

LESSON PLAN

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?*

MATERIALS

- Introductory slideshow
- Teacher Introduction with Notes PDF
- Introductory essays (optional)
- Copies of graphic organizer
- Student online access to sources or printouts of sources
- Teacher online access to audio recordings
- Pens or pencils

Central Question

Native Americans of California during the mission period: How did Native people resist and persist in the face of extreme adversity?

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

Suggested Lesson Pacing

We suggest two to three fifty-minute class periods or one and a half block classes with an optional 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 Introduction

Introductory Slideshow: Image Analysis and Background History

- Common teaching about Spanish California missions has largely focused on a romanticized Eurocentric perspective of the missions or on the victimization of Native Americans living and working at the missions. Textbooks usually omit Native American perspectives, resilience, and cultural persistence in the face of adversity.
- Share the introductory slideshow with students. This slideshow begins with an image analysis that highlights the traditional misconceptions and historical omissions of the mission period. It then provides background history on the mission period and the Spanish colonization of California. Finally, it asks students to think critically about what the words *resistance* and *persistence* mean as well as what different forms of resistance and persistence look like.
- See the “Introduction with Notes” PDF of the slideshow for teacher-specific background historical content as well as ideas on how to engage with students while sharing the slides.
- **Recommended Option:** Share the introductory essays written by archeologist Dr. Tsim Schneider, a citizen of the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria, and Tribal Historic Preservation Officer and Cultural Director, Nakia Zavalla, a citizen of the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians. One or both of these can also be assigned for homework before or after the lesson.
- **Recommended Option:** For an excellent seven-minute video overview of mission history featuring different Native American viewpoints, we recommend this video from the California Indian Museum and Cultural Center: [California Native Perspectives – YouTube](#). (Please note: Teachers should view the video in its entirety before sharing with students to make sure it is appropriate for the grade level.)

Instruction and Student Practice:

Introduction of the Central Question:

- Using the slideshow, introduce the central question of the lesson: *Native Americans of California during the mission period: How did Native people resist and persist in the face of extreme adversity?*

Graphic Organizer and Inquiry Process:

- Pass out the graphic organizer. Explain to students that they will analyze ten different sources to answer the central question.
- To begin the inquiry process, ask students to complete the first section of the graphic organizer by writing their initial hypotheses to the central question in the first box on the organizer. This taps into students’ prior knowledge.
 - Remind students to let the evidence guide their thinking. They should make educated guesses based on their own prior knowledge. This is only a starting point. They will test their hypotheses using primary and secondary sources. Emphasize that students may end up coming to different conclusions at the end of the lesson.
 - Option: Have students share their first hypotheses by writing them on the board or reading them aloud.
- Next, introduce students to the sources (online or print). Explain that the sources are the different pieces of evidence that they will use to answer the central question. After analyzing a source, students will decide if and how the source provides evidence for Native American resistance and/or persistence during the mission period. Students should consider whether the sources support, contradict, or modify their original hypotheses.
 - **Teacher Tip:** Analyze one or two sources and fill out the graphic organizer together as a class to model the process and scaffold for students new to source analysis. Then have students work alone or in pairs to analyze sources, revise their hypotheses, and complete the graphic organizer.

- **Teacher Tip:** To check for understanding, allow students to work on the graphic organizer for fifteen to twenty minutes. Then have the class pause, and ask students, “Based on the sources that you have analyzed so far, which source provides the most powerful evidence for Native American resistance and/or persistence during this time period?” If students are struggling, model successful analysis by working together to analyze a source as a class.

Assessment:

- Once students have analyzed the sources and completed the graphic organizer, ask them to complete the summative assessment at the bottom of the graphic organizer. This can be completed as a class or individually (and can be assigned for homework completion).
 - **Summative Assessment:** Construct an argument (detailed outline or essay) that uses the evidence from the graphic organizer to answer the central question: *Native Americans of California during the mission period: How did Native people resist and persist in the face of extreme adversity?*
 - **Additional Assessment Options:** If timing does not allow for students to write an outline or essay to answer the central question, consider discussing a final answer to the central question as a class and assigning one of these assessment options:
 1. Contemporary Resistance and Persistence: Ask students to research a local Native American tribe and write a reflection on how that community is still active in resistance and persistence today.
 2. Metacognitive Reflection: Ask students to write a reflection on how their perspective on Native Americans during the mission period has shifted since the start of this lesson. What questions do they still have? What about this lesson shaped their learning the most?
 3. Write a Letter to a California Mission: Ask student to write a letter to a mission in California asking for Native American perspective and experience to be highlighted more for visitors and explain why the mission should do this.
 4. For Younger Students: If an outline or essay is too lengthy or advanced for younger learners, consider asking them to write a paragraph response to the central question featuring three sources as evidence instead of a full outline or essay.

Lesson Conclusion: Audio Recordings and Class Discussion

- Navigate to the audio portion of the lesson website. Play the audio recordings of contemporary California Native Americans reflecting on the importance of accurate mission history and survival, resistance, and persistence today.
 - **Teacher Tip:** Students can simply listen, or they can listen and take notes on common themes they hear in the recordings.
- After listening to the audio recordings, begin a class discussion. Choose one question below to begin the conversation or, time permitting, discuss all of them. If students are working in small groups, teachers can assign a different question to each group and have groups share final thoughts aloud with the class.
 - **Teacher Tip:** Consider putting your questions on PowerPoint slides and projecting them one at a time for visual learners.
 1. These recordings are present-day reactions to what missions represent to different California Native Americans. What surprises you about these responses? What can we learn as a class from these modern-day reflections about what missions represent to Native Americans in California today? How do these audio recordings speak to Native American survival and resilience?
 2. In what ways does the evidence provided in this source investigation challenge what you first thought about what it means to resist and persist? Do you know of any ways that California Native Americans continue to resist and persist today? If not, what might modern resistance and persistence look like?

3. Why do you think Native American resistance and persistence have been left out of most accounts of mission history for so long? Think about how Native American history is generally taught in the United States. Think also about who writes history and why.
 - Follow-Up: Why is it important to include Native American history and perspectives in the central narrative of American history? How can we work to change the Eurocentric historical narrative of the past?
4. In the article “Scaling Invisible Walls,” the authors write,

Missions, at least as the missionaries originally conceived of them, no longer operate in California.....Surrounding what is left of them is an impressive array of more than two hundred federally recognized and non-recognized California Indian tribes—including the nearly forty modern bands of ‘Mission Indians’ who have persisted much longer than any of the missions with which their ancestors were once connected.

What piece of evidence that you found in this source investigation do you feel most strongly supports the fact that Native Americans survived the mission period and continued to adapt and be resilient?

Extension: Research and Taking Informed Action

Research:

One critical aspect of inquiry as a lesson plan model is to allow students to generate their own questions to investigate. Give students the opportunity to research one question that they still have about Native resistance and persistence during the mission period. We encourage students to use our recommended resources section to help with further research. Ask students to write a reflection, based on the evidence they find, about the process of their research, what they discover in their research, and any areas of further research on the topic they might want to pursue.

- **Teacher Tip:** Keep in mind that true inquiry is messy. It is difficult to predict where it will take students. Inquiry is about actively discovering information and looking for new understandings and conclusions.
- **Teacher Tip:** Consider a more direct research approach if students struggle to create their own research questions. For example, choose a tribe referenced in one of the sources and research where that tribe is today. *What is that tribe doing politically, culturally, economically, and environmentally? It is crucial that students understand that Native Americans are leaders in their homelands today.*

NK360° Framework for Taking Informed Action:

To help students understand their own agency as well as the issues from the inquiry lesson in a larger context, give students the option to work through the NK360° Framework for Taking Informed Action.

- Share the NK360° Framework for Taking Informed Action handout with students.
- **Teacher Tip:** This can be completed by each student, in pairs, or as a class, depending on time constraints.

Recommended Resources

TO READ

Akins, Damon B., and William J. Bauer Jr. *We Are the Land: A History of Native California*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2021.

Arkush, Brook S. "Native Responses to European Intrusion: Cultural Persistence and Agency Among Mission Neophytes in Spanish Colonial Northern California." *Historical Archeology* 45, no.4 (June 2011): 62–90.

Beebe, Rose Marie, and Robert M. Senkewicz. "Revolt at Mission San Gabriel, October 25, 1785: Judicial Proceedings and Related Documents." *Boletín: The Journal of the California Mission Studies Association* 24, no. 2 (2007): 15–29.

Chavez, Yve. "Basket Weaving in Coastal Southern California: A Social History of Survivance." *Arts* 8, no. 3 (September 2019): 94. <https://doi.org/10.3390/arts8030094>.

Chilcote, Olivia. "Pow Wows at the Mission: Identity and Federal Recognition for the San Luis Rey Band of Luiseno Mission Indians." *Boletín: Journal of the California Mission Studies Association* 31, no. 1 (2015): 79–87.

Duggan, Marie Christine. "With and Without and Empire: Financing for California Missions before and after 1810." *Pacific Historical Review* 85 (2016): 23–71.

Geiger, Maynard J., and Clement W. Meighan, eds. *As the Padres Saw Them: California Indian Life and Customs as Reported by the Franciscan Missionaries, 1813–1815*. Santa Barbara, CA: Santa Barbara Mission Archive Library, 1976.

Haas, Lisbeth, ed. *Pablo Tac, Indigenous Scholar: Writing on Luiseño Language and Colonial History, c.1840*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011.

Jackson, Robert H., and Edward Castillo. *Indians, Franciscans, and Spanish Colonization: The Impact of the Mission System on California Indians*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995.

Lorimer, Michelle M. *Resurrecting the Past: The California Mission Myth*. Pechanga, CA: Great Oak Press, 2016.

Miranda, Deborah A. *Bad Indians: A Tribal Memoir*. Berkeley, CA: Heyday, 2013.

Newell, Quincy D. *Constructing Lives at Mission San Francisco: Native Californians and Hispanic Colonists, 1776–1821*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2009.

Panich, Lee M. "'Sometimes They Bury the Deceased's Clothes and Trinkets': Indigenous Mortuary Practices at Mission Santa Clara de Asís." *Historical Archeology* 49, no. 4 (December 2015): 110–29.

Ramirez, Renya K., and Valentin Lopez. "Valentin Lopez, Healing, and Decolonization: Contesting Mission Bells, El Camino Real, and California Governor Newsom." *Latin American and Latinx Visual Culture* 2, no. 3 (1 July 2020): 91–98. <https://doi.org/10.1525/lavc.2020.2.3.91>.

Rizzo, Martin. "'If They Do Not Fulfill What They Have Promised, I Will Accuse Them': Locating Indigenous Women and Their Influence in the California Missions." *Western Historical Quarterly* 51, no. 3 (Autumn 2020): 291–313.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/whq/whaa045>.

Sandos, James A. *Converting California: Indians and Franciscans in the Missions*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004.

Schneider, Tsim. “Dancing on the Brink of the World’: Seeing Indigenous Dance and Resilience in the Archeology of Colonial California.” *American Anthropologist* 123, no. 1 (2020): 50–66.

Schneider, Tsim, Khal Schneider, and Lee Panich. “Scaling Invisible Walls: Reasserting Indigenous Persistence in Mission-Era California.” *The Public Historian* 42, no. 4 (November 2020): 97–120.

Teaching for Tolerance. *Critical Practices for Social Justice Education*. Montgomery, AL: Southern Poverty Law Center, 2023. <https://www.learningforjustice.org/magazine/publications/critical-practices-for-social-justice-education>

Teaching Tolerance. Let’s Talk: Facilitating Critical Conversations with Students. Montgomery, AL: Southern Poverty Law Center, 2020. <https://www.learningforjustice.org/magazine/publications/lets-talk>

TO VIEW

California Indian Museum and Culture Center. *California Native Perspectives: Tell Our Own Stories*. <https://www.cimcc.org/education-center/california-native-perspectives/>.

California Indian Museum and Culture Center. *Civilized vs. Savage: Definitions from a Native Perspective*. <https://www.cimcc.org/education-center/civilized-vs-savage/>.

Critical Mission Studies YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@criticalmissionstudies5028>.

PBSSoCal. Lost LA: Borderlands. Season Two, Episode One. Watch the first twelve minutes on the San Gabriel Mission and Toypurina. <https://www.pbssocal.org/shows/lost-la/episodes/borderlands>

PBSSocal. Tending Nature: Decolonizing Cuisine with Mak'amham. Season One, Episode Two. <https://www.pbssocal.org/shows/tending-nature/episodes/decolonizing-cuisine-with-mak-amham>.

The New York Historical Society. Women & The American Story. “Life Story: Toypurina.” <https://wams.nyhistory.org/settler-colonialism-and-revolution/settler-colonialism/toypurina>.

Redbud Resource Group. Lesson on assimilation and resistance (Lesson Four) featuring Deborah Miranda’s poem, “Lies My Ancestors Told for Me.” *The poem explores the idea that “assimilation” is a form of resistance, as it allows a community to survive into the next generation.* <https://www.redbudresourcegroup.org/ethnicstudies>.

Santa Barbara Mission Archive-Library. Speaker Series. <https://www.sbmali.org/deeper-dive-series>.

State of California Native American Heritage Commission. Digital Atlas of California Native Americans. It has the option to show information about missions and tribes throughout the state. <http://nahc.ca.gov/cp/>.