

Overview

The history of California is rich with ethnic and cultural diversity, economic energy, geographic variety, and growing civic community. The study of California history in the fourth grade provides students with foundational opportunities to learn in depth about their state, including the people who live here, and how to become engaged and responsible citizens.

The story of California begins in pre-Columbian times, in the culture of the American Indians who lived here before the first Europeans arrived. The history of California then becomes the story of successive waves of immigrants from the sixteenth century through modern times and the enduring marks each left on the character of the state. These immigrants include (1) the Spanish explorers, Indians from northern Mexico, Russians, and the Spanish-Mexican settlers of the Mission and Rancho period, known as “Californios,” who introduced European plants, agriculture, and a herding economy to the region; (2) the people from around the world who settled here, established California as a state, and developed its mining, industrial, and agricultural economy; (3) the Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, Filipinos, Southern Asian, and other immigrants of the second half of the nineteenth century, who provided a new supply of labor for California’s railroads, agriculture, and industry and contributed as entrepreneurs and innovators, especially in agriculture; (4) the immigrants of the first half of the twentieth century, including new arrivals from Latin America and Europe; and (5) the many immigrants arriving today from Latin America, the nations of the Pacific Basin (such as Vietnam) and Europe, and the continued migration of people from other parts of the United States. Because of their early arrival in the New World, people of African descent have been present throughout much of California’s history, contributing to the Spanish exploration of California, the Spanish-Mexican settlement of the region, and California’s subsequent development throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

To bring California history, geography, and economy to life for students and promote respect and understanding, teachers emphasize the ethnic, racial, and cultural diversity of California’s population. Fourth- grade students learn about the daily lives, adventures, accomplishments, cultural traditions, and dynamic energy of the laborers and entrepreneurs who formed the state and shaped its varied landscape.

In grade four, the regional geography of California is emphasized. Students analyze how the different regions of the state have developed through the interaction of physical characteristics, cultural forces, and economic activity and how the landscape of California has provided different resources to different people at different times—from the earliest era to the present.

Finally, by developing a time line, students will be able to put into chronological order events and developments that changed the course of California history, such as the Mexican–American War, the Bear Flag Republic, the Gold Rush, and California’s admission to statehood in 1850. Teachers are also encouraged to build understanding of history–social science concepts while furthering beginning literacy skills as outlined in the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). For example, shared readings of narrative and expository texts related to the history–social science standards can reinforce academic content vocabulary and comprehension skills.

California’s Historical and Social Sciences Analysis Skills for kindergarten through grade five are an integral part of the state’s content standards for elementary school. As students learn the content outlined in the standards, they should also be practicing the skills described under the headings “Chronological and Spatial Thinking,” “Research, Evidence, and Point of View,” and “Historical Interpretation.” All standards for fourth- grade history–social science, including the analysis skills, are provided in full at the end of this section.

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October 2011 Edition **What Fourth-Grade Students Should Know**

In third grade, students learned about the history of their local communities, a necessary stepping-stone to the study of their state’s history in fourth grade. The third-grade standards, entitled “Continuity and Change,” began to give students the chance to study history in more depth, through the experiences of local American Indian groups and the experience of newcomers who settled in their local region in the past. Students entering fourth grade have also developed the skills needed for the increasingly detailed and specific historical narratives that they will study in grades four and five. The third-grade standards enabled them to develop their geographic awareness, including an understanding of the ways that people change their environment. They continued to improve their understanding of political and economic concepts, including more specifics about the workings of the American government, and the operation of the local economy. That experience will enable them to better grasp the more specific political and economic institutions covered in fourth grade.

What Students Learn in Fourth Grade

Physical and Human Geographic Features that Define California

By the fourth grade, students’ geographic skills have advanced to the point where they can use maps to identify latitude and longitude, the poles and hemispheres, and plot locations using coordinates. Students locate California on the map and analyze its location on the western edge of North America, separated from the more densely settled parts of the American heartland by mountains and wide desert regions. They learn to identify the mountain ranges, major coastal bays and natural harbors, and expansive river valleys and delta regions that are a part of the setting that has attracted settlement for tens of thousands of years. During their study of California history, students will use maps, charts, and pictures to describe how California communities used the land and adapted to it in different ways.

Pre-Columbian Settlements and People

California has long been home to American Indian peoples, who lived along the coast, in the river valleys,

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and in the desert areas. Students learn about the major language groups of the American Indians and their distribution, social organization, legends and beliefs, and economic activities. Students study the extent to which early people of California depended on, adapted to, and modified the physical environment by cultivation and the use of sea resources.

Contemporary cities and densely settled areas frequently are located in the same areas as these early American Indian settlements, especially on the coasts where rivers meet the sea. In

analyzing how geographic factors have influenced the location of settlements, then and now, students have an opportunity to observe how the past and the present may be linked by similar dynamics.

European Exploration and Colonial History

In this unit, students will learn about the Spanish exploration of the New World and the colonization of New Spain. They review the motives for colonization, including rivalries with other imperial powers such as Britain and Russia, which brought Spanish soldiers and missionaries northward from Mexico City to Alta California.

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The stories of Junipero Serra, Juan Crespi, Juan Bautista de Anza, and Gaspar de Portola are told as part of this narrative. Students learn about the presence of African and Filipino explorers and soldiers in the earliest Spanish sea and land expeditions. The participation of Spaniards, Mexicans, Indians from northern Mexico, and Africans in the founding of the Alta California settlements is also noted. In mapping these routes and settlements, students observe that access to California was difficult because of the physical barriers of mountains, deserts, and ocean currents and also because of the closing of land routes by Indians who were hostile to foreigners.

Missions, Ranchos, and the Mexican War for Independence

To secure the northwestern frontier of New Spain, King Charles III began colonizing California in 1769. Students learn that while soldiers arrived to defend the territory, Franciscan missionaries came to convert native peoples to Christianity. With so few colonists, Spanish authorities believed they could transform Indian peoples into loyal Spanish subjects by converting them to Christianity, introducing them to Spanish culture and language, and through intermarriage. The introduction of Christianity affected native peoples, many of whom combined Catholicism with their own belief systems. Vastly outnumbered by native peoples, missionaries relied on some Indian leaders to help manage the economic, religious, and social activities of the missions. Cattle ranches and civilian pueblos developed around missions built by forced Indian labor. Here, colonists introduced European plants, agriculture, a pastoral economy based mainly on cattle, and

Spanish culture. This study of early California ecology may also provide support for the teaching of the Environmental Principles and Concepts that are part of California's Education and the Environment Initiative.

The historical record of this era remains incomplete due to the relative absence of native testimony, but it is clear that while missionaries brought agriculture, the Spanish language and culture, and Christianity to the native population, American Indians suffered in many California missions. The death rate was extremely high. Contributing factors included the hardships of forced labor and, primarily, the introduction of diseases for which the native population did not have immunity. Moreover, the imposition of forced labor and highly structured living arrangements degraded individuals, constrained families, circumscribed native culture, and negatively impacted scores of communities.

Sensitivity and careful planning are needed to bring the history of this period to life for students in a thoughtful way. Teachers emphasize the daily lives of the people who occupied the ranchos, missions, presidios, haciendas, and pueblos, using literature, journal writing, and other activities

designed to help students analyze carefully selected primary and secondary sources and thus understand and articulate the views of the native population, the Spanish military, and the missionaries.

The Mexican War for Independence is studied and discussed, including how it resulted in Mexican trade laws that opened up California to international commerce. During Mexican rule in California, merchants, traders, and sailors arrived from the United States and England to buy cowhides and tallow. By analyzing California's geography, students will see how the natural barriers and remoteness of the region influenced settlement patterns during this period.

The Gold Rush and Statehood

With awareness of the physical barriers of the California landscape, students read about the travels of Jedediah Smith, James Beckwourth, John C. Fremont, Christopher "Kit" Carson, and early pioneer families such as the Bidwell and Donner parties. Students gain an appreciation of the hardships of the overland journey.

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As more American immigrants began to arrive, Mexico was struggling with a brewing border dispute along the Rio Grande River in Texas. At the same time, United States President James K. Polk desired the rich fertile lands of California for the United States. Word of the Mexican–American War being declared in 1846 was slow in reaching California. By then, the troubles between American settlers and Mexicans had begun in earnest. A band of rowdy Americans revolted in June 1846 and took over the city of Sonoma. They raised the Bear Flag for the first time in California. By July, a U.S. warship had captured Monterey. Students learn that approximately one-third of the northern half of Mexico, including California, became part of the United States after the United States defeated Mexico in the Mexican–American War of 1846–1848.

Just as the war was ending, James Marshall discovered a little nugget of gold in California. Students learn how the discovery of gold and the spread of its news throughout the world affected the multicultural aspects of California's population. Students can compare the long overland route over dangerous terrain to the faster sea route, either via Panama or around Cape Horn.

Students consider how the Gold Rush changed California by bringing sudden wealth to the state; affecting its population, culture, and politics; and instantly transforming San Francisco from a small village in 1847 to a bustling city in 1849. On the negative side, the Gold Rush robbed many of California's earlier Mexican and Indian residents of their land grants and property rights and caused irreparable environmental destruction through the system of hydraulic mining that was introduced in the 1850s. Students learn about women who helped to build California during these years, such as Bernarda Ruiz, María Angustias de la Guerra, Louise Clapp, Sarah Royce, and Biddy Mason.

Students can explore the challenges California faced as a result of the Gold Rush. The class may be divided into small groups. Each group studies the role of a different ethnic group that participated in the Gold Rush or was influential in the growth of the state during this period. Students can also read some of the many stories about the California mining camps. They might

identify the causes and effects of conflicts in the camps by expressing their ideas in letters to the editor of an 1850s newspaper.

In discussing California statehood, students may learn about the link of California's bid to join the Union with the controversy over slavery expansion in the United States. California played an important role in the Compromise of 1850, which signaled Congress' desire to balance slave and nonslave representation in government, but also in many ways foreshadowed the impending crisis of the Civil War. Students may discuss the question of whether gold from California helped the Union win the war. Comparisons can also be made between governments during the Spanish and Mexican periods and after California became a state. California's state constitution and the government it created are introduced here and discussed in further detail in the last unit of the course.

California as an Agricultural and Industrial Power

The years following 1850 brought a transportation revolution, increased diversity, and agricultural and industrial growth to California. The Pony Express, the Overland Mail Service, and the telegraph service linked California with the East. The completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869 linked California with the rest of the nation. Completion of the railroad and newly built seaports increased trade between Asia and eastern cities. They also brought thousands of new settlers to California, including the Wakamatsu Tea and Silk Colony from Japan. Students analyze the hostilities toward the large Chinese labor force in California during the 1870s that led to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. The Gentlemen's Agreement in 1907, singling out Japanese immigrants, further limited the number of Asians admitted to the United States.

The invention of the refrigerated railroad car opened eastern markets to California fruit and produce. Students examine the special significance of water in a state in which agricultural wealth depends on cultivating dry regions that have longer growing seasons and warmer weather. Students study the geography of water, the reclamation of California's marshlands west of the Sierra Nevada, and the great engineering projects that bring

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water to the Central Valley and the semiarid south. Students also examine the continuing conflicts over water rights.

As California became home to diverse groups of people, its culture reflected a mixture of influences from Central America; South America; eastern, southern, and western Asia; and Europe. Students can compare the many cultural and economic contributions these diverse populations have brought to California and can make the same comparisons for California today. Students can conduct research using the resources of local historical societies and libraries to trace the history of their own communities. Students are encouraged to incorporate literature that represents different cultures. Then they could create a display for the library, documenting the contributions.

Modern California: Immigration, Technology, and Cities

Students in grade four learn about the development of present-day California, with its commerce, large-scale commercial agriculture, communications industry, aerospace technology, and important trade links to nations of the Pacific Basin and other parts of the world. Since the beginning of World War II, California has changed from an underdeveloped, resource-producing area to an industrial giant. Students might analyze how California's industrial development was strengthened after the war by the building of an extensive freeway system, which in turn led to the demise of the inter-urban railway system. The extension of water projects, including canals, dams, reservoirs, and power plants, supported the growing population and its expanding need for electrical power. Students examine the impact of these engineering projects on California's wild rivers and watersheds and the long-term consequences of California's heavy overdraft on its groundwater resources.

Through their studies, students understand the importance of agricultural labor, including how Cesar Chavez, Dolores Huerta, and the United Farm Workers, through nonviolent tactics, educated the general public about the working conditions in agriculture and led the movement to improve the lives of farm workers. In addition, students learn about the role of labor in industry through studying teamsters and other labor unions. To extend students' learning and involve them in service connected to Chavez's values, students might plan a celebration or participate in a local Cesar Chavez Day (March 31) observance or activities. Students can also learn about other important events in California's civil rights history, such as the court case *Mendez v. Westminster*, predecessor to *Brown v. Board of Education*, the forced repatriation of Mexicans and Mexican Americans to Mexico that took place during the Great Depression, and the forcible removal and internment of Japanese Americans during World War II.

California also developed a public education system, including universities and community colleges, which became a model for the nation. Students can learn to see how education opens new opportunities for immigrant youths as well as native-born residents. They analyze how California's leadership in computer technology, science, the aerospace industry, agricultural research, economic development, business, and industry depends on strong education for everyone.

Students explore the relationship between California's economic and population growth in the twentieth century and its geographic location and environmental factors. They determine the push and pull factors for California's dramatic population increase in recent times, such as the state's location in the Pacific Basin, the 1965 Immigration Act, the 1980 Refugee Act, and the state's historical ability to absorb new laborers in its diversified economy. They examine California's growing trade with nations of the Pacific Basin and analyze how California's port cities, economic development, and cultural life benefit from this trade. They learn about the contributions of immigrants to California and United States history, such as Dalip Singh Saund, a Sikh immigrant who was the first Asian American to serve in the United States Congress.

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This unit will conclude with an examination of some unresolved problems facing California today and the efforts of concerned citizens in addressing these issues.

Local, State, and Federal Governments

Students finish their studies in the fourth grade with a review of the structures, functions, and powers of different levels of government. In fifth grade, they will study the origins of the U.S. Constitution in depth, but they leave the fourth grade with a clear understanding of what the Constitution is and how it defines the shared powers of federal, state, and local governments. They also gain an understanding of how the California Constitution works, including its relationship to the U.S. Constitution, and the similarities and differences between state, federal, and local governments, including the roles and responsibilities of each. Students describe the different kinds of governments in California, including the state government structures in Sacramento, but also the governments of local cities and towns, Indian *rancherias* and reservations, counties, and school districts. Students' understanding of state and local government can be enhanced by visiting local courts, city halls, and the State Capitol. This knowledge is an important foundation for the development of the concepts of civic participation and public service that are explored further at later grade levels.