

# Life in the Missions of California

## Focus Questions:

- What were the relationships among soldiers, missionaries, settlers and Indians?
- What was life like for the people, native and nonnative, who occupied the missions?
- How did the Franciscans change the economy of California from a hunter-gatherer economy to an agricultural economy?

## History/Social Science Standard 4.

4. Describe the mapping of, geographic basis of, and economic factors in the placement and function of the Spanish missions; and understand how the mission system expanded the influence of Spain and Catholicism throughout New Spain and Latin America.

5. Describe the daily lives of the people, native and nonnative, who occupied the presidios, missions, ranchos, and pueblos.

6. Discuss the role of the Franciscans in changing the economy of California from a hunter gatherer economy to an agricultural economy.

## Historical and Social Science Analysis Skills

- Students place key events and people of the historical era they are studying in a chronological sequence and within a spatial context; they interpret time lines. (CST 1)
- Students judge the significance of the relative location of a place (e.g., proximity to a harbor, on trade routes) and analyze how relative advantages or disadvantages can change over time. (CST5)
- Students pose relevant questions about events they encounter in historical documents, eyewitness accounts...(REPV 2)
- Students summarize the key events of the era they are studying and explain the historical contents of those events. (HI 1)
- Students identify the ... physical characteristics of the places they are studying and explain how those features form the unique character of those places. (HI 2)

## **Activity # 1 What were the relationships among soldiers, missionaries, settlers and Indians?**

**Materials needed:** Harcourt *Reflections* textbook; Copy of *Key Topic/Main Idea Form* (Handout # 4.1, page 61); a transparency or chart of the same form

**Content Background: The mission system in California had three components.**

A **mission** was a religious settlement formed by Catholic priests to teach their religious beliefs to the Indians and to use the Indians as a labor force. Spain thought that the best way to start a colony in Alta California was to build missions.

A **presidio** was a fort where Spanish soldiers lived. The purpose of a presidio was the protection of the missions and the pueblos. One of the biggest problems for the presidios was a lack of food. In exchange for the protection of the missions and pueblos, the missions and the pueblos gave the soldiers food.

The presidios and the missions were built by Indian workers. Spanish colonial officials chose carefully the location for each of the Californian presidios. Like the missions, the military forts were placed where fresh water was accessible and as near to ports as possible. Presidios were needed to defend harbors against attack from foreign ships. The first Alta Californian presidio, built in San Diego in 1769, was soon followed by others. These subsequent presidios were evenly distributed among the coastal missions at San Francisco, Monterey and Santa Barbara.

A **pueblo** was a farming community (village) built close to the missions and settled by people from Mexico. Pueblos were the first Spanish settlements in California not run by priests or soldiers. A pueblo's most important person was the *alcalde* who served as a mayor and a judge. Each pueblo was laid out around a plaza, or square park. One of the most pressing problems in the early days of Spanish California was obtaining a sufficient food supply for the soldiers at the presidios. Government officials attempted to solve this problem by founding civilian towns, or pueblos, in northern and southern California.

The pueblos were different from other Spanish settlements because they were not run by priests or soldiers. Pueblos were small towns developed around presidios where soldiers lived with their families. To attract settlers to the new towns, the government provided free land, livestock, farming equipment, and an annual allowance for the purchase of clothing and other supplies. In addition, the settlers were exempt from all taxes for five years. In return for this aid, the settlers were required to sell their surplus agricultural products to the presidios. The first pueblo to be established in Alta California was San José, founded on November 29, 1777 near the southern end of San Francisco Bay.

## 1. Key Topic/Main Idea

Turn to page 126 in Harcourt's *Reflections*

To each student, distribute a copy of **Key Topic/Main Idea Form (Handout # 4.1, page 61)**

In the section of the form labeled "Key Topic", write the title of the lesson, "Other Kinds of Settlements".

**Step 1: Scan** the lesson to find the names of each section heading. Write each heading in the *main idea* sections of the form, "The Mission System", "Presidios for Protection", and "Pueblos for Farming".

**Step 2: Section Summary Share** Organize the class into 3 groups. Have each group read individually or in pairs, a different section of the lesson. Then ask volunteers from each group to orally share a summary of what something he/she learned in each section. (This step will help the teacher guide the students toward the essential details of each section.)

**Step 3: Record the Essential Details** Each group returns to their section and this time writes 3 to 4 essential details in their section of the *Key Topic/Main Idea Form* (Note: If your class needs more guidance, work as a total group to read each section of the lesson and record the essential details.)

**Step 4: Group Share** Volunteers from each group share the essential ideas from their section as the teacher and other students record the information on their charts.

**Step 5: Generalize** Explain to students that when you **generalize**, you make a broad statement that summarizes a group of facts and shows how they are related. The statement you write is called a **generalization**.

- A generalization is always based on facts.
- Look for these generalization signal words:  
**most many some generally usually**

Review the *Key Topic/Main Idea Form*. Make a generalization based upon the information recorded. Think of the “Big Idea” or “What is important about the information”.

**Step 6:** Challenge all students to answer the question given at the end of each section.

## 2. Kinds of Settlements – SHOW ME

<b>Materials needed:</b> Set of SHOW ME cards for each student (Handout # 4.2, page 62)
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Write the following words on the board:

*missions*      *presidios*      *pueblos*

Explain to students that for this activity you will read a sentence. If the sentence is about *missions*, they are to hold up the card that says *missions*. If the sentence is about *presidios*, they are to hold up the card that says *presidios*. If the sentence you read is about *pueblos*, they are to hold up the cards that says *pueblos*. To provide “think time”, students should wait to raise their card after you read each statement until you tell them to “SHOW ME.”

- These were often built on natural harbors. (presidios)
- These had important buildings bordering a plaza. (pueblos)
- These were connected by El Camino Real. (missions)
- These were usually located near fertile soil and fresh water. (missions)
- The first one of these settlements was San Jose de Guadalupe. (pueblos)
- These were built to protect settlements. (presidios)
- Each one had an *alcalde*, or mayor. (pueblos)
- The people at these brought Christianity to the Indians. (missions)
- Soldiers who lived at these settlements had many duties, such as hunting, working in the fields, caring for livestock, building and repairing structures, and delivering mail. (presidios)
- The people who lived at these farming communities grew food for the soldiers. (pueblos)

- There were four of these – one near San Diego Bay, one in Santa Barbara, one in Monterey, and one in San Francisco. (presidios)
- Each of these was about a day’s walk from the next one. (missions)
- The name for these settlements means “village”. (pueblos)
- These were built in the shape of a square around an open courtyard. (presidios)
- San Jose, Los Angeles, and Santa Cruz each started out as one of these. (pueblos)

Reference: Harcourt, *Reflections Homework and practice Book*, page 29.

Ask students:

- How did the missions, presidios and pueblos help each other?
- How were missions different from presidios?
- How were the missions different from the pueblos?”

## **Activity # 2 What was life like for the people, native and nonnative, who occupied the missions?**

**Materials needed:** Harcourt *Reflections* textbook pages 134-139

### **1. Daily Life Schedule of Events**

Discuss with students the events of their daily life, such as attendance at school, time for sleep, mealtimes, completion of chores and time for relaxation which can include television, sports, reading, etc.... Review the proper method to denote time, e.g., 7:00 a.m. or 8:00 p.m. Have each student produce a “schedule” for his/her typical school day.

### **2. Daily Life at the Mission**

Mission life was very scheduled, with assigned time for work and prayer. People who lived on mission property grew or made almost everything they needed. Share the following schedule with the students.

#### **Description of a typical schedule at a mission:**

5:00 a.m. Wake-Up  
 5:30 a.m. Church services and breakfast  
 6:00 a.m. Work  
 12:00 p.m. Eat and have a siesta (rest/nap).  
 2:00 p.m. Work  
 5:00 p.m. Eat dinner  
 6:00 p.m. Lessons in religion or language  
 9:00 or 10:00 p.m. Bed Time

### **3. Mission Life – Photographs and Captions**

Turn to the following pages in the textbook: Harcourt’s *Reflections* pages 134-139

Ask students to examine the **photographs and captions** in the lesson and identify how each one relates to the daily life of people living at missions in Alta California. Discuss student responses.

Next, read the lesson and discuss the reading check questions. (Note: Harcourt's *Reflections* Reading Support and Intervention book, page 57 provides an organizer for reading the lesson.)

**(Optional) Refer to *Daily Life on a California Mission* on pages 65 and 66 in the Extended Activities section of this lesson for the following optional activity:**

*The King of Spain has asked you to travel to Alta California to describe (in report form) the daily lives of the people, native and nonnative, who occupy the mission settlements. Write the report requested by the King.*

### **Activity # 3 Research Activity - Jobs performed by Mission Indians (Optional – good for GATE students)**

**Materials needed:** Harcourt *Reflections* textbook;  
Copies of *Research Activity Handout # 4.3* (page 63)

#### **1. Research a typical job of an Indian who worked at a mission**

Have each student select and research one typical job of an Indian who worked at a mission. Refer to *Research Activity Handout # 4.3*.

- Identify and describe in writing one type of job performed by mission Indians.
- Describe at least 3 steps required for completion of the job.
- Make a list of all of the necessary supplies involved to complete the task.
- Come to school prepared to demonstrate how to do the job.
- For extra credit, provide or construct props that can be used in your demonstration

**(Optional) Extended Activities** Refer to the Mission Reenactment Day (pages 66) and the art activity, Paint a Mural, (page 67) to depict the daily life of the people, native and nonnative, who occupied the missions.

### **Activity # 4 How did the Franciscans change the economy of California from a hunter-gatherer economy to an agricultural economy?**

**Materials needed:** Copies of *Economic Activity Cards* (Handout #4.4, page 64) for each pair

The natural resources of California were so abundant that even densely populated Indian villages did not need an agriculture economy. The land and natural resources around the Indians determined the types of homes they built, the food they ate and the clothing they wore. Plant fiber was used in making homes, clothing and a wide variety of basketry forms, string and carrying nets.

Many California Indians obtained much of their food from the ocean and built their villages along rivers and streams to have access to fresh water. Acorns were the most important staple

food of most California Indians. Also, they gathered roots, nuts and other wild plants to add to their diet. Soapstone was carved into cups, bowls, animal effigies, pipes and fancy beads.

Clam shells were made/shaped into shell beads which formed the Indians' predominant currency. While the Indians obtained many of the things they needed from their local environment, they also obtained a variety of foods and different useful materials by trading with the people from other villages. (From: Bowers Museum *Southern California Indian Curriculum Guide*)

Although the Spanish settlers were relatively few, they drastically altered California's fragile natural landscapes and wildlife. Settlers cut down trees for fuel and building materials, causing wood shortages and flooding. Their plowing and soil management practices (the raising of a single crop) exhausted nutrients and drove out more diverse native plants. Seeds from new crops spread wildly beyond cultivated fields. Perennial native grasses and plants could not compete with the hardier invading annuals, particularly on lands disturbed by cultivation and livestock grazing.

Dense herds of cattle devoured vegetation, eroded hillsides, collapsed the protective banks of streams and paved the way for other invading species. By competing for grass seeds and acorns, the cattle also threatened Indian hunting and gathering and forced the natives from the land.

Largely cut off from the outside world and hampered by a lack of rainfall, supplies, machinery, transportation and markets, Spanish Californians devoted their energy to subsistence, rather than commerce. Raising products for food and simple processing were their principle endeavor. Because populations were small and the water supply was erratic, missions and pueblos were fortunate to be able to feed themselves, much less produce a surplus.

The most successful agriculture emerged at the missions. Trained in farming under semiarid conditions, the Franciscans adapted Mexican Indian's and European methods to California. Also, the missionaries benefited from both a larger labor supply and from the more disciplined organization than existed in the pueblos.

By 1784, the missions had enrolled 5,800 Indians; by the early 19th century, the twenty missions had an Indian population of about 20,000. Missions functioned as industrial schools teaching the Indians European handicrafts and agricultural skills to make the whole community self-sufficient. Accustomed to highly refined skills in their culture, Indians quickly learned to plow, plant, harvest, tend livestock and construct implements from stone, wood and leather. As in the other settlements, it was Indian labor that sustained the struggling colony.

(Adapted from Rice, Bullough and Orsi. *The Elusive Eden*)

### **1. Questions to discuss.**

- Why did the Spanish want to change California's Indians' ways of life?
- How did the lives of California's Indians change when they came to the missions?
- Why might the Indians have been unhappy about working at the missions?

### **2. Sorting Activity.**

Distribute a set of the **Economic Activity Word Cards (Handout #4.4)** to each pair of students.

Students cut out the cards and sort them into two piles, one labeled “Hunter-Gatherer Economy of California’s Indians” and the other “Agricultural Economy of Spanish Settlers.”

### 3. Mission Life

Read each sentence about mission life. Students each decide whether each statement is True or False. If it is true, they give you a thumbs up. If the statement is false, they give you a thumbs down.

- Indians were allowed to keep their religious beliefs and customs.
- Neophytes are people new to the Catholic faith.
- Indians were able to keep from getting diseases brought by the Europeans.
- All Indians were happy with mission life.
- Indians at the missions spent little time working or praying.
- Before they lived at missions, most Indians were hunters and gatherers.
- The missions system changed the economy of California.
- All California Indians were farmers before the arrival of Franciscan priests.
- Some Indians were forced to go to the missions by soldiers.
- Some Indians were taught about carpentry and metalworking at the missions.

Reference: Harcourt, *Reflections Homework and practice Book*, page 32.

### 4. (Optional) Express a viewpoint.

Imagine you are a Californian Indian. Describe the changes caused by the missions that you see taking place. How is your Indian way of life changing? What do you think of these changes?

## Activity # 5 Hold a panel discussion

Divide the class into groups to represent each of the following: priests, soldiers, settlers and Indians. Tell the class that there will be a panel discussion where each group presents its views about the settlement of Alta California. Encourage each group to prepare testimony, especially about the problems it faces.

During the panel discussion, students should use the following *English-Language Arts Content Standards for Listening and Speaking*:

- Ask thoughtful questions.
- Summarize major ideas.
- Present effective introductions and conclusions that guide and inform the listener’s understanding of important ideas and evidence.
- Use supporting evidence to substantiate conclusions.

### Assessment:

- Identify the key topic, main ideas, and write a generalization.
- (Optional) Research one typical job of an Indian who worked at a mission
- Sort the economic activity cards into two piles, one labeled “Hunter-Gatherer Economy of California’s Indians” and “Agricultural Economy of Spanish Settlers.”
- Representing a priest, soldier, settler or Indian, participate in a panel discussion to present your views about the settlement of Alta California.

Handout #4.1

**Key Topic:**

**Main Idea**

**Main idea**

**Main idea**

**Essential details**

**Essential details**

**Essential details**


**GENERALIZATION (a general statement about the information)**

**SHOW ME cards**

Give each student a set of 3 cards, one for *missions*, one for *presidios*, and one for *pueblos*. Students cut apart the cards and use them for the SHOW ME Activity described on page 56.

missions	missions
presidios	presidios
pueblos	pueblos
missions	missions
presidios	presidios
pueblos	pueblos

## **Research Activity: Jobs Performed by Mission Indians**

Select and research one typical job of an Indian who worked at a mission. Then, complete the following steps.

- Identify and describe in writing one type of job performed by mission Indians.
- Describe at least 3 steps required for completion of the job.
- Make a list of all of the necessary supplies involved to complete the task.
- Come to school prepared to demonstrate how to do the job.
- For extra credit, provide or construct props that can be used in your demonstration.

### **Examples of the types of jobs performed by Mission Indians:**

- tanning leather (turning animal hides into leather by soaking them in a special liquid to make saddles, shoes and hats)
- herding, raising and managing livestock such as cattle, sheep and goats; branding calves
- making roof tiles and adobe bricks (sun-dried bricks made of straw, mud and water placed into molds and dried outdoors in the sun)
- working the forge (furnace) to shape metal (to make wagons called carretas, wheels, branding irons, locks and keys)
- making soap and candles (using tallow or fat from cattle)
- weaving wool for cloth
- grinding corn and making tortillas
- working in the fields planting and harvesting wheat, barley, corn and vegetables
- planting and tending to orchards of peaches, apricots, walnuts, figs, red and green grapes (used to make wine), oranges, pears, olives (used to make cooking oil and lamp oil) and date pal

## Economic Activity Cards

Students cut apart the Economic Activity Cards and sort them into two piles, one labeled “Agricultural Economy of Spanish Settlers” and the other “Hunter-gatherer Economy of California’s Indians.”

Agricultural Economy of Spanish Settlers	Hunter-gatherer Economy of California’s Indians
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Raised livestock such as cattle, sheep, goats and horses.
Gathered a variety of acorns, roots, nuts and berries.
Used plant fiber to make homes, clothing and a wide variety of basket forms.
Made soap and candles from cattle tallow.
Tanned animal hides/skins turning them into leather.
Dug ditches to divert water from the streams onto the fields.
Ground corn to make tortillas.
Rode horses and ox-driven carretas (wagons) as the main means of transportation.
Made mortars and pestles out of steatite and other rocks.
Made adobe bricks and used them to construct buildings.
Cultivated fields of barley, wheat, beans, corn, melons, squash and a few other vegetables.

Used clam shells in the form of beads as the predominant currency.
Obtained many of the things needed from the surrounding natural environment.
Worked the forge (furnace) to shape metal to make carretas, (wagons), wheels, branding irons, locks and keys.
Planted and then tended the orchards of fruits and nuts.
Carved soapstone into cups, bowls, animal effigies, pipes and fancy beads.
Walked as the main mode of transportation, although some used rafts and canoes.

## Extended Activities – Missions

### Daily Life on a California Mission

Research, write and present a Report to the King on the daily life at a mission.

Present the students with the following prompt.

*The King of Spain has asked you to travel to Alta California to describe (in report form) the daily lives of the people, native and nonnative, who occupy the mission settlements. Write the report requested by the King. This report must include the following 3 sections:*

**The Report to the King of Spain must include the following 3 sections:**

#### 1. Research the report.

- Select one of California’s mission to research. Look for important historical facts about the **daily life at the mission**, including 3 or more of the following topics:
  1. daily life of the padres (routines, tasks, anything else of interest)
  2. daily life of the Indians (routines, tasks, anything else of interest)
  3. types of work performed at the mission
  4. religious and cultural traditions practiced
  5. relationships between the missionaries and the Indians
  6. comparison between life in the Indian villages to that of life at the mission
- Use the organizational features (e.g., prefaces, appendixes) of reference texts to locate information.
- Draw information from one or more sources. Include a list of the sources used.
- Find details, examples, anecdotes or experiences to explain and clarify your research.

#### 2. Write the report.

- Select a historically correct date.
- Include important historical facts about at least 3 of the topics listed above in the research section.
- Use details, examples, anecdotes and/or experiences to explain and clarify information in your report.
- Accurately describe events typical of the historical time period.

Refer to the following textbook pages:

Harcourt’s *Reflections* pages 134-137

Houghton Mifflin’s *California* pages 100-101 and 104-107

While writing the report to be delivered to the King of Spain, use the following *English-Language Arts Content Standards for Writing Application*:

- Frame a central question about life at the mission.
- Include facts and details for focus.
- Write in the formal tone found in reports.

### 3. Presentation of the report.

While orally presenting the report to the King of Spain, use the following *English-Language Arts Content Standards for Speaking Application*:

- Present an effective introduction and conclusion that guides and informs the King’s understanding of the important ideas.
- Use details, examples, anecdotes or experiences to explain and clarify information.
- Emphasize points in ways that help the King to follow important ideas and concepts.
- Use volume, pitch, phrasing, pace, modulation and gestures appropriately to enhance meaning of the report.

## Mission Demonstration/Reenactment Day

Materials needed: a large bell or musical triangle; paper clock with hands for telling time so that at given times the bell can ring; easels or wooden stakes with labels for the different locations of the mission, including the quadrangle or central square (Most missions were built in the shape of a 4-sided quadrangle with a courtyard, church, living quarters for the padres, workrooms and storage rooms); the tannery for making leather; an area for making adobe bricks, soap and candles; pasture lands for cattle, sheep and horses; fields for growing crops; and, orchards for growing fruit trees.)

### Preparation:

On the day of the student reenactment, organize the school day into a schedule similar to that found at a mission. It is helpful to have parent volunteers to assist at each work location. (Note: In California’s public schools, students are not to do a simulation or role- playing of religious ceremonies or beliefs. Restrict the simulation to nonreligious activities at the mission.)

### Procedure for the Demonstration/Reenactment:

- Without warning, “corral” the students and “herd” them to a new location (i.e. round up the Indians and move them to the mission). New locations could include the school playground, a different classroom or a multipurpose room.
- Do not allow students to bring along any of their personal effects except for items they need to demonstrate their reenactment job.
- Ring the “bells” at the change of every activity during the school day.
- Serve students a breakfast of corn or grain.
- Following the morning meal, designate the locations on the playground or in different classrooms for each “job” activity to be conducted.
- After the morning work session, ring the bell for lunch. Lunch at the mission included pozole (a soup made of grain, vegetables and a little meat) served in earthen jars.
- Following the mid-day meal, Indians were permitted a siesta allowing them to rest.
- Return for afternoon work.
- Supper included a soup called *atole* (a cornmeal soup made from ground corn)
- In the evening, plan time for language lessons.

Invite classes from other grade levels to visit the demonstration/reenactment sites. Like a Living History Museum, have your students explain their jobs to the visitors, including the supplies they use and the steps necessary to perform their jobs.

**Art Activity: Paint a Mural to depict the daily life of the people, native and nonnative, who occupied the missions.**

Materials needed for a mixed media mural include:

large sheets of neutral-toned butcher paper for the background; tempera and watercolor: paint; crayons; colored chalk; construction paper to create three-dimensional paper sculpture objects that are glued to the background; a variety of other papers such as tissue paper and cardboard; mosaic materials such as sticks, stones, tiles, sandpaper and raffia (available from craft stores); several sizes of sponges (use to smear, wipe, dot or trail the paint on the background paper); glue; and, various containers for supplies, etc...

A mural is a design or a pictorial representation executed on background paper using a variety of media. It can be either two- or three-dimensional. Students should use the information from their research for the “report to the King of Spain” to help them depict a scene that visually illustrates the daily life of people, native and nonnative, who occupied a mission. Organize committees, choose materials suited for the project and assist in the organization of the mural. The size of the mural can vary from small to the area of an entire wall. First, determine the background of the mural. It should show the local landscape. Next, determine the people, animals, buildings and events that will be depicted on the mural. Discuss the proportions of the objects that will be constructed and then attached to the mural. Encourage students to be creative in their use of materials while remaining as historically accurate as possible.

For a visual representation of a mission, refer to the following textbook pages:  
Harcourt’s *Reflections* pages 13