

ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

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

SUBJECTS

- History
- Social Studies
- Language Arts

GRADE LEVELS

- 7–12

LESSON SUMMARY

Students will analyze primary 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?*

RECOMMENDED PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

Students should have a general understanding of California colonial history, the arrival of the Spanish in present-day California, and the establishment of the mission system.

Instructional Method

For each NK360° source investigation, we provide a lesson plan featuring a structured inquiry method.¹ 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.

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 their nation's 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

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.

Suggested Lesson Pacing

We suggest two to three fifty-minute class periods or one and a half block classes with a recommended extension

- **Teacher Tip:** If it is difficult to explore ten sources during the suggested time, consider the following options:
 - Ask students to read two sources for homework either before or after the first class.
 - “Jigsaw” the sources by grouping students and dividing the sources among the students in each group (click [here](#) for more on how to jigsaw).
 - Limit the number of sources for review by choosing six to eight sources to analyze.

Lesson Objectives

- Skills:
 - Analyze primary and secondary sources and evaluate the historical significance of those sources
 - Construct arguments using primary and secondary sources for support
- Content:
 - Understand the different ways in which Native Americans of California resisted the mission system and Spanish colonization
 - Understand the diverse ways Native Americans of California maintained links to their cultures once they entered the mission system
 - Analyze different forms of resistance and persistence
 - Evaluate how Native Americans of California both resisted and culturally persisted despite the adversity they faced during 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 Social Justice 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 reference 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 school district has a Title VI Indian Education Program, we recommend contacting program staff for support with this resource. Out of respect to Native students and families who may or may not feel comfortable self-identifying, consider contacting parents/guardians to notify them that this content will be covered in class.

For information on how to analyze a source, consider the 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.