Promises and Costs

Read westward expansion through the experiences of different groups.

8.C.9 "Examine the political, economic, social, and geographic changes that occurred during the period of westward movement. Examine multiple perspectives on the justification for and impact on westward expansion and analyze the influence of..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two economic reasons people explored or moved west, circle O'Sullivan's claim about expansion, and number three costs or conflicts faced by people already living in the West. Use your marks to compare the promises of expansion with its consequences.

Whose West?

1. Before wagon trains crossed the West, fur traders sought beaver pelts that sold for high prices. Jedediah Smith traveled through mountain passes, and his reports helped later migrants plan routes. Traders also relied on Native peoples for geographic knowledge and trade. In the 1840s, families moving to Oregon hoped for farmland, while some Northern European immigrants joined the search for land and work. These newcomers did not enter empty country. Native nations already lived, traded, and governed across these lands, and migration threatened their homelands and authority.

2. Newspaper editor John O'Sullivan argued in 1845 that the United States was destined to spread across the continent. He called this idea Manifest Destiny and claimed that American government and culture should expand. Many settlers viewed western land as an opportunity, but that claim ignored Native nations' right to govern themselves. Texas joined the United States in 1845 after years as an independent republic. Disputes over its border helped lead to war with Mexico. The war ended in 1848, when Mexico ceded a vast western region under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.

3. After the treaty, Mexican residents of the ceded territory could become U.S. citizens, yet many later lost land through legal disputes, taxes, and fraud. Gold discovered in California in 1848 drew migrants seeking wealth, including immigrants from Europe. Mining and settlement pushed Native peoples off land and damaged hunting and fishing places. At the same time, politicians argued over whether slavery would spread into the new territories. Expansion could promise land or profit to one group while costing another group its home, its rights, or its way of life.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the fur trade create both a reason to explore the West and help for later migrants?

2. How might a Native nation challenge O'Sullivan's claim about expansion? Use evidence from the passage.

3. How did the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo bring both a possible benefit and a loss for Mexican residents of the ceded territory?

4. How did expansion create economic opportunities and political conflict?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a five- or six-sentence letter to a newspaper editor in 1849 as a Mexican resident of the ceded territory or a Native community member along a migration route. Respond to O'Sullivan's claim, and use at least two details from the passage to explain one promise and one cost of expansion.

ANSWER KEY

Promises and Costs

GRADE 8 · 8.C.9

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two economic reasons people explored or moved west, circle O'Sullivan's claim about expansion, and number three costs or conflicts faced by people already living in the West. Use your marks to compare the promises of expansion with its 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 create both a reason to explore the West and help for later migrants?	**High prices for beaver pelts drew traders west. Jedediah Smith's reports about mountain passes helped later migrants plan routes.**
2	How might a Native nation challenge O'Sullivan's claim about expansion? Use evidence from the passage.	**A Native nation could reject the idea that U.S. expansion was destined or justified because Native peoples already lived and governed on those lands. Migration threatened their homelands and authority.**
3	How did the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo bring both a possible benefit and a loss for Mexican residents of the ceded territory?	**Mexican residents could become U.S. citizens, but many later lost land through legal disputes, taxes, and fraud.**
4	How did expansion create economic opportunities and political conflict?	**Farmland and gold drew migrants seeking land or wealth. Politicians argued over whether slavery would spread into the new territories.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Dear Editor, O'Sullivan says our land was destined to become part of the United States, but a claim of destiny cannot erase our lives here. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo gives Mexican residents in the ceded territory a path to U.S. citizenship, which may offer a new political voice. Still, I fear that legal disputes and taxes will strip families of the land they have long held. Gold seekers arriving in California may find wealth, while their arrival brings more pressure on our communities. Expansion should not be called progress if its rewards depend on our losses.

Accept letters from either viewpoint that use at least two accurate passage details, identify a promise and a cost, and respond to O'Sullivan's claim. Students may describe a promise that benefits a group other than the letter writer's.