

## ABOUT THIS RESOURCE: 4<sup>th</sup> GRADE LESSON

# California Native American Survival and Resilience During the Mission Period: A Source Investigation

### SUBJECTS

- History
- Social Studies
- Language Arts

### GRADE LEVELS

- 4

### LESSON SUMMARY

Students will analyze primary and secondary sources to answer the following central question: *Native Americans of California during the mission period: How did Native people resist and persist in the face of extreme adversity?*

### Instructional Method

For each NK360° source investigation, we provide a lesson plan featuring a structured inquiry method.<sup>1</sup> Students use sources as evidence to help answer a central question. Each lesson includes background history and taps into prior knowledge by asking students to formulate a hypothesis to answer the central question. Students go through a process of hypothesis revision as they uncover evidence contained in each source. We provide a graphic organizer to scaffold this investigation for students as they analyze sources and tackle challenging historical questions. This source investigation has been adapted to introduce and build the foundational skills of critical thinking and source analysis for the fourth grade, utilizing five of the ten sources featured in the source investigation for grades 7–12.

### Rationale for Lesson

This source investigation offers students a new way to think about and better understand California mission history. Knowledge of Native American experiences during the Spanish mission period provides students with a more complete understanding of United States colonial history. The inclusion of this content adds a long-omitted piece of history to the traditionally taught mission narrative and provides an opportunity for centering Native American agency during this brief era in the long history of Native Americans in present-day California. Rationale for this lesson includes:

- To shed light on a chapter of California history that has been omitted from the standard U.S. history narrative or taught incompletely
- To shift the Spanish-centric narrative of early California colonial history
- To share primary-source accounts of California Native American resistance and cultural persistence
- To act as a bridge between the classroom and the most recent historical and archeological scholarship on Native American experiences during the mission period
- To acknowledge this historical event as an important period in the ongoing history of Native Americans of California that has relevance to the many tribes that are in the state today

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1. This source investigation uses a general inquiry approach. Other NK360° resources borrow from the Inquiry Design Model (IDM), which implements the C3 Inquiry Arc and the C3 Framework Dimension Standards.

## Recommended Prior Student Knowledge

Fourth-grade students in California will have studied the regional geography of California and the diversity of California Native peoples, which should include different languages and cultural traditions, social and political structures, land stewardship practices, and relationships with their respective natural environments. Students should understand the motives and rivalries of European powers to explore the region. They should be learning about the impact colonization would have upon Native peoples and the land. Since this is not a unit, students should be introduced to the arrival of the Spanish and the establishment of the mission system prior to beginning this source investigation. A summary of important background knowledge is also provided in the introductory slideshow for the lesson.

## Suggested Lesson Pacing

This cross-curricular source investigation provides an opportunity to combine instruction for both social studies and English language arts. We recommend seven fifty-minute class sessions to examine all five sources, including the introduction and conclusion. Optional extensions for further learning are also provided for students and teachers in the recommended resources.

- **Teacher Tip:** If it is difficult to explore **five** sources during the suggested time, consider the following options:
  - Limit the number of sources by choosing **three** sources to analyze.
  - Divide the sources among small groups for teacher-led close reading instruction and source analysis. Each group can share their source analysis with the class. A class chart can help them track the evidence of each source as they are presented.

## Lesson Objectives

- **Skills:**
  - Draw evidence from primary and secondary sources to support research, analysis, and reflection
  - Recall key details and relevant information to explain and draw inferences
  - Support a point of view with reasons and information
- **Content:**
  - Understand the different ways in which California Native Americans resisted the mission system and Spanish colonization
  - Understand the diverse ways California Native Americans maintained links to their Native cultures once they entered the mission system
  - Evaluate how California Native Americans both resisted and culturally persisted through the mission period

## Before You Begin

The harsh treatment of Native Americans within the mission system can be difficult to read about and study. *Let's Talk: Facilitating Critical Conversations with Students* and *Critical Practices for Anti-bias Education*, published by Learning for Justice (formerly Teaching Tolerance), contain strategies to plan discussions and to facilitate critical conversations about difficult topics with students. Consider reviewing these resources before you begin, especially the "Classroom Culture" and "Family and Community Engagement" sections of *Critical Practices*. Please see the recommended resources for links to these materials.

While the focus of this lesson is on Native American agency and resilience, there is a reference in the introductory slideshow to the mental and physical abuse that Native Americans of California experienced in the mission system.



If you are concerned that this may be triggering to any of your students, please consult with your school counselor before teaching this lesson. If your student population includes Native American students, consider reaching out to parents/guardians to let them know this content will be covered in class.

It is important that families understand why building a mission model or reenacting mission activities are not appropriate methods of teaching this traumatic period of forced assimilation, abuse, and enslavement of California Native peoples. As stated in the California History–Social Studies Framework: “Building missions from sugar cubes or popsicle sticks does not help students understand the period and is offensive to many.”<sup>2</sup> To help families understand the Native perspective of these types of activities in past school settings, you may consider sharing this short video [Gabe's 4th Grade "Mission" Project](#).

For information on how to analyze a source, consider Digital Inquiry Group’s [“Historical Thinking Chart.”](#) It provides tips on sourcing, contextualization, corroboration, and close reading. Please note: the site requires a free login and password to access.

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2. California Department of Education, *California History–Social Studies Framework* (Sacramento: California Department of Education, 2017), 76, [Chapter 7 Grade Four: Missions, Ranchos, and the Mexican War for Independence](#).