

Market Speech Comprehension Questions

Standards-Based Objective: Students will explain how the growth of democracy and geographic expansion occurred and were significant to the development of the United States prior to Reconstruction. SS-08-5.2.3

Directions: After reading Henry Clay's *Market Speech*, answer the following questions. The questions in **bold print** require critical thinking.

Background

1. Why was Henry Clay known as "The Great Compromiser?"
2. What conflict was the United States involved in at the time Henry Clay delivered the Market Speech?
3. Which famous individual was in Lexington, Kentucky and was in the audience at Market Square?
4. **Make a prediction. Based on what you know about Henry Clay, what do you think he believed about the following issues?**
 - a. Mexican-American War
 - b. Slavery

Introduction

5. Why is the mood of the United States "dark and gloomy, unsettled and uncertain?"
6. Discuss at least three reasons why war is the worst kind of calamity that humans face.

Mexican-American War

7. Explain what Clay means by the following statement: "If we had not Texas, we should have no war."

8. Find and quote Henry Clay's answer to the following question: "Who, in the free government is, to decide upon the objects of a War, at its commencement, or at any time during its existence? Does the power belong to the Nation, to the collective wisdom of the Nation in Congress assembled, or is it vested solely in a single functionary of the government?"

9. Why is it important to have a clear objective (goal) in a military campaign? What can happen if there is no objective?

10. What is Henry Clay's position on the Mexican-American War? Does he oppose it or support it? Support your answer by using quotes from this speech.

War of Conquest

11. Although the annexation of Mexico was not likely, Henry Clay warned his listeners of the consequences of this course of action. Below are the reasons Clay opposes the annexation of Mexico. Restate each reason in your own words.
 - a. "It could not be achieved without frightful carnage, dreadful sacrifices of human life."

 - b. "[It could not be achieved without] the creation of an onerous nation debt."

 - c. "Nor could it be completely effected, in all probability, until after the lapse of many years."

- d. "It would be necessary to occupy all its strongholds, to disarm its inhabitants, and to keep them in constant fear and subjection."

- e. "To consummate the work, I presume that standing armies, not less than a hundred thousand men, would be necessary, to be kept perhaps always in the bosom of their country."

- f. "These standing armies, reveling in a foreign land, and accustomed to trample upon the liberties of a foreign people, at some distant day, might be fit and ready instruments, under the lead of some daring and unprincipled chieftain, to return to their country and prostrate the public liberty."

The National Character

- 12. What does it mean for a nation to have an "unsullied character?" Why does Clay believe that this is so important?

- 13. Clay predicts that if the United States gains territory from Mexico, the results may produce "distractions, dissensions, divisions, possible disunion." **In what ways did his predictions come true?**

- 14. "We bought all the Province of Louisiana for fifteen millions of dollars, and it is, in my opinion, worth more than all Mexico together." Based on what you know about the Louisiana Purchase, and going back to the introduction to find out what territory was acquired by the Mexican-American War, do you agree or disagree with Clay? Support your answer.

Slavery

15. What is Henry Clay's position on the issue of slavery?
16. Describe Clay's proposal for gradual emancipation. **Do you think this is a good idea? Why or why not?**
17. Clay gives several examples of injustices without simple remedies. List two of the examples he gives.

Resolutions

18. Clay ends his speech with a series of resolutions. Summarize each of the resolutions in 140 characters or less (the length of a tweet).

1:

2:

3:

4:

5:

6:

7:

8:

Making Connections

The United States still faces some of the same issues that it faced in 1847:

- Involvement in a controversial war
- Tension between different regions of the country
- Struggle for power between the different branches of government—President, Congress, and Supreme Court
- Desire for a strong economy

Choose one of these issues, and write a letter to the United States as if you were Henry Clay. What advice would he give the country for the issue you have chosen?