

**Lesson Plan:**  
**Manifest Destiny: War on the Plains**

**Grades:** 8th and 11th

**Subjects:** Social Studies/U.S. History,  
English/Language Arts

**Time Required:** 2 class periods

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**OVERVIEW**

This lesson examines the Indian Wars of the late nineteenth century and the idea of Manifest Destiny through multiple visual, written, and oral history sources by Turner, Custer, Tecumseh, Crazy Horse, and more.

**UNDERSTANDING GOAL**

Students will understand the credo of Manifest Destiny and, through analysis of images and text-based sources, will learn and discuss the Indian Wars from both the Federal and Native American perspectives.

**OBJECTIVES**

Students will critically examine images depicting the ideal and reality of Manifest Destiny. Through the analysis of diverse texts, students will compare, contrast, and evaluate the Federal and Native American positions.

**INVESTIGATIVE QUESTIONS**

What is Manifest Destiny? How was this doctrine used to justify war with Native Americans and their removal to reservations?



[American progress](#) Also known as Westward the course of destiny Westward ho! Manifest destiny [1873]

**MATERIALS**

- [PowerPoint](#)
- [Discussion Questions Worksheet](#) (p. 5 below)
- [Primary Source Analysis Tool](#) (student worksheet)
- [Analyzing Photographs & Prints](#) (Teacher's Guide)

**PRIMARY SOURCES**

IMAGES

- [American progress](#)
- [People escaping from the Indian massacre, at dinner on a prairie](#)
- [Ralph Morrison, a hunter killed & scalped by Cheyenne near Ft Dodge](#)
- [The Kidder Massacre](#)
- [Lieut. J. J. Crittenden, 20th Infantry, fell here in Custer Battle, June 25, 1876](#)
- [Big Foot's camp three weeks after the Wounded Knee Massacre \(Dec. 29, 1890\), with bodies of several Lakota Sioux people wrapped in blankets in the foreground and U.S. soldiers in the background](#)

*Primary source texts on p. 2...*

## PRIMARY SOURCES, *continued*

### TEXTS

- [“Sleep Not Longer”](#) speech by Tecumseh (Shawnee), p. 30
- [“Chief Red Cloud on Indian Rights”](#) speech by Red Cloud (Oglala Lakota)
- [“Crazy Horse Speaks from His Deathbed”](#) speech by Crazy Horse (Oglala Lakota)
- [My Life on the Plains](#) by George A. Custer, “Excerpt of Chapter one”
- [“What treaty that the whites have kept has the red man broken?”](#) speech by Sitting Bull (Hunkpapa Lakota), p. 175; *access to this link is limited, so print what you need the first time you link to it*)
- [The Frontier in American History](#) by Frederick Jackson Turner, chapter I: “The Significance of the Frontier in American History”



Lieut. J. J. Crittenden, 20th Infantry, Fell Here in Custer Battle, June 25, 1876.  
From Photo Taken One Year Later.  
Herbert A. Coffeen, Pub., Sheridan, Wyo.

[Lieut. J. J. Crittenden, 20th Infantry, fell here in Custer Battle, June 25, 1876](#) [1877] *Courtesy of the Denver Public Library*

## CURRICULUM STANDARDS

### 8<sup>th</sup> grade U.S. History

5.14 Identify American territorial expansion efforts and its effects on relations with European powers and Native Americans.

### 11<sup>th</sup> grade U.S. History

6.6 Read and interpret a primary source document reflecting the dynamics of the Gilded Age American society (e.g., Booker T. Washington's "Atlanta Compromise," Carnegie's "Gospel of Wealth," Sojourner Truth "Ain't I A Woman," Jane Addams' Hull House accounts, Jacob Riis photographs and/or writings, a sweatshop worker's personal story).

6.11 Analyze the basic principles of Turner's frontier thesis.

### 11<sup>th</sup> grade English

3003.5.2 Analyze text for fact and opinion, cause/effect, inferences, evidence, and conclusions.

3003.7.2 Examine the agreements and conflicts between the visual (e.g., media images, painting, film, graphic arts) and the verbal.

### English/Language Arts (Common Core)

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. (Include Shakespeare as well as other authors.)

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.5 Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.

*Common Core standards continued on p. 3...*

## Literacy in History/Social Studies (Common Core)

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.6 Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.7 Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.8 Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.2 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.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including analyzing how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term over the course of a text (e.g., how Madison defines faction in Federalist No. 10).

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.5 Analyze in detail how a complex primary source is structured, including how key sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text contribute to the whole.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.6 Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.7 Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.9 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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## PROCEDURE

### Day 1

#### Step 1

Teacher will lead brief discussion: What do you think when you hear the term Indian Wars? General Custer? Sitting Bull? Little Big Horn? Wounded Knee? Students will speculate on the meaning of Manifest Destiny and the characters of Custer, Tecumseh, Sitting Bull, etc. How have both history and popular culture portrayed these figures?

#### Step 2

Students will view [PowerPoint](#) depicting the idealization of Manifest Destiny and the realities of westward expansion from the perspectives of civilians, soldiers, and Native Americans. Students will complete the [Primary Source Analysis Tool](#). A good way to do this is to write the questions from the [Teacher's Guide](#) on the board and remind the students of these questions as you display the PowerPoint. Students should do their best to record their thoughts individually in order to contribute to discussion in the following step.



[People escaping from the Indian massacre, at dinner on a prairie](#) [1862] *Courtesy of the Denver Public Library*

**Step 3** Teacher will lead a discussion of the Primary Source Analysis Tool. As teacher explains context and purpose of images, discuss whether student speculations were accurate. What do the images reveal? What are your feelings about Manifest Destiny? How would today be different if European Americans had treated Native Americans differently?

**Step 4** Discuss and speculate in informal writing: What do you expect our readings to reveal about the American attitude toward Native Americans? How do you expect the civilian attitude to differ from the military? What do you expect the readings to reveal about the character of Native American leaders?

**Step 5** Students will complete assigned readings (*see Primary source texts, p. 2*) and answer [discussion questions](#) for homework. At his or her discretion, teacher assigns readings from the list on page 2 to students. All readings should be covered, and students will answer all questions as they are able. For example, all students can address the first part of questions 2 & 3, but only students who have done the appropriate readings can answer the second part.

### *Day 2*

**Step 6** Teacher will begin class by leading a discussion of assigned readings and Discussion Questions Worksheet. What stood out in the readings?

**Step 7** Discuss and take notes: What, from the images studied and the words of Turner, Custer, Tecumseh, et al., did you find significant? Has your perception of any of these people or the events that surrounded them changed?

**Step 8** Discuss and take notes: What have we learned? What is the significance of these events historically? What is their impact and significance today? What new ideas or observations can we take from this lesson?

**Step 9** Reflect on the Investigative Questions and prepare a short essay (3-5 paragraphs): What do you imagine the subjects of these images and documents thought and felt as they experienced these events? What can we apply from these sources today?

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### **EVALUATION**

Students are evaluated with a small participation grade. Active engagement in the learning process is essential, and students who demonstrate attentiveness and thoughtfulness earn their participation grade. (In my class, 2 points each day, totaling roughly 90 points (approximately one test grade) in a nine-week term.)

Student work (Day 1's homework) will be collected and graded for thoughtful completion.

This lesson will be assessed on a unit test, in the form of multiple choice and a brief essay open response.

### **EXTENSION**

Divide students into two groups and allow them to prepare points for a debate on the topic of Native American removal to reservations. Conduct a debate. This can be as formal or informal as you like, and can conclude Day 2 or take up a third day.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS WORKSHEET**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What is meant by Manifest Destiny? What was this ideology used to justify?

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2. How is George Armstrong Custer portrayed in popular history? Has reading his own words changed your view of him? Explain.

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3. How are Native Americans portrayed in popular history? Has reading their words changed your view of them? Explain.

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4. Make a case for the removal of Native Americans from the Western Plains to reservations.

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5. Make a case for the Native Americans' right to remain on the Western Plains.

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