**QUESTION:**

**To what extent did manifest destiny and territorial expansion unite or divide the United States from 1830 to 1860?**

**Document A**

I proceed now to a consideration of what is to me the strongest argument against annexing Texas to the United States. This measure will extend and perpetuate slavery…

As far back as the year 1829, the annexation of Texas was agitated in the Southern and Western States; and it was urged on the ground of the strength and extension it would give to the slaveholding interest… The great argument for annexing Texas is, that it will strengthen “the peculiar institution” of the South, and open a new and vast field for slavery…

By this act, slavery will be perpetuated in the old States as well as spread over new. It is well known, that the soil of some of the old states has become exhausted by slave cultivation… It is by slave breeding and slave selling that these states subsist… By annexing Texas, we shall not only create [slavery] where it does not exist, but breathe new life into it, where its end seemed to be near. States, which might and ought to throw it off, will make the multiplication of slaves their great aim and chief resource.

Reverend William Ellery Channing,

A Letter to Hon. Henry Clay, 1837

**Document B**

After twenty-five years, the American population has begun to extend itself to the Oregon Territory. Some hundreds went a few years ago; a thousand went last year; two thousand are now setting out from the frontier of Missouri; tens of thousands are meditating the adventure. I say to them all, Go on! the Government will follow you, and will give protection and land…

Let the emigrants go on, and carry their rifles. We want thirty thousand rifles in the valley of the Oregon; they will make all quiet there, in the event of a war with Great Britain for the domination of that country. Thirty thousand rifles on the Oregon will annihilate the Hudson Bay Company, drive them off our continent, quiet their Indians, and protect the American interests in all the vast region of the Rocky Mountains. Besides… the settlers in Oregon will also recover and open for us the North American road to India!

Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri,

Speech in the U.S. Senate, 1844

**Document C**

[The slave] population of the United States cannot be diminished, but must be increased. Now, if we shall annex Texas, it will operate as a safety-valve to let it off the superabundant slave population from among us; and will, at the same time, improve their condition, They will be more happy, and we all shall be more secure…

Senator George McDuffie of South Carolina,

Congressional Globe, 1844

**Document D**

California will, probably, next fall away from [Mexico]… The Anglo- Saxon foot is already on its borders. Already the advance guard of the irresistible army of Anglo-Saxon emigration has begun to pour down upon it, armed with the plough and the rifle, and marking its trail with schools and colleges, courts and representative halls, mills and meeting-houses. A population will soon be in actual occupation of California, over which it be idle for Mexico to dream of dominion. They will necessarily become independent. All this without… responsibility of our people—in the natural flow of events.

John L. O’Sullivan,

Democratic Review, 1845

**Document E**

None can fail to see the danger to our safety and future peace if Texas remains an independent state, or becomes an ally or dependency of some foreign nation more powerful than herself. Is there one among our citizens who would not prefer perpetual peace with Texas to occasional wars, which often occur between bordering independent nations? Is there one who would not prefer free intercourse with her, to high duties on all our products and manufactures which enter her ports or cross her frontiers? Is there one who would not prefer an unrestricted communication with her citizens, to the frontier obstructions which must occur if she remains out of the Union?

President James Polk,

Inaugural Address, 1845

**Document F**

Why, says the chairman of this Committee on Foreign Relations, it is the most reasonable thing in the world! We ought to have the Bay of San Francisco. Why? Because it is the best harbor on the Pacific! It has been my fortune, Mr. President, to have practiced a good deal in criminal courts in the course of my life, but I have never yet heard a thief, arraigned for stealing a horse, plead that it was the best horse that he could find in the country! We want California. What for? Why, says the Senator from Michigan, we will have it; and the Senator from South Carolina, with a very mistaken view, I think, of policy, says you can’t keep our people from going there. I don’t desire to prevent them. Let them go and seek their happiness in whatever country or clime it pleases them.

Senator Thomas Corwin of Ohio,

Congressional Globe, 1845

**Document G**

Resolved, That the present war with Mexico has its primary origin in the unconstitutional annexation to the United States of the foreign state of Texas while the same was still at war with Mexico; that it was unconstitutionally commenced by the order of the President, to General Taylor, to take military possession of territory in dispute between the United States and Mexico, and in occupation of Mexico; and that is now waged ingloriously—by a powerful nation against a weak neighbor—unnecessarily and without just cause, at immense cost of a portion of her territory, from which slavery has already been excluded, with the triple object of extending slavery, of strengthening “Slave Power,” and of obtaining the control of the Free States, under the Constitution of the United States.

Resolved, That our attention is directed anew to the wrong and “enormity” of slavery, and to the tyranny and usurpation of the “Slave Power,” as displayed in the history of our country, particularly in the annexation of Texas and the present war with Mexico…

Charles Sumner,

Legislature of Massachusetts, 1847