

PROMPT: evaluate the extent to which migration transformed the western United States across a broad time period in the mid- to late-nineteenth century.

From the very beginning of the European exploration of the Americas, the desire to discover new lands for resources, glory, and competition against foreign nations was strong. Businesses like the Hudson Bay Company broke frontiers in Canada the Northwest Territory, and explorers like Lewis and Clark mapped the American frontier. Compromises like the Louisiana Purchase, the Adams-Onís Treaty, and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo had granted the fledgling United States a massive untapped land of resources. However, these expeditions and endeavors were not solitary events; their occurrence allowed for tens of millions of Americans and immigrants to follow in their footsteps west and irreversibly change the course of the western United States. Migration was the greatest influence on the western United States from 1820 to the beginning of the Spanish-American War, as it directly led to an increasing spirit of imperialism and Manifest Destiny, the construction of infrastructure projects such as the Transcontinental Railroad, and increased conflict with Native American groups. As more and more Americans began to migrate westward via routes such as the Oregon Trail and the Santa Fe Trail, the concept of Manifest Destiny grew significantly, fostered the early signs of imperialist ambition, and most importantly introduced millions of Americans into the west who would go on to populate places like California. Beginning in the 1840s, Americans east of the Mississippi River were continuously drawn by the promise of land and liberty afforded by the west, and an escape from the now crowded urban areas of the east coast. Additionally, events like the California Gold Rush in 1849 and the Klondike Gold Rush in the late 1890s drew millions seeking riches and fame. Thus, it was the migration itself that massively grew the population of the American West and led to the prominence of states like California today. The very demographics of the United States and the density of our urban population centers today is largely owed to the initial migration of millions during the 1800s. Additionally, this migration fostered the spirit known as Manifest Destiny, which posited that it was the God granted right of the American people to claim the land of the American continent from the Pacific Ocean to the Atlantic Ocean. Indeed, it can be argued that the imperialist endeavors pursued by the United States in the form of claiming Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines during the Spanish-American War were a direct result of the general mood of Manifest Destiny pioneered in the American West in the decades prior. Another important impact of the migration of millions of Americans westward was the building of the Transcontinental Railroad and other infrastructure projects that helped the United States connect, communicate, and grow economically. The Transcontinental Railroad began under the administration of Abraham Lincoln, who was one of many to realize the need to link the eastern United States with the relatively new and growing state of California, and allowed for the rapid transportation of people and goods between both coasts. This construction even had the unintended effect of attracting many migrants, largely from China, into the American west to build the tracks, roads, and telegraph lines needed to continue expanding into the West. Without westward migration, these infrastructure projects may have never been realized, as the need for rapid communication and transportation with a large segment of the American population would not have existed. Furthermore, it was these very infrastructure projects that allowed for massive industrialization across the United States and boosted the American economy massively during the Gilded Age. The most significant development brought about by westward migration was

that of increased conflict with Native American groups across the west. As millions traveled westward to claim land offered under Abraham Lincoln, white and immigrant settlers came into increasing contact with native tribes on the Plains and elsewhere. This competition for space and resources led to a long series of wars that included Black Hawk's War in 1832 and eventually the Battle of Little Bighorn in 1876. This crusade against the Native Americans largely concluded with the Wounded Knee Massacre in 1890, and the reservation system was implemented in full force. These developments in the American West would not have been occurred without the mass migration of tens of millions of settlers to the west, as the competition for the land would have never occurred. Furthermore, the continuing effects of the reservation system and the oppression of Native Americans is reflected by events like the occupation of Alcatraz Island and the continuing controversiality of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. In conclusion, westward migration had a significant effect on the American West. The migration of tens of millions westward was the impetus for the founding of numerous states, and saw the early seeds of imperialism be sewn through the concept of Manifest Destiny. Furthermore, the migration of many to California after the Gold Rush in 1849 led to an increased infrastructure system via the Transcontinental Railroad and significant telgraph operations. Finally, the conflict of settlers with Native American groups led to the implementation of the reservation system, the Trail of Tears, and countless battles in the West. Without the settlement and migration of so many individuals in the American West, the United States would be very different today, and the development of the nation into a global superpower would have lagged behind tremendously.

SCORE BREAKDOWN:

Thesis: 1

Contextualization: 1

Evidence: 2

Analysis and Reasoning: 2

Total Score: 6

A. Thesis/Claim (0–1 points): 1 The response earned 1 point for thesis because the last sentence in the first paragraph establishes a historically defensible claim: “Migration was the greatest influence on the western United States from 1820 to the beginning of the Spanish-American War, as it directly led to an increasing spirit of imperialism and Manifest Destiny” and a line of reasoning that includes “the construction of infrastructure projects such as the Transcontinental Railroad, and increased conflict with Native American groups.” B. Contextualization (0–1 points): 1 The response earned 1 point for contextualization because in the first four sentences of the introductory paragraph it discusses the exploration of Hudson Bay, explorers such as Lewis and Clark, the Louisiana Purchase, and the Adams-Onís Treaty. C. Evidence (0–2 points): 2 The response earned 1 point for using evidence relevant to the topic of the prompt. For example, the response describes the Oregon and Santa Fe Trails, the California and Klondike gold rush, the transcontinental railroad and attracting immigrants, especially Chinese, conflicts with Native Americans (including the Black Hawk Wars, Battle of Little Bighorn, and Wounded Knee Massacre in 1890. The response earned the second point for

using the evidence to support an argument. The argument that migration was the greatest influence on the western United States is supported by the discussion of how the Oregon and Santa Fe Trails brought more and more American settlers to the West in support of early imperialist ambition. Additionally, in the first half of the second paragraph, the response argues that events such as the California gold rush in 1849 and the Klondike gold rush in the late 1890s drew millions more migrants who significantly influenced the West. In the third paragraph, the response claims that westward migration led to the construction of the first transcontinental railroad and other infrastructure projects that also brought Chinese workers to the West. And in paragraph four, the response argues that the most significant development brought about by westward migration was that of increased conflict with Native American groups across the West, which led to a long series of wars that included the Black Hawk War, the Battle of Little Bighorn, and Wounded Knee Massacre in 1890.

D. Analysis and Reasoning (0–2 points): 2 The response earned 1 point for using historical reasoning by establishing a strong causation argument. The second, third, and fourth paragraphs explain how the trails, gold rushes, transcontinental railroad, and the conflict with Native Americans over the competition for the land caused various changes throughout the West. The response earned the point for demonstrating a complex understanding in a variety of ways. The response uses at least four pieces of specific and relevant evidence in support of nuanced and complex argument. Also, the response uses multiple perspectives, explaining the viewpoint of pioneers along the trail and during the gold rush in paragraph two and the perspective of those seeking economic and technological development in paragraph four. In paragraph four, the response also explains the perspective of Native Americans who resisted White settler encroachment. Finally, the response explains multiple causes, differentiating between the causes of settler expansion motivated by Manifest Destiny (e.g., expansion into Oregon, California, and Native American lands) and the causes motivated by the spirit of imperialism (e.g., the claiming Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines). Bighorn, and the Wounded Knee Massacre), the reservation system, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs.