

## SHORT ANSWER

10 minutes for these questions (4 points each)

1. How did the American people react to the abolitionists?

*In the North, abolitionists were often met with mob violence. In the South, where slavery was crucial to the social and economic fabric of life, abolitionists were not tolerated; their literature was censored and burned, and slave codes were tightened.*

2-3. Define immediatism, and briefly explain why it became a popular approach among abolitionists.

*Immediatism was the view that abolitionists should immediately and wholeheartedly commit themselves to beginning to work for the total emancipation of slaves in America, rather than just waiting for events to resolve naturally. [NOTE: Immediatism is not the view that slaves should be immediately freed.] Immediatism became popular because it became clear that the gradual approach to freeing slaves had failed, practically speaking. Moreover, the idea that the establishment of Christian freedom for all could be delayed was morally flawed.*

4. List two methods that abolitionists employed in order to change their complacent society.

*Any two of the following are correct:*

- *public rallies*
- *revivalistic exhortations*
- *speakers' series*
- *bureaucratic agencies*
- *all forms of printing*

5. Who was Nat Turner, and what is he famous for?

*Nat Turner was a slave who led a slave rebellion in which over fifty white men, women, and children were killed.*

6-7. Give two reasons that slave uprisings were less common in the American South than in other slaveholding societies.

*Any two of the following are correct:*

- *In the Old South as a whole, whites far outnumbered slaves. They were sure of speedy reprisals in these areas, and where blacks outnumbered whites, slave codes were more strict.*
- *Distance between individual plantations made communication for planning revolts or coordinating attacks difficult.*
- *The South was remote from any regions where slaves might escape and retreat, unlike Brazil or the Guiana region of northeastern South America.*
- *In the U.S., successful escapes were rare, unlike escapes in the Caribbean and South America.*
- *In America, many men had families to protect and enjoy. These families were a deterrent to escape, since families had little hope to escape together and runaways rightly feared that their families left behind would be punished for their escape.*
- *Short-term escapes, or escapes for family reasons, were tolerated as "escape valves" to everyday tensions between slaves and masters.*
- *Slaves practiced a number of acts that constituted low-level resistance and minor rebellion. These tactics allowed slaves to keep a measure of self respect, which in turn kept them from true dehumanization and desperation.*
- *The vast majority of slaves were intelligent people who found a way to get along within their chains and bide their time, looking for a means of escape or ultimate emancipation through law or death.*

8. Why did Martin Van Buren oppose the annexation of Texas during his presidency?

*Van Buren had chosen to support slavery in order to win Southern support for the Democratic Party. He was afraid of the disputes over slavery that annexing Texas would bring, so he denied requests for Texas to join the Union.*

9. What battle made William Harrison famous, and what nickname did it give him?

*Harrison became famous in the Battle of Tippecanoe in 1811 against Native Americans. His nickname became "Tippecanoe."*

10. How did Tyler respond to the Whig agenda when he succeeded Harrison as President?

*Tyler, who had only joined the Whig Party when asked to run as Harrison's vice president, vetoed virtually every bill that Whig leader Henry Clay sponsored.*

## ESSAY QUESTION

20 minutes for one of these questions (60 points)

1. “The ‘era of the common man’ touted American freedoms for ‘the people.’ There were several groups of Americans, though, that were not included.” In a well-structured essay, explain how it was that blacks, women, and Native Americans were not included in the blessings of Jacksonian democracy.

### Points an Excellent Essay Might Include

#### Blacks

- Clearly blacks were denied the freedoms that the common white man enjoyed.
- Even free blacks often faced discrimination and restrictions of rights such as voting.
- In contradiction to the common-man mentality, the rhetoric of the South fostered the idea that black people, as a race, were dependent children who would never grow up and could not function without masters.
- Abolitionists used the discrepancy between the egalitarian mindset of the Jacksonian Age and the Southern, paternalistic view of black people to argue in favor of freeing the slaves.

#### Women

- While men and women had once worked together on farms or in home-based industries, men now began to work in factories and offices, and women were expected to tend the home and do nothing else.
- Women were not allowed to vote.
- One author suggests that a reason women so eagerly supported abolitionism was because they identified with the disenfranchised blacks.

Note: Students may make the further point that we as Christians can affirm women’s role in the home and their sympathies for black slaves without assuming that these women were discontent with their status.

#### Native Americans

- The question initially facing Native Americans was whether to adopt white culture or move west.
- Jackson decided this question for many when he signed the Indian Removal Act and insisted that even the Five Civilized Tribes—who had adopted many white customs but maintained their own land and sovereignty—move to the west.
- Indians were forced out of their homes to walk the Trail of Tears during Van Buren’s term.
- Their land and homes were taken and thousands died.

### Sample Essay

*The “era of the common man” touted American freedoms for “the people,” but for blacks, Native Americans, and women, this was clearly not the case. The denial of these rights to blacks and Native Americans resulted in cruel treatment and tragic results for many. For women, the situation was different, but it is clear that all of these groups fell outside of the “people” championed by Jacksonian democracy.*

*Black people enslaved in the South starkly demonstrate that the “common man” of this era was narrowly defined. Slaves were not equally protected under the law, could not vote, and were unable to rise in social status. In addition, free black men in the North often faced discrimination and restrictions on their freedom to vote. Moreover, many in the South promoted the idea that the black race would always be dependent children who would never grow up or be able to function without masters. This idea was so blatantly contradicted by the rhetoric of the common man that abolitionists were able to use it to show the discrepancy between the two mindsets and to argue in favor of freeing the slaves.*

*Like the black slaves, Native Americans were excluded from “the people.” The initial question facing Native Americans was whether to adopt white culture or move west. Jackson decided this question for the Five Civilized Tribes when he signed the Indian Removal Act, which forced tribes to move west. Leaving behind their land and homes, thousands of Cherokee walked the Trail of Tears during Van Buren’s term, and nearly four thousand died along the way. Clearly the Native Americans did not enjoy the protection, rights, or status of the “common man” that increasing numbers of whites had in the Age of Jackson.*

*Women, too, were not considered part of the “common man,” in that they did not have the right to vote and could*

*not do many of the things that men were able to do. The reasons that women experienced a different status are different than the blacks and Native Americans. It is the case that women were largely relegated to the home and were not allowed to vote, but they did have many more freedoms and a larger voice in society, both through their husbands, fathers, and brothers, and through their own organizations and involvement in movements like abolitionism.*

*Taken altogether, it is important to note that the freedoms that were supposedly extended to “the people” during the “era of the common man” were actually given to a limited group of people. It would take much more than Jacksonian democracy—including a civil war and over a hundred years—to extend the freedoms and blessings of democracy to others who made up “the people.”*

2. “It was clear to some that America’s manifest destiny was to be the ruling power for the North American continent. Why?” In a well-organized essay, explain and evaluate the reasons that Americans gave to undergird their claim of a divine right to North American lands.

### Points an Excellent Essay Might Include

#### Reasons for Belief in Manifest Destiny

- The belief in Manifest Destiny was an assertion that God had given North America to the United States as a place for the free development of this great democratic nation.
- Occupation equals moral right: If a people occupy a country, they have more right to it than any foreign power who “owns” it on paper.
- It is the natural flow of events: Because Americans are spreading across the continent, they ought to spread across the continent and control it entirely.
- Any community strong enough to maintain independence has the natural right to it.
- Some saw America as a chosen nation—the New Testament version of Israel.

#### Evaluation of Reasons

- Occupation equals moral right: This argument was inconsistent with the Americans’ treatment of the Indians.
- It is the natural flow of events: This argument has faulty reasoning; it assumes that the fact that America is growing makes it morally right that America is growing.
- The argument that communities strong enough to maintain independence have a right to independence is the old “might makes right” argument. This argument has often been proved false.
- There seems little biblical backing for seeing America as a chosen nation.

### Sample Essay

*In the mid-1800’s, it was clear to some that America’s manifest destiny was to be the ruling power for the North American continent. The belief in Manifest Destiny was an assertion that God (or destiny) had given North America to the United States so that this great democratic nation could maintain, grow, and spread its freedom. Despite much high patriotism and optimistic sentiments, the reasons that Americans gave to undergird their claim of a divine right to North American lands were not well-founded arguments.*

*John O’Sullivan articulated three arguments that were widely used to support Manifest Destiny. The first was the idea that occupation equals moral right. If a people actually occupy a country, O’Sullivan argued, they have more right to it than those foreign powers who “own” it on paper. This was one argument O’Sullivan presented for the annexation of Texas, but it also was applied to California and other western lands. However, it is noteworthy that Americans, while they were eager to claim their own right to lands they settled, were equally eager to ignore the rights of certain people already living there: the Native Americans.*

*A second argument was that America ought to spread across the continent and control it entirely because they were already in the process of doing so. It is the natural flow of events, therefore it must be destiny. Such an argument can create a sense of purpose, but it does not actually make the action right. Indeed, it rests on the faulty assumption that just because something is happening, it is right. To agree with this assumption, we would have to agree that any evil act is actually right, because it happened (in contrast with the biblical view that God can and does bring good out*

of evil, for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose).

O'Sullivan's third argument was that any community strong enough to maintain independence has the natural right to it, by virtue of its distinct position, origin, and character. While this is in line with the arguments made on behalf of Texan and Californian independence, it is a far different argument than the first Americans made for their independence from Great Britain. Indeed, when O'Sullivan's argument is boiled down, it is difficult to distinguish it from the argument that might makes right—which from both a biblical and a legal standpoint is simply not true.

Thus, although there was a pervasive feeling in America that she was destined to possess all of North America, by the will of God, the arguments with which Americans bolstered this position were not sound. And history also stands against the doctrine of Manifest Destiny, for although America now stretches from “sea to shining sea,” she certainly does not possess all of North America.

## SHORT ANSWER

10 minutes for these questions (4 points each)

1. How was the Mexican-American War a natural result of the expansionist mood of America in 1846?  
*Since Americans felt their society was the finest available—God’s gift to mankind—the war was not presented as a war of conquest (which it really was) but as a heroic, patriotic, benevolent attempt to spread American institutions.*
2. Name one way that the Mexican-American War was a preface to the Civil War.  
*Any one of the following is correct:*
  - *There was obvious hypocrisy in the argument that America should go to war with Mexico in order to spread the blessings of liberty and republicanism while at the same time Americans held slaves and many wanted to introduce slavery to new western territories. This hypocrisy deepened the divisions between abolitionists and slaveholders.*
  - *Many soldiers in this war received training that would later serve them in the Civil War.*
  - *The war (especially the Wilmot Proviso) caused both Democrats and Whigs to split along sectional lines by reintroducing the question of slavery in the newly won territories.*
- 3-4. Name two of Polk’s four campaign promises.  
*Any two of the following are correct:*
  - *He would serve only one term.*
  - *He would pass a new tariff that would be acceptable to both North and South.*
  - *He would restore fiscal order to the federal government via the establishment of an independent treasury.*
  - *He would settle the Oregon border, which was disputed by Great Britain.*
- 5-6. Explain how Polk accomplished two of his campaign promises.  
*Any two of the following are correct:*
  - *He refused to run for reelection when the time came; he was the first U.S. President to do so.*
  - *He had the new protectionist tariff legislation drafted and ready when Congress convened after his election. It did prove acceptable to both North and South.*
  - *He restored fiscal order by promoting the Independent Treasury System to hold government funds, rather than independent banks or a national bank.*
  - *Polk purposefully broke off negotiations when the British refused to accept the modified proposal of the Oregon border on the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel. He returned to demands for “all Oregon,” which escalated tensions along the border and led the British to sign the Oregon Treaty in 1846, fixing the border back at the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel.*
7. For how long was the Oregon Trail heavily traveled as the West was settled?  
*It was heavily traveled for about 20 years from the 1840’s to the 1860’s.*
8. What motivated Marcus and Narcissa Whitman to marry?  
*Narcissa married because it was a means for her to gain her goal of missionary work in the West. This appears to have been Marcus’s initial goal as well.*
9. Give one reason that Morse and Cooke had trouble gaining public and financial support for the electric telegraph.  
*Any one of the following is correct:*
  - *There was widespread skepticism concerning the practical applications of the telegraph.*
  - *Ordinary people could not connect Morse code and jumping needles with real communication.*
  - *Most people thought of the electric telegraph as a scientific curiosity.*
10. Describe one factor or event that finally won over the skeptics of the telegraph.  
*Any one of the following is correct:*
  - *A line between Washington and Baltimore carried messages about real, important news faster than trains could.*
  - *The first message from Baltimore to Washington caused a ripple of sensation, as did Morse’s ability to transmit the names of the Whig nominees from their convention in Boston to Washington D.C.*
  - *The news that Queen Victoria had given birth to her second son, Alfred, came by wire from Windsor Castle to London with impressive speed.*

- *When the Duke of Wellington forgot his evening wear, he telegraphed back to London, and his suit was put onto the next train.*
- *Even more impressive were two successive arrests of fleeing criminals within days of one another.*

## ESSAY QUESTION

20 minutes for one of these questions (60 points)

1. “James K. Polk was one of the most successful Presidents ever.” Assess the validity of this statement from a political perspective, an ethical perspective, and an eternal perspective.

### Points an Excellent Essay Might Include

#### Governing perspective

- Accomplished all of his stated goals:
  - Served only one term
  - Passed a new tariff that was acceptable to both North and South
  - Restored fiscal order to the federal government via the establishment of an independent treasury
  - Settled the Oregon border, which was disputed by Great Britain
- People might argue over how important or valuable his goals were.

#### Ethical perspective

- Polk was not well-respected in his day.
- He was not known as a kind or merciful individual.
- It can be argued that Polk led the country in an unjust war against Mexico.
- He worked hard and faithfully as President—which may have caused his death a few months later.

#### Eternal perspective

- The measure of success from an eternal perspective is not becoming President or accomplishing your personal goals but knowing Jesus Christ, for “what good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul?” Matthew 6:26.
- On the other hand, God does call us to work in this world (see 2 Thessalonians 3:6-10).
- We cannot know Polk’s heart; his devotion to God may have been sincere. His presidency gives little indication one way or the other in this regard.

### Sample Essay

*James K. Polk has an impressive track record as President. He kept all his campaign promises, settled a boundary dispute with Great Britain, and won a war with Mexico. On these grounds alone, it would be easy to argue that Polk was one of the most successful Presidents ever. But success does not just depend on one’s political achievements. When we analyze Polk’s presidency from a political, ethical, and eternal perspective, it appears that, like other Presidents, Polk achieved only mixed success.*

*In respect to his effectiveness as a political leader, Polk was consistent and gave the people exactly what he promised. He kept his four campaign promises: to serve only one term, to pass a tariff acceptable to both the North and the South, to restore fiscal order to the federal government by establishing an independent treasury, and to settle the Oregon border dispute with Great Britain. Polk is widely—and rightly—applauded for this feat, which shows both skill in governing and judgment in what to promise.*

*From an ethical perspective, Polk had both success and failure. He was a faithful worker and a man of his word—two essentials for a President. His character, however, did have some flaws in that he could be selfish and unkind. People of his own day did not respect him for these flaws. Moreover, Polk led the country in war against Mexico with questionable justification. A good leader should direct his country to pursue what is right and just; it is not clear that Polk in fact did this, though he himself believed the war was just.*

*Finally, from an eternal perspective, it is not clear that Polk was one of the most successful Presidents ever. He*

pursued worldly success, but he is not known for pursuing God first. Unlike Washington and other Presidents who publicly and repeatedly acknowledge their dependence on God, Polk's presidency is not particularly marked by such dependence. While we cannot know Polk's heart, it is clear that the flavor of his presidency was not always heavenly.

When we thus consider Polk from a political, ethical, and eternal perspective, we see a man who had some brilliant political successes but much more limited success from an ethical or eternal perspective. While we can laud Polk for his consistency, governing skill, and diligence, he did not reach the highest measure of success.

2. "The Mexican-American War was unjust." Support or refute this statement according to Aquinas's three qualifications for a just war (declared by a lawful authority, undertaken to right some wrong, and waged with right intentions) and facts about the Mexican-American War.

### Points an Excellent Essay Might Include

#### Declared by a Lawful Authority?

- The lawful authority belongs to those who govern the country (not a private individual).
- President Polk asked Congress for a declaration of war, which it approved on May 13, 1846.

#### Undertaken to Right Some Wrong?

- Polk declared that Mexico had "shed American blood on American soil," which was true if the border was the Rio Grande.
- Mexico maintained that the border was farther north, at the Nueces River and that the Americans had invaded Mexico.
- Opponents to the war argued that those who favored it were just looking for a reason to get more land and a way to expand slavery.

#### Waged with Right Intentions?

- The war should be meant to advance good, secure peace, or avoid evil.
- American intentions varied, but included the following:
  - Gaining more land (including California, if possible)
  - Establishing the border at the Rio Grande (which had been fixed at the conclusion of the Texas War of Independence)
  - Expanding slave territory (the desire of many southern Democrats)
  - Expanding free territory (promoted in the Wilmot Proviso, which Congress did not pass)
  - Pursuing America's Manifest Destiny and spreading the blessings of democracy to those who wanted to be free of Mexican rule

### Sample Essay

*It is difficult to evaluate the justice of the Mexican-American War, because the motivations and actions of many people were mixed. However, the three criteria for a just war that Thomas Aquinas provides are useful for analyzing this war. When we consider all three criteria—whether it was declared by a lawful authority, undertaken to right some wrong, and waged with right intentions—a strong argument can be made that the war was indeed unjust.*

*The Mexican-American war meets the first of the three criteria. In response to President Polk's request, Congress declared war on May 13, 1846. Thus, the war was undertaken by lawful authorities in the manner prescribed by the Constitution.*

*In his message to Congress, Polk declared that Mexico had "shed American blood on American soil." This would indeed constitute a wrong that the American government had the responsibility to right, but the issue is more complicated than Polk stated. Mexico did not acknowledge the Rio Grande as the border between itself and Texas. Texas claimed that this border had been established when Santa Anna signed the treaty that ended the Texas War of Independence—which was true, except that Mexico had never ratified the treaty. Moreover, opponents to the war claimed that the shedding of American blood was just a good excuse for pursuing an unjustified desire for Mexican territory (particularly in California). It would thus seem that, though it can be argued that the immediate cause of the war was to right a wrong, other less just causes lurked in the background.*

*Finally, Aquinas insists that a war should be waged with right intentions—to advance good, secure peace, or avoid evil. Many Americans had what they believed were good intentions: to pursue America’s Manifest Destiny to control the continent and to spread the blessings of democracy to those who wanted to be free of Mexican rule. This rhetoric was powerful, but many people of that time—and many more since—believed that the idea of Manifest Destiny was wrong in itself and disguised a selfish greed for land and power. Other motivations were even more clearly wrong, such as the desire of some southern Democrats to gain more slave territory and thereby secure the power of the South.*

*Thus, while the authority of the war was just and the direct purpose was perhaps also just, the war was motivated by wrong thinking and, in some instances, by evil intentions. The Mexican-American War does not meet the three criteria for a just war and should be considered unjust.*



## SHORT ANSWER

NOTE: Because this week focuses more on the factual details of life in America (and particularly the West) than on analysis, this quiz has no essay questions. Instead, we ask students to relate what they have learned by answering the following 10 questions. These questions are mostly fact-based, though some analysis is required. Due to different resources and emphases in discussion times, student answers may vary and need not be as detailed as those we provide.

30 minutes for these 10 questions (10 points each). Answers should be 2-6 sentences long.

1. Why did people travel west?  
*Most people desired to establish a new home on the plentiful land that was available in the West. Some were lured by the promise of wealth; others found the adventure intoxicating. Certain religious groups such as the Mormons went to escape persecution or trouble with the law. Many immigrants sought opportunities in the West that they could not find in the more closed Eastern society.*
2. What kinds of people traveled west, and what character qualities did they need to have in order to survive?  
*People of all kinds traveled west, including whites whose families had been in America for many years, newly-arrived immigrants, free blacks, and Native Americans who were forced off of their eastern lands. To survive the journey and life in the West, people needed to be courageous, strong, sacrificial, persevering, and able to endure loneliness.*
3. What challenges did pioneers face, and how did they overcome them?  
*Pioneers faced many kinds of illnesses, death, and accidents. There were dangers from wild animals, rivers, weather, and Indians. Once they claimed their land and began to build a home, pioneers faced the many difficulties of wresting a living from the wilderness. One of the keys to overcoming these difficulties was endurance, perseverance through trials, and for many, deep faith in and reliance on God. In addition, the pioneers were ingenious in using all of the resources that they had to survive by building sod houses, making their own clothing, soap, butter, etc.*
- 4-5. Relate the strengths and weaknesses of Marcus and Narcissa Whitman. How did their strengths and weaknesses affect their missionary efforts?  
*Marcus and Narcissa's strengths include their courage, their faith in God, and their sincere desire and determination to take the gospel to Native Americans in the West. One of Narcissa's weaknesses was her unfriendliness towards the Indians. One of Marcus's weaknesses was his rigidity in demanding that the Indians conform not only to the gospel but also to his own cultural standards.*  
*The Whitmans' strengths were a large part of why they traveled to the West in the first place. They trusted God and courageously followed his call. However, their weaknesses made it difficult for them to reach the Native Americans effectively and probably contributed to the anger which led to the massacre.*
6. Explain why many Irish immigrated to America and how they related to American society once they arrived.  
*British rule in Ireland had left many of the people in an impoverished and downtrodden position. Farmers sold their grain and subsisted almost entirely on potatoes. When a potato blight destroyed potato plants in the 1840's, a million Irishmen starved and millions of others emigrated to America or other countries. When they arrived in America, many of the Irish carried their bitterness with them. Because they were also Roman Catholic and very poor, the Irish did not fit easily into American society.*
- 7-8. Choose one of the utopian communities from this week's reading and explain what that community believed. Why were there a number of utopian communities in nineteenth-century America?  
*Any one of the following descriptions of utopian communities are correct:*
  - *Unitarianism attacked trinitarian orthodoxy (belief in the Trinity) and stressed the reliability of human reason and the brotherhood of all men.*
  - *Universalists denied that some would be damned. They believed that since God is love, all will be saved.*
  - *Transcendentalists taught that the spiritual world provides the only authentic reality, and that this world can be interpreted by reason. The famous Transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson opposed social conformity and stressed individual freedom and autonomy, self-sufficiency, and self-government.*
  - *The Shakers, one of the most successful communal groups, practiced strict celibacy (holding that sex was the root of human sin) while waiting for the imminent (they believed) Second Coming of Christ.*

*The chief reason that these utopian communities appeared was that Americans were beginning to follow through with the logic of a radically democratic society in which the church and state had little control over individual thought and behavior. Most utopian communities departed from biblical doctrine in some way and were working for the perfection of mankind through human efforts in the here and now.*

- 9-10. Many Americans—including Christians—looked on Native Americans, black men and women, and immigrants (like the Irish) as inferior and either excluded them from mainstream American society or forced them to adopt the American culture and lifestyle. From a biblical perspective, how should Christians deal with their own cultural prejudices? *The key to overcoming our own prejudices is to be amazed at the gospel, which God offers freely to people of all nations, as Paul makes clear in Galatians 3:28 and Ephesians 3:4-6. When we think about the love that God has shown us, we see our own unworthiness and have a humble and grateful attitude in our interactions with others. Moreover, Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan shows that God calls us to love people of different nationalities and cultures, even if those people consider us their enemies. If we are called to such radical love, it would seem that there is no room for a self-righteous or prideful attitude towards the traditions and customs of others (so long as those traditions do not go against the Word of God).*