

Manifest Destiny

“America is destined for better deeds. We have no interest in the scenes of antiquity, only as lessons of avoidance of nearly all their examples. The expansive future is our arena, and for our history. We are entering on its untrodden space, with the truths of God in our minds, beneficent objects in our hearts, and with a clear conscience unsullied by the past. We are the nation of human progress, and who will, what can, set limits to our onward march? Providence is with us, and no earthly power can. We point to the everlasting truth on the first page of our national declaration, and we proclaim to the millions of other lands, that “the gates of hell” – the powers of aristocracy and monarchy – “shall not prevail against it. Who, then, can doubt that our country is destined to be the great nation of futurity?”

(John L. O’Sullivan, *Manifest Destiny*, 1839)

1. Read the quote by yourself, and then list key words or phrases.
2. Now work with a partner and combine your two lists of key words or phrases into one shared list.
3. Next, write a definition of “manifest destiny,” based on your shared list of key words and phrases.

Put two or three pairs together and form a small group. Share your pair definitions of manifest destiny. If possible, come up with one definition of manifest destiny. If you can’t agree on the definition, write two definitions.

Share your definition with the class. Help the class come up with one single definition of “Manifest Destiny.” Write this definition on the board or on an overhead.