**Debate Question:** Should the United States follow a policy of manifest destiny in the 1840s?

In the debate, students should research the arguments for and against manifest destiny, the motives behind manifest destiny, arguments for and against the annexation of Texas and the acquisition of territory from Mexico, and arguments for and against the acquisition of the Oregon territory.

**Time:** February 25, 1845

Polk has been elected president, but John Tyler is still in office. The U.S. Congress is deciding whether to prepare a joint resolution supporting the annexation of Texas.

**Place:** Washington, D.C.

**Debate Moderator:** President John Tyler

**Student Assignment:**

Students will be assigned a historical character. Sources used should pre-date 1847, except in extenuating circumstances. Although the Mexican War has not yet occurred, students can allude to the possibility of war being declared. Students may go back as far as 1828 for background information and the accomplishments of their characters. Using at least one primary source and a minimum of two secondary sources (please do not cite information from traditional encyclopedias, internet encyclopedias, or your textbook) students should:

1. Identify their historical character as being either pro or anti manifest destiny or a facet of manifest destiny. (e.g., a character can support the annexation of Oregon but be against the annexation of Texas).
2. Identify the character’s political party (if applicable).
3. Identify the nationality of their character or his state of residence.
4. Identify the character’s position on one or more of the issues surrounding manifest destiny.
5. Become totally familiar with the character’s arguments and position regarding manifest destiny, the annexation of Texas, a possible war with Mexico, and/or the acquisition of the Oregon Territory.
6. Identify pamphlets and other works their character has written on the issues.
7. Complete a formal resume (see the sample resume you have been given) for your character. The resume should cover the character’s life between the years 1828 and 1850. At least three references from the debate should be listed. Resumes must contain a bibliography of at least 3 sources in correct format.

**Debate & Assignment:**

Students will complete a resume for their assigned character and be prepared to answer the following questions:

1. Should the United States support a policy of manifest destiny as it relates to the annexation of Texas and American expansionism in general?
2. Should the U.S. go to war with Mexico to obtain western lands?
3. Should the U.S. acquire the Oregon Territory?

**THE CHARACTERS**

John C. Calhoun William Gilpin

Andrew Jackson Governor Edward Everett

Robert J. Walker Thomas Hart Benton

Joshua Giddings Hall J. Kelley

James K. Polk Marcus Whitman

John L. O’Sullivan William Snelling (critic of Hall J. Kelley)

Robert C. Winthrop Rep. John T. Hardin (IL)

James Russell Lowell Senator Daniel Webster (MA)

Frederick Douglass Senator George Evans (ME)

Henry David Thoreau Rep. Robert Clarke Winthrop (MA)

Senator George McDuffie (SC) Thomas Hart Benton

Senator Edward Hannegan (IN.) Rep. Moses Norris, Jr. (NH)

Charles Sumner Waddy Thompson

Henry C. Wright Rep. Charles Hudson (MA)

Henry Clay Rep. Charles Goodyear (NY)

Ramon Alcaraz (Mexico) Rep. Andrew Kennedy (IN)

Rep. J.D. Cummins (OH)

Rep. George A. Caldwell (KY)

Rep. John Wooleston Tibbotts (KY) (references Senator Jacob Welsh Miller)

Senator Jacob Welsh Miller (NH) (references Rep. Tibbotts)

Rep. Isaac E. Holmes (SC)

Jose Fernandez Ramirez

Lyman Beecher

Zenas Leonard

Walt Whitman

William L. Barney

**Background Information for members of Congress may be found at:**

http://bioguide.congress.gov