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## 7. Westward Expansion Accomplishment or Tragedy?

**Assignment:** Write a multi-page research essay using five or more sources. Present at least one counterargument. Document your sources. The final copy must be typed.

In the years from 1820 to 1860 the United States grew to stretch “from sea to shining sea.” The growth brought much accomplishment, but it also brought tragedy. Based on the evidence, did the 1800s expansion of the United States bring about more accomplishment or tragedy?

In your essay, include a thesis in the first paragraph. Make sure each paragraph has a topic sentence. Within your essay, include the correct usage of the following terms and people:

Manifest Destiny	Mexican-American War	James K. Polk
Sequoyah	California Gold Rush	Oregon
representative democracy	Santa Anna	Northwest Ordinance
Laura Ingalls Wilder	Texas	Trail of Tears
Andrew Jackson		

This essay has six assignments:

Assignment	Due Date		Due Date
1. Prewriting Activities	_____	4. Rough Draft	_____
2. Thesis Statement	_____	5. Final	_____
3. Outline	_____	6. Works Cited	_____

**Prewriting Activities for Essay #7**  
**A. Taking Notes**

Follow the structure below to write notes. Use a variety of sources.

<b>Manifest Destiny</b>
What? _____
Who? _____
When? _____
Where? _____
Why? _____
Any other information? _____
Does this term show accomplishment, tragedy, both, or none? _____
_____
Source: _____

<b>Mexican-American War</b>
What? _____
Who? _____
When? _____
Where? _____
Why? _____
Does this term show accomplishment, tragedy, both, or none? _____
_____
Source: _____

## B. The Capital “T”

Write a large capital “T” on a separate piece of paper and title it as below. Fill in which terms and topics fit into one or both of these titles. Only list the terms and people.

Accomplishment(s)	Tragedy(ies)
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.
6.	6.
7.	7.
8.	8.
9.	9.
10.	10.

## C. The Modified Capital “T”

You may want to list the term or person on the middle line of your paper instead. Write a few notes as to why or how this was part accomplishment and tragedy.

Term: _____	
Accomplishment	Tragedy
	—
	—
	—
	—
	—

## **D. Class Discussion**

When you share ideas with other students your ideas may be reinforced, rejected, or slightly changed. Listening to your classmates' ideas will help you form your own judgment.

Each student must interview at least three classmates who do not sit next to one another. The answers to the following questions must be written down on a piece of paper.

1. What is your name?
2. Which term do you think was the greatest accomplishment? Why?
3. Which term do you think was the greatest tragedy? Why?
4. How did you find your answers?

### **Reflection**

After you have written down all your classmates' responses, think about them and ask yourself the following questions. Write down your answers under your classmates' responses.

1. What do I think of my classmates' answers?
2. With which person do I most agree and why?
3. With which person do I most disagree and why?

You should now have a chance to present your ideas in a class discussion. If somebody says something with which you disagree, speak up! In your discussion, you may find out they are actually right and you are wrong. All possible viewpoints should be stated and defended out loud. Test your ideas in class.

Now that you've learned the difference between fact and opinion, read the example paragraphs below and answer the questions.

**Student 1:** George Washington was not greatly responsible for the founding of the United States of America. He was just this rich white guy who had a lot of power. He married the wealthiest person in Virginia and wanted to be strong. He got his wish when he was stuck in charge of a big army. During the war he didn't really do anything that was so special. There were some battles, and the Americans won some of the big ones. Then the French came in and helped out. The French were the ones who did a lot of the damage. The British just got tired of getting all of their men killed and so America won. Anybody could have done the job Washington did.

**Student 2:** George Washington was greatly responsible for the founding of the United States of America. Washington succeeded in turning unorganized colonial militia into an organized fighting force within a year. When Washington took command of the Continental Army in 1775, local Massachusetts' militia had the British surrounded in Boston, but they had no plan of attack and there was no military discipline. Washington ordered Knox to take men to Fort Ticonderoga to bring back cannon and he taught officers how to lead. A few months later Knox came back with 59 cannons and the Continental Army implemented a detailed battle plan Washington had made. Because of Washington's moves, the British fled Boston and gave the U.S.A. one of its first big victories.

### Questions

1. Which of these two students uses more opinion than fact? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Copy one sentence that is an opinion. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Copy one sentence that details at least one fact. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Which of these two students' writings is more persuasive? Why? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## 7. Thesis Statement

The **thesis statement** is the main idea or argument of your entire essay. It is your judgment regarding the essay question and it should contain words used in the prompt. A thesis statement is not a fact. Instead, it is your judgment of the facts. Because of this, a thesis has to be something with which not everyone will agree. Every thesis will provide an answer to the prompt and a few reasons of support.

Here is an example from essay question #1 in this book, “Based on the evidence, was George Washington greatly responsible for the founding of the United States of America?”

**Example 1:** George Washington was greatly responsible for the founding of the United States of America because of his leadership abilities, his willingness to take risks, and his integrity.

This thesis answers the question and provides an outline for the rest of the essay. The writer addresses the question directly and provides general reasons to support his answer (leadership abilities, his willingness to take risks, and his integrity). In the essay the writer will expand on these reasons through supporting evidence and explanation.

Come up with two more examples of a thesis based on this first question.

<b>Example 2:</b> _____ _____
<b>Example 3:</b> _____ _____

### The Good Thesis Test

If you can answer, “Yes,” to these questions, you most likely have a good thesis for a five-paragraph essay:

1. Does the thesis address the prompt directly?
2. Does the thesis take a position that I can argue with evidence?
3. Could somebody argue against my thesis statement?