

Name: _____ Date: _____ Pr: _____

Manifest Destiny, I Do Believe

By BirdBrain History
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In this letter, Cordelia writes to her friend about her plans to become a pioneer, a common ambition during the "Manifest Destiny" era of western settlement in the 19th century. As you read, note how Cordelia mentions God and God's influence on her plans and actions.

Dear Emily,

This is farewell, dear friend. My family and I set out tomorrow. Out past the horizon to see what waits for us in the west. Will there be gold? Will there be trouble? Will there be some place we can call home? Truly, I am terrified. But I know it is the will of President Polk¹ and of God for us to spread as far as we can. So, we will follow that setting sun to our destiny.

We are going into territory that no one has gone before. I don't just mean the well you and I explored when we were young, dear Emily. No white people have set foot on the path we're about to take. A pioneer, after all, is someone who explores a country for the very first time. Yes, those Indians were here first, but we do not think of them as Christians. Not yet, anyway.

Some people try and kill every Indian they see. But you know me. I am a woman of God. They have blood flowing through their veins just like any other person. That blood can be blessed. I'm a missionary, and it is my goal to bring anyone I can into the light of Christianity. I've seen the Indians with their wives and their children. They seem like they can be good people. They are good hunters, for sure, better than my husband even, but don't tell him I said. I know in my heart that these Indians deserve God's forgiveness, like the rest of us.

What makes me so daring to go out into the dark, you ask? I know that I will have God's help. Manifest Destiny says that God has chosen us to take over this country, all the way to the coast. This means we are meant to overcome everything that gets in our way, be that wars or bad terrain² or Indians. Nothing will stand in the way of the pioneers³ settling this great new land of ours. At least, I hope not.

It's dark out there. There are no maps showing us where to go. Dangers could wait around every corner. But as the pioneers bravely march into these new mysterious places, we carry with us a light. We carry the light of civilization, man's most advanced state of society. The wild land will become fields of crops. The Indians will become Christian. The darkness will become light ... at least in our eyes.

Please keep me in your prayers as my husband, Sarah, and I set out into the darkness. I have faith in Manifest Destiny, that the pioneers were meant to bring the light of civilization to this land. As missionaries, my husband and I will bring the word of God to the Indians, if they will have us. Really, Emily, I would have no confidence in myself were it not for God's guiding hand. I know that this is his goal to bring the pioneers to the far sea. But to tell you the truth, I am afraid.

I'll write you often and let you know if God's work is unfolding.

Love,

Cordelia

1. James K. Polk was the 11th president of the United States from 1845 to 1849.
2. **Terrain** (*noun*): land of a particular kind (such as mountains or woods)
3. **Pioneer** (*noun*): someone who is one of the first people to do something, such as move to and live in a new area

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which of the following statements best identifies the central theme of the text?

- A. God first created the land for Indians but then decided to give Americans control because he preferred their civilization.
- B. God has given Americans the will to spread Christian American civilization from coast to coast.
- C. It is guaranteed that missionaries will bring Christianity to American Indians, and Cordelia does not want to miss the opportunity to help.
- D. Pioneers are more likely to succeed if they are also missionaries because then God has blessed them.

2. PART B: Which TWO phrases from the text best support the answer to Part A?

- A. "I know it is the will of President and of God for us to spread as far as we can." [Paragraph 2]
- B. "Yes, those Indians were here first, but we do not think of them as Christians." [Paragraph 3]
- C. "I know in my heart that these Indians deserve God's forgiveness, like the rest of us." [Paragraph 4]
- D. "Manifest Destiny says that God has chosen us to take over this country, all the way to the coast." [Paragraph 5]
- E. "The wild land will become fields of crops. The Indians will become Christian. The darkness will become light." [Paragraph 6]
- F. "I would have no confidence in myself were it not for God's guiding hand." [Paragraph 7]

3. What statement best explains how Cordelia responds to the west?

- A. She is unafraid of the west and ready to explore.
- B. She is frightened of the west but certain it contains her destiny.
- C. She is unconvinced that she will succeed in the west.
- D. She is disgusted by the darkness of the west as it is.

4. How does the speaker's point of view most influence how the events are described in the letter?

- A. Cordelia's plans seem easy and exaggerated.
- B. Cordelia's plans seem frightening and ill-fated.
- C. Cordelia's plans seem brave and necessary.
- D. Cordelia's plans seem silly and unnecessary.

5. How is it suggested that Manifest Destiny is not as noble as Cordelia makes it out to be? Provide evidence from the text.
