

2. “Although Americans perceived Manifest Destiny as a benevolent movement, it was in fact an aggressive imperialism pursued at the expense of others.”

Assess the validity of this statement with specific references to American expansionism in the 1840s.

- This statement is valid based on specific events of American Expansionism during the 1840's. The aggressive removal and oppression of America's native peoples for profit and land gain overshadowed the romantic ideals of "Manifest Destiny," which was in fact a term coined to justify the social darwinism that actually took place.

- Imperialism: The policy of forcefully extending a nation's authority by territorial gain or by the establishment of economic and political dominance over other nations (a nation being a group of people; not necessarily an established state).

- The term "Manifest Destiny" was coined in 1845 by John L. O'Sullivan in reference to a growing conviction that the United States was preordained by God to expand throughout North America

- Examples of Imperialism during American Expansion:
- Trail of Tears: Under Jackson/ The Indian Removal Act of 1830, c. 50,000 Native Americans had been forced from 25 million acres of desirable land was later used for American settlement.
- When land was gained from Mexico (Mexican-American War 1846-1848), people who had lived there for generations became lesser citizens in American society

- Consider the definition of imperialism, the events of American Expansion, and the term "Manifest Destiny." It is evident that Americans sought to justify their westward march with a variety of ideas about race, religion, culture, and economic necessity.
- Land speculators that settled in Florida, Texas, and Native American lands wanted more land for monetary gain.
- People who fled poverty in Europe and eastern metropolitan centers assumed that without spreading out to fresh lands the nation would languish.
- Many sought to perpetuate the institution of slavery by expanding it to new territories.
- Others believed that expansion into "uncivilized" regions would spread progress and democracy.
- Most importantly, the majority of Americans, like President Jackson, felt that they were doing right by the "savages" whom they assimilated and displaced. This is the classic ideology of an imperialistic state.

- Because it involved the usurping of lands that had formerly belonged to foreign peoples, Manifest Destiny was more than just westward expansion; it was imperialism.