

Hidden Histories

Mexican Repatriation During the 1930s

Introduction

The period of Mexican repatriation is often referred to as “forgotten” history because it is so rarely taught. Students will read from a variety of sources and learn how racism and anxiety collided during the Great Depression to form nativist views of belonging. Through small group discussion and Socratic Seminar, this lesson challenges students to critically investigate the misremembering of this important history. Prior to this case study, students should have an understanding of the Great Depression. General knowledge of the Mexican-American War is suggested.

Essential Questions

- How have our changing beliefs and attitudes about belonging impacted immigration and migration throughout American history and today?
- What impact do xenophobia, forced migration, and deportation have on individuals, families, and communities?
- What does it take to reconcile the past and repair wrongdoing in order to establish a more inclusive and democratic sense of belonging?

Key Terms and Concepts

- Great Depression
- repatriation
- deportation
- welfare
- Latinx

Standards

CCSS English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies

- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.9](#) Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.
- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1](#) Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

NCSS C3 Framework

- D2.His.2.9-12 Analyze change and continuity in historical eras.
- D4.4.9-12 Critique the use of claims and evidence in arguments for credibility.

Materials

Texts

- [INS Records for 1930s Mexican Repatriations](#)
- [“Mexican Repatriation During the Great Depression, Explained”](#)

BECOMING US BELONGING

- [Fighting Mexican Removal Since the 1930s](#)
- [“America’s Forgotten History of Mexican-American ‘Repatriation’”](#)
- [“Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s”](#)
- [Mass Eviction to Mexico in 1930s Spurs Apology](#)
- [“Los Angeles Apologizes for Role in Massive Deportations”](#)
- [“The Kids Who Got ‘The Mexican Repatriation’ of the 1930s Into California Textbooks”](#)

Student-Facing Documents

- Cornell Notes worksheet [HANDOUT A]
- Socratic Seminar [HANDOUT B]

Objective

Students will engage in close reading of diverse texts related to Mexican repatriation by taking Cornell Notes and will practice speaking and listening skills during a Socratic Seminar.

Agenda/Class Outline

- Warm Up
- Close Reading
- Socratic Seminar
- Exit Ticket

Procedure

Warm Up

1. Have students free write for three to five minutes in response to the following African proverb: “The true tale of the lion hunt will never be told as long as the hunter tells the story.”
2. Facilitate a brief discussion about their interpretations of the proverb and how they think it applies to the study of history.

Close Reading

1. Provide students with a variety of texts about Mexican repatriation in the 1930s. The assortment below includes written, audio, and video content from a diversity of authors and sources (museum, government, journalist, historian, student). You can assign students to read them all, do a jigsaw reading within small groups, or differentiate the task by assigning different texts to different students. (It is recommended that students use at least three.)
 - a. [INS Records for 1930s Mexican Repatriations](#)
 - b. [“Mexican Repatriation During the Great Depression, Explained”](#)
 - c. [Fighting Mexican Removal Since the 1930s](#)
 - d. [“America’s Forgotten History of Mexican-American ‘Repatriation’”](#)
 - e. [Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s](#)
2. Pass out copies of the Cornell Notes worksheet [HANDOUT A] and go over the directions as a class. Tell students to take notes as they read about Mexican repatriation, but to leave the “summary” section at the bottom blank for now. If this is their first time using the structure, spend some time modeling how to take Cornell Notes. Explain that this method for taking, organizing, and reviewing notes was developed by Walter Pauk, an education professor at Cornell University. Allow sufficient time for students to complete the readings and finish taking notes. Depending on your judgment, readings can be done in a single class period, as homework, or spaced out over a series of days.

BECOMING US BELONGING

3. Divide the class into groups of three to five students. With their group, have students review their notes and add any new things they learn from each other. Then, instruct groups to work together to write a summary at the bottom of the page.

Socratic Seminar

1. Use the following prompts to facilitate a Socratic Seminar where students will critically engage with the topic of Mexican repatriation. Students will all read the same texts in preparation for the formal discussion where students answer open-ended questions on the Socratic Seminar worksheet, building on and responding to each other's answers.
 - a. What differences did you notice among the texts? Consider specific things, like differing estimates of how many people repatriated, as well as more subtle things like tone, point of view, and bias.
 - b. Use these critical literacy questions to draw out differences between the accounts: Who wrote the story? Who benefits from the story? Who is missing from the story?
 - c. Did you know about the period of Mexican repatriation before this lesson? If so, where did you learn about it? Why do you think this topic is left out of most American history textbooks and curricula?
 - d. Misremembering means to inaccurately or imperfectly remember. How does historical misremembering perpetuate discrimination and oppression? Can historical misremembering be remedied by education? How does this apply to the experience and history of Mexican Americans?
2. Explain that, while both the state of California, [Mass Eviction to Mexico in 1930s Spurs Apology](#), and Los Angeles County, "[Los Angeles Apologizes for Role in Massive Deportations](#)," have issued formal apologies to the victims of Mexican repatriation, the federal government has yet to do so.
3. Listen to the story of the Los Angeles fifth graders who successfully fought to have Mexican repatriation taught in California schools, "[The Kids Who Got 'The Mexican Repatriation' of the 1930s Into California Textbooks.](#)"

Exit Ticket

1. Have students write for three to five minutes, relating what these student activists did to the proverb from the start of the lesson: "The true tale of the lion hunt will never be told as long as the hunter tells the story."

BECOMING **US** BELONGING

Cornell Notes worksheet [HANDOUT A]

Directions

Take notes as you read, view, and listen to a variety of informational texts. Use the big ideas in the left column to organize the notes you take on the right. After consulting multiple sources, summarize what you have learned at the bottom of your paper.

Big Ideas	Details and Notes *Code your notes to indicate sources (i.e. NPR, Teen Vogue)
BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES about belonging CIRCUMSTANCES shaping beliefs and attitudes about belonging RATIONALE given for Mexican repatriation IMPACT of Mexican repatriation on individuals, families, and communities	
SUMMARY:	

Socratic Seminar

Directions

Named for the Greek philosopher, this discussion strategy emphasizes critical thinking and questioning. The facilitator poses a series of open-ended questions related to a central topic. Students engage in dialogue, practice active listening, defend their claims, and present counterclaims.

1. Divide the class into groups of three to five students.
2. Give each group a list of questions.
3. Have students discuss the questions within their groups and record their ideas.
4. Instruct each group to come up with one question of their own to bring with them into the seminar.
5. Begin the seminar once small-group discussions have ended. Place as many chairs as there are groups in a circle in the center of the room.
6. Instruct each group to send a representative to the center. The representatives bring their notes and ideas from the group.
7. Once the representatives are seated, allow students to drive the discussion. A “talking piece,” like a ball or stick, can be used to designate the speaker who has the floor.
8. Students in the circle address the list of questions and pose new ones they generated with their groups.
9. Students should listen and respond to one another’s views and ask questions to determine if they agree or disagree.
10. Facilitate the discussion by reminding students when to clarify their statements or when important points have been missed.
11. Students outside the center can take notes on the discussion.
12. At any time during the seminar, a group member can tap out their representative and switch places. You might want to require that each group tap out someone at least once and encourage groups to put in every member.
13. Close by having students summarize the discussion. Ask if they learned anything new or will think about the topic differently now.