

Borders with the World

The Mexican–American War and U.S. Southern Borderlands

Introduction

What we refer to today as the U.S.–Mexico border was created as the result of a war fought with our neighbor to the south. This case study assumes students have studied or are studying the Mexican–American war, including the motives, effects, and contemporary relevance of that important conflict. The goal of the case study is for students to focus on the creation of our southern border and to connect with the experiences of people who were living in the borderland region before, during, and after the Mexican–American War.

Essential Questions

- How and why are borders created and recreated throughout our nation’s history?
- What is it like when a border crosses you?

Key Terms and Concepts

- Manifest Destiny
- expansionism
- annexation
- incorporate (land)

Standards

CCSS English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies

- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.1](#) Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.
- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.11-12.2](#) Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes.

NCSS C3 Framework

- D2.His.2.9-12 Analyze change and continuity in historical eras.

Materials

Texts

- [Map of U.S.–Mexico Territories Before Mexican-American War](#)
- [Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo](#)
- [A War of Violence and Violations](#)
- [Living on the Border: A Wound That Will Not Heal](#)

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Student Facing Document

- Exit Ticket

Objective

Students will provide text-based evidence to explain the impact of conflict on political geography and social life using primary and secondary sources, including maps, and personal narratives, to complete the Exit Ticket.

Agenda/Class Outline

- Warm Up
- Mini Lesson
- Close Readings
- Discussion
- Exit Ticket

Procedure

Warm Up

1. Present students with two different, unlabeled maps. Have students compare the differences between a map that shows [Mexican Territory Before the Mexican–American War](#), and a current map of Mexico.
2. Choose from the tasks:
 - a. Analyze the two maps in front of you. What do you see?
 - b. Infer what occurred to create two maps. Why do you see what you see?
 - c. Have students discuss their work with each other using a discourse strategy (i.e. [Single Round Robin](#) for a group or [Timed Pair Share](#) for partners).
3. Debrief with the class and explain that what caused the change was the Mexican–American War and its resolution.
4. Illustrate the war’s impact by focusing on the geography of our southwestern border and The Mexican Cession of 1948.

Mini Lesson

1. Read and review the [Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo](#) (1848), which ended the war with Mexico, and along with the [Gadsden Purchase of 1853](#), gave the United States control over modern-day border-states Texas, California, Arizona, and New Mexico as well as Nevada, Utah, Colorado, and Wyoming.
2. Pose the Essential Question for discussion, “What is it like when a border crosses you?” If students have trouble connecting with the question, rephrase it to say, “What do you *think* it would feel like if a border ever crossed you?” Remind students that these are the questions they should have in mind as they read and answer questions. Emphasize that after the Mexican–American War, entire groups of people – the Tejanos, Nuevo Mexicanos, and the Californians,

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as well as Native Americans and mestizo peoples – found themselves in a new nation, even though they were on the same land they had lived on for generations.

Close Reading

1. Depending on time, have students read and answer text-dependent questions for one or both of the following sources: “[A War of Violence and Violations: The Consequences of Conquest](#),” and “[Living on the Border: A Wound That Will Not Heal](#).”

Discussion

1. After students complete these tasks, reread the following quotes from the sources above:
 - a. “Families were literally split in half. Families held land and had homes. Then an artificial political border was created and suddenly part of the family was on one side, and the other part of the family was on the other side. Suddenly, these families became enemies on opposite sides in a sense, although they didn’t see themselves that way.”
 - b. “These lands have always been here; the river of people has flowed for centuries. It is only the designation ‘border’ that is relatively new, and along with the term comes the life one lives in this ‘in-between world’ that makes us the ‘other,’ the marginalized...”
2. Pose the Essential Question, “What is it like when a border crosses you?” Have students discuss using the discussion strategy, [Talking Chips](#).

Exit Ticket

1. Have students complete the Exit Ticket: Using the Mexican–American War as an example, how can conflict impact political geography and social life? Please provide text-based evidence from the sources we examined in class today.

