

Emily Waldron, El Rancho High School

Content Standards

CA SS 8.5: Discuss Mexican settlements and their locations, cultural traditions, attitudes toward slavery, land-grant system, and economies.

CA SS 8.6: Describe the Texas War for Independence and the Mexican-American War, including territorial settlements, the aftermath of the wars, and the effects the wars had on the lives of Americans, including Mexican Americans today.

CCSS Standards:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.7

Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.6-8.7

Integrate quantitative or technical information expressed in words in a text with a version of that information expressed visually.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL 8.1

Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL. 8.4

Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) in order to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data.

Overview of Lesson

So often the history of the west is told from the perspective of Anglo American westward expansion into the region, leaving the stories of the individuals and groups who were already rooted in the west on the margins. In this lesson, students will critically examine and reflect on the ways in which the Mexican history of California is often invisible and untold by answering the question, *What happened to the Mexican ranchos of California?*

Students will work collaboratively in groups to explore the history of Mexican ranchos in California using the Picturing America app and online archive. While learning about the ranchos, students will see different examples of how Mexican-Americans lost their land after the Mexican-American war and how

these ranchos changed hands, slowly disappeared or were absorbed into our cities over time.

To assess their learning and share their findings with the class, students will work together in small groups to create a digital presentation detailing the history of a Mexican rancho, how the land changed over time, and what exists in place today. Students will reflect on how the history of the ranchos demonstrates the experience of Mexican Americans during this era and the long-lasting impact of the loss of land to our region and the Mexican-American community today.

This lesson is designed to be situated in a unit of study on westward expansion and the Mexican-American War, therefore students should have a foundational knowledge of these topics heading into the lesson. Some slides for historical context have been provided to support the pertinent background knowledge.

Resources and Lesson Materials

- [Google Slide Presentation](#)
- [Picturing Mexican America Source Set](#) (for classrooms without one-to-one access):
- [Student Presentation Template](#)
- [Picturing Mexican America website](#)

Student Handouts below

Procedure

- 1. Warm Up:** Have students take out their phones and download the “Picturing America” app or go to the “Mis Tierras” tab on the Picturing Mexican America website (linked [here](#)). Have students explore the “Mis Tierras” interactive map of Mexican ranchos across southern California and try to figure out which rancho is local to their home or school. Use **Student Handout #1** to guide their interaction with the map. Then, give them the opportunity to reflect on and discuss the following questions:
 1. Were you aware that this area used to be part of a Mexican rancho? If so, when or where did you learn this history?
 2. Is our Mexican history visible or noticeable in our community? How might someone be able to tell today that this was once a part of Mexico?
- 2. Historical Context:** Use the **Google Slide Presentation** to review the background information on the Mexican-American War, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, and Anglo expansion into the region after the war if necessary. There are two options for **Handout #2**, one that is fill-in-blank style notes and the other that has guiding questions that can be answered as the students follow along with the slides. If students are

already very familiar with the content, the slides could also just be used as review without the notes.

- 3. Exploring the Ranchos:** Place students into small groups (3-4). The teacher will be assigning each group a different Mexican rancho from the **Source Set**. They will work together to explore information, maps, and images of a Mexican rancho. First, before students work on their own, the teacher should choose one rancho from the **Source Set** to model for students how to read the information and explore the sources provided to complete the graphic organizer provided in **Student Handout #3**. Once the students have grasped the process, assign each group a different rancho and have them complete the graphic organizer again for the rancho assigned to them.

Note: The source set provided includes summaries, maps, and photographs of 9 different ranchos, each of which were chosen because they have rich histories, detailed information, and varying examples of how the land changed over time. All of these materials are directly taken from the [Picturing Mexican America website](#). You can either give the students one of these source sets, or simply assign them each a different Rancho and have them use the "Mis Tierras" map to access the exact same information.

- 4. Assessment:** Students will use the notes they took to create a presentation in Google slides. The teacher can share the **Student Presentation** template provided. Students should be encouraged to insert images from the archive or from their own online searches (for example, a picture of the La Brea Tar Pits to show what exists on the land today). It is recommended that students be given the opportunity to do further online research to explore the area of the Mexican rancho to which they were assigned. To hold each student in the group accountable, teachers can also assign specific slide to students and have them each be responsible for a different part of the presentation.
- 5. Presentations:** Have students present their slides to the class or share their presentations digitally with one another (i.e. posting a link to their slides). Have students use **Handout #4** to take brief notes on each other's presentations, then complete a final reflection comparing and contrasting the stories of these ranchos and what their overall takeaways are from the history they have learned. Use the final reflection questions as an opportunity to share out and have a discussion in small groups or with the entire class.

Extension options:

Design a historical landmark. Have students work in partners or small groups to use the Picturing Mexican American archives and the interactive "Mis Tierras" map to research and design plans for a historical landmark that commemorates

either a Mexican rancho, a prominent Mexican figure or family, or some part of our Mexican past that students feel should be recognized and remembered.

Bibliography

<https://www.pbssocal.org/shows/lost-la/the-life-and-times-of-pio-pico-last-governor-of-mexican-california>

<https://www.pbssocal.org/shows/lost-la/vast-swaths-of-southern-california-once-belonged-to-pio-pico>

<https://www.pbssocal.org/history-society/how-rancho-owners-lost-their-land-and-why-that-matters-today>

<https://www.pbssocal.org/history-society/today-in-history-how-the-treaty-of-guadalupe-hidalgo-defined-our-neighborhood-boundaries>

<https://www.loc.gov/resource/g4363l.ct001439/>

<https://www.loc.gov/resource/ppmsca.09855/>

<https://www.loc.gov/resource/g3701sm.gct00483/?sp=25&r=-0.847,0.03,1.694,0.723,0>

Student Handout #1: Warm Up

Download the “Picturing America” app or go to the “Mis Tierras” tab on the Picturing Mexican America Website. Explore the map and read about the different ranchos that existed across southern California. **Can you figure out which rancho existed on the land where you live or go to school on now?**

Share some details of the rancho that is most local to you:

Reflection & Discussion Questions:

- 1. Were you aware that this area used to be part of a Mexican rancho? If so, when or where did you learn this history?**

- 2. Is our Mexican history visible or noticeable in our community? How might someone be able to tell today that this was once a part of Mexico?**

Student Handout #2: Historical Context: Notes

Mexican Ranchos

Previously Spanish grants for Catholic missions, after Mexico declared independence from Spain in 1821, the Mexican government began the process of _____, which meant the land would shift from being held by the church to individual landowners.

During the secularization process, large tracts of land were granted to wealthy Mexican _____. Spanish missions became Mexican ranchos, whose economies similarly relied on sheep and cattle grazing, as well as agriculture.

The Mexican-American War & The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo

Anglo Americans began _____ west in California during the 1800s. Triggered by border disputes and a desire to expand, the U.S. declared _____ on Mexico in 1846. By 1848, the United States claimed victory and Mexico ceded over half of its territory in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ending the war.

The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo gave Mexican citizens in the new U.S. territory the _____ of either remaining Mexican citizens or becoming American citizens. If they chose to become American citizens, the treaty promised that they would be granted full citizenship _____ and that their _____ would be respected.

Broken Promises & the challenge of land claims

Although the treaty claimed to honor Mexican _____ rights, Mexican-Americans needed to file a _____ and register their land with the U.S. government. In 1851, the United States government established the Board of Land Claims Commissioners to _____ these claims.

The land claims process made it difficult for Mexican-Americans to hold onto their land because it was _____, lasted many years, and difficult to find _____ of their ownership. At the same time, Anglo Americans _____ threatened their claims to the land as they entered the region in greater numbers during the Gold Rush.

Student Handout #2: Historical Context: Notes

Mexican Ranchos

What was secularization ? Who controlled and owned most of the land after this process?	
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The Mexican-American War & The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo

What did the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo promise Mexican citizens in new U.S. territory after the war?	
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Broken Promises & the challenge of land claims

What were some of the difficulties Mexican Americans faced in securing their land claims with the U.S. government?	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1.2.3.
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Student Handout #3: Examining the history of the ranchos

Name of Rancho:	
Location: Which city, neighborhood or landmark currently exists on this land?	
History: Summarize the story of this rancho. How did this land change hands over time?	
Physical space: Is there any evidence of this rancho still in existence today? (Buildings, landmarks, etc) Explain what still exists, or if not, what has taken its place.	
Reflection: What does the history of this rancho teach us about the experience of Mexican Americans in California during this era? How might our region be different today if more Mexican families had been able to hold onto their	

land?	
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Student Handout #3: Presentation Notes

Use this space to take notes while your classmates share their presentation.

Name of the Rancho	Notes <i>What did you learn about the history of this rancho? How did the land change over time? What exists on the land today?</i>

This lesson was designed by the UCLA History-Geography Project for the "Picturing Mexican America"

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Reflection:

After learning from your classmates, compare and contrast the different stories of these ranchos.

What <u>similarities</u> did you notice about the histories of these ranchos?	
What <u>differences</u> did you notice about the histories of these ranchos?	
Overall, what have you learned about what happened to the Mexican ranchos of California?	

<p>How do you think we should remember this history? What should Californians know about our Mexican past?</p>	
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