and given different roles within that group. They will form new groups with students from other groups who have been assigned the same role or topic as them. This is often called an expert group, as they master something with this group well enough to take back to their original group and teach it. In this case, the students will form an expert group with students who have randomly received a section of a painting that they have as well. This strategy allows for collaborative learning with many other different students, some much needed opportunity for bodily kinesthetic movement, an engaging way for students to see multiple works of art in a brief amount of time and crucial practice and processing of the newly acquired questioning technique.

Direct Instruction: PowerPoint

Ultimately, I want my students to determine for themselves, through their critical analysis of powerful art works, whether or not European-Americans of the nineteenth century portrayed the Native American in certain ways due to their absolute devotion to the concept of manifest destiny. They must be able to support their own claims with evidence from the paintings and sculptures, but also will need background knowledge to achieve success. I will create a visual PowerPoint lecture that will address the different ways that Native Americans were portrayed in works of art in order to further inflame expansionist goals: the Native American as "Noble Savage", the Native American as the source for frontier conflict that must be eradicated, and the Native American as a doomed and nostalgic figure. The lecture will also include the romanticized frontiersmen and landscape paintings that further created the mythology and ideology of the expansionist art. Here is where I will spotlight paintings by artists such as George Catlin, Charles Bird King, John Wesley Jarvis, Seth Eastman, William T. Ranney, Henry Farney, Alfred Jacob Miller, Charles Shreyvogel, William Keith, Albert Bierstadt, Thomas Moran, Frederick Remington, James Earle Fraser, and Olaf Carl Seltzer. These are the artists who have seminal works at the Gilcrease Museum for my students, but there are many other choices that would suit any school district region or specific topic. (A comprehensive list of all artists, art works, and where to find them will follow this unit) Students will record notes from the PowerPoint into their interactive Artist Journals so that they have access to the basic content while at the museum.

Compare and Contrast: Sensory Figures

When the Direct Instruction has ended, students will be given the opportunity to process the information through a Sensory Figure illustration. I will ask students to partner up with one person at their table. The partners will complete a Sensory Figure for either a Native American on the frontier or a European-American settler on the frontier. They will draw the figures as authentically as they can and place a minimum of two thought bubbles above each character. Inside the bubbles they will write from the perspective of the character. What are the perspectives of the two opposite groups? How do they see one another? These are the questions my students should be tackling by this point in the unit. This is an essential activity that will allow students the necessary time to process the information with a partner while determining the perspectives of the major players in the manifest destiny drama.

Museum Field Study Trip

My students will use their information and analysis skills with genuine art works from our era of study. I will

organize a Field Study Trip to a local museum, the Gilcrease Museum of Art, where the students will analyze works of art, including many works that they have seen in the classroom. Expectations for acceptable behavior and deportment will have been discussed in class and written into their Artist Journals. Procedures will include how to speak to each other and docents quietly and professionally, how to monitor their body movements, and how not to touch a work while getting as close as possible. They will be given small pencils and allowed to bring only their Artist Journals with them to the museum. They will attend in small groups and be further divided up once at the museum. I have three overall goals at the museum, one being that students be able to locate, analyze and evaluate assigned works of art for the information they impart about the unit's primary Essential Question. I also want my students to be completely saturated by the stunning visuals of westward expansion. A third goal is for my students to have a deeply personal experience with great art, one that will become a part of who they are as a person. I believe that art is for everyone and that everyone's reaction and interaction with art is valuable.

Fish Bowl Discussion

After our experience at the Gilcrease Museum, I will have my students participate in a Fish Bowl discussion, an activity in which a small group of students engage in a discussion of the Essential Question while the remainder of the class observes and takes notes. Once the discussion is going well, discussion circle members may leave the circle and become observers and observers may come into the discussion. The discussion circle participants will interact with each other to create meaning in response the art works and background information, constructing new insights as they speak and listen to the insights of others. Observers will make notes about cogent points made or "aha" moments that they relate to. Students will already be well prepared for the discussion and will enter it armed with their analysis questions, claims and evidence in their Artist Journals. Prior to the actual discussion, I will also ask my students to respond to four queries that will help them determine what they still want to know or what interests them the most.

Assessment: Poem for Two Voices

The unit will culminate with the students collaborating on a *Poem for Two Voices*, a strategy that will allow students to further process what they have learned about our topic after a critical analysis of authentic works of art and deep discussion. A Poem for Two Voices asks students to compare and contrast the two sides of our unit of study: the Native American and the white frontier settler. This strategy requires my students to work with a partner, as they each take a side. The partners will take turns writing the poem from the two perspectives, while in the middle of the poem will be ideas both sides agree on or things that would both sides would say. This will be done in class.

Classroom Activities

I have designed this unit for five 90 minute class periods.

Activity One: Creating an Artist Journal

This activity will introduce my students to the topic of art and artists as well as set up their own Artist Journal, a place in which they will corral all of the unit's activity components and complete the processing activities. It is important for my students to feel at home with the idea of art prior to beginning the unit, to connect

themselves to art as a natural part of life.

Essential Questions for Activity:

- Pablo Picasso stated that "All children are artists. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up." Are you all artists? How will you know?
- How can you become part of a painting or image?

Materials:

sheets of construction paper (a variety of colors) that have been cut down to 8 x 10 inches; copy paper; scissors; stapler; role cards-one for each student, evenly mixed; small copies of painting for each student as well as an electronic copy to show on board: *American Progress* by John Gast

The Process:

First, we will discuss the Essential Questions for this activity as a class. I will allow time for students to share their ideas about these questions in their small learning groups before sharing as a whole. It is important for them to think about the questions prior to tackling the activity so that everyone feels has had an opportunity to tap into any prior learning or experiences. In my class, students are already at tables of four, so partners or small group will work best for me. We will then discuss together, with me leading the students to the idea that everyone is an artist in some way and that art is a creative expression of self. Not only do they all have an inner artist, but they all have the ability to appreciate and learn from art and image.

We will then discuss how many great artists have kept Journals in which they record their ideas (both visual and written), creative expressions, doodles, etc. I will explain that for our purpose, we want to critically analyze great works of art from our American past in order to learn more about an historical event: westward expansion and manifest destiny.

They will create an Artist Journal of their own to keep track of activities and the processing of those activities, as well as notes, handouts, procedures, etc. I will have students choose a piece of construction paper and fold it in half to create a book cover that is 8 inches tall by 5 inches wide. They will then attach at least twenty sheets of copy paper inside their book jacket and staple at the very outer left edge.

I will then introduce the Unit's topic of manifest destiny in art and image through a very iconic work of art, John Gast's *American Progress*. (1872, N and R Enterprises) I will post this visual on a large screen (Smart Board) and have the class participate in a *Talking Statues* activity. First, I will randomly hand out pre-assigned role cards to all students, a card for each individual or group of characters portrayed in the painting. Some of the cards will have a star on them to indicate those who will come to the front of the class when asked. (The topic of westward expansion falls later in our school year and by this time my students are quite used to presenting in front of their class and most feel quite comfortable. If this were at the beginning of the year, I would pre-select those students that I knew were comfortable in front of the class regardless of any situation.) I then will ask everyone to quietly read their role to themselves and locate themselves in the painting, allowing a little time for them to look back at the painting and imagine what their character is thinking, feeling, and/or seeing. Students with the stars on the back of their Role Cards will then be asked to come up to the painting, stand near where their character(s) are, and freeze into a similar position as those characters.

I will then function as an "on-the-scene" reporter. As I touch each character, they will come to life and answer

my questions and/or those of the audience/class. This form of tableau is highly structured yet nonthreatening and can be done as quickly or as leisurely as your time allows. Leaving the painting on the big screen, I have students go back to their table groups with their personal copy of the painting (or one from a text to look at). Students will then glue their copy of the painting onto the opening page of their Journal. Underneath, they should write a five sentence summary of what they see, hear, feel, touch, taste, and/or smell in the painting below it as a caption.

Activity Two: Critical Analysis of Images Using Levels of Questioning

Essential Questions for Activity:

- How do we "see" art? How do we "read" art?
- How do artists, either of the time period of an historical event or before or after, impact the way we view the event?

Materials: *American Progress* by John Gast (on SmartBoard), handouts of Levels of Questions

The Process:

I want my students to be able to closely examine the concept of manifest destiny as a motivation and justification for westward expansion in the United States, as well as the impact of this on a specific group of Americans. How did these motivations and justifications impact the portrayal of the Native American in American art and culture? I need to teach them strategies for critical analysis in order for them to determine the role that manifest destiny and westward expansion have played in our national history. Therefore, I will introduce the overarching Essential Question of this unit of study: How was the Native American portrayed by artists during the era of manifest destiny? How was this a reflection of the zealous desire for expansion west by the European-Americans? I will remind them that they will come back to this question over and over again during this unit.

I will now introduce the students to the Levels of Questions. I will give them an instructional handout with the following information on it:

Level I: Gathering Evidence Think of yourselves as detectives, and regard your image as a scene from a time or a place that you need to investigate. At this level, the detective's task is to look for evidence—details that may reveal something about the scene. The evidence should be physical—material objects that you could actually touch if you were able to step into the scene.

Examples:

- What do you see in this image?
- What key details, or pieces of evidence, do you see?
- How would you describe the scene and the people?
- What do you hear or smell in this scene?

Level II: Interpreting Evidence Now begin to interpret the details or evidence you have gathered at the "scene". Formulate ideas or make inferences based on the existing evidence, such as the time period, place, or people in the scene. As you share your ideas with your team, state your interpretation, then follow up with a "because" statement that cites your supporting evidence. Typically, questions at this level are **what, when, where, and who** questions.

Examples:

- What do you think is the approximate date of this scene? Give one piece of evidence to support your answer.
- Where might this scene have taken place? Give two pieces of evidence to support your answer.
- What do you think is happening in this scene? Be prepared to support your opinion with two pieces of evidence.

Level III: Making Hypotheses from Evidence At this level, you will use the evidence and your own critical thinking skills to determine the "motives" behind the scene you are investigating. Make hypotheses about what is happening and why it is happening. Typically, questions at this level are **why** and **how** questions that require higher-order thinking skills such as justifying, synthesizing, predicting, and evaluating.

Examples:

- How do you think these people were feeling at this time and place?
- Why do you think these people are engaged in this activity?
- How is the image a reflection of the events of manifest destiny period of America?

I will allow time for students to work through each level of questioning with the *American Progress* painting, making sure to point out the underlying Essential Question for the unit again as a consistent framework for their understandings. I will have them work in groups at this point in order for better scaffolding and more harmonious class building. Once they have had ample time for analysis, I will ask them if their summary of the painting from yesterday's activity has changed. They should now add to or change their summary, rewriting an entirely new one.

Activity Three: Jigsaw Art

Essential Questions for Activity:

- How was the Native American portrayed by artists during the era of manifest destiny? How was this a reflection of the zealous desire for expansion west by the European- Americans?
- How do we "see" art? How do we "read" art?
- How do artists, either of the time period of an historical event or before or after, impact the way we view the event?

Materials:

A different painting from the westward expansion era for each small group of students, laminated and cut into four parts each, numbered on the back; a handout that lists each of the art work titles, artist name, and date of painting; music of your choice

The Process:

I want the students to be able to collaboratively practice the skill of questioning learned in Activity Two. I will prepare enough 4 x 6 size copies of a variety of different works of art for each small group, each image laminated and cut into four equal pieces. (Please see the comprehensive list of art works towards the end of this Unit) I will have them randomly choose a part of a painting and, using their Levels of Questions strategy from Activity Two, they will analyze their piece of the painting/image. I will have the students complete this

part of the activity independently and will assist when needed. This will challenge them and intrigue them, possibly even frustrate them at first. However, I want them to see that there are many things we can get out of an image even if we cannot see all of it at once.

Once they have had enough time to work through their Levels of Questions with the one piece, I will have them mingle to music in order to find the other three parts (and people) to their image. Once they have found them, they will then form a new group and sit at a new table. I will have the students put their four pieces together to form the entire art work. They will then share their findings thus far as a group and begin working through the Levels of Questions again as a group, this time with the entire painting.

I will then give the students a handout that lists all of the paintings by the numbers on the back of their image. They now will have the artist name, the title of the work, and the date that it was created. The students will now be given time to briefly research the artist and the art work. Students will then rejoin their original table group and present their research of their painting. (If short on time, I will give the research as a homework assignment and have them present at the beginning of the next class.)

Activity Four: Direct Instruction of Content Background

Essential Questions for Activity:

- How was the Native American portrayed by artists during the era of manifest destiny? How was this a reflection of the zealous desire for expansion west by the European-Americans?
- How do we "see" art? How do we "read" art?
- How do artists, either of the time period of an historical event or before or after, impact the way we view the event?
- Was Manifest Destiny justified?
- Why did Americans of European descent feel so compelled to expand the country westward?
- What might 19th-century Native Americans have said about Manifest Destiny? Why would they have taken this perspective?
- What would it have been like to walk in the shoes of a 19th-century European American settler in the West? Of a Native American?
- Did artists of the nineteenth century and their art impact how Americans perceived the Native American?

Materials:

A comprehensive PowerPoint visual and informational lecture

The Process:

I will make sure that the Essential Question is posted, as always, and go over it again if necessary. Students should be thinking about the major Essential Question throughout every lesson.

As students take notes in their interactive Artist Journal, I will talk them through a comprehensive PowerPoint lecture about America's period of manifest destiny and westward expansion, as well as the artists and artistic rendering of that era. The PowerPoint should focus on how the Native American was portrayed in art by artists and the underlying reasons for these European-American depictions. It is here that the students will view numerous other important art works of the period and subject, many from the holdings of the museum we will

be visiting. We will practice our analysis strategies together as we build excitement to see the original and authentic works that we will soon be interacting with at the museum. I will use the Content Background information below for the information and art works shown in the PowerPoint. The Teacher Resource section has a comprehensive list of works that may be used as well.

Activity Five: Take it to the Museum

Materials:

Permission slips and transportation requests, students' Artist Journals, small pencils, sack lunches brought by students

The Process:

We will go over all of the procedures and behavior expectations for visiting the Gilcrease Museum. I want the visit to be an enriching one with many opportunities for mastering the content and Essential Questions of the unit. Making sure that students understand the unique behavior expectations when at an art gallery full of priceless art works is essential to them receiving the most profound learning experience we can hope for. Our museum funds our visit completely and we owe it to their staff to be as prepared and forearmed as possible.

Prior to departing for the museum, I will give my students a handout that they will glue into their Artist Journals. The handout will have a list of paintings/sculpture/engravings along with the artist name and date. Their task will be fully explained and modeled: find at least eight works on the handout and analyze each of them using the Levels of Questioning strategy, also glued into their Artist Journals. These are the art works that they will be examining in order to determine the Essential Question: how have artists of the nineteenth century interpreted the concept of manifest destiny? How have they portrayed the Native American within the realm of westward expansion? Students will record all of their thoughts, questions, etc. into their Artist Journals.

I will also allot some time for students to view any of the other artworks in order to determine their favorite work from any of the rooms visited at the museum. This they will note in their Artist Journal with an explanation of why it is their favorite. The trip will be rounded out by a leisurely picnic lunch on the lovely museum grounds.

Activity Six: Assessment: Fishbowl Discussion and Poem for Two Voices

Materials: Artist Journals,

The Process:

As a way to debrief and assess at the same time, I want my students to participate in a Fishbowl discussion. We will begin with the Essential Question: How was the Native American portrayed by artists during the era of manifest destiny? How was this a reflection of the concept of manifest destiny and the zealous desire for expansion west by European-Americans in the nineteenth century? I want my students to be able to organically discuss all that they have learned from class activities and primarily the visual art works. I will have them copy down the following Discussion Guiding Questions:

- During our unit on art of the manifest destiny period, what has surprised you?
- What has interested you about this topic and unit?

- What other questions do you have about this topic that have not been answered for you?
- What connections do you see with other events or ideas?

I will allow the students some time to address these questions in their Artist Journals. This may be done quietly and independently or collaboratively. As there has been so much collaboration up to this point in the unit I will have them work through these questions independently.

Once they have had ample time to gather their thoughts about our Essential Question, I will have volunteers form an inner circle, pulling their chairs over in the middle of the classroom. The other students will pull their chairs up around that circle, facing the backs of the discussion group. As discussion group members share and make points, they must support their ideas by going back into their Artist Journal and referring directly back to the art works. The observing group will record statements from the discussion with which they agree or disagree. They also will keep tabs on how many points each discussion makes. By keeping tally, they remain engaged in the discussion and are ready to enter it when they want to. The Fish Bowl is a favorite in my classroom as the students feel empowered by their roles as well as by knowing they may choose when to go in and out of the discussion circle. I will act as a facilitator only, staying completely outside both circles, gently redirecting if necessary only occasionally. My goal is that they are provided ample opportunity to get to the heart of the topic: the image of the Native American was created by artists who were caught up in the acculturation stemming from the causes and effects of the manifest destiny-driven westward expansion of the United States in the 19th century. That this resulted in a marginalization of the Native American is a tragedy borne of nationalistic success.

After the Fish Bowl discussion, I will have my students work with a partner to complete a Poem for Two Voices. They will choose to write one part of the poem: the voice of the Native American in the second half of the nineteenth century or a white frontier settler. They will write the lines of the poem for the character they chose separately. Together with their partner they will decide what both characters would say together. One character's thoughts are on the left side of the poem, the other character's thoughts on the right side, and both characters speaking together in the middle. When the rough draft is complete, I will assign them to complete a final draft for the next class and present the poem in choral form to the class.

Content Background

The movement of Americans westward has been connected to the American ethnography since its very beginnings. However, no era saw the monumental frenzied movement and sheer numbers of European Americans migrating westward quite like that of the early to late 19th century. One of the first contemporary attempts to analyze this exceptional historical phenomenon was an article written in the *Democratic Review* by John L. O'Sullivan in 1845. O'Sullivan expressed the shared belief, a belief already acted upon, that it was the destiny of the United States to annex all the land to the west, until the entire continent, from east to west coast, was under the control of the United States. He stated that the nation should look towards "the fulfillment of our manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions". During the antebellum period, that period from 1776 to 1861, Americans gradually embraced the idea that the natural course for America's future, politically, socially, and culturally, was to move towards the west. This expectation was guided by a sense of entitlement that was preordained providentially, and ensured the proper spread of the democratic institutions of the nation into lands newly

acquired. By the time O'Sullivan uttered the now iconic term "manifest destiny", the United States had quite literally spread itself from coast to coast. Following a process begun with the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, continued with the Indian Removal Act of the 1830s the annexation of Texas in 1845, the acquisition of the Oregon Territory in 1846, and the Mexican Cession treaty that ended the Mexican American War in 1848, the expansionist tendencies created a contiguous land mass of enormous scale. And the dominant voices in American society knew just what to do with it. Many white Americans believed by this time that it was indeed their protestant obligation to see that these new regions of the nation be unencumbered by the inferior Indians, the Catholics, whose religion they distrusted, and the mixed race populations of the Southwest. Unacceptable as it is in today's world, the idea of racial supremacy was an important factor in the dogma of the time. Attitudes towards Native American people varied: while the Native Americans were forcibly driven from their lands, attempts were made by many European-American writers and artists to document the Native American culture that was endangered by the racist expansion of the United States. ¹

American cultural historian John Cawelti has isolated four distinct versions of the "frontier myth". The first is that these "new" frontiers connected back to a European enticement to the west from when the New World was the west: the attractive opportunity for gold and wealth (as in Jamestown). Another myth prevalent in this era was that of the opportunity to reform a corrupt society, popular during these years among those striving to shape the American principles of democracy. The frontier also represented a form of escape for Americans who felt the east was far too restrictive, too civilized. Finally, there was the fully embraced idea that expansion, conquest and settlement were the preferred ways that the nation could grow and prosper. These myths of the west would form the backdrop to the drama that would play out throughout the 19th century, a drama that would ultimately find the expansionist United States triumphant and the Native American vanquished. These beliefs about the frontier need to be understood when attempting to study this period of American history. ²

Throughout this time, the arts would be the harbinger of the manifest destiny message, an ideology that would permeate the culture of the United States. It was in the early part of the century that a call went out to artists and literary practitioners: the newly independent, young nation required their own literary and cultural nationalism. The dominant artistic movement of the period, Romanticism, with roots in Great Britain, focused on indigenous traditions, folk customs, and a way to create a national past, a past that lay with the wilderness and the Indian. ³ This would include artists of paintings, sculpture and engravings, as well as writers of both novels and poetry. It was the visual artist who in particular created the images of the expansion experience for their audiences-images that a large illiterate citizenry might still enjoy. These artists would be guided by the eastern establishment who profoundly shaped the attitudes of the time and of the eastern businessmen and power players. These influential men, desirous of the proceeds to come from enhanced technology, transportation, and products needed by the settlers heading west in record numbers, would dictate the narrative that the artists would relay. The art of the nineteenth century was pivotal in designing and perpetuating several different narratives of the westward expansion events and experiences, especially with respect to the portrayal of the east's great nemesis, the Native American. ⁴

Interestingly, no major artist was a part of the migratory groups who moved west. In the 1840s, the paintings of the artists who were part of the American Arts Union, an organized effort to "animate the many hundreds of millions", did not *illustrate* westward expansion, they *actively endorsed* the concept by creating visuals that would excite and encourage. Artists such as William Ranney, Tompkins H. Matteson, William Sydney Mount, and Richard Caton Woodville consistently used subject matter that had deep appeal for expansionists. As Patricia Hills has stated, the paintings and other art to come out of this group were creating images of

progress, in whatever theme it may invoke: pleasure, heroism, or the majesty of the western lands. The concept of "progress" was exemplified in each, whether based on the inclusion of specific landscapes, significant motifs and themes, and from the way in which specific characters in a work of art had a "privileged" role or stance in the work. ⁵

In this period, the early part of the nineteenth century, and primarily in the 1830s and 1840s, Americans began to see the Native American as a "noble savage", a term that had been in existence since the age of enlightenment. This idealized depiction of the Indian as a rational individual who lived beyond the bounds of civilization but was virtuous, symbolized the progress that might come if civilized man were left to be "free and untrammled". ⁶ In Charles Bird King's portrait *Young Omahow, War Eagle, Little Missouri, and Pawnees* of 1822 (National Museum of American Art) we see Roman physiques, intelligent eyes, and an appearance of sensibility, qualities of a noble, yet primitive people, perhaps hearkening back to a fresh America. George Catlin, a painter who went west and painted primarily Native American culture and everyday life, demonstrated stereotypes in his paintings even though he believed that he was capturing the native for posterity. For Catlin and his audiences, it was the polarity that the images imbued that was interesting: through his paintings of Native American culture the Indian could be viewed as noble in nature, irredeemably corrupted or as being destroyed by contact with white society. In any case, it worked for setting up the preferable expansionist attitude. ⁷ His notion that a white audience would find these images noble sometimes backfired as many viewers found the lifestyle as portrayed to be "indolent". ⁸ A contemporary of Catlin's, Seth Eastman, was also successful portraying Native Americans at the business of living, as evidenced by his 1851 painting *Lacrosse Playing Among the Sioux Indians* (The Corcoran Gallery of Art). Again, although white viewers loved to view the art, in many ways satisfying their curiosity about the Native American, the racial differences were often what the public saw most clearly. ⁹

With Andrew Jackson's Indian Removal Act, which resulted in 60,000 Native Americans being forcibly removed from their eastern lands to the western area of Indian Territory (present day Oklahoma), came a conflict framework through which the artist could surround his work. These types of policies, fully endorsed by white easterners, would continue throughout the century as virtually no land was undesirable to Americans. Oddly enough, there are no works of art created during this time of peak Indian removal commemorating the specific movements of the Native Americans, such as in the Trail of Tears or other tragic events. However, the conflicts stemming from these policies would ultimately redefine the Indian as a villain and the soon to be engrained practice of Indian hating gained momentum. It is during this period that numerous works of art would show settlers in distress situations, fighting for their lives. Indian captivity was also a prominent subject, as in George Caleb Bingham's *Captured by Indians* in 1848 (St. Louis Art Museum) and John Mix Stanley's 1845 *Osage Scalp Dance* (National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian). The scenes of conflict in these as well as another popular painting subject, pioneer caravans under attack, always presumed innocence of the white characters. This is the case in Carl Wimar's *The Attack on an Emigrant Train* in 1856 (University of Michigan Museum of Art). In these types of paintings as well as another by Theodore Kaufman called *Westward the Star of Empire* in 1867 (St. Louis Mercantile Library Association), Native Americans are depicted as nothing less than wild beasts, demonic in nature. ¹⁰

Also in the 1840s and 1850s the art world would see a resurgence of depictions of Daniel Boone as a primary American symbol of westward expansion. Boone's pioneer qualities were seen as almost god-like to a nation that felt that the revolutionary values, such as independence, individuality, and sacrificial courage, had fallen along the wayside. ¹¹ These paintings by William Ranney, George Caleb Bingham, and Charles Deas visually legitimized the recent conquests of new territory in the west. ¹² Ranney's work, *Daniel Boone's First View of*

Kentucky in 1849 is imbued with biblical symbolism, such as the commanding ridge on which Boone and his party stand, a literal pulpit, or summit of "visual conquest". Boone's dreamy gaze west allows for the viewer to place themselves in that glorious future that lay ahead with the conquest of the lands there. His stance, much like Moses pointing out the Promised Land, is that of a heroic figure with common origins. ¹³

The "doomed Indian" was another view of the Native American by white Americans that was put forth by a wide variety of artists. The notion of the Indian standing on the precipice of extinction was a common one mid-century, beginning in the 1840s. Romanticized and nostalgic, some artists ennobled the Indian while at the same time indicating that they would soon be gone, evoking emotions and a wistfulness for the wilderness that most were in actuality happy to see as part of the past. George Catlin's portrait of *Wi-Jun-Jon (Pigeon's egg head) Going to and Returning from Washington* (1832, Smithsonian American Art Museum) is a quintessential image of a noble yet doomed native. The portrait of an Assiniboin chief, shown in two different garbs, one facing east the other west, is an obvious commentary by Catlin. This battle between civilization and savagery would end badly for both *Wi-Jun-Jon* personally and for the Native American in general. This portrait is a great example of the precarious, paradoxical thinking of Americans during this time: the difficulty of maintaining a position between European civilization and Indian savagery. ¹⁴ Another exceptional example of art representing near Indian extinction is James Earle Fraser's *End of the Trail* (Gilcrease Museum of Art). This sculpture was created at the end of the century, circa 1894. It is a moving and evocative portrayal of a Native American man slumped over on horseback, completely drained of energy and will to live. The mood of the sculpture is readily felt by the onlooker: it is quite evident that it symbolizes the end of a race, a desired outcome perhaps by American citizens but a stereotype none the less that will continue to be prevalent throughout the twentieth century. ¹⁵

By the latter nineteenth century and very early twentieth centuries, artists were hearkening back to a romanticized, nostalgic view of the west, a view that went part and parcel with that of the "doomed Indian". Landscapes and narrative works were now offering a "promise of participation", inviting the viewer in, inviting them to the west. These paintings are rich with divine inspiration, characterized by gorgeous sunsets shining down upon the characters and the always stunning natural views. Indeed, works of art such as *Emigrants Crossing the Plains* by Albert Bierstadt in 1869 (Butler Institute of American Art) give clear pictorial evidence of manifest destiny come to fruition. This awe inspiring and sublime work encompasses all of the western landscapes such as forests, plains, and mountains, while utilizing symbolism of the presence of God, indicating that somehow all will proceed with little trouble. Thomas Moran's *Shoshone Falls on the Snake River* in 1900 (Gilcrease Museum of Art) is another of many of this style, hearkening back to a breathless and exuberant time of wide open spaces and opportunities for the revered frontiersman or white settler. These works are examples of how a painting can completely mythologize the frontier in a powerful, visual way. Other artists from this time chose to portray the Indian as that savage other, also a nostalgic look back. Charles M. Russell's *The Attack on a Wagon Train* in 1904 (Private Collection) and *The Emigrants* by Frederick Remington are good examples of this. ¹⁶

These works are indicative of a nation that has realized itself-"the west is the dream at the center of the national myth". ¹⁷ It is also worth noting that it is very apparent when viewing artworks of the west from this period that the socio-political racist and imperialistic themes so much a part of a nation busy acquiring overseas territories, are quite visible. In many of the works, the Native American is already absent or insignificant; in still others, shown as a savage or barbarian, the antithesis of the alleged inherent goodness that was the west and America itself. Throughout the nineteenth century the historical role and character of the Native American was repeatedly reworked to suit the needs of America's nation building pursuits.

Nowhere is this borne out more clearly than in a careful study of art and artists of the time. ¹⁸

Ultimately, the progress of empire will succeed. The powerful technology of the expansionist whites had laid claim to the vast western lands, displacing the Native American over and over again along the way. One of the most iconic art works of manifest destiny, and one that allegorically depicts in detail the energy and success of the event, is John Gast's *American Progress* of 1872 (N and R Enterprises). This painting, commissioned by publicist George A. Crofutt for his travel guide, is visually stimulating and detailed. The central and ethereal female figure of the painting hovers and floats above a wide open landscape and is holding a school book and a telegraph wire, clearly symbols of technology and education, those entities that would ensure the success of the nation's expansion dreams. Behind her is the east, well lit and busy about the technological travel: the railroad, the stage coach, the prairie schooner, all heading west. Also heading west are the sturdy and rugged farmers and pioneers, all alit from the "Star of the Empire" above them. It is the western or left side of the painting that gives pause. The skies are dark and tumultuous, with the Native Americans looking back as they run further west, their buffalo as well. ¹⁹ The viewer understands that the white settlers are bringing to the west the enlightened progress that has ultimately guaranteed their superior place in the world. America's destiny is clear; and unstoppable.

Teacher Resources

Exceptional Art Work/Artists of America's Westward Expansion at the Gilcrease

Albert Bierstadt, *Mountain Scene and River*

Albert Bierstadt, *Sierra Nevada Morning*

George DeForest Brush, *Mourning Her Brave*, 1883

George Catlin, *The Bear Dance (Sioux)*, 1847

George Catlin, *Indian Council*, 1847

Henry Farny, *The Sorcerer*, 1903

James Earl Fraser, *End of the Trail*, circa 1894

Alexander Hogue, *Crucified Land*, 1939

John Wesley Jarvis, *Black Hawk and his Son Whirling Thunder*, 1833

Frank Tenney Johnson, *California or Oregon*, 1926

William Robinson Leigh, *A Close Call*, 1914

Alfred Jacob Miller, *Fort Laramie*, 1851

Alfred Jacob Miller, *Snake and Sioux Indians on Warpath*, 1856

Thomas Moran, *The Grand Canyon*, 1913

Thomas Moran, *Shoshone Falls on the Snake River*, 1900

William T. Ranney, *Boone's First View of Kentucky*, 1849

Frederick Remington, *An Episode of the Buffalo Hunt*, 1908

Frederick Remington, *Coming Through the Rye*, 1902

Frederick Remington, *The Stampede*,

Charles M. Russell, *The Attack on the Wagon Train*, 1904

Charles Schreyvogel, *Breaking Through the Line*,

Appendix

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy 6-12

- Conduct short research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question), drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration.
- Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
- Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on *grade 8 topics, texts, and issues*, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with relevant evidence, sound valid reasoning, and well-chosen details; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.
- Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.
- Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

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Notes

1. Angela L. Miller, et al., *American Encounters: art, history and culture* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2008), 209-210
2. Miller, *Encounters*, 211
3. Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., *The White Man's Indian* (New York: Random House, 1978), 86-87
4. Patricia Hills, "Picturing Progress in the Era of Westward Expansion", in *The West as America: Reinterpreting Images of the Frontier*, edit. William H. Truettner, et al. (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 104
5. Hills, "Picturing Progress", 102
6. Julie Schimmel, "Inventing the "Indian"", in *The West as America: Reinterpreting Images of the Frontier*, edit. William H. Truettner, et al. (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 151
7. Miller, *Encounters*, 220
8. Schimmel, "Inventing", 152-4

9. Schimmel, "Inventing", 156
10. Schimmel, "Inventing", 163-164
11. Schimmel, "Inventing"
12. J. Gray Sweeney, *The Columbus of the Woods* (St. Louis: Washington University Gallery of Art, 1992),31
13. Sweeney, *Columbus*, 35
14. Berkhofer Jr., *WhiteMan's*, 91
15. Schimmel, "Inventing", 173
16. Matthew Baigell, "Territory, Race, Religion: Images of Manifest Destiny", *Smithsonian Studies in American Art*, Vol. 4, No. ¾, Summer/Autumn, 1990: 5-7
17. Roger Cushing Aikin, "Paintings of Manifest Destiny: Mapping the Nation", *American Art*, Vol. 14, No. 3, Autumn, (2000), 78-79
18. Baigell, "Territory", 12-13
19. Hills, "Picturing", 119

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