### Manifest Destiny: Close Reading

**EQ:** Describe the rationale of the United States in expanding westward

**Writing of John O'Sullivan (ORIGINAL)**


The American people having derived their origin from many other nations, and the Declaration of National Independence being entirely based on the great principle of human equality, these facts demonstrate at once our disconnected position as regards any other nation; that we have, in reality, but little connection with the past history of any of them, and still less with all antiquity, its glories, or its crimes. On the contrary, our national birth was the beginning of a new history, the formation and progress of an untried political system, which separates us from the past and connects us with the future only; and so far as regards the entire development of the natural rights of man, in moral, political, and national life, we may confidently assume that our country is destined to be the great nation of futurity....

Yes, we are the nation of progress, of individual freedom, of universal enfranchisement. Equality of rights is the cynosure of our union of States, the grand exemplar of the correlative equality of individuals; and while truth sheds its effulgence, we cannot retrograde, without dissolving the one and subverting the other. We must onward to the fulfilment of our mission -- to the entire development of the principle of our organization -- freedom of conscience, freedom of person, freedom of trade and business pursuits, universality of freedom and equality. This is our high destiny, and in nature's eternal, inevitable decree of cause and effect we must accomplish it. All this will be our future history, to establish on earth the moral dignity and salvation of man -- the immutable truth and beneficence of God. For this blessed mission to the nations of the world, which are shut out from the life-giving light of truth, has America been chosen; and her high example shall smite unto death the tyranny of kings, hierarchs, and oligarchs, and carry the glad tidings of peace and good will where myriads now endure an existence scarcely more enviable than that of beasts of the field. Who, then, can doubt that our country is destined to be *the great nation of futurity*?

**TERMS:**

- Derived: obtained from someone/somewhere else
- Contrary: other side/opposite opinion
- Futurity: of future time
- Enfranchisement: rights and privileges, especially to vote
- Cynosure: center of attention
- Exemplar: example
- Correlative: corresponding
- Enviable: arousing envy or to be desired

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1. Using prior knowledge, Describe how America was settled by other nations and how is O'Sullivan addressing them in his writing?

2. When settling a new nation, can we see examples of planning for the future?

3. Why does O'Sullivan use the phrase "the great nation of futurity" to describe the United States?

4. Identify 3 to 4 historical examples of what O'Sullivan is talking about in regards to equity of rights, individual freedom, progress, etc.

5. O'Sullivan is given credit for creating the term "Manifest Destiny." How does this document support the ideas we have discussed about that term? Provide an example from the text.

6. Using your historical knowledge, is the path of Manifest Destiny (as described by O'Sullivan) a credible choice for the United States?

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**Source:** John O’Sullivan was a writer and editor of a well-known newspaper around the time of the Mexican-American war. Most people give him the credit for coining the term “Manifest Destiny.”