

FPRI-Why America Goes to War

Manifest Destiny and the Transcendentalists-A Crossover Lesson

Lesson Gleaned from a Lecture Given for FPRI by Walter A. McDougall, Professor of International Relations, University of Pennsylvania, on March 25, 2017 at First Division Museum at Cantigny, Wheaton, IL

Summary

1. **Subject(s):** Language Arts/American Literature
2. **Topic or Unit of Study:** The Transcendentalists
3. **Grade/Level:** 10, 11, 12. **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.10; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.9; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.1.B; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.2.E; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.9**
4. **Objective:** Students will demonstrate their understanding of the terms, people, and themes associated with “Manifest Destiny” and the “Transcendentalists”. Students will be able to objectively point to the values of the Transcendentalists and their objections to Manifest Destiny through their aversion to the Mexican War.
5. **Time Allotment:** 4-5 Days

Implementation

- a. **Anticipatory Set-**Students will view the painting “American Progress” by John Gast and recall the symbols of westward expansion that were introduced with the painting through their American History classes. Students should understand that although the painting does not convey a realistic representation of actual events, it is a powerful historical idea about the meaning of America’s westward expansion.
- b. **Direct Instruction-** Read Emerson-Self Reliance, Thoreau-Civil Disobedience, and Whitman-Pioneers! Oh Pioneers!. Discuss the Transcendentalist movement in literature and the fact that most of these writers were not in favor of the Mexican-American War.
- c. **Guided Practice-**Using Civil Disobedience as a model, students will write a paragraph about a time in which they followed their own conscience or broke an “unjust” law.

- d. *Check for Understanding*-Think/Pair/Share activity-"Give examples of the "Rhetorical Mysticism" of the Transcendentalists.
- e. *Closing*-Exit ticket to show understanding. Ask student to restate the definition of "Renaissance" and how that vocab word relates to the movement in literature.

Materials & Resources

- a. Instructional Materials: Gast Painting: <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/97507547/> ;
- b. Resources: Holt McDougal Literature Book, American Literature
- c. <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper2/thoreau/civil.html>
- d. http://lhsela.weebly.com/uploads/7/9/0/8/7908073/emerson_self_reliance_excepts.pdf
- e. <http://www.bartleby.com/142/153.html>
- f.

Assessment

-Write to the Prompt: Emerson once wrote: "The united States will conquer Mexico, but it will be as the man who swallows the arsenic, which will bring him down in turn. Mexico will poison us." Does his statement follow the logic of the Transcendentalist Movement? In a well written essay, please discuss.

