

# APPENDIX A

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## *Sample Student Research Paper*

On the following pages you will find a sample research paper written for a course in world history using the process we have outlined in this book (and sometimes illustrating it with Ms. Sonnenburg's research experiences). Study the paper. Then consider the questions about the paper at the end. Ask similar questions about any essay you write for a history course.

Pay close attention to the format of the paper. Note the title page (which includes the title of the paper, the name of the author, the date the paper is turned in, the name of the course, the time of the class, and the name of the professor) as well as the footnotes and the bibliography. The margins should be set at no less than one inch on all four sides of the page. *Always* number pages, but remember that the title page is not numbered, although it is considered page one in the text of your paper.

Manifest Destiny: A Characteristic of Nations

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History 4957: Colonialism and Imperialism

Professor Melvin Page

M 2:00—4:50 pm

More than a century before John L. O'Sullivan wrote the words reflective of the expansionist fervor that

gripped the United States, of “our manifest destiny to overspread the continent,”<sup>1</sup> the essence of the idea was already a part of what would become our national heritage. Yet as late as the 1920s, Julius Pratt proclaimed confidently in the *American Historical Review* that O’Sullivan invented the phrase.<sup>2</sup> Now, over a century and a half after O’Sullivan penned those well-known words, it should be apparent that the United States was not alone in its fervor and O’Sullivan merely gave dramatic voice to what was a well-developed national disposition with deep roots in the Western tradition.

In *The Power of Ideals in American History*, Ephraim Adams construed the concept of “manifest destiny” as inherent in the nature of nearly all countries, dispelling the notion that it was a unique American characteristic. Adams elaborated that the “sense of destiny is an attribute of all nations and all peoples.” He claimed that if we penetrated beyond recorded history, distinct emotions of various tribes and races would provide an early understanding of “manifest destiny.” Probably we would find that these tribes and races also felt themselves a “chosen people” set apart for some high purpose.<sup>3</sup>

Adams also implied that any great nation had a belief in its destiny; larger nations wanting a place in the sun while smaller, contented nations were constantly on alert to avoid absorption by their more powerful neighbors. As historians, we can analyze and thereby illustrate that the concept of manifest destiny occurred long before 1845 and was not limited to the American people. The United States, beginning with its colonial past, utilized the essence of the concept, placing it on a higher philosophical plane. The nationalistic expansionist movement in the United States was based upon a moral ideology and appeared as an inherent quality justifying itself as a natural right.<sup>4</sup>

Natural right formed the historical foundation that was later used as an explanation and underlying ideology surrounding the manifest destiny movement. Natural right was basically defined as any right that “Nature,” recognized in a “divinely supported system of ‘natural law’ inclusive of moral truths, bestows prior to or independently of political society.” The beginnings of this idea can be traced back to Greek philosophers who wrote of “things that are right by nature, that is, inherently, and can be recognized by every rational being to be so.”<sup>5</sup> Later stoic philosophers, and indeed basic Roman legal beliefs, followed the same reasoning that natural rights were among the truths contained in natural law. Sir Ernest Barker, in *Traditions of Civility*, addressed the natural law idea as a movement among the Stoic thinkers of the Hellenistic age. The large and somewhat general expression “became a tradition of human civility which runs continuously from the Stoic

teachers of the Porch to the American Revolution of 1776 and the French Revolution of 1789.”<sup>6</sup> For many centuries this was directly considered part and parcel of church theology, later adopted by the Catholic Church and forming a core element of church doctrine for teachers and early canonists. This logic formed a rational basis for the physical and moral universe, hence the “theory of Natural Law had become in the sixteenth century, and continued to remain during the seventeenth and the eighteenth, an independent and rationalist system professed and expounded by the philosophers of the secular school of natural law.”<sup>7</sup> Later Christianity “harmonized these ideas of paganism with its own theology by regarding natural law as the expression of the eternal reason of God.” And thus natural right came to embrace two principles in the Western tradition—secular and sacred—and set the stage for the “momentous pretension later to be called nationalism.” This powerful affirmation enhanced an emerging idea that nationalities were the most likely agencies for promotion not only of the rights of particular groups, but also of the rights of mankind as a whole.<sup>8</sup> This tendency toward an assertion of group entitlement confirmed for Adams his view of early tribes and races employing concepts of higher purpose, foreshadowing early nationalistic leanings.

Based on this *a priori* condition, there is firm ground for asserting the close relationships between the ideas usually described as nationalism, expansionism, ethnicity, natural law, and manifest destiny. The rhetoric of politics, religion, and philosophy throughout early European history established a touchstone for these relationships. And early historians of Europe were instrumental in drawing attention to the connections. Tacitus, Roman historian of the Germanic peoples, described in his *Germania* such characteristics among the people about whom he wrote. “The tribes of Germany,” he declared, “are free from all taint of intermarriages with foreign nations, and...they appear as a distinct, unmixed race, like none but themselves.”<sup>9</sup> Such tendencies were passed on to the early populations of Great Britain who were descendants of Germanic tribes. William Camden confirms this in his *Remaines concerning Britaine*, writing that “he saw God’s hand in the guiding of the Angles and Saxons to England.”<sup>10</sup> This version of the “chosen people” doctrine became an early cornerstone of popular ideology in England as the New Anglican church under Elizabeth adopted the essence of its message.

Archbishop Matthew Parker, a major defender of Anglo-Saxon literature and scholarship, along with his secretary, John Joscelyn, began an inquiry of pre-Norman English history. The purpose of their study was an effort not only to prove the ancientness of new English church customs but also to promote an interest in

general English history during the Anglo-Saxon period. Archbishop Parker's contemporary John Foxe, particularly emphasized in his 1563 *Acts and Monuments* the "uniqueness of the English and their nature as 'a chosen people,' with a church lineage stretching back to Joseph of Arimathea and his supposed visit to England, and with John Wyclif as the true originator of the Reformation."<sup>11</sup> Following the English Revolution, and especially after the Restoration of the monarchy, "the idea of the English nation as the crusading agent of God's will faded" into a minor theme in English thought. But the historical roots of the philosophy ran deep and were planted especially on the frontiers of English expansionism. It is no wonder then, that "Americans never lost the belief that they were a special, chosen people, a people destined to change the world for the better."<sup>12</sup>

The ascendancy of the English view of the Anglo-Saxons appeared as an inherent characteristic in the American colonies. The post-Reformation Continental writers reinforced the myth produced by two centuries of political and religious conflict. "As colonial Englishmen the settlers in America fully absorbed the mythical view of the English past developed between 1530 and 1730."<sup>13</sup> Colonial settlers did not limit their absorption to one viewpoint. They also embraced and were inspired by an emerging philosophy of nationalism. In an effort to systematize nationalism, eighteenth-century European philosophers provided the spark for revolutionary movements of the period. The diversity of thought found in the "culturally nationalistic Herder, the democratic Rousseau, the Tory Bolingbroke, and the liberal physiocrats" was transplanted into the natural rights domain of the American colonial psyche. These philosophers' proto-nationalist doctrines basically included one—and usually both—of two basic foundations of natural right ideas. The first principle addressed the "natural rights of groups to determine upon and organize the desired form of government." The second principle declared that nations were the "natural agencies" for advancing not only the rights of particular groups but also, the rights of all mankind.<sup>14</sup> One does not have to have an overactive imagination to recognize this characteristic in colonial America.

In *Manifest Destiny and Mission in American History: A Reinterpretation*, historian Frederick Merk links nationalism with expansionism. He asserts that expansionism was usually associated with ideology. Merk's validation of this point leads one past the early writings of natural right into an ideological framework for expansionism. His broad, global sweeps through expansionist ideology are summarized as he concludes of the causes: "in the case of Arab expansionism it was Islam; in Spanish expansionism, Catholicism; in

Napoleonic expansionism, revolutionary liberalism; in Russian and Chinese expansionism, Marxian communism.” In the United States an equivalent of these ideologies appeared as manifest destiny, and the main ingredients consisted of republicanism, democracy, freedom of religion, and Anglo-Saxonism.<sup>15</sup> The intellectual ship that carried the settlers across the wide Atlantic also altered, and then adopted the “idea of natural right as the moral rationale of America’s expansionism.” In the early developmental period, the newly arrived Americans tended to stress the rights rather than the duties of natural law. “The conception of natural right was first used by New England clergymen in behalf of right of ecclesiastical independency.” In 1760 the concept escaped from the pulpits into the public discussion arena as Americans became concerned with their own political rights under English rule. This ideological transformation reached an initial climax with inclusion of the “inalienable natural rights with which their Creator had endowed them [Americans]” in the Declaration of Independence confirming the United States’ belief in its “chosenness.” Americans assumed the position “among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and Nature’s God entitle them.” Assuming the position of natural rights guardian, Americans justified the “right of revolution when governments became destructive of natural rights.”<sup>16</sup>

The end of the American Revolution empowered the new nation and set it along a course that engaged the country in the manifest destiny phenomenon. This total embrace of a powerful movement allowed the misnomer that manifest destiny was a unique American feature. Early American history is laced with examples of the doctrine that have been used throughout as situational justification of the means to the end. In 1801 Jefferson’s application of diplomatic and military pressure induced Napoleon to negotiate with the United States for the sale of New Orleans and a slice of coastal territory to the east. Much to Jefferson’s surprise, in 1803 Napoleon sold all of the immense Louisiana territory to the United States. This enabled Jefferson to realize his main objective: possession of New Orleans and ultimate control of the mouth of the Mississippi, thus providing the much-needed outlet to world markets for the interior of the new nation.<sup>17</sup> Acquisition of the Louisiana Purchase also perpetuated the expansionist movement of the United States.

This expansionism continued as a nationally heartfelt but nameless movement. As early as 1818 Andrew Jackson applied his own understanding of President Monroe’s instructions and led military forces into Spanish-held Florida, destroying the Indians in his path; he set into motion the natural rights claim of Americans to possession of any land that they wanted.<sup>18</sup> Further use of the still unnamed principle appeared

as an American assumption that its destiny was that of a world power. In 1822 the Monroe Doctrine—warning the whole of Europe to stay out of the Western Hemisphere—illustrated James Monroe’s belief in this idea. Monroe was certainly not alone in this belief, although there was a small vocal opposition which made the still unnamed doctrine a disputed philosophy.

The opposition movement exposed a different side to Americans as being the “chosen people.” In an 1837 letter to Henry Clay, William E. Channing—the social activist and leading figure in the American Unitarian movement—wrote that “we are a restless people, prone to encroachment, impatient of the ordinary laws of progress.” Channing feared the strength that the country felt at extending its boundaries—by natural right—from shore to shore was fraught with dire consequences. “We boast of our rapid growth,” he continued in his letter to Clay, “forgetting that, throughout nature, noble growths are slow....Already endangered by our greatness, we cannot advance without imminent peril to our institutions, union, prosperity, virtue, and peace.... There is no fate to justify rapacious nations, any more than to justify gamblers and robbers, in plunder.”<sup>19</sup> Opposition, however, seems to have emboldened the proponents of the doctrine, which was only then surfacing in open expression.

What seemed to be the opinion of a majority of the American people at the time was featured not only in John O’Sullivan’s 1845 editorial in the *Democratic Review*, but also in another article published in the same journal that year. This also addressed the Texas annexation issue and justified the addition of the new state. “Texas has been absorbed into the Union in the inevitable fulfillment of the general law which is rolling our population westward.” O’Sullivan contended that Texas “was disintegrated from Mexico in the natural course of events, by a process perfectly legitimate on its Union was not only inevitable, but the most natural, right and proper thing in the world.”<sup>20</sup> It is not ironic that the article appeared in this particular *Review*, as it was the same journal that finally gave a name—hence a formal justification—for what was believed the right of Americans: our Manifest Destiny.

Precursors to American predominance had been played out, and history was set to be made, all in the name of Manifest Destiny. This is a classic example of how, when doctrines gain names, they in turn gain legitimacy and ultimately power. The combination of the idealistic vision of social perfection through God and the pride of American nationalism in the mid-nineteenth century filled an American ideological need for domination of the hemisphere from pole to pole, as Monroe had implied. This was ultimately based on the

concept of Americans possessing a divine providence. The strong belief of God's will for American expansion over the whole of the continent and to ultimately control the country led to a guiding call to human destiny. "It was white man's burden to conquer and christianize the land," as Kipling envisioned at the end of nineteenth century. This expanded the Puritan notion of a "city on a hill" and was secularized into Manifest Destiny, albeit a materialistic, religious, and utopian destiny.<sup>21</sup>

This eventually led to the fear that foreigners crossing the national frontier borders might hamper the security of the United States. The most reasonable answer was to conquer land beyond those borders and expand to other areas. This became evident when Albert T. Beveridge arose in the United States Senate and espoused the view—with utmost certainty—that "Anglo-Saxon [America] was destined to rule the world" and went on to state that "He [God] has made us the master organizers of the world to establish system where chaos reigns."<sup>22</sup> In speaking so boldly, Beveridge introduced an international dimension to American Manifest Destiny that justified the 1867 purchase of Alaska from Russia for \$7,200,000. The price of being a world empire had risen from its earlier purchase of Louisiana from Napoleon! Indeed, not only the price, but the arrogance of this doctrine was on the rise as the expansionist fervor grew following the Spanish-American War. Congress went so far as to call for annexation of all Spanish territories. Newspapers of the time were more extreme in suggesting the annexation of Spain itself.

Aspirations of an American empire were echoed in the views of other expansionists, including Theodore Roosevelt, former President Harrison, and Captain Alfred T. Mahan. Indeed the latter's treatise on the importance of naval power in international affairs was especially influential. Such voices fed what seemed to be an insatiable desire once again, manifesting itself in 1898 when America decided that it wanted control of Hawaii and took it—oddly not quite so differently as when Andrew Jackson took Florida nearly a century before. The supposed American mission to the islands came to fruition in 1959 when the United States made Hawaii its fiftieth state.<sup>23</sup>

Throughout American history the dual visions of the American people—of a divine providence destined by God to direct national expansion, or of a natural right to extend liberty (our own version, of course) to other parts of world—seemed to complement each other. Once again, it appeared that the means ultimately justified the end. As a people we embraced an unnamed, but not unknown, doctrine and made it our own. And, as in our previous history, we have taken concepts, ideologies, and policies—altering them to fit our

own needs—and then applying them to our own country.

While this process is not totally detrimental, it hinders our ability to understand and examine American history as a part of world, as well as our own national, history. When faced with attempting to understand the philosophy of destiny and the concept of being a “chosen people,” it is most beneficial to widen our lens and focus on a broader picture. When this occurs, we can then understand that the United States did not create a new doctrine but simply embellished upon principles that can be traced back to earlier “chosen people” and their own individual views of natural right and nationalism. This philosophy began as far back—if not farther—as the Greek philosophy of Stoicism. Viewed that way, manifest destiny is a necessary requirement for all societies seeking a higher purpose for their own nation and peoples. This is not totally inconceivable since “all nations that are worth anything, always have had, and always will have, some ideal of national destiny, and without it, would soon disappear, and would deserve their fate.”<sup>24</sup>

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## **THINGS TO NOTICE ABOUT THIS PAPER**

This paper is more a historiographic essay than some traditional history papers. Nonetheless, it still presents primary sources, secondary sources, and the interpretations of the author to arrive at a thesis: that "Manifest Destiny" was not just a phenomenon of American history. The paper is more than a mere collection of sources, pasted together. The writer has thought about the material and has arrived at some interpretations that help explain it. She has inferred much from her sources and has treated some of the writings of philosophers and historians as primary sources, as she should.

The author's own point of view is unmistakable: She points out a long-standing interpretation of American history—one which has sometimes captured the popular imagination—and indicates how her interpretation differs. She identifies the source of the phrase and then traces the essential idea back through English history to its ancient roots. She arrives at a judgment about the effect of this on the history of the United States, but she does not preach to the reader. A historian can make judgments on whether certain ideas or actions in the past were good or bad. Historians do that sort of thing all the time. But it is not acceptable in the field of history to rage about events in the past as if your readers must be more persuaded by your emotions than by your evidence and your reasoning. Trust your readers. They do not read this paper to see how upset or self-righteous the writer is; they read to see how a fundamental idea

about American history actually ties the United States into a broad reach of global history.

The paper is documented throughout, which means that readers may look up the evidence should they want to know more about it. Notice particularly how Ms. Sonnenburg has used primary sources, some located on the Internet and others identified in the writings of others. This helps prevent the paper from being a collage of what other historians have written about manifest destiny. This technique is highly valuable, especially when you face limitations of direct access to the original primary sources. The thoughtfulness of the author in dealing with her sources is enough to make us feel that we have learned something important from someone who has taken pains to become an authority on an important aspect of U.S. history and to see how it has larger historical implications.

Answer the questions below by studying this sample paper. You would do well to ask these questions about your own writing:

### **Writer's Checklist**

- 4        What sentence or sentences near the beginning of the paper announce the writer's thesis, the main idea that controls the paper?
- 4        How does the writer use quotations? Why does she use shorter quotations, rather than larger block quotations, throughout? Where does she seem to use paraphrase instead?
- 4        What form do footnotes take? Why does the form sometimes change?
- 4        Where does the writer use secondary sources? Can you show where she disagrees with some of her secondary sources?
- 4        Where does the author make inferences? That is, where does she make plausible suggestions about the meaning of various texts when the meaning is not explicit in the text itself?
- 4        Which paragraphs in the essay are primarily narrative? Where does the author write in a more expository mode?
- 4        Where are arguments in the essay?

- 4 Where does the writer make her own judgments clear?
- 4 Where does the author use simile and metaphor to good effect?
- 4 In what ways does the conclusion of the paper mirror some of the ideas in the opening?

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1 John L. O’Sullivan, “Annexation,” *Democratic Review*, 17 (July and August 1845), in *Manifest Destiny and the Imperialism Question*, ed. Charles L. Sanford (New York: Wiley, 1974), 28.

2 Julius W. Pratt, “The Origin of ‘Manifest Destiny,’” *The American Historical Review*, 32(1927): 798.

3 Ephraim Douglas Adams, *The Power of Ideals in American History* (New York: AMS Press, 1969), 67.

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4 Albert K. Weinberg, *Manifest Destiny: A Study of Nationalist Expansionism in American History* (New York: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1958), 12.

5 Weinberg, 13–14.

6 Ernest Barker, *Traditions of Civility* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948), 312.

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7 Barker, 216.

8 Weinberg, 13–14.

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9 Tacitus, *The Agricola and Germania*, trans. A. J. Church and W. J. Brodribb (London: Macmillan, 1877), in *Medieval Source Book*, ed. Paul Halsall, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/tacitus1.html>, January 1996 (accessed 17 February 2005).

10 Quoted in Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 12.

11 Horsman, 10.

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12 Horsman, 82.

13 Horsman, 15.

14 Weinberg, 13–14.

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15 Frederick Merk, *Manifest Destiny and Mission in American History: A Reinterpretation* (New York: Knopf, 1963), vii–ix.

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16 Weinberg, 16.

17 David Goldfield et al., *The American Journey: A History of the United States* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1998), 261.

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18 Goldfield et al., 277.

19 Quoted in Michael T. Lubragge, “Manifest Destiny: The Philosophy That Created a Nation,” in *From Revolution to Reconstruction*, <http://odur.let.rug.nl/~usa/E/manifest/manif1.htm>, updated 6 March 2005 (accessed March 12, 2006).

APPENDIX A n *Sample Student Research Paper*

20 Quoted in Lubragge, “Manifest Destiny.”

21 Lubragge, “Manifest Destiny.”

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22 Quoted in Lubragge, “Manifest Destiny.”

23 Lubragge, “Manifest Destiny.”

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24 Adams, 68.

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