

CNN Millenium – Nineteenth Century “The Century of the Machine”

ENGLAND – “Darwin’s Theory of Evolution”

Charles Darwin, a young scientist conducting a world survey for the Royal Navy, developed astounding new theories about evolution. These ideas were published as *The Origin of Species*, in which Darwin suggested that species, including humans, changed over time as they adapted to local environments. Humans, he said, were the descendants of apes. While Darwin's arguments horrified the religious establishment, others found his ideas appealing and adapted them for other uses. The doctrine of "survival of the fittest" was interpreted as justification for the nations of the West to dominate and conquer other less "fit" cultures. In the last two decades of the century, Africa became the victim of a wholesale European colonial take-over.

Geography Theme - Darwin studied the characteristics of animals and plants in the places he visited and noted the diversity of species within each location; species adapted to the place that comprised their environment.

History Theme - Darwin's theories of survival of the fittest and evolution take on political and social dimensions, justifying European imperialism, challenging long-held religious beliefs, and reshaping society.

- 1. What are the premises of Darwin's theories? How did Darwin describe the process of evolution?**
- 2. Why did Darwin keep his theories to himself? Why did he eventually reveal them to the public?**
- 3. How did the scientific and lay communities respond to Darwin's theories? Who was in favor of his ideas, and who was opposed? How do you account for these different reactions?**
- 4. In what ways were Darwin's ideas "hijacked by Imperialists"?**
- 5. How does the history of nineteenth-century Africa illustrate the misapplication of Darwin's theories?**
- 6. How do you differentiate between scientific and social Darwinism? How was social Darwinism applied in the nineteenth century?**

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USA – “Westward Expansion”

Nineteenth-century mechanization also contributed to the drift of American settlers westward. Steel plows and railroads made settlement of the prairies easier. The native inhabitants resisted the new settlers; using guns and horses brought to the New World by Europeans, the Plains Indians proved to be difficult to displace. But the settlers turned their repeating rifles against the life-source of the Indians: millions of buffalo were slaughtered and an entire ecosystem was destroyed. Defeated at last, the Indians were confined to unwanted land, prisoners in their own country. The conflict would be recreated in theatrical fantasies such as the Wild West Show, establishing a myth of cowboys and Indians.

History Theme - The nineteenth century marked a change population dynamics in North America, typified by a growing white population and a shrinking Indian population. This shift also marked the decline of the native way of life. Theories of Social Darwinism and improved methods of warfare helped establish a doctrine of Manifest Destiny in America; white Americans and new European immigrants believed they could lay claim to lands already occupied by Native Americans.

Geography Theme - The westward movement of white American and European settlers had a tremendous impact on the Native Americans already living on the land.

- 1. What did the settlers moving westward think about their migration, their newly claimed land, and the native people who already lived there?**
- 2. What role did disease play in the destruction of Native American populations?**
- 3. How did the railroad contribute to patterns of expansion in the nineteenth century in the United States? What was "manifest destiny", and how did this doctrine affect patterns of expansion?**
- 4. According to the segment, what is the relationship between the American West, the Age of Industry, and Charles Darwin's doctrine of survival of the fittest? How does this segment shed light on why the filmmakers chose to call the nineteenth century "the century of the machine"?**
- 5. Why do historians characterize the territorial growth of the United States as "expansion" or "settlement" as opposed to "imperialism"? What is the difference between expansion and imperialism? Is there one? Is it a matter of perspective?**