

Ancient civilizations



**ASSIGN
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Over the centuries there have been many different environmental and geographical factors that have shaped the development of the United States. Two of these factors that I feel are extremely significant to this development are the Irish Potato Famine and the discovery of gold in California. The Irish Potato Famine began in Ireland in September 1845. The famine was caused by an airborne fungus, *phytophthora infestans*, which attacks the leaves of the plant, turning them black, causing them to curl and rot, ultimately killing the plant. The rotting plant makes the perfect environment for the fungus to multiply.

The wind then carries the fungus spores to more healthy plants. (Irish Potato Famine, 2000) This famine caused such dire conditions for the families. The main source of food and income withered away before their eyes. Since families could not make ends meet, half-a-million people were evicted from their homes. The landlords used a method of getting rid of their poor tenants by promising them food, money and prosperity in America. The families left with nowhere to go fell for the empty promises and migrated to America. The famine caused around 650, 000 Irish emigrants to come to America in huge waves. 2, 000 arrived in New York City in 1847 alone. (Irish Potato Famine, 2000) The California Gold Rush began in January 1848, when gold was discovered in the American River near present day Sacramento by James Marshall. News of this discovery traveled to New York City. In August 1848 the New York Herald announced the discovery, kicking off the migration west with dreams of striking it rich in California. By December 1849, San Francisco's population jumped to 100, 000. Prior to the Gold Rush,

California's population was 25, 000, but by 1852 the total population was 223, 856.

This population growth ensured California's incorporation into the United States of America as the 31st state and the first western state. As a result, San Francisco became the main port on the West Coast, opening the United States to the Pacific trading ring. (The California Gold Rush, 1849, 2003) Both the environmental disaster of famine in Ireland and the environmental discovery of gold in California lead to immense migration to and across the United States, thus shaping and influencing the cultural dynamic of the United States.

Each Civilization has many reason why the original peoples of that group migrated and settled in a particular area. The Ancient Egyptians settled along the Nile River banks around 6, 000 BC (Ancient Civilizations: Ancient Egypt, 2008). The geographical factor of the Nile River had a huge impact on why it became inhabited. Every year the Nile River floods bringing rich soil (Lectures on Ancient and Medieval European History, 2000) to the sandy arid area that is otherwise unusable. Without this yearly flood, the Egyptians would not have been able to produce crops and sustain a thriving metropolis as it did.

With such a successful civilization, it was only a matter of time before the seclusion that Egypt had been experiencing was over. Rome began rule over Egypt in 30 BC after Augustus defeated Marc Antony and Cleopatra (Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History, 2000). This take over by Rome did not create the fall of the Egyptian civilization, but actually seemed to enhance it.

Although Egypt is such an arid desert wasteland, the Nile River banks were fertile enough to produce enough grain to supply Rome as well as itself.

With the beginning of trade with the Roman Empire came cultural influences as well. Romans became enthralled with the Egyptians' culture, using their designs for architecture and in art. The cultural trade was also a two-way street. The Egyptians started representing themselves artistically and fashionably as the Romans did with a more Greco-Roman style (Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History, 2000). Both civilizations came to be known as some of the most prosperous and successful civilizations of the ancient world.