

The following is a critic of Amazing Archeological Adventures on the California Mission Trail. We chose this curriculum as an example of a “typical” fourth grade curriculum on California missions. The yellow highlighted sections indicate language/issues of interest to our native scholars and educators. The blue highlighted sections represent our commentary on how these statements could better represent native perspectives, historical accuracy and cultural sensitivity.

<http://www.missionsofca.com/educator/lessonplans.html>

## AMAZING ARCHEOLOGICAL ADVENTURES ON THE CALIFORNIA MISSION TRAIL

### Objectives

- *Students will understand that the Spanish **exploration** of California was through a series of 21 Catholic mission settlements.*

The Spanish came specifically to colonize and create a buffer between Mexico and Fort Ross

- *Students will discover how and why the missions were placed where they were and how they were **influenced** by Spain and Catholicism.*

*This language avoids the fact that California Indian cultures and populations were devastated by the Spanish, who forbade native traditions and brought diseases which significantly lowered the population.*

- *Students will be able to describe a typical Spanish mission including the daily activities of the **residents**.*

*The “residents” were actually captive Indians*

- *Students will learn how the Franciscans helped change California's economy to an **agricultural economy**.*

*California Indians did tend and alter the land around them to grow crops, but not in the traditional ways that the Spanish were used to conducting their agriculture. This language suggests that Indians did not have an agricultural economy, which is not true.*

---

### Grade Level

Fourth Grade

### Subject

Social Studies

### Timeline

One to two weeks

---

### California Education Standard:

Students describe the social, political, cultural, and economic life and interactions among people of California from the pre-Columbian societies to the Spanish mission and Mexican rancho periods.

3. Describe the Spanish **exploration** and colonization of California, including the **relationships** among soldiers, missionaries, and Indians (e.g., Juan Crespi, Junipero Serra, Gaspar de Portola).

Exploration is ambiguous because missionaries were sent to California to establish the missions, so surveying would be a more accurate term.

“Relationships” is another example of the ambiguous because it makes the destruction of tribal cultures and the cruel treatment that they received in the missions seem neutral.

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.**

Expanding influence suggests that they were creating a colony of Spanish citizens, when in reality they were enslaving the native populations and creating a buffer state against other encroaching European powers.

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.**

Again, this assumes that Indians had a primitive economy, when they actually had tools and worked the land to produce crops. See myths page for more details.

## Background

The Spanish missions in California are a series of religious and military settlements established by Spanish Catholics of the Franciscan Order between 1769 and 1823. **The missions were built to spread the Christian faith among the Native Americans in California, and to educate and civilize them as well.** They were the first movement by Europeans to colonize the Pacific coast region. The missions also gave Spain a major presence in the western frontier. Also, Spain needed harbors for ships to dock so they could repair their ships and replenish their supplies. The Franciscans brought European livestock, vegetables, fruit, horses, and ranching to California. The missions were shut down in the 1830s by the Mexican government. **The missions produced mixed results with their goals of educating, civilizing and converting to Catholicism. Today, the missions are some of California's oldest buildings and most visited historic monuments.**

This insinuates that Indians were not civilized or educated. What the claim means is that Spanish culture was forced upon California Indians. This statement leaves out the grittier details that are important to understanding what native life was really like for California Indians living in the missions.

Indians resisted Spanish rule because they were not allowed to practice their traditions, including language, religion, and diet, and were not allowed to leave the missions. Indians resisted being slaves to the Spanish, which is why the Spanish had “mixed results”.

## Mission Settlement (1769-1833)

The missions of California were established as part of **Spain's need to control their growing land holdings in the New World. The Spanish believed that their colonies needed a literate population base that they could not supply. The government worked with the Catholic Church to form a network**

of missions to convert the Native Americans to Christianity and to make them tax paying citizens. The natives were taught the Spanish language and vocational skills with the Christian teachings.

Spain intended to force their culture onto native peoples in order to extend their empire. They used the church as a means of developing the mission system with the intent of enslaving its people and turning them into Spanish citizens. Some letters speculate that the land was meant to be given back to the Indians, but these letters really promised that Indians could have their culture destroyed and replaced by Spanish culture, and then they would pay taxes. Indians were not asked if they wanted to become Spanish citizens and instead were coerced or forced to work in the missions.

In 1767, General Jose de Galvez appointed the Franciscans to take over 15 missions in Baja California that were originally founded by the Jesuit priests. The Franciscan leader was Fray Junipero Serra. This plan changed and the Dominican Order took over the Baja missions. Because of this change, the California missions were established in Alta California by the Franciscans. On July 14, 1769, Galvez sent the priests Junipero Serra and Gaspar de Protola to found a mission at San Diego and presidio at Monterey. Fathers Francisco Gomez and Juan Crespi were sent to Monterey. The plan was in ten years to turn over each mission to a secular clergy and the common mission lands would be distributed to the natives. This never happened and none of the missions ever attained complete self-sufficiency. In fact, they needed continued financial support from Spain.

## California Mission Trail

In 1798, Father Lasuen proposed the California Mission Trail. The concept was to assist land travels by filling in the spaces along the El Camino Real with outposts (missions) to provide rest stops and lodging for travelers. The missions were placed approximately 30 miles (48 kilometers) apart so they were separated by a one day, long horseback ride. (three day on foot).

### The Franciscan missions in the order founded are:

- 1769 – Mission San Diego de Acala
- 1770 – Mission San Carlos Borromeo de Carmelo
- 1771 – Mission San Antonio de Padua
- 1771 – Mission San Gabriel Arcangel
- 1772 – Mission San Luis Obispo de Tolosa
- 1776 – Mission San Francisco de Asis (Mission Dolores)
- 1776 – Mission San Juan Capistrano
- 1777 – Mission Santa Clara de Asis
- 1782 – Mission San Buenaventura
- 1786 – Mission Santa Barbara
- 1787 – Mission La Purisima Concepcion

- 1791 – Mission Santa Cruz
- 1791 – Mission Nuestra Señora de la Soledad
- 1797 – Mission San José
- 1797 – Mission San Juan Bautista
- 1797 – Mission San Miguel Arcángel
- 1797 – Mission San Fernando Rey de España
- 1798 – Mission San Luis Rey de Francia
- 1804 – Mission Santa Inés
- 1817 – Mission San Rafael Arcángel
- 1823 – Mission San Francisco Solano

## Mission Life

Native Americans were taught the basics of the Catholic faith. They were baptized and called a neophyte or new believer. The padres decided the neophytes could no longer freely move around the country. They had to work and worship at the mission. The fathers and overseers kept a strict reign over them and actually led them to daily masses and work.

California Indians who were brought into the missions were forced to learn the Spanish language, Christianity, and Spanish customs. If they tried to use their own language or practice traditional religions, then they were punished. The third sentence suggests that the padres casually decided to restrict the Indians to the missions, when in fact they always intended to force Indians to stay in the missions. Indians were forced to work in the missions and were not allowed to leave, making them slaves to the Spanish. The soldiers in the missions forced Indians to work and punished them if they refused.

Young native women were required to live in the monjerio (nunnery). They were supervised by an Indian matron who was responsible for their education and welfare. Women only left the convent when they were won by an Indian suitor and classified ready for marriage. Married women left the convent and lived in one of the family huts. The convents were cramped and unsanitary which led to disease and many deaths.

The missionaries controlled when men and women could marry and kept men and women separate in the missions. One major reason that the missions failed to benefit the Spanish is because they decimated the Indian population. Diseases killed thousands of Indians, which was caused by the poor living conditions that they were given in the missions. The birth rates were significantly lower than the death rates in the missions because the missionaries controlled when Indians could marry. Between the diseases and gender segregation, the Indian population steadily declined in the missions and was never sustainable.

Bells were very important and used daily at the missions. Bells were rung at mealtimes, to call residents to work and religious services, during funerals and births, to signal a returning missionary or the arrival of a ship, and for other announcements.

The daily routine began with sunrise Mass and morning prayers, then instruction of the natives in the teachings of the Catholic faith. Next was breakfast, followed by all able-bodied men and women working at their assigned jobs. Women's jobs were knitting, weaving, dressmaking, embroidering, laundering, and cooking. The stronger girls were grinding flour or carrying adobe bricks to the men building adobe houses. All skills were taught to the men by the missionaries. These tasks included plowing, sewing, irrigating, cultivating, reaping, threshing, and gleaning the crops. Additional skills were shearing sheep, weaving rugs and clothing from wool, tanning leather, making soap, paint, and ropes.

The language in this paragraph suggests that Indians happily went about their work and that their jobs were normal for the times that they were living in. What the writer fails to mention is how these jobs would have been a complete culture shock to Indians. The skills that Indians were taught promoted Spanish culture, but Indians never had a use for them. Indians also did not want to do these jobs. They were not used to the Spanish work day or customs, so they would not have wanted to willingly work for the Spanish. Learning all of these skills and being forced to labor for the Spanish gave the Indians less time for cultural practices and promoted a Spanish lifestyle.

There was a six hour work day, interrupted by lunch at 11:00 a.m. and a two-hour siesta, the evening prayers and the rosary, supper, and social activities. Approximately 90 days per year were designated as religious holidays that were free from manual labor. Indians were considered free laborers and were not paid wages.

They are basically calling Indians slaves without using the word.

## Mission Industries

The goal of the missions was to become self-sufficient in ten years. Farming was the major industry of each mission. The most common crops were wheat, barley and maize. Cereal grains were dried and ground by stone into flour.

These industries are not important to learning California history unless they are used to reference the introduction of new species in California that hurt native plants and foods. There is not value to learning what the missions produced because it takes away from talking about the people involved in the mission system and what happened to them.

The Spanish missionaries brought fruit seeds from Europe to California. Many fruit trees were planted with these seeds. The fruit trees planted were apple, peach, pear, grape, orange, and fig.

Ranching was also an important industry. Cattle and sheep herds were raised.

See above.

---

## Key Words

mission  
native  
citizen  
priest  
missionary  
presidio  
rancho  
pueblo  
economy

## Materials

Missions of California Kits

- Pre-cut Foam Kit or
- DIY Kit

White Glue  
Scissors  
Paint, crayons or markers  
Paint Brush  
Hobby Knife  
Masking Tape  
Ruler

colonization

---

## Lessons (Missions)

### California Missions Class Library

Check out as many school or public library books you can find on California Missions for a California Missions Class Library. Students can use these books for research or for a library book to read.

Ask your students if they have visited one of the Missions of California. If someone has visited one, ask them to tell the class what mission it was and what they saw at the mission. Discuss the Spanish exploration and colonization of California by establishing a chain of 21 missions along California's El Camino Real (The Royal Highway). Topics to Include:

- *This was the first arrival of non-Native Americans to California.*

Sir Francis Drake and other explorers (or pirates, in Drake's case) explored the coast of California and made contact with California Indians approximately 150 years before the Spanish came.

- *Life for the California Native Americans was forever changed by the missions.*

This language is ambiguous and neutral when it should talk about the negative impacts that the mission system had on California.

- *Besides Christianity, missions brought many other things to California including flowers, fruits, vegetables, livestock and industry.*

These things were forced on California Indians and the land; they had negative impacts on both; the land suffered from new flora and fauna as native plants and animals were pushed out of their traditional habitats by new dominant species.

- *The missions were the beginning of civilization as we know it today.*

This statement is extremely racist because it assumes that Indians were uncivilized and that the Spanish brought civilization. The California Indians had their own villages and governments well before the Spanish arrived, and the Spanish proceeded to destroy native traditions and people in their pursuit of "civilizing" California Indians.

### 3. Introduction to the Mission Expeditions

Discuss with students what the study of archeology is, what an archeologist is and what he/she does. After the discussion, let students know that they are going to be California Mission Archeologists. Tell them the following:

Welcome mission archeologists. Your mission is very important to your career and the state of California. You will be taking a trip back in time to early California when the California Missions were being established. Along the way you will be completing three important missions. You might even discover secrets that have been buried for hundreds of years.

Archeologists are bound to the facts of what they discover and do not speculate on what might have happened without evidence. Their ethics prevent them from the biased claims made in this curriculum. Additionally, archeologists uncover artifacts while anthropologists investigate how people lived, so the two fields might be confused here.

### **California Mission Trail Journal**

Archeologists need to keep an accurate log of what they find. Each team will do this by keeping an archeological journal of their missions. Students should complete numbers 1 and 2 after you explain about the journal. Journals can be a student made folder or a spiral notebook.

The journal should include:

List of all items needed for your expedition

Labeled map of the California Mission Trail that shows all 21 missions

Information discovered from each mission

List of the three most important items/information that you found

Your best assumption (guess) of the importance of these three items or information

### **Process**

Students will work in one or two member archeological teams (depending on class size) to complete the missions. They must work together (if more than one member teams) to achieve the mission goals. The first problem each team has to solve is to give their team a name.

Note: You may assign the team members or let the students pick their own teams. Try to have enough teams so all 21 missions will be covered in Mission 2. If you do not have enough students for teams of two for Mission 2, you will have teams with one student per team.

### **Mission 1: Mission Quest**

Before each team begins their mission adventures, they need to do some research and planning. Each team will do an online search for websites about the Missions of California. Their goal is to find as many websites as they can in a specific amount of time (one - two class periods). Make sure each team records in their journal a list of each website found by its name, website address and one or two sentences about the site.

When the research time is up, give your students time to record in their team journals a summary (paragraph or two) of what they discovered about the missions from doing the Mission Quest.

Note: You may choose to give a prize to the team that found the most number of websites with the most complete journal entries about them.

### **Mission 2: Mission Archeologist**

Your amateur archeologists will have two tasks to complete – the archeological dig (fact finding) and a model of their mission. Archeological expeditions are funded by a university, private business or corporation. Your archeologists will need to orally report to their benefactors (the class) information on the mission they found and construct a model to show them in their presentation.

#### **Part 1: What did you dig up?**

Each team or archeologist (student) will become an archeological expert on one California Mission.

They will pick (from a box, bowl, hat, basket, etc.) an artifact recovered from mission archeological digs. The name of the mission where each artifact was discovered is on each one. Each student or team will become an expert on the mission that is on their artifact.

Note: Cut out pictures of items in magazines like building tools, farming tools, kitchen utensils, weaving looms, books, etc. that could be found at a mission. Write the mission name on the back of the artifact.

Mission archeologists may use many resources (whatever is available at your school) to become an expert on their mission. These resources include using a laptop, desktop, netbook, encyclopedia and classroom or library books. They will need to record all the information they discover about their mission in their journal. Mission information to find and include:

Mission name and Indian name for the mission

Who mission was named for or why was the mission given this name?

What was the mission known for?

What other jobs and industries were at your mission?

When was it founded?

In the order missions were founded, what number was your mission?

Name of the priest or priests that established the mission.

Did your mission have a nickname? If it did, what was it?

Who lived at your mission?

How did the people at the mission get along?

How and why were the missions on the Mission Trail mapped or laid out the way they were?

How was your mission influenced by Spanish customs and Catholicism?

How did the Franciscans change the California economy to an agricultural economy?

What were the main crops at your mission?

Describe a typical day for a Native American that lived at your mission.

These questions are completely irrelevant to California history because they do not focus on the people. California history should be told from a native perspective because Indians are more native to California than the Spanish.

Which native people lived around the mission?

What customs were they forbidden from practicing?

Do they still exist today?

What affected the decline in native populations in the mission era?

Where did the Indians go when the missions were secularized?

## Part 2: What did your mission look like?

Many parents and educators have argued that having students build scale models of missions have no educational value. They are correct because creating the structure of the mission does not teach kids about the people in the mission or how they were treated. Kids would benefit more from hearing and exploring the oral stories of mission life passed down from tribes or doing a report on how mission culture destroyed tribal culture. Teaching them to build a model does not further their knowledge of California history and consumes a significant amount of class time to complete.

Based on the research and artifacts the team has found, the mission archeologists will make a model of their mission. Students will need the Missions of California models to complete this task. There are two types available – a pre-cut foam kit and a DIY kit. There is a pre-cut foam kit for each



of the 21 missions. The pre-cut kits are the easier ones to make. Every kit includes pre-cut foam core sheets, a detailed accessory sheet, complete instructions and information about the mission. First you label and punch out the pieces. The next step is to decorate the pieces you want to do like walls, roofs, towers, etc. The third step is to assemble the wall pieces by gluing them together followed by attaching the roof sections. If there is time, students can make and add additional accent pieces to add to their mission or use the accessories that are available for them. Assembly time is one to two hours for the pre-cut kits.

The DIY kits are advanced model kits that require cutting, gluing and painting. Each kit comes with blueprints for three or four different missions, materials to build one mission and complete instructions with building tips and mission information. The DIY kits use white and brown cardboard for the building material. It takes at least six steps to build this type of mission kit. You begin by attaching the plan sheets to the cardboard, then cutting each part out with scissors. After all parts are cut out, you will glue the walls and building sections together. Attach the roof sections (corrugated brown cardboard) by gluing them together, then glue details like columns and casings to the mission.

To finish the mission, paint, decorate with markers or use the mission accessories that are available. It will take four to five hours to build a DIY mission kit.

Your mission archeologists can build their missions in class or at home.

### **Made from Scratch Option: Missions of California Blueprints**

If you prefer to have your students make their missions from scratch, they can use the Missions of California Blueprints. Blueprints are just that, blueprints for specific Missions of California. Each mission blueprint comes with detailed, easy-to-follow instructions that include tips on building, safety, and proper supplies.

The mission blueprint is printed on 11" x 17" paper that includes mission bells and crosses for the mission. To build the mission your students will need white glue, ruler, scissors and cardboard.

A special feature is a section on mission history, the life of priests, adobe and adobe tiles, mission gardens and fountains, bells and bell towers, and earthquakes and the missions. A summary of the specific mission's history is also included.

Once a mission is built, students can decorate it by painting it. They can also get at local craft stores grass, gravel, trees, plants, etc. to spruce it up. Mission accessories are also available to complete their mission.

VIP Note: When making the mission models, students will be using hobby knives for cutting out the walls and roof sections. Hobby knives are very sharp. Strict teacher supervision is recommended when students are using these knives. Number each knife and record what student or team has each numbered knife. Hand each knife out only when it is needed in the building process. Watch students carefully while they are using the knives. When students are finished with the hobby knives, they will hand it back to you so you can check it in. You don't want to have these knives sitting around for possible misuse. When the building session is completed, make sure all hobby knives are accounted for before you start another lesson or students leave the room. Explain this procedure before students need to use the hobby knives. Also talk about safety procedures needed when building the mission.

### **Part 3: What did you discover about your mission?**

Each archeological team will write a detailed report on their mission and make an oral presentation (maximum 15 minutes) to their benefactors (the class). They will include their mission model and all the important mission information they discovered on their expedition. This information should include what makes their mission unique or special when compared to other missions.

## Extensions

Students will make a California Mission Trail Accordion Book. The book will have 21 pages plus a cover page. They will draw, color and label each mission (one per page). Students should also include the date founded, who founded it, the nickname (if any) and one important fact about each mission. To finish the book, students will tape the pages and fold pages on the taped edges like an accordion and stand the book up.

Collect travel brochures at local hotels and motels to share with your students. Students will design and make a travel brochure of their mission. They should include information about the mission that will make people want to visit it.

While exploring the mission trail, your archeologists (students) discovered new artifacts that led to them finding a 22nd California Mission. Each archeologist will write a news story for their local newspaper. They should name the new mission. Based on the artifacts they discovered, the article will describe how, what and where this new mission was found, include as much information about the mission that they can and have a drawing of what it might have looked like.

This project avoids the fact that the people should be the point of discussion, rather than the buildings. It does not discuss the treatment of the Indians or the purpose of the mission system. Similar to building the mission model, this project is a waste of time and does not teach kids anything about California history.

Each mission archeologist will make a poster about their mission. Their goal is to show it off and make it look special. They will decide on the poster content. These posters can be hung in the classroom, school halls or used with a display of all the missions.

Assign new teams of archeologists with five to eight members. They can either pick a mission or you can assign one to them. Each team will write a skit, practice it and perform it. The theme of the skit is "A Day in the Life" of their mission as either a priest or a Native American.

Teams can research Franciscan or Native American clothing, music or food of this time. They can create a costume, write and perform a song or cook a meal with these foods.

This project is completely romanticized because it suggests that there would have been friendly relationships between the Indians and the padres, when in fact the padres would have been brutally punishing the Indians and forcing them to learn Spanish culture. If the students correctly portrayed the relationships between these two groups, the result would not be age appropriate for fourth grade students. Focusing on clothing, food, and music would also not inform students about native life in the missions, with the exception of food, which would inform them about how European foods made their teeth fall out.

Students or teams can make a California Mission Trail Timeline.

## Evaluation

Students will keep a California Mission Trail Journal.

Students will conduct a Mission Quest to find as many missions as they can in a specific time frame. They will record their findings in their journal.

Teams will conduct research and become an archeological expert on one mission. They will write a written report about their mission, build a model of their mission and make oral presentations to their class.