

Handout A: Student Document Packet

Document 1: Fredrick Jackson Turner, *The Significance of the Frontier in American History*, 1893

Source:

<http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/the-significance-of-the-frontier-in-american-history/>

Introduction:

In his “frontier thesis,” historian Frederick Jackson Turner writes about a turning point in U.S. history. In this essay, originally presented at a meeting of the American Historical Association in Chicago and later incorporated in his book on the frontier, Turner identifies a connection between American character and civilization and the settlement of frontier lands. This long march across the continent had come to an end by the close of the nineteenth century, and Turner saw significant consequences for the United States in this new reality.

Text

In a recent bulletin of the Superintendent of the Census for 1890 appear these significant words: “Up to and including 1880 the country had a frontier of settlement, but at present the unsettled area has been so broken into by isolated bodies of settlement that there can hardly be said to be a frontier line. In the discussion of its extent, its westward movement, etc., it can not, therefore, any longer have a place in the census reports.” This brief official statement marks the closing of a great historic movement. Up to our own day American history has been in a large degree the history of the colonization of the Great West. The existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement westward, explain American development.

Behind institutions, behind constitutional forms and modifications, lie the vital forces that call these organs into life and shape them to meet changing conditions. The peculiarity of American institutions is, the fact that they have been compelled to adapt themselves to the changes of an expanding people—to the changes involved in crossing a continent, in winning a wilderness, and in developing at each area of this progress out of the primitive economic and political conditions of the frontier into the complexity of city life. . . .

Thus American development has exhibited not merely advance along a single line, but a return to primitive conditions on a continually advancing frontier line, and a new development for that area. American social development has been continually beginning over again on the frontier. This perennial rebirth, this fluidity of American life, this expansion westward with its new opportunities, its continuous touch with the simplicity of primitive society, furnish the forces dominating American character. The true point of view in the history of this nation is not the Atlantic coast, it is the Great West.

Questions:

1. What change in the nature of the United States does the 1890 census announce?
2. What does Turner see as the “peculiarity” of American institutions?

Document 2: Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Interest of America in Sea Power, Present and Future*, 1897

Source:

https://books.google.com/books/about/The_Interest_of_America_in_SeaPowerPrehtml?id=d1ESAAAAYAAJ

Introduction:

Alfred Thayer Mahan was a naval officer and historian who wrote about the importance of naval power. In this influential book, he discusses the importance of the Pacific islands, and specifically Hawaii, to the economic and national security of the United States.

Text

When the opportunities for gain abroad are understood, the course of American enterprise will cleave a channel by which to reach them. . . . A keen reader of the signs of the times and of the drift of opinion, has identified himself with a line of policy which looks to nothing less than such modifications of the tariff as may expand the commerce of the United States to all quarters of the globe. . . .

The interesting and significant feature of this changing attitude is the turning of the eyes outward, instead of inward only, to seek the welfare of the country. To affirm the importance of distant markets, and the relation to them of our own immense powers of production, implies logically the recognition of the link that joins the products and the markets,—that is, the carrying trade; the three together constituting that chain of maritime power . . .

The Hawaiian group [islands] possesses unique importance—not from its intrinsic commercial value, but from its favorable position for maritime and military control.

The military or strategic value of a naval position depends upon its situation, upon its strength, and upon its resources. . . .

Let us now apply these considerations to the Hawaiian group. To any one viewing a map that shows the full extent of the Pacific Ocean, with its shores on either side, two striking circumstances will be apparent immediately. He will see at a glance that the Sandwich Islands stand by themselves, in a state of comparative isolation, amid a vast expanse of sea; and, again, that they form the centre of a large circle whose radius is approximately—and very closely—the distance from Honolulu to San Francisco. . . . The distance from San Francisco to Honolulu, twenty-one hundred miles—easy steaming distance—is substantially the same as that from Honolulu to the Gilbert, Marshall, Samoan, Society, and Marquesas groups, all under European control . . .

Referring again to the map, it will be seen that while the shortest routes from the Isthmus [of Panama] . . . those directed toward China and Japan pass either through the group or in close proximity to it. . . .

From the foregoing considerations may be inferred the importance of the Hawaiian Islands as a position powerfully influencing the commercial and military control of the Pacific, and especially of the Northern Pacific, in which the United States, geographically, has the strongest right to assert herself. These are the main advantages, which can be termed positive: those, namely, which directly advance commercial security and naval control. To the negative advantages of possession, by removing conditions which, if the islands were in the hands of any other power, would constitute to us disadvantages and threats, allusion only will be made. The serious menace to our Pacific coast and our Pacific trade, if so important a position were held by a possible enemy . . . that is the immense disadvantage to us of any maritime enemy having a coaling-station well within twenty-five hundred miles, as this is, of every point of our coast-line from Puget Sound to Mexico. Were there many others available, we might find it difficult to exclude from all. There is, however, but the one. Shut out from the Sandwich Islands as a coal base, an enemy is thrown back for supplies of fuel to distances of thirty-five hundred or four thousand miles,—or between seven thousand and eight thousand, going and coming,—an impediment to sustained maritime operations well-nigh prohibitive. . . .

The annexation, even, of Hawaii would be no mere sporadic effort, irrational because disconnected from an adequate motive, but a first-fruit and a token that the nation in its evolution has aroused itself to the necessity of carrying its life . . .

But if a plea of the world's welfare seem suspiciously like a cloak for national self-interest, let the latter be accepted frankly as the adequate motive which it assuredly is. . . . The demands of our three great seaboards, the Atlantic, the Gulf, and the Pacific,—each for itself, and all for the strength that comes from drawing closer the ties between them,—are calling for the extension, through the Isthmian Canal, of that broad sea common along which, and along which alone, in all the ages prosperity has moved.

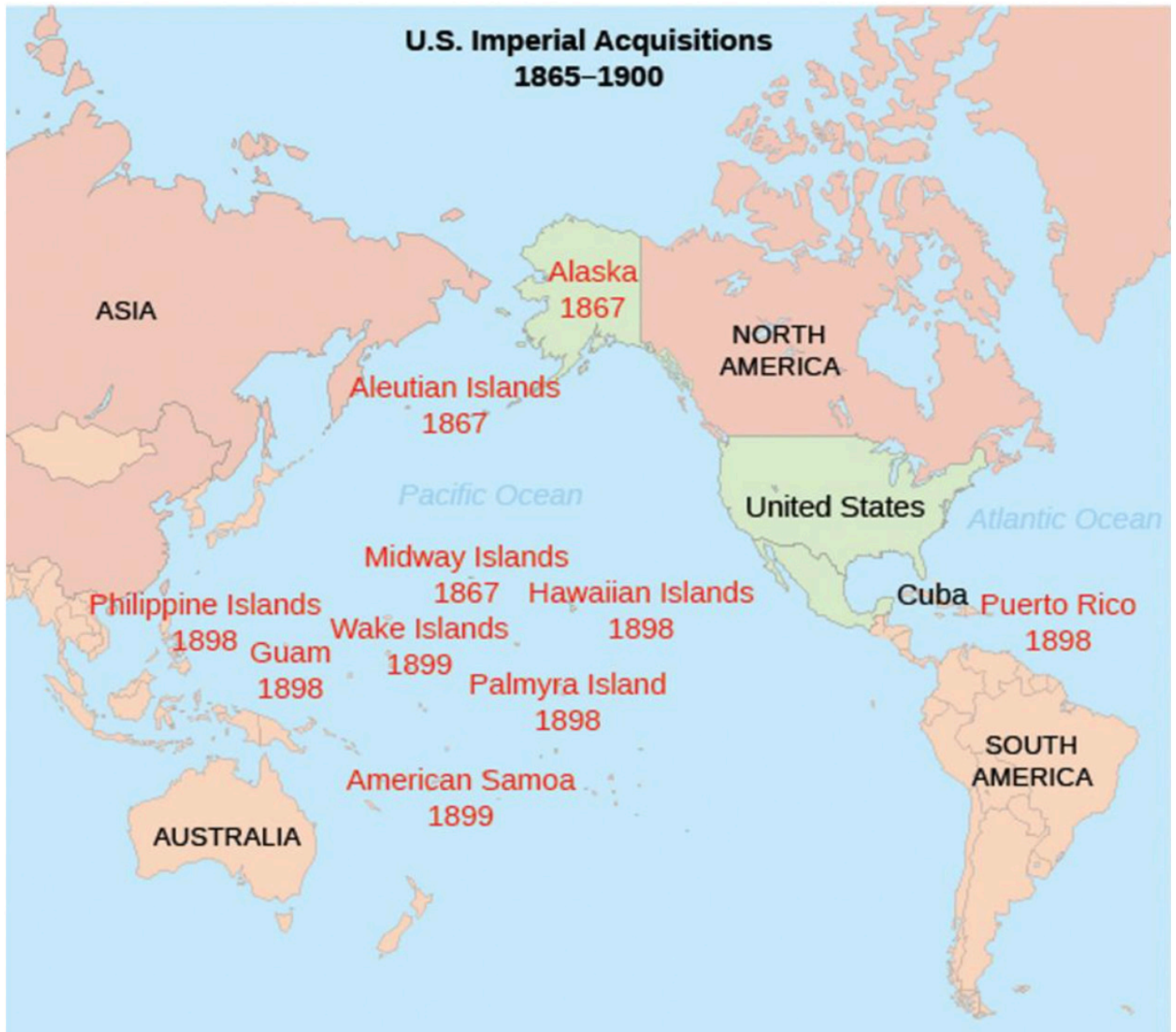
Questions:

1. According to Mahan, what three things “constitute the chain of maritime power”? How does this connect to Frederick Jackson Turner’s frontier thesis in Document 1?
2. What is the importance of the Hawaiian Islands, according to Mahan?
3. If Hawaii were not controlled by the United States, how does Mahan see the island nation as a potential threat to U.S. national security?
4. Why does Mahan assert that the United States has a right to claim Hawaii?

Document 3: Map of U.S. Imperial Acquisitions 1865–1900

Introduction:

The map shows U.S. overseas acquisitions as of the end of the Spanish-American War in 1898.



U.S. imperial acquisitions as of the end of the Spanish-American War in 1898. (attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY 4.0 license)

Questions:

1. What important countries could be reached by steamships after re-coaling in Hawaii?
2. How does this map support the evidence provided in Document 2: Alfred Thayer Mahan's *The Interest of America in Sea Power, Present and Future*?

Document 4: “Bayonet” Constitution of the Kingdom of Hawaii, 1887

Source:

<http://hooilina.org/collect/journal/index/assoc/HASH01b8.dir/5.pdf>

Introduction:

The Hawaiian League, a militia affiliated with U.S. interests on the islands, forced King Kalakaua to sign the 1887 constitution under duress, thus it is known as the “bayonet” constitution. The Bayonet Constitution laid the groundwork for U.S. control of the islands by reducing the power of the monarchy. It also significantly changed voting rights on the islands, made more important by the increased powers that the legislature would now hold.

Text
Therefore, I, Kalākaua, King of the Hawaiian Islands, in my capacity as Sovereign of this Kingdom, and as the representative of the people hereunto by them duly authorized and empowered, do annul and abrogate the Constitution promulgated by Kamehameha the Fifth, on the 20th day of August, A.D. 1864, and do proclaim and promulgate this Constitution.
Article 1. God hath endowed all men with certain inalienable rights, among which are life, liberty, and the right of acquiring, possessing, and protecting property, and of pursuing and obtaining safety and happiness.
Article 2. All men are free to worship God according to the dictates of their own consciences; . . .
Article 13. The government is conducted for the common good, and not for the profit, honor, or private interest of any one man, family, or class of men. . . .
Article 20. The supreme power of the kingdom, in its exercise, is divided into the executive, legislative, and judicial; these shall always be preserved distinct . . .
Article 21. The government of this kingdom is that of a constitutional monarchy, under His Majesty Kalākaua, his heirs and successors. . . .
Article 56. A Noble shall be a subject of the kingdom, who shall have attained the age of twenty-five years and resided in the kingdom three years, and shall be the owner of taxable property in this kingdom of the value of three thousand dollars over and above all encumbrances, or in receipt of an income of not less than six hundred dollars per annum.
Article 57. The Nobles shall be a court, with full and sole authority to hear and determine all impeachments made by the Representatives, as the grand inquest of the kingdom . . .
Article 59. Every male resident of the Hawaiian Islands, of Hawaiian, American or European birth or descent, who shall have attained the age of twenty years, and shall have paid his taxes, and shall have caused his name to be entered on the list of voters for Nobles for his district, shall be an elector of Nobles.

Questions:

1. In what ways do the first two articles of the Bayonet Constitution establish principles in line with the founding principles of the United States?
2. How do articles 13, 20, and 21 limit the Hawaiian monarchy?
3. What group of people has their political power increased by articles 56, 57, and 59?

Document 5: President Grover Cleveland, Message about Hawaii, December 18, 1893

Source:

<http://www.let.rug.nl/usa/documents/1876-1900/president-clevelands-message-about-hawaii-december-18-1893.php>

Introduction:

In this speech, President Grover Cleveland is explaining his opposition to the treaty of annexation presented to the U.S. Senate by his predecessor, Benjamin Harrison. Cleveland makes the case that the annexation is in opposition to the fundamental principles of the United States.

Text
If national honesty is to be disregarded and a desire for territorial extension, or dissatisfaction with a form of government not our own, ought to regulate our conduct, I have entirely misapprehended the mission and character of our Government and the behavior which the conscience of our people demands of their public servants.
When the present Administration entered upon its duties the Senate had under consideration a treaty providing for the annexation of the Hawaiian Islands to the territory of the United States. Surely under our Constitution and laws the enlargement of our limits is a manifestation of the highest attribute of sovereignty, and if entered upon as an Executive act, all things relating to the transaction should be clear and free from suspicion. Additional importance attached to this particular treaty of annexation, because it contemplated a departure from unbroken American tradition in providing for the addition to our territory of islands of the sea more than two thousand miles removed from our nearest coast. . . .
The ownership of Hawaii was tendered to us by a provisional government set up to succeed the constitutional ruler of the islands, who had been dethroned, and it did not appear that such provisional government had the sanction of either popular revolution or suffrage. . . .
Thus between the initiation of the scheme for a provisional government in Hawaii on the 14th day of January and the submission to the Senate of the treaty of annexation concluded with such government, the entire interval was thirty-two days, fifteen of which were spent by the Hawaiian Commissioners in their journey to Washington. . . .
I conceived it to be my duty therefore to withdraw the treaty from the Senate for examination . . .
It appears that Hawaii was taken possession of by the United States forces without the consent or wish of the government of the islands, or of anybody else so far as shown, except the United States Minister. . . .
Therefore the military occupation of Honolulu by the United States on the day mentioned was wholly without justification, either as an occupation by consent or as an occupation necessitated by dangers threatening American life and property. . . .
Our country was in danger of occupying the position of having actually set up a temporary government on foreign soil for the purpose of acquiring through that agency territory which we had wrongfully put in its possession. The control of both sides of a bargain acquired in such a manner is called by a familiar and unpleasant name when found in private transactions. . . .
I do not understand that any member of this government claims that the people would uphold it by their suffrages if they were allowed to vote on the question.
While naturally sympathizing with every effort to establish a republican form of government, it has been the settled policy of the United States to concede to people of foreign countries the same freedom and independence in the management of their domestic affairs that we have always claimed for ourselves; . . .

A substantial wrong has thus been done which a due regard for our national character as well as the rights of the injured people requires we should endeavor to repair. . . .

The United States in aiming to maintain itself as one of the most enlightened of nations would do its citizens gross injustice if it applied to its international relations any other than a high standard of honor and morality. . . .

In commending this subject to the extended powers and wide discretion of the Congress, I desire to add the assurance that I shall be much gratified to cooperate in any legislative plan which may be devised for the solution of the problem before us which is consistent with American honor, integrity, and morality.

Questions:

1. What does Cleveland see as illegitimate about how the United States acquired Hawaii?
2. What does Cleveland see the United States as losing if it gains Hawaii by this proposed treaty of annexation?
3. How does Cleveland believe the Hawaii situation should be justly resolved?

Document 6: Petition against the annexation of Hawaii, 1897

Source:

<https://www.archives.gov/files/education/lessons/hawaii-petition/images/hawaii-petition-01.jpg>

Introduction:

The Hawaiian Patriotic League, a group of native Hawaiians, contacted the U.S. Senate to express the views of descendants of the original Polynesian settlers of Hawaii on annexation.

Text
To His Excellency William McKinley, President, and the Senate, of the United States of America. Greeting: Whereas, there has been submitted to the Senate of the United States of America a Treaty for the Annexation of the Hawaiian Islands to the said United States of America, for consideration at its regular session in December, A.D. 1897: therefore,
We, the undersigned, native Hawaiian citizens and residents of the District of Honolulu Kona, Island of Oahu, who are members of the Hawaiian Patriotic League of the Hawaiian Islands, and others who are in sympathy with the said League, earnestly protest against the annexation of the said Hawaiian Islands to the said United States of America in any form or shape.

Questions:

1. What was the position of the Hawaiian Patriotic League on annexation?

Document 7: Newlands Resolution, July 7, 1898

Source:

<http://www.freehawaii.org/newlands.html>

Introduction:

Faced with the lack of two-thirds Senate support for the annexation of Hawaii, President William McKinley decided to put the status of Hawaii to a vote in a joint resolution to Congress.

The bill was approved on July 4 and signed by the president on July 7.

Text
To Provide for Annexing the Hawaiian Islands to the United States.
Whereas the Government of the Republic of Hawaii having, in due form, signified its consent, in the manner provided by its constitution, to cede absolutely and without reserve to the United States of America all rights of sovereignty of whatsoever kind in and over the Hawaiian Islands . . .
Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress Assembled, That said cession is accepted, ratified, and confirmed, and that the said Hawaiian Islands and their dependencies be, and they are hereby, annexed as a part of the territory of the United States . . .
The existing treaties of the Hawaiian Islands with foreign nations shall forthwith cease and determine, being replaced by such treaties as may exist, or as may be hereafter concluded, between the United States and such foreign nations. . . .
There shall be no further immigration of Chinese into the Hawaiian Islands, except upon such conditions as are now or may hereafter be allowed by the laws of the United States; no Chinese, by reason of anything herein contained, shall be allowed to enter the United States from the Hawaiian Islands.
The President shall appoint five commissioners, at least two of whom shall be residents of the Hawaiian Islands, who shall, as soon as reasonably practicable, recommend to Congress such legislation concerning the Hawaiian Islands as they shall deem necessary or proper. . . .
That the commissioners hereinbefore provided for shall be appointed by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate.

Questions:

1. What does the resolution claim about the wishes of the native-born Hawaiians?
2. What is the new relationship between the United States and Hawaii as of July 4, 1898?