

## **Great Films and How They Shaped American Politics: Manifest Destiny in Texas**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Manifest Destiny is the idea that the United States was destined to be a two-ocean country. U.S. presidents, including Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Jackson, and James K. Polk, helped bring this idea to fruition. These presidents went to great lengths to make the geography of the United States the size that it is today. The consequences of this westward push were very severe, including war and the near extermination of the Native American people. Over time, the American people have tried to justify these actions. They say that history is written by the victors, and this is definitely the case when we consider what “necessary evils” were committed in order to assimilate the lands of the United States of America. The justifications behind these aggressive actions have been portrayed historically in many different ways, especially in the movies. There are many different films that have shown both sides of the story of Manifest Destiny, and they are a great way for students to explore early American politics.

The focus of the unit is Manifest Destiny in Texas. Although westward expansion was not limited to Texas, the state became a microcosm of the process between 1836 and 1895. I teach seventh-grade Texas History, so this unit will be perfect for teaching the broad subject of U.S. expansion while illustrating its effects on the state of Texas. By being presented through film specific examples and stories of the effects of Manifest Destiny on their home state, students will be inculcated with a greater sense of relevancy of the subject matter. They will be able to associate annexation, the treatment of the Native Americans, and the Mexican War with United States expansion. Students will analyze the role of Texas in the successful westward growth of the United States.

My seventh-grade students at Lanier Middle School are vanguard/gifted and talented students who will benefit from being shown both sides of the story and forming their own conclusions about the justifications made by the United States. Students will be presented with Native American, Mexican, and U.S. versions of events and make deductions based on the different bias presented. Gifted and talented students prefer to analyze and make their own assumptions about history as opposed to being told how they should view a historical event. This is why I believe that presenting them with films that each show a different view of Manifest Destiny will allow them to evaluate both the biases of the contrasting viewpoints, and to decide if the end justified the means as it pertains to this era of history.

### **OBJECTIVES**

#### **TEKS: Social Studies 7**

The students will:

#### ***Social Studies Skills***

- Analyze information about Texas.
- Identify cause and effect relationships.
- Draw inferences and conclusions.

- Identify differing points of view on a given issue.
- Support a point of view on a particular issue in Texas History.
- Analyze written, oral, and visual material about events and issues to determine the presence of bias.
- Establish possible criteria for determining the validity of a source.
- Create written and visual presentations of social studies information.

### ***History***

- Identify the age of annexation/statehood.
- Identify major eras in Texas History
- Describe defining characteristics, events, and individuals from eras in Texas History.
- Identify the importance of 1845.
- Analyze the issues and problems facing the Republic of Texas.
- Identify Manifest Destiny, Texas annexation and statehood, and border disputes as issues and events related to the outbreak of the Mexican War.
- Analyze the significance of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.
- Identify and describe factors that led to the expansion of the Texas frontier.
- Summarize the effects of westward expansion on Native Americans.

### ***Geography***

- Interpret data about geographic distributions and patterns in historic Texas.
- Analyze how human factors have affected events in Texas.
- Analyze the effects of the changing population distribution in Texas.
- Analyze how immigration has influenced Texas.
- Analyze why immigrant groups came to Texas and where they settled.

## **RATIONALE**

Middle school is a big change for students. Up to this point, their educational experiences have been centered more on lower-level thinking skills, or the bottom two to three cognitive levels of Bloom's Taxonomy. Throughout elementary school students have been asked to recall, recognize, memorize, identify, discuss, and classify information (the knowledge and understanding levels of Bloom's Taxonomy). On occasion they have reached the third level of cognitive skills, application, which has encouraged students to demonstrate, illustrate, write, etc. There has been very little opportunity for them, due to their developmental group, to apply the higher-level thinking skills that employ analysis, criticism, formulation, development, assessment, and defensive postures, that is analysis, synthesis, and evaluation on Bloom's Taxonomy. The seventh grade is a key turning point in students' developmental processes because they are encouraged to practice and use higher-level thinking skills. This curricular unit will give them a chance to apply their previous knowledge and to expand upon and challenge their critical thinking skills. By presenting students with multiple points of view and allowing them to draw their own conclusions about history, we encourage the development of their cognitive skills. Students in middle school are expected to have these skills refined and ready for them, so that they are able to perform and succeed at the high school level. Manifest Destiny is an abstract concept, and middle school students struggle with abstract concepts. Using specific examples, such as the treatment and removal of Native Americans, the annexation of Texas, and the Mexican War as concrete illustrations of the abstract concept of Manifest Destiny, we will foster the growth of the middle-school mind. By incorporating different aspects of history under the umbrella of Manifest Destiny, we broaden students' understanding of history and allow them to comprehend the causes and effects of U.S. actions through history while encouraging higher-level thinking skills. The use of film in the lessons will be an effective way to attract the attention of students. The visuals and inconspicuous bias presented will allow the students to analyze and explore their own personal feelings about issues.

## UNIT BACKGROUND

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century a few people from the United States began to make their way to Texas. The people who moved to Texas were generally hard working citizens who were hoping to be able to build a new life in a place where land was abundant and relatively cheap. In 1820, Moses Austin came to San Antonio seeking an empresario contract from the Spanish government. This contract would allow him to recruit settlers, bring them to Texas, build a settlement, and divide out the land allotted in the contract (Richardson 57). He was granted permission to establish a colony of 300 families in Texas. Before Moses Austin was able to fulfill the contract, Mexico won its independence from Spain, and because Texas was now part of the Mexican nation, the validity of Austin's contract was in question. Moses Austin died in 1821, before he was able to renegotiate a contract with the new Mexican government. His son Stephen Austin took over his father's role as empresario, gained permission from the Mexican government, and brought The Old Three Hundred to Texas.

Part of the empresario contract that Austin agreed to demanded that all settlers obey the laws of the newly established Mexican government in the form of the constitution of 1824. Texas became part of the state of Coahuila y Texas under this new constitution. A clause in the constitution established the Roman Catholic Church as the official church of the nation and prohibited slavery. Colonists were required by law to give satisfactory evidence of their Catholic faith, but were allowed to keep their slaves for a term of ten years (Richardson 68). Colonists largely ignored the demands of the Mexican government and continued to practice their Protestant religion and keep strong ties to the United States. Due to clashes between colonists and the government, the Law of April 6, 1830, was created as an attempt to prevent rebellion or independence movements among colonists in Texas. The law stated that no more citizens from the United States could move into Texas; it suspended all pending empresario contracts, provided for the establishment of military posts, prohibited any more slaves from entering the territory of Texas, and demanded that colonists become subject to all taxes. The people of Mexican Texas were very disgruntled by the new laws, especially taxation, because they had largely been exempt up until this point.

Trouble began when the colonists in Texas started violating the Law of April 6, 1830. Many military disturbances occurred throughout Texas in 1832 as government officials tried to force colonists to pay taxes and obey the laws. In 1835, Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna became the military dictator of Mexico and revoked the federal constitution of 1824 and replaced it with Siete Leyes, a centralized government. The activities of the new government alarmed and disgusted many Texans. Many people favored war and independence. The first violent action that led directly to revolution happened in Anahuac in 1835. A consultation was called together in November of 1835, and the delegates present drafted and voted on a declaration of independence (Richardson 106). This document officially started the Texas Revolution. There were many reasons for the revolution of Texas. Some of these reasons include the despotic government of Mexico, the close ties to the United States by Texan colonists, the issue of slavery, cultural and ethnic differences, and the failure of Mexico to establish a stable and democratic government (Richardson 100).

The Texas Revolution was fought largely through three main battles, the Alamo and Goliad, which were Mexican victories, and San Jacinto where Texans were able to procure the beginnings of independence through victory. The Texans forced Santa Anna to sign the Treaty of Velasco which promised Mexico's recognition of Texas independence. The treaty was immediately rejected by the Mexican Congress (Robinson 136). Although the war for independence was officially over, relations with Mexico were very poor for the ten years that Texas acted as its own republic. The new Texas government, under the leadership of Sam Houston, immediately asked the United States for annexation. Although they were turned down until 1845, this idea furthered

poor relations with Mexico and gave future leaders of the United States an opportunity for acquiring more land as Manifest Destiny became a nationwide desire.

### **Manifest Destiny**

The term Manifest Destiny was coined by writer John L. O'Sullivan in 1845 in the *Democratic Review*. O'Sullivan believed that Americans deserved "the right of our manifest destiny to overspread and to possess the whole of the continent which Providence has given us for the...great experiment of liberty" (Wilentz 562). At the time when O'Sullivan wrote this article, he was part of a political group called Young America, and they, along with many other Americans, believed that it was their duty to spread the values of democracy throughout the world. "Manifest Destiny, as O'Sullivan explained it, described United States' providential mission to extend its systems of democracy, federalism, and personal freedom, as well as to accommodate its rapidly growing population by ultimately taking possession of the entire North American continent" (Frazier 234). Unfortunately, their ideals of freedom and liberty did not extend to slaves or Native Americans.

Manifest Destiny was used as an argument by expansionists who wanted to annex Texas and the Oregon territory and became an intrinsic plank in the platform of Democrat James K. Polk in the presidential election of 1844 (Wilentz 576). Polk's election was interpreted as a demand for expansion from the people, and Polk was very successful at accomplishing what he promised. In 1845, Texas was annexed into the United States and the boundary of the Oregon territory was set at the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel (Garraty 327). The concept of moving west was not new in the United States of the 1840s. It began as early as 1803 when Thomas Jefferson bought "Louisiana" from France and doubled the size of the U.S. territory. From 1803 onward, settlers had been slowly making their way west, battling hardships along the way, including hostilities with the Native Americans. It was not until the era of Andrew Jackson that the westward migrations became a national goal and that Americans began to believe that the whole continent was destined to be theirs (Garraty 323). Because of its success, westward expansion encouraged the belief that Manifest Destiny was achievable.

Presidents Polk, Zachary Taylor, and Franklin Pierce helped make the concept a reality by means of the Oregon compromise, The Mexican War, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, and the Gadsden Purchase (Garraty 376). "Since the founding of the Republic, the idea had been echoed by Washington, Hamilton, Adams, Franklin, and Jefferson, but in the 1840s it reached its zenith with the coining of the term Manifest Destiny and the controversy with Mexico...Mexico, 'downtrodden and oppressed' seemed a most suitable object for America's concern" (Rappaport 44). From the time of the annexation of Texas in 1845 to the Gadsden Purchase in 1853, the United States was able to acquire 869 million acres of territory, which completed the geographical expansion of the continental United States and accomplished the dreams of Manifest Destiny. This achievement allowed the United States to become a two-ocean continent that had been the desire of so many Americans (Garraty 339).

### **Texas Annexation**

The majority of people living in Texas during the Republic (1836-1845) were immigrants who still had close ties to the United States. From the time of Texas Independence (1836), they expressed a strong desire for Texas Statehood. Sam Houston addressed annexation in his inaugural address in 1836 (Richardson 132). The initial offer of annexation made by Texas was denied by the United States Congress for many reasons. Among them were that the United States did not want to damage relations with Mexico, which still had not recognized Texas independence, and the fact that antislavery forces did not want another slave state admitted into the union (Richardson 136).

The issue of annexation was put on the back burner during the presidential term of Mirabeau Lamar (1838-1841), who believed that the Texas Republic was destined to be its own country. During Sam Houston's second term as president, he again raised the issue of annexation to the United States, but this did not become a reality until the presidency of James K. Polk. This coincided with the election of Anson Jones in Texas (Reichstein 177). The great expansionist, Zachary Taylor, created the opportunity for the United States to annex Texas, after the election, but before Polk was inaugurated President of the United States.

When Mexico, France, and Great Britain expressed their opposition to Texas' annexation, Polk defended the decision and cited the Monroe Doctrine before continuing his efforts to make Texas a state. "If the United States meant to have Texas, it would have to fight. The Mexicans' enthusiasm was matched by the average citizens in the United States; many shared Polk's view that expansion into new territory would scatter the population and dilute any potential for centralized, and thereby abusive, political and economic power" (Robinson 7). Taylor and Polk did this with the full understanding that the annexation of the Republic could lead to a full-scale war with Mexico. Polk was prepared to take whatever means necessary to help accomplish the spread of the United States from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean (Reichstein 182).

Congress passed the annexation resolution in February of 1845. The document stated that Texas would enter the union as a state instead of a territory, that the United States would decide international boundaries, that Texas must give all public property to the country, that public lands would be exchanged to pay off Texas' debt, and that slavery would be allowed only within specific boundaries of the new state (Richardson 152). The act was not finalized until the Texas Congress convened and approved the treaty on December 29, 1845. The president of Texas, Anson Jones, gave his last address and announced, "The final act in this great drama is now performed; the Republic of Texas is no more" (Richardson 154). The annexation of Texas was one giant step in the direction of completing Polk's dream of Manifest Destiny, but it came at a price. "The annexation of Texas, finalized in 1845, prompted Mexico to break off diplomatic relations and go on a war footing" (Robinson 5). So, although Texas became part of the United States, the issues with Mexico were no closer to being resolved.

### **Mexican War**

Polk and the people of the United States wanted more than just Texas; they wanted the United States to reach the Pacific Ocean. "President Polk's initial goal was to complete the process of annexing Texas. He likewise hoped to acquire the Western part of New Mexico, which at the time included Arizona and Northern California" (Robinson 6). In an attempt to do so peacefully, the Polk administration offered to buy upper Texas and the New Mexico territory for five million dollars, and offered an additional twenty-five million dollars for California (Meyer 327). The Mexican government was outraged by this proposal and immediately rejected it. Frustrated by the Mexican reaction, Polk and his advisors reached the conclusion that the only way to acquire the territory that they so desperately wanted was to go to war with their southern neighbor. "The United States fought Mexico for several reasons: annexation of Texas to the United States, the American belief in Manifest Destiny, political instability in Mexico, and a desire for war in both countries" (Robinson 1). The American public supported Polk's desire to go to war.

Polk knew that the only way the Congress would justify declaring war on Mexico was if the United States were attacked. At this time, Mexico and the United States were in a border dispute over the limits of Texas. Mexico claimed that the border was at the Nueces River, where it had always been, but the United States argued that the border was the Rio Grande. Knowing that sending troops into this disputed territory was the best way to provoke an attack from Mexico, President Polk ordered General Zachary Taylor to do just that (Meyer 328). The acquisition of land was not the only reason that Polk and America wanted to go to war with Mexico. "The

Mexican war gave direction to the hitherto inchoate and diffuse idea of the American mission to bring democracy to benighted and oppressed peoples. American expansion into Mexico meant lifting the poor Mexicans from the abyss of despair and increasing their happiness” (Rappaport 45).

As the Polk administration expected, a skirmish broke out between Taylor’s men and the Mexican Cavalry. On May 9, 1846, the general sent a message to Washington informing authorities that sixteen American soldiers had been killed or wounded in the attack. This was the excuse that Polk had been waiting for. He quickly appeared before Congress and argued that war with Mexico was not only justified, it was necessary. Polk’s message strayed far from the truth of the matter. He told Congress that “We have tried every effort at reconciliation... Mexico has passed the boundary of the United States, has invaded our territory, and shed American blood on American soil. She has proclaimed that hostilities exist, and that the two nations are now at war” (Meyer 328). This, combined with the desire to help spread American “civility,” was all it took for the United States to declare war on Mexico. “The Mexican War was a war of conquest. The United States has increased its landholdings as the result of warfare more than once, a fact to which the American Indians can readily attest. The war with Mexico, however, represents the only time that the nation went to war with another ‘civilized’ nation with the express purpose of gaining territory from that country” (McCaffrey 208).

It was a two-front war. The United States sent soldiers in the north through what is today New Mexico into California, while another contingent marched south into Mexico. “Mexicans considered their cause just and the American cause evil. They viewed Yankees as rapacious, avaricious, and aggressive. They rallied to defend their homeland. Although their army was not well prepared and their government chaotic, they hoped a slave revolt in the United States would destroy the American war effort” (Rappaport 13). The Mexican people did not get their wish. Instead, the United States’ troops were very efficient and effective. The troops in the north were led by General Stephen W. Kearny, and the troops who went south were led by General Winfield Scott (Heidler 65). The bloodiest battles took place in Mexico at Vera Cruz, Cerro Gordo, and Chapultepec Castle in Mexico City. Approximately 14,000 Americans and 25,000 Mexican troops died in battle before the United States captured Mexico City and forced the Mexican government to sign the peace treaty that marked the end of the war (Henderson 179). The American people were not against the war, and due to the brevity, approximately sixteen months, the antiwar sentiment among American citizens was kept to a minimum.

The treaty was signed on February 2, 1848, in the village of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which lent its name to the document. “The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo officially ended the war between nations and permanently fixed the border along the Rio Grande. In Texas, however, the guerilla conflict that raged back and forth along the Rio Grande and Nueces continued for another sixty years” (Robinson 91). The treaty determined that Mexico would retain all lands south of the Rio Grande, and that the disputed Texas territory, and the California and New Mexico territories, would be ceded to the United States. The United States agreed to pay the government of Mexico fifteen million dollars. This was a small price to pay to a country that had lost over half of its territory in the war (Meyer 334). With formal hostilities over, the United States had succeeded in becoming a two-ocean country, and Manifest Destiny was now a reality.

### **Treatment of the Native Americans**

Although the United States was very successful in the acquisition of land, there was yet another obstacle that stood in the way of their westward settlement: the Native Americans. The physical geography had been absorbed, but not the cultures: the Native Americans were willing to fight, and die, for their ancient birthrights. From the time of Spanish entrance into Texas, relations with Native American tribes were characterized by continuous conflict. It was no surprise to the

United States after the annexation of Texas in 1845 that they would need an aggressive policy toward the native tribes. The Texas tribes at this time included the Cheyenne, the Arapahoe, the Kiowa, the Apache, and the Comanche (Richardson 283).

As more people moved westward, it became apparent that the government was going to have to intercede in the relations with the Native Americans because of the armed conflicts that arose between new settlers and the indigenous population. The settlers wanted to drive the Native Americans off any farmable land. In 1830, the United States Congress passed the first legislation in an attempt to address this issue. The Indian Removal Act allowed the federal government to pay the Native Americans to move west. In 1834 Congress created the Indian Territory in Oklahoma with the idea that Native Americans would move into this territory (Appleby 342).

In Texas, there were conflicting views on how to deal with the Native Americans. During the 1820s, at the time of Stephen Austin and other Empresarios, the “civilized” tribes were assured land titles by the state government of Coahuila y Texas. There was no protection for nomadic tribes. In 1836, when Sam Houston became president, he tried a peaceful tactic and created treaties and reservations for the different tribes (Anderson 282). He hired agents who went to the tribes and created treaties, distributed gifts, and opened communications. Despite Houston’s attempts at peaceful negotiations, problems increased because of the vast number of immigrants continually taking more of Texas’ land.

In 1838, negating all of Houston’s attempts, President Mirabeau Lamar ordered the removal of all Native Americans from Texas. His policy was one of destruction and expulsion. In the summer of 1839, the Texas army made repeated attacks on the Cherokee, Kiowa, and Comanche tribes (Anderson 277). The worst damage to relations between the Native Americans and Texans occurred in 1840 between the Comanche and the Texan Army at the Council House Fight. Texans attempted to take the Comanche negotiators as hostages and in the ensuing battle, seven Texans and thirty-five Comanche died. After this event, the Comanche people refused to make any treaties with Texans (Anderson 278). The Shawnee agreed to leave Texas peacefully in exchange for the Texas government paying for supplies and transportation to their new reservation in New Mexico.

During his second term as president, starting in 1844, Sam Houston greatly expanded the role of the Texas Rangers in an attempt to protect Texans from Native American attacks (Richardson 134). He tried to revert back to his previous policy of peaceful negotiations, but by this time trust had been severely damaged between Native tribes and the Texas government. At this time Indian raids were very serious, especially those carried out by the Cherokee and Comanche. After Texas became a state, the United States government inherited the task of eliminating the hostilities. Two reservations were created in 1855 and federal authorities tried to persuade the tribes to move onto this land. “The United States idea in regards to westward expansion was that 1) the frontier wilderness should give way to farms, factories, and towns 2) new lands should promote economic riches. Because the Indians were part of the frontier, by definition the tribes had to give up their way of life and be incorporated into the new nation as economically responsible citizens” (Frazier 204).

More Rangers were recruited and the national government eventually sent in the U.S. army to help Texas end the Native American threat. A new policy in 1845 proposed that all tribes sell lands in exchange for reservations away from main lines of westward expansion. The United States believed that Indians isolated on small tracts of land could be civilized by missionaries and federal agents. Unfortunately these efforts did not bring peace to the frontier. By 1877 nearly all of the native tribes of Texas had been forced out of their homelands and either killed or driven onto reservations (Richardson 289).

## Conclusion

Texas played a significant role in the achievement of Manifest Destiny for the United States. By examining the different aspects of Manifest Destiny through the lens of the Texas perspective, students are able to see direct consequences of the United States westward expansion. Starting with the Independence of Texas from Mexico, through the Annexation of Texas, the War with Mexico and the ensuing treatment of the Native Americans, Texas' role in American history has been momentous. Teaching this unit to Texas history students puts history into their domain. Students feel a connection to history when they see the significant role that their state has had in the changing of the United States' borders.

## LESSON PLANS

### Lesson Plan 1: Manifest Destiny

**Objectives:** Students will be able to define Manifest Destiny and identify the territories that were acquired to fulfill the Manifest Destiny of the United States.

TEKS 6A: the student understands how events shaped the history of Texas.

**Materials:** Maps of the United States showing the change in geography after: the Louisiana Purchase, the annexation of Texas, the Mexican Cession, and the Gadsden Purchase. Copies of the paintings *American Progress* and *Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way*. Index cards with the details of different land acquisitions of the United States. Clips from *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*.

#### **Procedures:**

As students come into class have *Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way* up for students to see. Ask students to list the objects, people, and activities that they see in the painting. Have students share their findings with their neighbor and see if either of the pair saw something the other didn't. Then ask students, in pairs, to make a conjecture as to what the painter wanted this painting to say. Have the pairs share their findings with the class. Why did the artist create this piece? Have students discuss where they believe the people in the painting are going.

Discuss with the students the idea of westward expansion. Have students describe reasons that people would want to move into the western frontier. Ask students: What would the benefits of moving west for families be? What would the disadvantages be? Are any of the benefits or disadvantages apparent in the painting *Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way*?

Show students the different maps of the United States showing the change in geography and the addition of territory over the years (Louisiana Purchase, Texas, Mexican Secession, and Gadsden Purchase). Ask students why they think the United States had the desire to expand. Have students get into groups of four. Each foursome will get copies of the different maps of the United States (with each of the different land acquisitions) and index cards that have the dates the land was acquired by the United States, the means by which it was acquired (bought, taken in war, by treaty, etc.) and who was president of the United States at the time. Have students match the index cards with the map and take notes in their notebooks when they have them paired correctly. Have students decide whether or not the United States was justified in expanding in each of these areas and answer why or why not.

Have students define destiny. Ask each student to write down something they think they are destined to do.

Show students the painting *American Progress*. Ask students to list the objects, people, and activities that they see in the painting. Have students discuss what the Angel in the painting stands for. Discuss with the class the idea that at the time, many Americans believed it was our



destiny to spread across the continent and that we call this our Manifest Destiny. Ask them how the Angel could represent Destiny. Discuss with students how each different land acquisition contributed to our Manifest Destiny until we successfully reached the Pacific Ocean. Have students define Manifest Destiny in their notebooks.

Ask students to discuss some of the consequences of Manifest Destiny. Have students discuss the hardships of moving West as well as the conflicts with the Native Americans. Show students clips from *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* as an example of how the settlers were living out west. Be sure to focus on the geography- showing the farms that the settlers have and their way of life. Compare the settlers' way of life with that of the Native Americans on the reservations.

**Assessment:** Classroom discussion and participation.

## **Lesson Plan 2: Texas Annexation**

**Objective:** Students will be able to debate and defend the differing views of Mexico and the United States over the territory of Texas.

TEKS 6A: the student understands how events shaped the history of Texas.

**Materials:** Clips of *The First Texan*, debate rules/agenda handout for moderators, suggested questions for moderator to ask ambassadors.

### **Procedures:**

Show students two clips from the movie *The First Texan*. The first clip should show Texas' victory over Mexico in the Battle of San Jacinto, and the second clip should show Sam Houston expressing his desire for Texas to become part of the United States after their victory from Mexico. Ask students if Texas had the right to rebel against Mexico. Discuss with students the views of each of the three parties involved in the conflict: Mexico, Texas, and the United States. Discuss with students that Mexico viewed Texas as a rebelling state and refused to recognize their independence. Discuss with students that Texas felt that Mexico's government had failed them so they had the right to secede and join the United States if they so wished. Discuss with students the idea that although the United States wanted to fulfill their Manifest Destiny, there were issues, such as debt, slavery, and injuring relations with Mexico, that made the United States hesitate in annexing Texas. Explain to students that they will be role playing a meeting between ambassadors to try to come to a peaceful solution to the issue of what to do with Texas.

Split students into groups of four. One student will role play as an ambassador for Mexico, one as an ambassador for the United States, one as an ambassador for Texas, and one will act as a moderator/scribe for the delegation. Give students at least ten minutes to prepare for the debate. Ambassadors should spend this time writing an opening speech that details what they hope to accomplish in the meeting and describes their opinions on what should be done about Texas.

Remind students that they should be writing from the opinion of the delegation they are representing and not their personal views. Ambassadors should also prepare a list of demands and negotiations they are willing to make. The moderator at this time should prepare a list of questions that will be asked of each delegate during the debate. Also give each moderator a debate agenda that outlines how the debate will be structured. For example, 1 minute for each opening speech, 1 minute for each delegate's rebuttal after opening speeches, 5 questions from the moderator with each delegate allotted 1 minute to answer and a 1 minute rebuttal, and a 2 minute closing speech. A list of suggested questions could also be given out to each moderator such as: Mexico, why are you not willing to accept Texas' independence? Texas, why do you think you will benefit from joining the United States? United States, would you be willing to risk offending Mexico by annexing Texas?

Once students have had sufficient preparation/research time, allow groups of students to engage in the debate. Each group will have their own debate and the moderator will act as the enforcer, making sure that each delegate is obeying the rules of the debate, and will also act as a scribe to write down significant arguments made by each of the ambassadors. After the debates have concluded, ask all students to answer the following question in their notebook three times, once from the view of Texas, once from the view of Mexico, and once from the view of the United States. Should the United States annex Texas?

**Assessment:** Debate participation and engagement, and the three different answers of the final question in student notebooks.

### **Lesson Plan 3: The Mexican War**

**Objectives:** Students will be able to evaluate the causes of the Mexican American War from both the American point of view and the Mexican point of view.

TEKS 6A: the student understands how events shaped the history of Texas.

**Materials:** Clips of *The Mexican American War*, two newspaper templates that include spaces for the name of the newspaper, a headline, the date, title of the article, the article, and an illustration.

#### **Procedures:**

Show students clips from *The Mexican American War* which show interviews from historians who discuss the causes of the war. Discuss with students the border dispute that erupted about the Texas territory. Explain how the United States forced a conflict on American soil, and used that to justify to Congress the declaration of war. Also discuss with students the unspoken justifications of war by the United States, such as Manifest Destiny and the desire to spread their ideas of democracy to other nations. *The Mexican American* discusses all of these views. Then discuss with students the Mexican version of the war. Explain how Mexico justified the war because they felt they were defending their territory. They felt that the territory between the Nueces and Rio Grande was rightfully their territory and they were protecting their property from the thieves to the north.

Give students a newspaper template. Have students act as if they are reporters for a United States newspaper. They will be writing an article that justifies and explains the war to the readers in the U.S., and it must include bias. The student should come up with an appropriate newspaper name, such as the *U.S. Tribune*. Students will write their article from the point of view of the United States. They need to incorporate the appropriate bias in their article that includes why the United States was right in going to war, a title and headline that express bias, and an illustration that also gives a one-sided view from the United States' perspective. Then, students will do the same thing, but from the Mexican point of view. Students will take on the role of Mexican reporter and create a biased article explaining the Mexican perspective on the war. For example, it could include the idea that the United States is unfairly trying to take possession of their territory. The student will again include a newspaper name, a headline, article title, article, date, and illustration that all include bias for the Mexican perspective.

**Assessment:** The newspaper articles showing bias.

### **Lesson Plan 4: Treatment of the Native Americans**

**Objectives:** Students will be able to understand the policies of the United States towards the Native Americans.

TEKS 6A: the student understands how events shaped the history of Texas.

**Materials:** Clips from *Dances with Wolves*, *Geronimo*, and *Cheyenne Autumn*.

### ***Procedures:***

Show students clips from *Dances with Wolves*, *Geronimo*, and *Cheyenne Autumn*. The clips should include battle scenes between the United States army and the Native Americans, scenes from the reservations, and scenes showing the lifestyle of the Native Americans before it was interrupted by U.S. interference.

Ask students to explain any differences they saw between the Sioux, Pawnee, and Apache tribes that were depicted in the film clips. Discuss with students the way of life of the Native Americans, including their nomadic tendencies to follow herds of Buffalo.

Ask students to share people, activities, and things that were shown in the different film clips that represented the way of life of the Native Americans.

Discuss with students the idea that the United States wanted the best land to be used for farms and the agricultural industry and that the Native Americans often lived on the best lands in the West. The United States forced Native Americans onto reservations so that they could give the best lands to settlers and farmers who could help the economy. The United States also felt that by putting Native Americans onto smaller tracts of land, it would be easier to try and teach and convert them to the way of life of the Americans.

Discuss with the students that the United States often broke their treaties with the Native Americans. Explain that this was shown in the clip from *Cheyenne Autumn* when the Sioux tribe decided to return to their homeland.

Ask students the consequences of this movement on the Native American way of life. Have students take on the role as a Sioux Indian who has been at war with the United States and is eventually pushed onto a reservation.

Ask the student to create four diary entries that record the journey of this Sioux Indian. The first entry should be about the daily life of the tribe before the presence of the United States. The second entry should describe the battles that rage between the U.S. Army and the tribe over the land. The third entry should be about the journey to the Indian reservation that is hundreds of miles from the native lands of the tribe, and the final entry should be about the way of life on a reservation and describes the difference in the way of life.

***Assessment:*** Student diary entries describing the effects of the United States on the Native American tribes.

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