

## Unit Plan: 8.5- Analyzing U.S. Foreign Policy in the Early Republic

**\*Unit Context\*** ➔ This unit takes place after students have already studied the founding of the nation, the development of American democracy, the foundations of the American political system, the physical and political landscapes of the country, and the rise of capitalism. After this unit, students will go on to study Jackson's presidency, the Indian Removal Act, westward expansion, the Lewis and Clark expeditions, the "Trail of Tears," water rights, and Mexican settlements. They will also examine the Mexican-American War more deeply, including the Texan War for independence and the aftermath of the war.

### Learning Objectives:

- Students will analyze the political and economic causes and consequences of the War of 1812.
- Students will analyze key moments and figures in the War of 1812 and synthesize their ideas in writing.
- Students will identify territorial changes in the US between 1800 and 1850.
- Students will define the Monroe Doctrine and explore its implications for U.S. foreign policy.
- Students will describe the causes/motivations of the Mexican-American war.
- Students will define Manifest Destiny and analyze treaties made with Indigenous nations during the first four presidencies.
- Students will integrate primary and secondary sources to construct a cohesive argument in favor of/or against early US foreign policy decisions.

### Essential Questions:

- How have the borders of the United States changed over time and what caused these changes?
- How do changing boundaries affect foreign policy?
- What means do nations use to expand and protect their territory? What are the advantages and disadvantages for each of these options?
- How does expansion affect the various parties involved?
- How can conflict and change lead to progress?
- How did Manifest Destiny shape American attitudes and policies toward the people it conquered or controlled?
- What were the moral, political, and economic reasons that the US expanded?
- How did the language used in treaties and foreign policy documents with Indigenous nations depict and frame Indigenous peoples?
- How has President Trump reinforced the concept of "Manifest Destiny" in more recent foreign policy agendas?
- Was the Monroe Doctrine more a policy of expansion or self-defense?
- *How did the American imperialist policies both fulfill and challenge the promise of America?*

### Key Concepts:

- Manifest Destiny
- Land cessions
- Foreign Policy
- Monroe Doctrine

- Sovereignty
- Assimilation
- Frontier
- American Expansionism

### **Standards Addressed (8.5.1-8.5.3)**

- California Core Curriculum 8.5.1: Analyze the impact of the War of 1812 on U.S. foreign policy.
- California Core Curriculum 8.5.2: Examine the significance of the Monroe Doctrine and other foreign policy decisions.
- California Core Curriculum 8.5.3: Describe the treaties with American Indian nations and their outcomes during the early Republic.
- CCSS Writing Emphasis → Students will practice producing argumentative and well-organized writing about historical events using primary and secondary sources.

### **Assessment Strategies:**

- US Foreign Policy Debate: Students work in small groups to debate U.S. foreign policy decisions during the early Republic.

### **Resources**

#### **Primary Sources (text):**

- Gilder Lehrman Collection: Excerpt from [“The Monroe Doctrine from the President’s Annual Message to Congress.”](#) *Washington Republic Extra*, December 2, 1823.
- Indigenous Land Treaties:
  - “The Treaty of Canandaigua,” 1794. Retrieved from: <https://www.onondaganation.org/government/the-canandaigua-treaty-of-1794/>
  - “The Treaty of Greenville,” 1795. Retrieved from: <https://treaties.okstate.edu/treaties/treaty-with-the-wyandot-etc-1795-0039>
  - “From John Adams to Cherokee Nation,” Aug. 27, 1798. Retrieved from: <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/99-02-02-2892>
  - “Treaty of Fort Wayne,” Sept. 30, 1809. Retrieved from: <https://americanindian.si.edu/static/nationtonation/pdf/Treaty-of-Fort-Wayne-1809.pdf>
  - “The Treaty of Fort Jackson,” Aug. 9, 1814. Retrieved from: <https://americanindian.si.edu/static/nationtonation/pdf/Treaty-of-Fort-Jackson-1814.pdf>
- “Proclamation of a State of War with Great Britain”, Jun. 19, 1812. Retrieved from: <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/june-19-1812-proclamation-state-war-great-britain>
- “The Treaty of Guadalupe and Hidalgo,” Feb. 2, 1848. Retrieved from: <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/treaty-of-guadalupe-hidalgo#:~:text=This%20treaty%2C%20signed%20on%20February,Oklahoma%2C%20Kansas%2C%20and%20Wyoming>

## Secondary Sources (text):

- Britannica Kids: [“The War of 1812”](#)
- Smithsonian American Art Museum: [“Causes of the War”](#)
- Britannica: [“The Treaty of Greenville”](#)
- Historical Society of the New York Courts: [“Navigating Sovereignty: Unraveling the Treaty of Canandaigua and Its Impact on Haudenosaunee–U.S. Relations.”](#) Nov. 30, 2023.
- National Park Service (NPS): [“Summer 1814: The Treaty of Ft. Jackson ends the Creek War”](#)
- National Archives: [“The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo”](#)
- National Park Service (NPS): [“Creek War in Southeast”](#)

## Media:

- **Painting:** John Gast, *American Progress*, 1872.
- Monroe Doctrine Political Cartoons:
  - *Expansion! The Western Patrol’s Long Stretch* by Louis Dalrymple (1905)  
<https://education.cfr.org/learn/reading/us-foreign-policy-americas>
  - *The Pull of the Monroe Magnet* by Udo J. Keppler (published in *Puck*, v. 74, no. 1902)
  - *Keep off! The Monroe Doctrine must be respected.*, 1896. Photograph.  
<https://www.loc.gov/item/2002697703/>.
- NPR Article: [“What does Trump mean when he invokes Manifest Destiny?”](#)
- PBS Learning Media: [“The Mexican–American War”](#)
- C-SPAN.org: [The War of 1812 Choice Board](#)
- Washington Tribes: [“What is Tribal Sovereignty?”](#)

## Teacher Resources:

- C-SPAN.org: [The War of 1812 Choice Board](#)
- PBS Learning Media, [Westward Expansion, 1790–1850 Interactive Map](#)
- Zinn Education Project: [Mexican–American War Lesson](#)
- PBS Learning Media, [The Mexican–American War](#)

## Unit Overview: Lesson Summary

**Lesson 1:** Political & economic causes of the War of 1812

**Lesson 2:** Important figures and battles in the War of 1812

**Lesson 3:** Changing boundaries of the United States

**Lesson 4:** Visualizing the consequences of the War of 1812

**Lesson 5:** The Monroe Doctrine (and relationship with Latin America and Europe)

**Lesson 6:** US’ Changing Borders

**Lesson 7:** Introduction to the Mexican–American War

**Lesson 8:** Manifest Destiny and treaties with Indigenous nations

**Lesson 9:** Treaties with Indigenous Nations (continued)

**Lesson 10:** Foreign Policy Debate Preparation (DAY 1)

**Lesson 11:** Foreign Policy Debate Preparation (DAY 2)

**Final Assessment:** US Foreign Policy Debate

## Full Lesson Plans



### Lesson 1: Political and Economic Causes of the War of 1812

**Objective:** Students will analyze the political and economic factors leading to the War of 1812.

**Key Points:** Impressment of sailors, trade restrictions, and territorial expansion.

**Assessment:** Draw a comic strip illustrating the primary causes of the War of 1812.

**Standard Addressed:** California Core Curriculum 8.5.1

Activity	Description	Accessibility Measures	Time Estimate
<b>Warm-up</b> (Activate prior knowledge)	<p>Ask students to think back to one of our first units of the year, and journal answers in their history notebooks: <i>“Why did American colonists fight for independence from the British?”</i></p> <p>Then, review important reasons on the board: Taxation without representation (Stamp Act, Sugar Act), the Intolerable Acts (punitive measures after the Boston Tea Party), growing sense of a separate American culture/identity, etc. » the desire to be separate.</p> <p><b>Pivot!</b> Tell students: <i>Today we are going to learn about the War of 1812. Many historians believe this war to be a continuation of the American Revolution...</i></p>	Students have the opportunity to write their thoughts before sharing out loud.	5 mins
<b>Station Rotation</b>	<p>Students will work independently to read sources. After that, they will work through the graphic organizer in pairs.</p> <p>Texts:  8.5- War of 1812 Causes Stations</p> <p>Graphic Organizer:  8.5- Start of the War of 1812</p>	All materials will be uploaded to Google Classroom so that students who benefit from extra time can access them at home.	30 mins
<b>Assessment</b>	Students will create a small comic strip that depicts the causes of the War of 1812	Students benefit from multiple means of expression of their learning (written and visual).	10 mins

**Homework:** Complete your comic strip for homework!

## **Lesson 2: Exploring the important figures and events in the war**

*(This lesson is adapted from C-SPAN.org)*



**Objective:** Students will explore key moments and figures in the War of 1812 and synthesize their ideas in writing.

**Key Points:** Specific battles, figures, and events of the war (The Battle of Baltimore, Bladensburg, Fort Meigs, The Burning of Washington, The Battle of New Orleans, Black soldiers, President Madison, Tecumseh, Dolley Madison... )

**Standard Addressed:** California Core Curriculum 8.5.1 ()

**Materials:** Computers, headphones.

**Assessment:** Completed Choice Board Assignment

Activity	Description	Accessibility Measures	Time Estimate
<b>Warm-up</b>	Start by reviewing the <u>leading causes</u> of the war by choosing a few students to present their comic strips!   8.5- Start of the War of 1812	This activates students' prior knowledge before they continue to study the war in depth.	15 mins
<b>Exploration:</b> Independent Work	Students will read about important <u>battles and events</u> using various online resources to describe these events on a <b>virtual Choice Board</b> :   8.5- The War of 1812 Choice Board	Headphones available for students who would benefit while completing independent reading work.	30 mins

**Potential Extension Activity:** Option for quick-workers to complete additional topics (more than the 3 assigned as a minimum)

**Homework:** Complete Choice Board:  8.5- The War of 1812 Choice Board

## **Lesson 3: Identifying Key Figures and Battles of the War of 1812**

*(This lesson is adapted from C-SPAN.org)*

**Objective:** Students will identify and explain key moments and figures in the War of 1812.

**Key Points:** The Battle of Baltimore, Bladensburg, Black soldiers, Fort Meigs, The Burning of Washington, The Battle of New Orleans, President Madison, Tecumseh, Dolley Madison...

**Standard Addressed:** California Core Curriculum 8.5.1 ()


**Assessment:** Fully completed virtual choice board

Activity	Description	Accessibility Measures	Time Estimate
<b>Do-Now</b>	Students are instructed to take out their homework assignments and refresh their memory about what they have written.		5 mins

<b>Jigsaw</b>	<p>Students will take turns presenting their findings on important figures, events, and battles in the War of 1812.</p> <p>As students present, their peers will fill in the gaps on their own, virtual choice boards.</p>	<p>Since we will go over all of the topics, students will learn new information AND reinforce each others' understanding of the topics they have already read about.</p>	30 mins
<b>Assessment</b>	<p>Students will complete an "exit ticket" answering the following question:  <i>What is one thing you learned today that deepened your understanding of the War of 1812?</i></p> <p>If there is enough time, a few students will share their takeaways with the class.</p>	<p>Students have the opportunity to look back in their notes if it is helpful.</p>	10 mins

**Potential Extension Activity:** If students finish early, they are welcome to reflect on the following, additional question: *Which event and which person do you think were the most influential in the War of 1812?*

**Homework:** Summarize the War of 1812 in a brief paragraph:  8.5- War of 1812 Summary

**\*Modified version:**  \*8.5- War of 1812 Summary


#### **Lesson 4: Visualizing the Consequences of the War of 1812**

**Objective:** Students will work together to visually depict and explain the consequences of the War of 1812.

**Materials:** Chart paper, markers, rulers, pencils

**Standard Addressed:** California Core Curriculum 8.5.1, CCSS Writing Emphasis (Homework)

Activity	Description	Accessibility Measures	Time Estimate
<b>Do-Now:</b> Activation	<p><i>What were the outcomes of the War of 1812?</i></p> <p>Students will free-write for a minute, then turn and talk to discuss the outcomes of the War of 1812 (using their homework from the night before.)</p>	I will circulate the classroom to check for understanding.	5 mins
<b>Group Work:</b> Tableau Vivant	<p>Students work in small groups to create a <b>tableau vivant</b> that depicts the outcome of the war. Show students this photo, to reinforce their understanding of a tableau:</p>	Groups will be carefully determined beforehand to optimize collaboration.	30 mins

	 <p>This will be accompanied by a brief artists' statement written together. <a href="#">8.5- Tableau Vivant</a></p>		
<b>Assessment:</b> Presenting	Groups will take turns presenting their tableaux to the class. As other groups are presenting, students will answer this question on a sticky note: <i>"What outcomes of the war does this tableau represent?"</i>	Students express their understanding via multiple means of expression (written, drawn, verbally explained)	10 mins

**Homework:** Summarize the War of 1812 in a brief paragraph: [8.5- War of 1812 Summary](#)

(this is a two-night assignment)

**\*Modified version:** [\\*8.5- War of 1812 Summary](#)

### Lesson 5: Changing US Borders

This lesson is adapted from: [PBS Learning Media](#)


**Objectives:** Students will identify territorial changes in the US between 1800 and 1850.

**Key Points:** Territorial cession, disputed territories, westward expansion

**Standards Addressed:** California Core Curriculum 8.5.2, CCSS Writing Emphasis

Activity	Description	Accessibility Measures	Time Estimate
<b>Do-Now:</b> Map Observations	<p>Introduce students to this <a href="#">interactive map of the United States</a></p> <p><b>Flip between 1800 and 1850</b></p> <p>Ask students to write 3-5 changes they notice about this map. Then, we will take a few minutes to discuss as a group.</p>	First, students will have a few minutes to write their ideas before discussing out loud.	15 mins
<b>Historical Glossary</b>	<p>Students will add these terms to their historical glossaries:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Cession (noun)</b>- the formal giving up of rights, property, or territory by a state (or nation).</li> </ul>	Students have the option to add visuals to their notes if it improves their	5 mins



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>To cede (verb)</b>- to give up rights or property</li> </ul>	understanding of the terminology. This aligns with the UDL principle of multiple means of expression.	
<b>Partner Map Exploration</b> (Part 2)	Students will work in pairs to complete a worksheet exploring territorial changes in the United States   8.5- Map: Westward Expansion-1790-1850	The interactive map allows students to visualize changes as they read about them.	20 mins

**Potential Extension Activity:** Students can opt to research additional disputed territories if they finish early.

**Homework:** Students finish the map exploration started in class:

 8.5- Map: Westward Expansion-1790-1850




## **Lesson 6: The Monroe Doctrine**

**Objective:** Students will define the Monroe Doctrine and explore its implications for U.S. foreign policy.

**Key Points:** Monroe Doctrine, Foreign Policy, Oregon Territory, Texas-Mexico border

**Standard Addressed:** California Core Curriculum 8.5.2

**Assessment:** Primary and secondary source analysis

Activity	Description	Accessibility Measures	Time Estimate
<b>Warm-up</b>	Students will pull up their homework assignments and discuss the disputed territory they researched.		5-10 mins
<b>Full Group Instruction</b>	Students will take out their guided note-taking sheet.  8.5- Changing Borders/Monroe Doctrine Notes  As a class, we will work through this slideshow:  8.5- Changing Borders/Monroe Doctrine	Students are given note-taking sheets to keep them on task. Modified worksheets are also available.	20 mins
<b>Station Rotations:</b> Source Analysis	Students will rotate around the room analyzing primary and secondary sources and filling out a guided note-taking sheet.  <b>Station Sources:</b>  8.5-Monroe Doctrine Source Analysis	Students are given a variety of sources (including political cartoons) so that there are multiple means of representation of the content.	20 mins
<b>Assessment (HW)</b>	Students will answer the following question: <i>“Do you think the Monroe Doctrine was a policy of expansion or self-defense?”</i>		HW



**Potential Extension Activity:** If students finish early, extra political cartoons (and sources) are available for their analysis.

**Homework:** Students will continue to investigate station rotation sources at home and complete the worksheet (all documents will be posted to Google Classroom)


 8.5- Changing Borders/Monroe Doctrine Notes

### **Lesson 7: The Mexican-American War**

**Objective:** Students will describe the causes/motivations of the Mexican-American war.

**Key Points:** Mexican-American War, Texas Independence, US acquisition of California

**Standard Addressed:** California Core Curriculum 8.5.2

Activity	Description	Accessibility Measures	Time Estimate
<b>Do Now</b>	Ask students: <i>“What strategies can a country take to expand its territory?”</i>  <i>“What are the advantages and disadvantages for each of these options?”</i>		10 mins
<b>Clip Viewing</b>	Show students: <a href="#">“The Mexican-American War”</a> (PBS Learning Media)  Throughout the video, I will pause to let students write answers to the check-in questions on their notes:  8.5- Mexican-American War Video Questions	(Option for bilingual and/or modified worksheet)	15 mins
<b>Independent Work</b>	Students work independently to watch the remaining videos and complete comprehension questions.	Students are able to watch the videos and answer questions at their own pace.	20 mins

**Potential Extension Activity:** Students who finish early can opt to do additional research on Anti-War movements and Slavery during the war.

**Homework:** Students will finish  8.5- Mexican-American War Video Questions



### **Lesson 8: Manifest Destiny + Treaties with Indigenous Nations**

**Objective:** Students will define Manifest Destiny and analyze treaties made with Indigenous nations during the first four presidencies (Washington, Adams, Jefferson, and Madison).

**Key Points:** Manifest Destiny, Assimilation, Sovereignty

**Standard Addressed:** California Core Curriculum 8.5.2, 8.5.3

Activity	Description	Accessibility Measures	Time Estimate
----------	-------------	------------------------	---------------

<b>Do Now:</b> Image Analysis	Students will observe John Gast's "American Progress" and share their observations in small groups.  8.5- Manifest Destiny handout	This visual representation helps anchor students' understandings of Manifest Destiny.	10 mins
<b>Full Group Instruction</b>	 8.5- Manifest Destiny/Indigenous Treaties As a class, we will define Manifest Destiny, sovereignty, and treaty.		15 mins
<b>Small Groups</b>	In small groups, students will read through Jefferson's Letters to the Cherokee, 1808 & 1809, and answer questions.	Modified worksheet available (more scaffolded version of the text).	10 mins
<b>BrainPop</b>	As a class, we will watch a BrainPOP video on Cherokee Assimilation. As such, students will define assimilation (on their handout) and take note of how the Cherokee responded to Jefferson's letter.		10 mins

**Homework:** Students will focus on one of five US treaties with Indigenous nations. They will read a description of the treaty and research whether it was honored.

 8.5- Native American Treaties Text

 8.5- Indigenous Treaties Analysis HW

### **Lesson 9: Treaties with Indigenous Nations (continued)**


**Objective:** Students will exchange information about major treaties with American Indian nations during the first four presidential administrations (1789–1817) and their outcomes.


**Key Points:** Treaty of Fort Wayne, Treaty of Fort Jackson, Treaty of Greenville, Treaty of Canandaigua, Treaty of Tellico

**Standard Addressed:** California Core Curriculum 8.5.3

**Assessment:** Create a chart comparing different treaties and their impacts on Native American populations.

Activity	Description	Accessibility Measures	Time Estimate
<b>Warm-up</b>	Students will take out their homework and complete the <b>summary</b> section for the document they studied (pulling from the HW they already completed)	Students have time to refresh their memory and gather their thoughts before we exchange information.	10 mins
<b>Jigsaw:</b> Group Work	Students will take turns exchanging key information about the treaties they studied. As their peers explain new treaties, each student will take notes on a chart, and color in a map to illustrate which land was ceded in that	Students are provided with multiple means of representation of	30 mins



	specific treaty  8.5- Indigenous Treaties Analysis HW OPTION: This activity could be done in small groups, or as a full class. The benefit of working as a small class is that multiple students get to share (potentially differing) takeaways about their documents.	content (visual, written, auditory).	
--	--	--------------------------------------	--

**Homework:** Students will read the assignment sheet for the final assessment:  8.5- Foreign Policy Debate and the and bring questions about the assignment to class tomorrow.

### **Lesson 10: Foreign Policy Debate Preparation (DAY ONE)**

**Objective:** Students will integrate primary and secondary sources to construct a cohesive argument in favor of/or against the United States’ foreign policy in various contexts.

**Standard Addressed:** California Core Curriculum 8.5.1, 8.5.2, 8.5.3, CCSS Writing Emphasis


Activity	Description	Accessibility Measures	Time Estimate
<b>Introduce Final Assessment</b>	Re-read the assignment sheet aloud and answer any questions  8.5- Foreign Policy Debate		10 mins
<b>Group work time</b>	Now, students will begin work in groups. During class today, they must accomplish the following: <input type="checkbox"/> Read at least 2 sources <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss their argument as a group <input type="checkbox"/> Delegate HW assignments for each group member They will use these resources:  8.5- Debate Text/Resources	Students are assigned to specific policies and positions based on their reading levels.	35 mins


**Homework:** Students prepare for the final debate.

### **Lesson 11: Foreign Policy Debate Preparation (DAY TWO)**

**Objective:** Students will integrate primary and secondary sources to construct a cohesive argument in favor of/or against the United States’ foreign policy in various contexts.

**Standard Addressed:** California Core Curriculum 8.5.1, 8.5.2, 8.5.3, CCSS Writing Emphasis

Activity	Description	Accessibility Measures	Time Estimate
<b>Flow Chart Exercise</b>	Give students  8.5- Argument Trackers/Reflection and explain how to use the (modified) flow chart to track an argument during a debate.  Now, students will fill out the tracker <u>for their group’s</u> argument. They will have to make predictions about the	OPTION: Make animated flow chart slides (to not visually overwhelm students).	15 mins

	points their opposition will make.		
<b>Group work time</b>	<p>Now, students will begin work in groups. During class today, they must accomplish the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Craft their argument as a group</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Draft their opening/closing remarks</li> </ul> <p> 8.5- Debate Text/Resources</p>	Students have the opportunity to ask clarifying questions while they are doing group work.	30 mins


**Homework:** Students prepare for the final debate.


### [OPTIONAL: THIRD DAY OF IN-CLASS DEBATE PREPARATION]


## Unit Assessment: Foreign Policy Debate

**Objective:** Students debate U.S. foreign policy decisions during the early Republic.

**Standards Addressed:** California Core Curriculum 8.5.1, 8.5.2, 8.5.3, CCSS Writing Emphasis

Activity	Description	Accessibility Measures	Time Estimate
<b>In-Class Debates</b>	<p>Student groups will take turns debating the foreign policies they were assigned.</p> <p>As other groups are debating, all students act as spectators and track their peers' points using their argument trackers:</p> <p> 8.5- Argument Trackers/Reflection</p>	Students express their thoughts/ observations in writing in addition to speaking during the debate.	45 mins

**Homework:** Students will complete the debate reflection (last page of  8.5- Argument Trackers/Reflection )


**Grading Rubric:**  8.5- Debate Grading Rubric

Students are graded individually, though there shouldn't be much variation in grades within groups (aside from the ultimate criterion which evaluates their completion of the argument trackers and reflection).

## Recommendations

Since the next few units (particularly 8.8) involve in-depth study of the Mexican-American War, I would consider postponing the foreign policy debate until after students have studied the war more thoroughly.

Another activity to deepen their knowledge is this role-play lesson designed by the Howard [Zinn Education Project](#), though it is probably a better fit for the following unit (where students study the Mexican-American War in more detail).

Moreover, studying early US foreign policy poses an excellent opportunity for students to make connections to current foreign policy proposals/decisions. For this reason, I suggest assigning students a homework assignment such as this one:  8.5- Modern Day American Expansionism Which allows them to explore the current administration's plans to expand the American frontier and form their opinions using sources with opposing perspectives.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/20/learning/should-the-us-government-provide-humanitarian-assistance-abroad.html>