

2020 - 21

SOCIAL STUDIES

NOTES



A summary based on

*Honor in the Dust: Theodore Roosevelt, War in the Philippines,
and the Rise and Fall of America's Imperial Dream*

Supplemental Reading | Additional Resources



2020-2021

TOPIC: American Empire: Expansion, Imperialism, and Intervention

Written by
Andrew Bates, Contest Director

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INTRODUCTION

Social Studies Notes is a time-tested 'tool kit' for building a solid annual topic foundation. Covering concepts, documents, terms, people, themes, events, and a plethora of significant facts, *Social Studies Notes* is arranged to facilitate full-topic comprehension, and the order of discussion may differ from the actual test. In this regard, students will be able to form their own unique ideas and opinions, which are especially useful in the essay portion of the contest as well as in everyday life. We encourage students to become familiar with the format of the contest, which consists of 45 multiple-choice questions and an essay, while reading.

UIL High School Social Studies contest test format is as follows, for a possible total of 100 points:

- Part 1— General Knowledge = 20 points (20 questions, 1 point each)
- Part 2— Supporting Documents = 30 points (15 questions, 2 points each)
- Part 3— Primary Reading = 30 points (10 questions, 3 point each)
- Essay = 20 points

MEET THE AUTHOR

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Social Studies Notes 2020-2021

BACKGROUND

The story of the UIL Social Studies topic for 2020-2021 is much like the story of this year's subject matter, itself. It began as a relatively small area that, due to its inability to match its perceived role in the world, decided it was necessary to grow, and by the end of its development, grew to much larger proportions than were ever envisioned at the time of its creation. The seed from which this thematic and more developed topic grew was a look at the role of filibusters in the development of the United States. It does not take a long look at these events to realize that the issues and ideals that drove the people responsible for most major filibustering operations were strikingly similar to those that drove the expansion of the U.S. overall. Those same desires, beliefs, and motivations could be found heavily influencing U.S. actions during the Mexican-American and Spanish-American Wars. Likewise, it does not take much study of these events to realize that the driving forces behind them are not just similar but have ties to issues that had been developing and, in some ways, festering for decades and decades. Thus came about a topic dealing with the overall themes that created the various overlapping eras that collectively comprise the history of the U.S.'s physical, political, and cultural influence.

It will be important to follow the path of several key issues or factors guiding the growth of the U.S. for this topic. To track these elements such as demographics, slavery, commerce, and several other important societal issues and trends, it is helpful to compare their roles in a few main eras of history. These elements are often intertwined with each other and the eras themselves and overlap considerably depending on how they are defined. A brief discussion of these issues and their impacts on the expansion of the U.S. is a perfect jumping-off point for building a foundation of knowledge.

The very creation of the U.S. as a nation had questions about boundaries and what they meant inextricably tied to it. The movement of settlers into territory unoccupied by whites began before the American Revolution had even ended, and the issues those actions created would dominate much of how the country approached expansion from then on. The rights of people within U.S. borders from the time the West was defined as the Mississippi River to when it became the Pacific Coast to its evolution of including territory within the Pacific Ocean itself have always been a contentious issue.

The rights or lack thereof for Native Americans and Blacks defined the way that territory was added during the first half of U.S. history. From the forced removal of Cherokees and other tribes in the Old Southwest to the removal of buffalo from the Great Plains, all aspects of U.S. expansion would impact natives, and it was overwhelming in a negative and often catastrophic way. The expansion or limitation of slavery into new territories was one of the other significant factors in how a territory was or was not added. Limiting the nation's acquisition of land was so counter to the identity of the country at the time that the process was continued at a rapid pace despite its progress running parallel to the nation's progress towards a civil war. Race would also play a significant role later in which non-contiguous territories were added or allowed to become states.

Why the U.S. would hurtle itself forward in gaining territory despite very real and dangerous consequences is in large part due to another pair of fundamental characteristics of 19th-century America. The U.S. population grew at a pace unseen in European history. At the same time, the government and its people were keen on perpetuating a relatively high quality of life for this burgeoning population. The natural explosion of people and the purposeful support of commerce and trade combined to further frame the way the U.S. sought and claimed territory. The movement of a few settlers into areas such as the Ohio River Valley, the Missouri River Valley, Texas, the Great Salt Lake, and the Willamette Valley quickly became a flood and often before the U.S. had any justifiable claim to the land. The fertility rates that accompanied these settlers made U.S. acquisitions seemingly inevitable. Through purchase, war, and treaties, the actions of aggressive settlers were codified into official policy. As the areas for settlement became more and more numerous, the country and its people began to focus more on protecting those lands and the quality of life enjoyed within them.

Not all new territories saw an influx of people and many were taken without a desire to see them populated. They were, however, seen as essential to the economic support of the growing population. Many countries in Latin America were eyed for annexation at one time or another in U.S. history. Some, like Nicaragua, were nearly brought in through filibustering operations. Others, like Cuba, were eyed for decades but had their incorporation blocked by numerous and continuing circumstances. Though bringing a territory directly under U.S. sovereignty was rife with issues about rights, race, and changes to the balance of power in the government, having economic dominion was full of benefits with a much more limited set of downsides. Hence, the U.S. began to seek lands that it could influence, or more correctly, control without annexing it. The U.S. did not completely abandon adding territory, but it was largely done for more economic and military reasons (directly tied to protecting those interests). Hawaii, the Philippines, and Guam were highly desirable to many people who promoted expanding the influence of the U.S. empire, but not as places to settle, and for many promoters, not as states to be added, but merely for the aid they would provide in making the influence of U.S. commerce felt on a global scale. Even without the issues of statehood, such incorporations had obvious difficulties. These controversies, such as the Philippine War and the Insular Cases, in several territories like Puerto Rico, made influence and intervention even more desirable approaches. The U.S. made incursions into sovereign countries dozens and dozens of times during the first third of the 20th century. This way, the economic, military, and some political benefits of an empire could be maintained or expanded without many of the domestic social implications.

For every action, there is a reaction, and even these policies that were seen as extremely beneficial to the U.S. early in the century started to have increasing fallout. The imperialism of the U.S. evolved once again into a more modern form. After World War II, the U.S. began to use its economic and cultural power to influence other countries. The strength of its cultural force could be, and is still, felt well beyond the Western Hemisphere it once focused so intently on influencing. WWII and the subsequent Cold War also facilitated the creation of around 700 military bases that provide continuing sources of strong and soft power influences across the globe. In many ways, the U.S. has a drive for expansion in its DNA. The form and impact of that expansion has changed dramatically over time, but many of the same themes from past eras can be found guiding it.

One last group of elements that are important to consider when analyzing the many events that form this year's topic are the various cultural movements and forces influencing the individuals that created and executed the policies behind the acquisition of territory. Looking back from a modern

perspective, it is fairly easy to see the flaws in many expansionist policies and even easier to note the problematic ways they were executed. What is more difficult is to note that some of these questionable or even reprehensible actions were seen by those espousing them as the best options available or even benevolent actions. Some of the justifications are obviously made to deflect blame and accountability, but some were the sincere perspectives from which certain individuals viewed the world due to their unique socialization. At the top of the list of such powerful social influences were social Darwinism, the perceived importance of war as it relates to the concept of manliness, Anglo-Saxonism, imperialism of righteousness, and American exceptionalism. These and many other beliefs not only informed but dominated the mindsets of many of the people involved in U.S. expansion. It is not possible to fully understand their actions without considering these motivations.

TIMELINE

Date	Event
1784, 1785, 1787	Northwest Ordinances established organization of territory
1789-1797 George Washington presidency	
1791	Vermont statehood
1792	Kentucky statehood
1801-1809 Thomas Jefferson	
1803	Louisiana Territory Treaty doubled size of U.S.
1803	Ohio statehood
1803-1806	Lewis and Clark expedition to the Pacific Coast
1809-1817 James Madison	
1811	Tecumseh's War
1812	Failed invasion of Canada
1812	Louisiana statehood
1812	South Pass discovered through the Rocky Mountains
1812-1815 War of 1812	
1812-1813	Patriot War of East Florida
1813-1814	Creek War ended in ceding of territory in Old Southwest
1817	Mississippi statehood
1817-1818	First Seminole War
1817-1825 James Monroe	
1819	Adams-Onis Treaty acquired Florida from Spain
1820	Missouri Compromise
1820	Maine statehood
1821	Missouri statehood
1822	Rocky Mountain Fur Company established

1822	Santa Fe Trail established
1823	Monroe established Monroe Doctrine and U.S. influence over Western Hemisphere
1825-1829 John Quincy Adams	
1826-1827	Fredonian Rebellion marked first attempt for Texas independence by Anglo settlers
1829	Great Intrusion began in northern Georgia after gold was discovered
1829-1837 Andrew Jackson	
1830	Indian Removal Act passed
1830	Oregon Trail established
1832	Black Hawk War was last major native resistance in Old Northwest
1832	<i>Ann McKim</i> built in Baltimore became first clipper ship
1835	New Echota Treaty signed by rogue members of Cherokee Nation
1835-1836	Texas Revolution resulted in Texas declaring independence from Mexico
1836	Treaty of Velasco
1837	Panic of 1837
1837-1841 Martin Van Buren	
1838	Trail of Tears
1838-1839	Aroostook War
1841 William Henry Harrison	
1841-1845 John Tyler	
1843	Great Emigration wagon train headed to Oregon from Missouri
1844	Samuel Morse sent first telegraph message from Washington, D.C., to Baltimore, Maryland
1845	<i>The Emigrant's Guide to Oregon and California</i> by Lansford Hastings published
1845	Florida statehood
1845	Texas annexed by U.S.

1845-1849 James Polk	
1846	Mormon Trail established
1846	Oregon Territory
1846-1847	Donner Party
1846	Wilmot Proviso
1846-1848	Mexican-American War
1847	Taos Revolt
1848	Free Soil Party founded
1848	Mexican Cession to U.S. took place as part of Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo
1849	State of Deseret established in modern-day Utah
1849	Vanderbilt signed contract to create Nicaraguan canal
1849-1850 Zachary Taylor	
1850-1853 Millard Fillmore	
1850	Clayton-Bulwer Treaty ratified between the U.S and United Kingdom
1850	Compromise of 1850 passed in piecemeal fashion
1850	California statehood
1853	Gadsden Purchase added southern portions of modern-day Arizona and New Mexico
1853-1857 Franklin Pierce	
1854	Kansas-Nebraska Act
1855-1857	William Walker and filibuster army eventually gained presidency of Nicaragua
1856	Guano Act of 1856 began annexation of several uninhabited islands
1857	Baker and Howland Island annexed by U.S.
1857-1861 James Buchanan	
1859	Oregon statehood
1859-1861	Jefferson Territory created in mainly modern-day Colorado from parts of several existing territories

1861-1865 Abraham Lincoln	
1861-1865	U.S. Civil War
1862	Homestead Act passed
1862	Pacific Railway Act of 1862 passed
1864	Sand Creek Massacre in Colorado Territory
1865-1869 Andrew Johnson	
1866	Fetterman Massacre resulted in one of the worst defeats for U.S. forces in the West
1867	Alaska purchased from Russia
1867	Midway Island annexed
1869	Attempted annexation of Santo Domingo
1869	Transcontinental Railroad completed at Promontory Point
1869-1877 Ulysses Grant	
1876-1877	Great Sioux War occurred after U.S. sought to claim Black Hills
1877-1881 Rutherford Hayes	
1881	Ferdinand DeLesseps began failed attempt at Panamanian canal
1881	Helen Hunt Jackson released <i>A Century of Dishonor</i> describing U.S. treatment of Native Americans
1881 James Garfield	
1881-1885 Chester Arthur	
1885	Josiah Strong released <i>Our Country</i> discussing need to "Christianize and civilize" the "savage" races
1885-1889 Grover Cleveland	
1887	Hawaii Constitution of 1887 promulgated
1887-1889	Samoa Crisis between colonial powers nearly led to war between rival colonial powers
1889	Wilcox Rebellion sought to limit royal authority in Hawaii
1889-1893 Benjamin Harrison	
1890	Alfred Thayer Mahan released <i>The Influence of Sea Power Upon History</i>