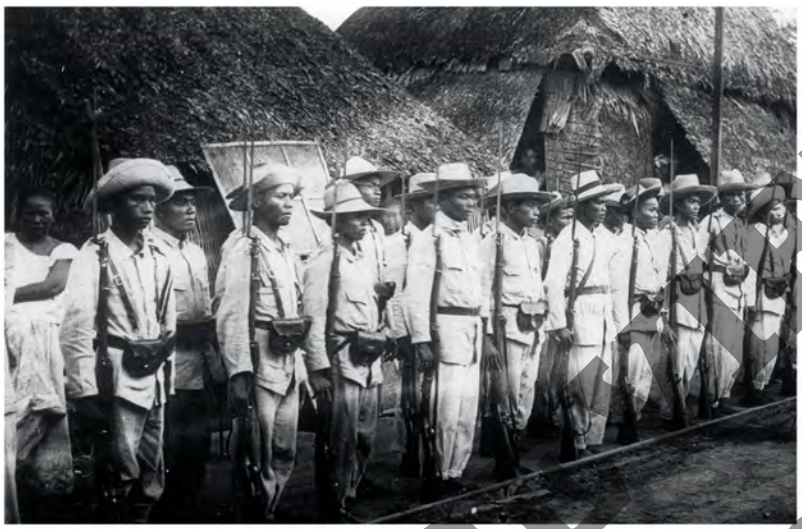
Imperial America: U.S. Global Expansion, 1890-1915

Student Text



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Faculty at Brown University and other institutions provided advice and carefully reviewed this curriculum. We wish to thank the following scholars for their invaluable input to this edition:

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Contents

Introduction: Imperial America

In December 1898, the United States and Spain signed the Treaty of Paris, ending the military conflict between the two countries known as the War of 1898. The result of the war was that the United States took over control of Spain's colonies in the Caribbean and Pacific—Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines. The U.S. military also controlled Cuba, another Spanish colony, for the next several years before the United States allowed for its limited independence. In addition, the United States annexed the independent Republic of Hawai'i in the middle of the War of 1898. In 1899, what is now called American Samoa was annexed as well. In just a short time, the United States acquired an overseas colonial empire and secured its place as a global imperial power.

> ***"[T]he United States is now a land on which the sun never sets.... Imperial America, which comprises more than half of the inhabited portion of [the North American] continent, stretches its arms across to another hemisphere. Its possessions dot the world's greatest ocean and...will add largely to the country's wealth and general resources."***
>
> —Editorial in the *Los Angeles Times* newspaper, celebrating the United States' acquisition of an overseas empire, December 1898

For a long time, U.S. history textbooks tended to teach American imperial expansion at the turn of the twentieth century as if it were a major departure from the nation's historical record both before and since. They often described these years as a brief whirlwind of war and colonial conquest that ultimately did not last. If you flip through one of these old textbooks, in fact, you may only find a few pages—or a single chapter, at most—covering U.S. imperialism. After that, the colonies often disappeared from the text altogether, along with any discussion of the United States as an "empire."

That is not how historians view turn-of-the-century U.S. imperialism today. For example, they emphasize how long U.S. colonial rule has actually lasted. Hawai'i was held as a territory for sixty years before becoming a U.S. state. The Philippines were ruled as a colony until 1946. Puerto Rico, Guam, and American Samoa remain in a colonial relationship with the U.S. government today. For the people who have lived on these islands, U.S. imperialism was not a brief whirlwind, but a lasting way of life.

> ***"The only problem is they don't think much about us in America."***
>
> —Opening stanza from "They Don't Think Much About Us In America," a poem by Filipino poet Alfredo Navarro Salanga, 1989

Historians today also insist that we understand the U.S. acquisition of overseas colonies at the turn of the twentieth century as part of a much longer

Introduction Definitions

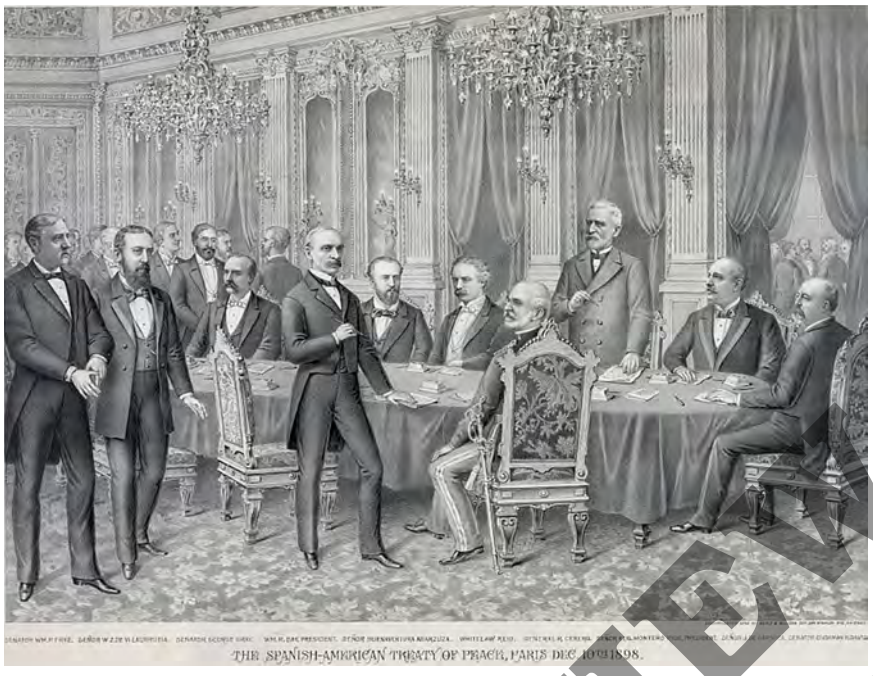
Imperialism—Imperialism is a system in which a foreign power exerts cultural, economic, or political control over other societies. There are two types of imperialism—(1) with colonies (colonialism); and (2) without colonies. Imperialism without colonies is when a powerful nation controls or dominates a less powerful nation or people but does not directly take over its government.

Colonialism—Colonialism is a form of imperialism when a foreign power directly rules over another society by taking over its government. The people of a colonized territory are deprived of both political and economic independence.

Empire—An empire is the territory and people under the direct or indirect control of an imperial power.

Annex—Annex is to add territory to one's existing territory.

Military intervention—A military intervention is an invasion carried out to influence the affairs of a foreign nation or people.



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Spanish and American officials sign the Treaty of Paris in December 1898. Despite the treaty dealing with the transfer of Spain's colonies to the United States, no Filipinos, Cubans, Puerto Ricans, or Chamorro (the Indigenous people of Guam) were present at the negotiations or signing.

history of U.S. imperialism. They look backward from 1898, and point out that the United States had spent more than a century invading North American territory inhabited by Native Americans, claiming that territory as its own, and then colonizing those lands. What Americans have tended to call "westward expansion" was, in fact, the construction of a continental empire in North America.

Historians today also look forward from 1898. They emphasize that from 1900-1915 the United States expanded the power and reach of its empire through military interventions into Cuba, China, Panama, the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Mexico, and Haiti. Of course, there were differences between the conquest of North America, the colonization of islands in 1898-1899, and U.S. military invasions and occupations in the early twentieth century. But, as you will see, they were also deeply interconnected.

In the coming pages, you are going to examine the major historical developments that characterized U.S. imperial expansion from 1890 to 1915. In Part I, you will briefly explore the history of U.S. territorial expansion in North America. Then you will examine the rise of a group of powerful Americans in the 1890s who called for the nation to continue to expand by acquiring overseas colonies. Finally, you will read about their first failed attempt to acquire Hawai'i in 1893.

In Part II, you will explore the War of 1898, the United States' acquisition of Puerto Rico, Guam, the Philippines, and Hawai'i, and the war the United States fought from 1899-1902 to defeat the Philippine independence movement.

Note on Terminology

When the first Europeans arrived in the Americas in the fifteenth century, they called the Native peoples they met "Indians" because they believed they were in India. Some Indian communities in the United States began to use the term "Native American" in the mid-twentieth century, in part to counter the negative and racist stereotypes that had become associated with the word "Indian." But this term is also problematic because the term "America" is also a European invention. Indigenous peoples outside of the United States also do not use the term "Native American" to describe themselves. There is no Indigenous name for all of the Native peoples of the Americas because before Europeans arrived, there was no need for such a term. With thousands of distinct nations and languages, the Native peoples of the Americas were not a unified group. Some Indigenous people in the Americas today see themselves as unified, however, due in large part to their treatment by white people. In this reading, the terms "Indian" and "Indigenous" will be used interchangeably. Whenever possible, groups will be referred to by their specific names.

In Part III, you will read about how the United States governed its new colonial empire. You will also explore resistance movements to U.S. rule within the colonies. Finally, you will examine U.S. military interventions into Cuba, China, Panama, the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Honduras, Mexico, and Haiti from 1900-1915.

As you read, keep these questions in mind:

- What role has imperial expansion played in U.S. history?
- What was similar and different about the United States' colonization of North America, acquisition of overseas colonies, and military interventions into foreign countries?
- What arguments did supporters of imperialism make to explain or justify U.S. actions?
- In what ways did people resist U.S. imperialism?

Race, Racism, and White Supremacy

The concepts of race, racism, and white supremacy appear throughout these readings and lessons. It is important to understand and keep these concepts in mind as you explore the history of U.S. imperialism.

Race—The idea of race is seemingly based in biology, but it lacks a scientific basis. The DNA differences within a race can be wider than DNA differences among races. For instance, the DNA of an African American can be more similar to that of a Chinese American than to another African American. Overall, race is a concept that rests on physical differences in skin color, hair texture, etc., that comprise only 0.1% of the total of each human's DNA. White Europeans created ideas about race and racial differences in order to explain and justify their enslavement of Black Africans and colonial domination of Indigenous and Asian peoples. Since then, these physical differences have been used to classify people into unequal hierarchies, often to exploit the labor of some groups and allow other groups to profit from that exploitation.

Ideas about race reflect the political, economic, cultural, and social circumstances of a society. These ideas can change over time. For example, the common understanding of who was considered "white" in the United States once excluded Eastern and Southern Europeans.

Racism—Racism is a system of social structures (laws, policies, practices, and attitudes) that creates inequalities by either providing or denying power, resources, opportunities, and safety based on racial categories. Racism is more than prejudice or bigotry. Racism is having the institutional or structural power to harm, commit violence against, or deny opportunities to those facing racial prejudice or bigotry. Racism exists in the attitudes and actions of individuals as well as in the larger institutions and structures of which they are a part.

White Supremacy—White supremacy is based on the belief that white people are superior to people of other races. White supremacy is thus an ideology, a deeply ingrained system of beliefs, values, and assumptions. White people developed it over time to explain not only racial slavery and colonial domination, but also why they should have power over people of color overall. White supremacy is also more than an ideology. It is a social structure created to keep people of color in lower political, economic, and social positions through laws, social expectations, and denial of economic and educational opportunities.

Note about Disturbing Content

This period in history is marked by oppression and violence and has had lasting repercussions for many groups. Please be advised that this text includes firsthand accounts of violence, descriptions of warfare, and discussions of racial and colonial oppression. At times, you will encounter primary sources that contain racist and bigoted language—these sections of the text are noted with a content warning. These sources have been included in order to demonstrate how U.S. policies and actions were motivated by racism and white supremacy. It is important to be sensitive to your classmates and the ways in which this history might be a difficult topic to study.

Imperial America: U.S. Global Expansion, 1890-1915

Teacher Resource Book

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Contents

"American Progress": Analyzing a Portrayal of Manifest Destiny

Objectives:

Students will: Examine the process of settler colonialism.

Explore the concept of a symbol.

Analyze a painting's portrayal of "manifest destiny."

Consider the power of an artistic image to influence an audience's understanding of historical events.

Required Reading:

Students should have read the Introduction and Part I of the reading and completed "Study Guide: Facts and Information—Introduction and Part I" (TRB 3-4) or "Study Guide: Analysis and Synthesis—Introduction and Part I" (TRB-5).

Videos:

The videos used with this lesson are available at <www.choices.edu/imperialism>.

- "The Conquest of North America"
- "Analysis of 'American Progress' by John Gast (1872)" (Professor Naoko Shibusawa)
- "How do you go about analyzing a work of art?" (Ian Alden Russell)

Resources:

"American Progress" (TRB-9) (color version available at <www.choices.edu/imperialism>)

"Analyzing a Portrayal of Manifest Destiny" (TRB-10)

"Info Sheet for Teachers" (TRB 11-12)

In the Classroom:

1. Introduction—Ask students to recall Part I of the reading. Review the concepts of settler colonialism and manifest destiny. Then play the video "The Conquest of North America."

How does the narrator describe settler colonialism? How does the narrator describe manifest destiny? According to the video, what were the three main methods that settlers used to displace and/or eliminate Native Americans? Which historical examples does the video provide for each method (warfare and violence, treaty violations, and Indian Removal)?

2. Painting Analysis—In contrast to the methods of colonization discussed in the video, most Americans in the nineteenth century viewed this process as "manifest destiny." Tell students that they are going to analyze a painting from 1872 that portrays the idea of manifest destiny in the United States. Break the class into small groups of three to four students. Distribute the painting and worksheet to each group. You may wish to review the definition of a symbol that is included on the worksheet. Show the video "How do you go about analyzing a work of art?" by curator Ian Alden Russell to introduce a framework for analysis.

If you would like to demonstrate an example to the class using this framework before students complete the assignment, you could point out and analyze the train in the painting using the following steps:

- **Description:** There is a train in the painting heading from right to left.
- **Deduction:** Railroads played a key role in the U.S. colonization of North America, moving settlers, U.S. troops, and goods from the East to the West.
- **Speculation:** The artist seems to be celebrating U.S. technological advancements, and he implies U.S. technological superiority is one of the reasons why the United States is successfully conquering and settling the continent.

3. Class Discussion—Bring the class back together. Ask each group to share a few examples of features of the painting that they noticed. Do students think these features symbolize or represent anything larger? How do different aspects of the painting connect to what students know about what was taking place in the United States at this time? You may wish to consult the "Info Sheet for

Teachers" for additional prompts and examples of analysis.

What do students think the artist's message is in this painting? How does the artist portray settler colonialism? In a positive way? In a negative way? Ask students to reference specific elements of the painting as they respond. For example, what does the artist seem to be saying about white settlers? Native Americans? About other aspects of settler colonialism, such as agriculture, technology, education, religion, and transportation?

Remind students of the title of the painting, "American Progress." What does the title suggest about the artist's message?

4. Comparing Perspectives—How does this portrayal of manifest destiny compare to the description of settler colonialism that students read in Part I? How does it compare to the video they watched at the beginning of class? Do students think the painting is an accurate portrayal of history? What story does this image represent? Why does the artist tell the story this way? Whose perspectives are represented? Whose perspectives are missing?

Play the video "Analysis of 'American Progress' by John Gast (1872)" by Professor Naoko Shibusawa. How does her analysis of the painting compare to students' analysis?

5. Making Connections—What power do images and artwork have to influence viewers' perceptions, feelings, and understandings of events? For example, if you were a white person in Virginia in 1872 and you saw this image, what would you think settler colonialism was like? If you were an African American in 1872, how might you view this image? What feelings or thoughts do you think this image would evoke if you were a Native American or a Mexican American in 1872? If you were a seventh grade student today learning about U.S. settler colonialism for the first time and you saw this image, what would you think happened during this time in history?

Homework:

Students should read Part II and complete "Study Guide: Facts and Information—Part II" (TRB 21-22) or "Study Guide: Analysis and Synthesis—Part II" (TRB-23).

Extra Challenge:

Make Your Own Symbolic Artwork—Tell students they are going to use what they just studied about an artist's message and use of symbolism to create their own artwork based on what they learned about U.S. settler colonialism and Native American resistance in Part I of the reading. You may want to consider partnering with an art teacher to conduct this lesson and expand students' options for art materials.

Note: U.S. settler colonialism has had lasting effects on Native American groups and others. We recommend directly addressing this history of dispossession, oppression, and resistance with students before they begin their art project. It is important to establish your expectations so that students do not unwittingly offend their classmates or others. Students should be told not to create explicit displays of violence or racism in their artwork. If students wish to confront these issues in their art, they should do so using symbolism.

Divide the class into pairs. Students should work with their partner to review "The Settler Colonization of North America" and "Native American Resistance to U.S. Settler Colonialism" sections from Part I of the reading. They should identify significant historical events, major themes, and important ideas from the text that they want to portray in their artwork. They should also brainstorm with their partner about how they want to portray these events, themes, and ideas. Tell students their artwork should include at least two or three "symbols" that represent these significant events, themes, and ideas.

Distribute blank paper or posterboard and colored pencils or markers to each pair of students. Tell students to work with their partner to create an artistic portrayal of U.S. settler colonialism and Native American resistance. Emphasize to students that they have creative flexibility—for instance, they can portray the long-term processes of settler colonialism and Native American resistance or choose specific events or ideas and create a piece of art that reflect those.

After students have completed their artwork, display them around the classroom. Have student pairs introduce their art and describe their "message." Provide students with time to examine each other's art and ask questions.

American Progress

Library of Congress. Prints and Photographs Division, LC-DIG-ppmsca-09855.

This painting, titled "American Progress," was created by John Gast in 1872. John Gast was a painter based in Brooklyn, New York. He was hired to create the painting by a publisher named George Crofutt. Crofutt printed the painting in his travel guides of the American West, such as *New Overland Tourist* and *Pacific Coast Guide*. Color reproductions of the painting were also widely circulated.

Name: _____

Analyzing a Portrayal of Manifest Destiny

Instructions: Read the definition of a symbol below. Then answer the questions below as you analyze the painting "American Progress."

Symbol: A symbol is a simple object that represents a larger idea or concept. For example, a cross may represent Christianity, a dove may symbolize peace, and an eagle might represent the United States.

Three Steps for Analyzing a Work of Art

1. Description

What do you see? Provide at least six details about what you see in the painting.

a.

b.

c.

d.

e.

f.

2. Deduction

What do the details you have noticed in the painting make you think about or feel? For example, what are the expressions of people in the painting? Do you think any of the details represent or symbolize something larger? How do the details connect to what you know about what was happening in the United States at the time the painting was created?

3. Speculation

What hypothesis can you make about what you see in this painting? What political, cultural, or social ideas do you think the painting is trying to show? What is the artist trying to make you think about or feel? What is the artist's message?

Info Sheet for Teachers

Below are sample prompts for students and examples of analysis of particular components of the painting "American Progress." Additional background information on specific aspects are included.

Prompt 1

What do you notice about the figure in the middle? How is she portrayed? What is she holding in her hands? What is she doing as she moves westward? How would you describe her motion? Her expression? What do you think she represents?

Analysis: The figure is Columbia, a personification of the United States (like Uncle Sam). The book in Columbia's hand represents education and "civilization." The wires and posts behind her are telegraph lines, symbolizing technological advances and communication. Her expression is calm and she seems to be floating. Her white, flowing clothes seem angelic. This could symbolize Christianity and the idea of "manifest destiny." Overall, the figure represents the artist's belief in the progress, modernization, enlightenment, and God-ordained nature of the United States' colonization of the West.

Prompt 2

How would you describe the men on the bottom right? What are they doing? What have they built around them? What does this part of the painting represent?

Analysis: The men are farmers and use oxen to plow the land. They are surrounded by fences and a house. All are white. This part of the painting represents the farms that white settlers created after forcing Native Americans off their land. The artist seems to be celebrating U.S. agriculture and presenting this as a justification for confiscating Native Americans' land. The individual plots of land also likely represent those acquired through the Homestead Act (1862), which sought to extend the idealized "yeoman" farm into the West through government grants of free or cheap land to U.S. settlers.

Prompt 3

How would you describe the group of four men in the lower central part of the painting?

Analysis: The men travel over a hill on foot and on horseback. They carry tools, which could be mining tools. All are white. These men could represent land prospectors and miners. The artist could be glorifying the settlers' supposed "discovery" of the West and their utilization of natural resources in ways the artist believed were superior to Native Americans' use of the land. The portrayal idealizes the individual miner, rather than the large-scale mining operations that actually dominated western mining.

Prompt 4

How would you describe the ox-drawn wagon?

Analysis: A man uses a whip to drive oxen, which pull a covered wagon full of passengers. Surrounding the wagon are the dead bodies of cattle. One has an arrow stuck in its body, perhaps shot by the Native American man to the left carrying a bow. This could represent the dangers for settlers moving west and the artists' view that Native Americans were a threat to white settlers.

Prompt 5

What do you notice about the group of Native Americans on the left? What do they have in their hands? How are they traveling? What are they looking at? What do you think they symbolize?

Analysis: The Native Americans carry various weapons. Some walk on foot and others ride or are pulled by horses. They are moving to the left, or west, and look back to the east toward the white settlers. They seem to

be fleeing the oncoming white settlers, implying that U.S. settlement of the West necessitated removing Native Americans from their land. The fact that white settler and U.S. military violence are not portrayed here serves to sanitize what was in reality a violent process.

Prompt 6

What types of wild animals do you notice in the painting? Which direction are they moving? What might they represent?

Analysis: The painting depicts buffalo, bear, and deer. Most of them are running to the left, or west, away from the white settlers. These animals symbolize the wildlife that were slaughtered or driven away by white settlers, particularly the decimation of wild buffalo herds. The artist could be celebrating the West as a place rich with wildlife for settlers to hunt. Buffalo seemingly being driven off the image may also represent the U.S. military policy of killing buffalo in order to deprive Plains Indians of one of their most essential resources.

Prompt 7

What do you see in the top right part of the painting?

Analysis: There are settlements along the coast, with ships in the water and a large bridge. This could represent New York City and the Brooklyn Bridge, which was under construction at the time. John Gast, a Brooklyn-based painter, created this painting. The artist is likely depicting the East as a civilized area with modern and advanced architecture.

Prompt 8

How would you describe the colors in the painting? The brightness and darkness? How does the right side of the painting compare to the left?

Analysis: The right side of the painting, or East, is lighter and brighter. The sun is depicted on the eastern side of the painting, sending beams of light westward. The left/West is darker, particularly the sky. The light colors in the right side of the painting could represent goodness, progress, and "civilization." The dark colors of the left side of the painting could represent the dangerous and "uncivilized" wilderness of the West. The artist implies that U.S. settlers bring "civilization" (light) with them into "uncivilized" territories (dark) as they take land from Native Americans.

Imperial America: U.S. Global Expansion, 1890-1915

Imperial America: U.S. Global Expansion, 1890-1915 explores the central role of imperial expansion in U.S. history. Students examine the historical connections between the United States' creation of a settler colonial empire in North America, the nation's acquisition of an overseas colonial empire following the War of 1898, and the various ways U.S. imperial power continued to expand in the early twentieth century.

Imperial America: U.S. Global Expansion, 1890-1915 is part of a continuing series on current and historical international issues published by the Choices Program at Brown University. Choices materials place special emphasis on the importance of educating students in their participatory role as citizens.

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