Routes and Reasons

Compare the promises and consequences of westward migration

8.C.9.1 "Examine multiple perspectives on the justification for and impact on westward expansion and analyze the influence of immigration. Explain how the fur trade provided economic incentive for early exploration of the West including the crucial..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two reasons people argued for or chose westward migration, and circle two ways migration affected different groups. Use your marks to compare hopes with consequences.

Who Saw Opportunity in the West?

1. In the 1820s and 1830s, demand for beaver hats drew fur traders across the Rocky Mountains. Jedediah Smith traveled through mountain passes and deserts, sharing knowledge that helped later migrants imagine routes west. Traders relied on Native peoples for geographic knowledge and trade, but those relationships could involve conflict as well as exchange. In the 1840s, John C. Frémont published reports and maps of western lands; Kit Carson guided some of his expeditions. Their work made routes better known, although a known route did not make travel safe.

2. In 1845, writer John L. O'Sullivan argued that Americans were meant to spread across the continent. This idea, called Manifest Destiny, treated the spread of U.S. government and culture as inevitable and desirable. Some families headed west because farmland in their home regions was scarce, a push factor. Promises of land and opportunity pulled them toward western territories. Yet calling expansion inevitable ignored choices made by people. For Native nations already living there, incoming settlers often brought land loss and pressure on their communities.

3. Migration did not involve only people born in the United States. Irish immigrants often found work in eastern cities, while some helped build railroads that carried people west. Norwegian immigrants established farming communities in the Upper Midwest, changing who settled there. French observer Alexis de Tocqueville described American democracy as unusual for its broad social equality among white men compared with European societies of his time. That observation could support claims of American exceptionalism, but slavery and the removal of Native peoples exposed serious limits to claims of liberty and equality.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the fur trade help turn early exploration into later migration? Use Jedediah Smith as an example.

2. How does the passage challenge O'Sullivan's claim that westward expansion was inevitable?

3. Compare one push factor and one pull factor for families moving west. How did each affect their decision?

4. How do the Irish and Norwegian examples show different ways immigrants shaped westward settlement?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four- or five-sentence museum label for a westbound wagon exhibit. Present one settler's reason for moving, one Native perspective on its effects, and explain whether Tocqueville's view of American equality fits both experiences.

ANSWER KEY

Routes and Reasons

GRADE 8 · 8.C.9.1

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two reasons people argued for or chose westward migration, and circle two ways migration affected different groups. Use your marks to compare hopes with consequences. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the fur trade help turn early exploration into later migration? Use Jedediah Smith as an example.	**Demand for beaver hats drew traders west. Smith traveled through passes and deserts, and knowledge of those routes helped later migrants.**
2	How does the passage challenge O'Sullivan's claim that westward expansion was inevitable?	**Calling expansion inevitable hid the choices people made to migrate and ignored the land loss and pressure Native nations faced as settlers arrived.**
3	Compare one push factor and one pull factor for families moving west. How did each affect their decision?	**Scarce farmland at home pushed families to leave. The promise of land and opportunity in western territories pulled them west.**
4	How do the Irish and Norwegian examples show different ways immigrants shaped westward settlement?	**Some Irish immigrants helped build railroads that carried people west, while Norwegian immigrants established farming communities in the Upper Midwest.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A family might travel west because land at home was scarce and land farther west seemed promising. A Native community could see those same newcomers as a threat to its land. Tocqueville saw unusual equality among white men in American democracy, but that did not protect Native peoples from losing land. The journey could mean opportunity for one group and harm for another.

Accept other passage-based reasons for migration and effects on Native peoples. The museum label should distinguish a settler's opportunity from a Native community's experience and address the limits of Tocqueville's observation.