

A Cheyenne Odyssey Part 2 & Part 3

Guiding Question: Why did violent conflict break out between the Plains Indians and European Americans in the 1860s and 1870s? How did each side understand and respond to this conflict?

Document Analysis

“American Progress”

Examine carefully the painting *American Progress* by John Gast (below) and answer the questions that follow.



John Gast, *American Progress*, 1872.
Chromolithograph published by George A. Croft.
Source: Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

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Jot down observations about the following (be specific!):

Setting:	
People:	
Objects:	
Animals:	
Actions:	

Discussion Questions

1. What direction are all of the people, animals, and modes of transportation moving in the image? Why do you think Gast chose to paint everything moving that direction?

2. There are five modes of transportation illustrated in the painting. What are they? Do you think Gast painted them in any particular order (hint: look from right to left)?

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3. Find the Native Americans, buffalo, and other animals in the painting. What are they doing? What is Gast saying about the future of the “wild” frontier?

4. What are the men in the lower right hand corner of the painting doing? Do you think they are travelers passing through, or settlers who are planning on making their homes on this land? What makes you say that?

5. The woman in the center of the painting is dressed in an ancient Greek toga. She wears the “Star of Empire” on her head, carries a schoolbook in her right hand, and is stringing a telegraph wire with her left.
 - a. Why is she carrying a book and a telegraph wire? What is Gast saying about the benefits of westward expansion by including these objects?

 - b. Why is the woman looking and moving westward?

6. Why did Gast name his painting *American Progress*? Who would agree that the painting illustrates progress? Who would disagree?