Westward Choices

How hopes, hardships, and beliefs shaped migration

8.C.9.1.C "Explain how the idea of Manifest Destiny influenced migration by identifying push and pull factors impacting the settlement of western territories."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline pressures that pushed people to leave home, circle opportunities that pulled them west, and put a star beside sentences showing how Manifest Destiny influenced their choices.

More Than a Place to Go

1. Imagine a farming family in Missouri in the 1840s facing a hard choice. Their small plot could not support all their children, and buying nearby land cost more than they could pay. Stories from Oregon described fertile valleys where newcomers hoped to start larger farms. These pressures at home pushed the family to consider leaving, while the promise of farmland pulled them west. The journey on the Oregon Trail required months of travel, supplies, and dangerous river crossings, so hope alone could not make the decision easy.

2. Many Americans of the time believed in Manifest Destiny, the idea that the United States was meant to spread across North America. Newspapers and politicians used this belief to praise westward settlement. For the Missouri family, the idea could turn a risky search for farmland into a mission they thought was right. It did not create their need for land or the fertile valleys, but it made moving seem important and justified. Federal policies also encouraged settlers, though government promises could not erase the journey's real costs.

3. After gold was discovered in California in 1848, news of possible riches pulled thousands of people toward its mining camps. Some left jobs with low pay or few chances to advance, a push factor different from the Missouri family's shortage of land. Manifest Destiny helped some migrants see both farming in Oregon and mining in California as part of a larger national expansion. But these western lands were already home to Native peoples. Migration and U.S. expansion often brought broken treaties, displacement, and violence to their communities.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What pushed the Missouri family to consider leaving, and what pulled them toward Oregon?

2. How could Manifest Destiny influence the family's choice even though it did not create their need for land?

3. For some people headed to California, what was a push factor, what was a pull factor, and how could Manifest Destiny affect their decision?

4. Why would it be misleading to describe the Oregon farmland that pulled settlers west as land no one lived on? How might Manifest Destiny have shaped settlers' views of moving there?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you have a low-paying job in 1849 and are deciding whether to go to Oregon or California. In four or five sentences, recommend one destination, compare the two places' pull factors, explain how your job and Manifest Destiny shape the choice, and acknowledge the effect on Native peoples.

ANSWER KEY

Westward Choices

GRADE 8 · 8.C.9.1.C

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline pressures that pushed people to leave home, circle opportunities that pulled them west, and put a star beside sentences showing how Manifest Destiny influenced their choices. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What pushed the Missouri family to consider leaving, and what pulled them toward Oregon?	**Their small plot could not support their children, and nearby land was too expensive. Oregon's fertile valleys offered a chance to start a larger farm.**
2	How could Manifest Destiny influence the family's choice even though it did not create their need for land?	**It could make the risky move seem like an important and justified part of the nation's expansion.**
3	For some people headed to California, what was a push factor, what was a pull factor, and how could Manifest Destiny affect their decision?	**Low pay or few chances to advance pushed some people to leave. The possibility of finding gold pulled them to California, and Manifest Destiny could make the move seem part of a larger national expansion.**
4	Why would it be misleading to describe the Oregon farmland that pulled settlers west as land no one lived on? How might Manifest Destiny have shaped settlers' views of moving there?	**Native peoples already lived on western lands. Manifest Destiny could make settlers view moving there as justified, despite the displacement and violence expansion brought to Native communities.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

My low-paying job pushes me to leave home. Oregon's fertile valleys offer a chance to farm, while California's mining camps offer a chance to find gold. I would choose Oregon because I want to build a farm rather than search for uncertain riches. Manifest Destiny might make my move seem like part of a national mission, but that belief does not make it fair. Native peoples already live on western lands, and newcomers' settlement can displace their communities.

Accept either destination if the response distinguishes the job-related push factor from both pull factors and explains how Manifest Destiny could influence the choice. The response should also recognize that Native peoples already lived on western lands.