FAR WEST: THE HIDDEN HISTORY
A DOCUMENTARY BY TOMAS VAN HOUTRYVE AND MATHILDE DAMOISEL

TEACHER’S GUIDE
## Table of Contents

Acknowledgments ........................................................................................................ III

Letters to Educators and Students
- Tomas van Houtryve .................................................................................................. 1
- Elodie Mailliet Storm ............................................................................................... 3
- David Chickey ............................................................................................................ 5

Subjects, Grade Levels, and Standards ........................................................................ 6

Essential Questions ........................................................................................................ 7

Objectives ....................................................................................................................... 8

Materials ......................................................................................................................... 8

Teacher Preparation ........................................................................................................ 9

Procedures ....................................................................................................................... 9

Multiple Choice/True-False Quiz .................................................................................. 12

Answers to Multiple Choice/True-False Quiz ............................................................. 13

Maps of U.S.–Mexico Borders ....................................................................................... 14

Far West: The Hidden History Terminology and People ............................................. 16

Far West: The Hidden History Film Timeline ............................................................... 20

Viewing Questions ........................................................................................................ 21

Answers to Viewing Questions ...................................................................................... 23

Small Group Activities:
- A. Images from Far West: The Hidden History ....................................................... 25
- B. Examination of Quotes from Far West: The Hidden History.......................... 29
- C. Textbook/Film Comparison ................................................................................. 32
- D. Quotes by Anita Rodriguez .................................................................................. 38
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The development of this guide was made possible by the generous support of Amanda Minami, who has been unwavering in her support of SPICE and her commitment to making the visual arts (including documentaries like *Far West: The Hidden History*) accessible to schools.

Additional support was provided by the Center for Latin American Studies, Stanford University through U.S. Department of Education National Resource Center funding under the auspices of Title VI, Section 602(a) of the Higher Education Act of 1965; and Dr. Bert Bower and Dr. Jerome Shaw, both alumni of Stanford University.

SPICE is grateful to Elodie Mailliet Storm, CEO, of CatchLight for her willingness to work with SPICE on the development of this guide with CatchLight Fellow Tomas Van Houtryve and Co-Director with Mathilde Damoiselet of *Far West: The Hidden History*. CatchLight is a visual first media organization that leverages the power of visual storytelling to inform, connect and transform communities.

SPICE would like to thank David Chickey, Publisher and Creative Director, Radius Books. Upon receipt of a grant from Lannan Foundation, Radius Books published *Tomas van Houtryve: Lines and Lineage* © 2019. David has been instrumental in advancing the work of Tomas.

SPICE is appreciative of the support of Tomas Van Houtryve for his permission to use some of the visuals from *Far West: The Hidden History* in this guide.

The layout of this guide was done by Rich Lee, Rich Lee Draws!!!
Dear Educators and Students:

As a photographer, I am fascinated by the power of images to fix themselves in our minds. Certain photographs—whether we see them in books, in museums, on screens or in old family albums—have the ability to stay in our memories.

I am also interested in the images that are missing from the mind’s eye. What are the blindspots in our understanding of the past?

When I researched the history of the Mexico–U.S. border, I noticed that it runs curiously parallel with the history of photography. During the early 19th century, the Mexican border was 700 miles north of its current position. Early photographic technology—initially daguerreotypes, then collodion-based tintypes and glass negatives—arrived in the region just after the U.S. military conquered the land and cut Mexico in half, shifting the border south.

From 1849 onward, there is a photographic record of nearly every key historical event in the West, from the Gold Rush to the armed campaigns waged against native peoples to the arrival of the railroads. Our visual understanding of the West was seeded by these early photographs and then amplified by Hollywood, where the Western was the most popular movie genre for 50 years. Over time, the myth of the West grew big, potent, and distorted.

I began to wonder if America’s perception of its Mexican heritage would be more accurate if it had been photographically documented as well as later periods. What might the West have looked like before the U.S. takeover?

Have you ever looked at an old family photo and noticed an uncanny resemblance with an ancestor? My spine has tingled when I’ve noticed a distinctive gaze, wrinkle, or gesture that somehow—almost magically—jumped forward multiple generations. Perhaps, I thought, this uncanniness could also be conjured to open an avenue back to a forgotten historical world. To attempt this spell, I bought a 19th-century wooden camera and learned the wet collodion photographic process. Once I had mastered it, I set out to find direct descendants of families that have been living in the West since long before it was part of the United States. Portrait by portrait, I started reconstructing a photo album of what the forgotten West could have looked like.

Many of the people that I met during my photographic journey felt that their experiences were not properly reflected in the dominant tellings of history. Their stories were swept aside or forgotten. Listening to their voices, we realize that the history of the West is ready to be rediscovered.

Sincerely,

Tomas van Houtryve
Photographer and filmmaker
Author, *Lines and Lineage* and *Behind the Curtains of 21st Century Communism*
Questions to Consider

How can primary sources such as photographs help us understand history?

How have Hollywood Westerns affected our perception of historical events and people of the West?
Dear Educators and Students:

I want you to consider some of the most iconic images in modern history: The lone protester confronting a procession of tanks in Tiananmen Square. A shell-shocked Syrian toddler sitting bloodied and ashen in the back of an ambulance. The child standing tearful and distraught as a border patrol agent pats down her mother at the U.S.–Mexico border.

These images tell the story of a moment but, more importantly, they bring distant or abstract issues into clear and immediate focus. They grip the public’s attention, give momentum to social movements, and become rallying calls for change.

In an age when pictures have become a form of everyday vocabulary, the most talented visual storytellers bring a context and experience that enriches images with subtle layers of meaning, reaching deep into viewers’ consciousness.

When you see such images, do you stop and reflect beyond the emotion you might feel immediately, to actually read the image?

Images reflect the complexity and nuance of both the moment they depict and the perspective of the image-maker. Powerful images are the result of careful thought and work just as is prose or poetry—embedded with subtext to be studied.

Here are some visual thinking strategies that may guide you in this process:

What does the image tell you visually?

Examine the details, point of view, focal points, and what you see in the background and foreground.

How does the image make you feel? Emotion is often achieved with certain techniques, such as dramatization by light or camera angle.

What was the nature of collaboration between the photographer and their subject? Was the image taken in public unbeknownst to the person photographed, or do the photographer and subject appear to have a connection? Consider the role of trust in the making of the image—and its relevance and impact on the outcome.

What did the photographer leave out of the photo? Imagine what was happening when the photo was made. What other ways could the photo have been made? Why do you think the photographer chose the perspective that they did?

What knowledge and access did the photographer need to be able to make this image? The images that define moments and movements are often preceded by deep research and cultivation of many relationships.

Was the image manipulated in any way? If so, ask why, whether it distorts or clarifies the meaning, and if there are any ethical questions to consider.

Images are such powerful tools for information, connection, and transformation that they now dominate our modern, technology-driven communication. However, technology has also made
it such that images can be easily and convincingly fabricated, which is why we must spend time to truly read them.

CatchLight invests in the power of visual storytelling to foster a more nuanced and empathetic understanding of the world. We are proud to have supported Tomas Van Houtryve in his making of *Lines and Lineage*, a project that compels audiences to re-examine California history through the visual language. Because like so many important stories of past and present, the truth is better shown than told.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Elodie Mailliet Storm
CEO, CatchLight

Questions to Consider

Reflect on the visual thinking strategies in the letter.

How do images affect the way we perceive distant or abstract issues?

Why is it important to spend time truly examining an image in a technology-driven world?
Dear Educators and Students:

Since Radius was founded in 2007 as a nonprofit art book publisher, it has been our mission to donate as many books as possible into underfunded libraries and arts centers. With that goal in mind, we are constantly seeking ways to foster collaborations with artists, writers, and institutions that will allow us to publish a variety of books that are both visually compelling and culturally relevant.

When we first learned about Tomas Van Houtryve’s project, *Lines and Lineage*, we recognized the potential to partner with other organizations to bring this work into book form. Upon receiving a grant from Lannan Foundation, we were able to design, produce, and distribute a beautiful object that—we hope—conveys the complicated history of the West in a richly nuanced yet accessible format.

Accessibility is one of our core values: a single art book can reach a single reader in the most remote corner of the world and provide a window into a new way of seeing, a new way of thinking, and a new way of understanding. At its best, book publishing amplifies an artist’s voice and vision, and the book delivers that vision directly to you, the individual who engages with it in your local library or school.

Recently, one of our artists reflected that their first book was like a seed that had been planted. In the years since publication, it has been an honor to see the seed of Tomas Van Houtryve’s work flourish and grow into multiple formats that continue to generate innovative collaborations, greater accessibility, and an expanding audience.

Sincerely,

David Chickey
Publisher & Creative Director
Radius Books

Questions to Consider

Reflect on the core value mentioned in the letter.

What art book has had an impact on you?
Far West: The Hidden History is recommended for use in high school world history and U.S. history classes. In particular, it is recommended for use during the teaching of the American West and Westward Expansion.

Far West: The Hidden History helps to address the following National History Standards.

**U.S. History Standards**

**Era 1: Three Worlds Meet (Beginnings to 1620)**
Standard 2: How early European exploration and colonization resulted in cultural and ecological interactions among previously unconnected peoples

**Era 2: Colonization and Settlement (1585–1763)**
Standard 1: Why the Americas attracted Europeans, why they brought enslaved Africans to their colonies, and how Europeans struggled for control of North America and the Caribbean
Standard 3: How the values and institutions of European economic life took root in the colonies, and how slavery reshaped European and African life in the America

**Era 4: Expansion and Reform (1801–1861)**
Standard 1: United States territorial expansion between 1801 and 1861, and how it affected relations with external powers and Native Americans
Standard 2: How the industrial revolution, increasing immigration, the rapid expansion of slavery, and the Westward movement changed the lives of Americans and led toward regional tensions

**World History Standards**

**World History Era 6: The Emergence of the First Global Age, 1450–1770**
Standard 1: How the transoceanic interlinking of all major regions of the world from 1450 to 1600 led to global transformations
Standard 4: Economic, political, and cultural interrelations among peoples of Africa, Europe, and the Americas, 1500–1750

**Era 7: An Age of Revolutions, 1750–1914**
Standard 1: The causes and consequences of political revolutions in the late 18th and early 19th centuries
Standard 4: Patterns of nationalism, state-building, and social reform in Europe and the Americas, 1830–1914
Standard 5: Patterns of global change in the era of Western military and economic domination, 1800–1914
Far West: The Hidden History helps to address the following National Geography Standards.

Standard 4: The physical and human characteristics of places.
Standard 6: How culture and experience influence peoples’ perceptions of places and regions.
Standard 9: The characteristics, distribution, and migration of human populations on Earth’s surface.
Standard 10: The characteristics, distribution, and complexity of Earth’s cultural mosaics.
Standard 13: How the forces of cooperation and conflict among people influence the division and control of Earth’s surface.
Standard 14: How human actions modify the physical environment.
Standard 17: How to apply geography to interpret the past.
Standard 18: How to apply geography to interpret the present and plan for the future.

The following are essential questions for Far West: The Hidden History.

- What are common myths and misperceptions of the far West and its earliest inhabitants?
- Who were the indigenous people of the West?
- How and why have common myths been perpetuated?
- How was land divided prior to Westward Expansion?
- What is Manifest Destiny?
- How did Manifest Destiny impact the land and people of the West?
- What alternatives are there to using violence to obtain land?
- What is the significance of borders?
- How can primary sources such as art, photographs, and quotations help us gain a better understanding of history and human experience?
- Why are first-hand perspectives important when examining historical events?
- What are some parallels between the indigenous people of the West and other groups whose histories are largely unknown?
- What is the meaning of forced amnesia? What significance has it had on our understanding of western history?
- In what ways does Far West: The Hidden History challenge the conventional historical narratives of the West?
Objectives

Through *Far West: The Hidden History* and the activities in this teacher’s guide, students will:

- consider the myths and misperceptions of the far West and its earliest inhabitants;
- learn about the indigenous people of the West;
- understand how and why common myths and misperceptions have been perpetuated;
- use maps to gain an understanding of how land was divided before Westward Expansion;
- gain awareness about Manifest Destiny and its implications on the land and people of the West;
- consider alternatives to using violence to obtain land;
- discuss the significance of borders;
- examine primary sources such as art, photographs, and quotations to gain a better understanding of history and human experience;
- learn about the importance of first-hand perspectives in examining historical events;
- consider some parallels between the indigenous people of the West and other groups whose histories are largely unknown;
- consider the meaning of forced amnesia and how its affected our understanding of Western history; and
- analyze how *Far West: The Hidden History* challenges the conventional historical narratives of the West.

Materials

*Far West: The Hidden History* film [55 Minutes]
Letter to Educators and Students by Filmmaker Tomas van Houtryve, p. 1
Letter to Educators and Students by CatchLight CEO Elodie Mailliet Storm, p. 3
Letter to Educators and Students by Radius Books Publisher & Creative Director David Chickey, p. 5
Multiple Choice/True-False Quiz, p. 12
Answers to Multiple Choice/True-False Quiz, p. 13
Maps of U.S.–Mexico Borders, p. 14
*Far West: The Hidden History* Terminology and People, p. 16
*Far West: The Hidden History* Film Timeline, p. 20
Viewing Questions, p. 21
Answers to Viewing Questions, p. 23
Small-Group Activities
  - a: Images from *Far West: The Hidden History*, p. 25
  - b: Examination of Quotes from *Far West: The Hidden History*, p. 29
  - c: Textbook/Film Comparison, p. 32
  - d: Quotes from Anita Rodriguez, p. 38
Debriefing Questions, p. 11
Teacher Preparation


2. There are four small-group activities to further student engagement with the film: a) Images from *Far West: The Hidden History*, b) Examination of Quotes from *Far West: The Hidden History*, c) Textbook/Film Comparison, and d) Quotes by Anita Rodriguez. Each is written as a stand-alone activity to allow for flexibility. Review the activities and select which one(s) to assign to groups. Make one copy of each activity selected for each student.

3. There are three *Letters to Educators and Students* included in the teacher’s guide. Make one copy of each of the letters for each pair of students in the class.

4. Preview the film, *Far West: The Hidden History*.

5. Listen to the podcast (30:35 minutes) of an interview of Tomas van Houtryve that students can also listen to at https://tomasvh.com/2022/03/21/podcast-interview-making-the-far-west-documentary-with-the-taos-center-for-the-arts/.

6. Become familiar with the information contained in this teacher’s guide.

7. Become familiar with Tomas van Houtryve’s website, such as his biography and the interactive book club video (75 minutes) at https://tomasvh.com/2020/05/04/book-discussion-sally-martin-katz-of-the-sfmoma-about-lines-and-lineage/.

Procedures Part One

1. To set the context for the lesson, ask students the following questions, and record student responses on the board or on a sheet of butcher paper:
   - What terms or images come to mind when you hear the term “American West”?
   - What areas comprise the American West?
   - What do you know about the history of the West before it became American territory?

2. Inform students they will learn about pre-American history, people, and places of the West.

3. Distribute a copy of the *Multiple Choice/True-False Quiz* to students. Allow students five minutes to take the quiz. Inform students that the quiz is a pre-assessment of their knowledge of the topic and will not be graded.

4. Review the answers to the *Multiple Choice/True-False Quiz*, with the class, using *Answers to Multiple Choice/True-False Quiz*.

5. Inform students they will watch a film called *Far West: The Hidden History*, a documentary that aims to increase awareness and fill a historical gap about pre-U.S. Western culture and history.

6. Divide the class into pairs of students. Distribute copies of *Letters*
to Educators and Students to each pair. Inform students that the letters were written by award-winning photographer, Tomas van Houtryve, who is also the filmmaker, Elodie Mailliet Storm, the CEO of Catchlight, a nonprofit media organization that discovers and develops visual storytellers, and David Chickey, the Publisher and Creative Director of Radius Books.

7. Ask student pairs to spend ten minutes reading the letters and briefly discussing the questions. The following questions are also included with the letters.
   • How can primary sources such as photographs help us understand history?
   • How have Hollywood Westerns affected our perception of historical events and people of the West?
   • Reflect on the visual thinking strategies in the letter.
   • How do images affect the way we perceive distant or abstract issues?
   • Why is it important to spend time truly examining an image in a technology-driven world?

8. Distribute Maps of U.S.–Mexico Borders, Far West: The Hidden History Terminology and People, and Far West: The Hidden History Film Timeline to each student, and review them as a class. Inform students they can use these handouts as a reference during this unit.

9. Distribute Viewing Questions to each student. Review the directions on the handout with students and instruct them to complete the questions while watching the film.

10. Show Far West: The Hidden History to the class. The film may need to be shown over two class periods. Stop the film when necessary if students need time to write down their responses to the handout.

11. Debrief the film by discussing student responses to Viewing Questions.

Part Two

1. Explain to students that they will learn more about the filmmaker, the people in the film, and the context behind his project by listening to a 30-minute podcast of an interview with Tomas van Houtryve.

2. Instruct students to get a blank sheet of paper and write down at least five pieces of information or concepts they learn while listening to the interview.


4. Ask several students to share something they learned. Then ask students to identify one concept or fact they would like to learn more about. If time allows for homework (or as an optional extension activity), ask students to research their chosen topic, write a one-half page summary, and be prepared to share what they learned with the class.
Part Three

1. If research homework was assigned from Part Two, divide the class into small groups of 3–5 students each and allow time for students to share their summaries with group members.

2. Assign groups to the stand-alone activity(ies) previously selected from Teacher Preparation: a) Images from Far West: The Hidden History, b) Examination of Quotes from Far West: The Hidden History, c) Textbook/Film Comparison, and d) Quotes by Anita Rodriguez. Distribute copies of handouts for the activity(ies) assigned to each group and review the directions with the class.

3. Allow students class time to work on their activities and/or assign them as homework.

4. Depending on which activities were assigned, collect group work and/or have groups present their work to the class (as defined on each activity handout).

Debriefing

1. Review students’ initial perceptions of the American West by reflecting on their responses to the class discussion in Part One, which were written on the board or on butcher paper prior to viewing the film. Ask students to comment on their responses. Have their perspectives stayed the same or changed? Explain.

2. Pose the following questions to the class and ask several students to share their responses to each:
   - How does Far West: The Hidden History challenge the conventional historical narratives of the West?
   - What efforts can promote further understanding and appreciation of the contributions of indigenous people and their history, dispel common stereotypes, and reconcile the injustices of the past?
   - What happens when myths are elevated to the status of official history?
   - What is the significance of not having a visual history of one’s past?
   - How does war/conquest make you feel?
   - Is there a right or wrong in how history is told? Explain.
   - What quote/interview from the film most resonated with you and why?
   - What specific visual images were most impactful to you in terms of conveying the key concepts or themes of the film?
   - Has your family, neighborhood, or community had experience with border or immigration issues? If so, explain.
   - How is one’s identity related to borders?
   - What other current issues are you aware of involving political borders and/or immigration?
   - How has this unit of study impacted your understanding of the history of the West?
MULTIPLE CHOICE/TRUE-FALSE QUIZ

[Circle the correct answer.]

1. In New Spain, a ______ was a person born in the New World with one Spanish-born and one Indian parent.
   a. mulatto; b. vaquero; c. coyote; d. mestizo

2. In ____, Francisco Vázquez de Coronado led a major Spanish expedition up Mexico’s western coast and into the region that is now the southwestern United States.
   a. 1620; b. 1540; c. 1510; d. 1770

3. The city of Los Angeles was founded by Spanish governor Felipe de Neve in:
   a. 1781; b. 1821; c. 1542; d. 1776

4. The ________ was signed on February 2, 1848, which ended the war between the United States and Mexico. As a result, the United States annexed all of Northern Mexico (which was roughly half of all of Mexico’s territory at the time).

[Circle “True” or “False.”]

5. Spanish law in Mexico allowed for enslaved people to buy their own freedom.
   True or False

6. In Mexico, enslaved Africans married with the local populations.
   True or False

7. The word, “vaquero,” in Spanish means a cowboy or a cattle driver.
   True or False

8. California, Nevada, Utah, New Mexico, and Texas are among some of the states that once belonged to Mexico.
   True or False

9. In 1824, the United States enacted a constitution that granted citizenship to all men regardless of race.
   True or False
Answers to Multiple Choice/True-False Quiz

[Circle the correct answer.]

1. In New Spain, a ________ was a person born in the New World with one Spanish-born and one Indian parent.
   a. mulatto; b. vaquero; c. coyote; d. mestizo

2. In ____, Francisco Vázquez de Coronado led a major Spanish expedition up Mexico’s western coast and into the region that is now the southwestern United States.
   a. 1620; b. 1540; c. 1510; d. 1770

3. The city of Los Angeles was founded by Spanish governor Felipe de Neve in:
   a. 1781; b. 1821; c. 1542; d. 1776

4. The ________ was signed on February 2, 1848, which ended the war between the United States and Mexico. As a result, the United States annexed all of Northern Mexico (which was roughly half of all of Mexico’s territory at the time).

[Circle “True” or “False.”]

5. Spanish law in Mexico allowed for enslaved people to buy their own freedom.
   True or False

6. In Mexico, enslaved Africans married with the local populations.
   True or False

7. The word, “vaquero,” in Spanish means a cowboy or a cattle driver.
   True or False

8. California, Nevada, Utah, New Mexico, and Texas are among some of the states that once belonged to Mexico.
   True or False

9. In 1824, the United States enacted a constitution that granted citizenship to all men regardless of race.
   True or False
The border was 700 miles farther north than it is now, when all of the far West up to Oregon territory was ruled by Mexico and referred to as Northern Mexico.
By 1848 Mexico lost half of its land to the United States in the Mexican–American War, which in Mexico is called the “United States Intervention” or “United States Invasion.” This was the largest territorial conquest in U.S. history, with the United States taking roughly 800,000 square miles of Mexican land, realizing its dream of Manifest Destiny.

Today the border between the United States and Mexico is roughly 2,000 miles in length, protected by 700 miles of fencing and natural barriers such as mountains, deserts, and rivers. The border is militarized and monitored to help keep people from entering the United States illegally. The U.S. border patrol agents monitor the border on foot, in boats, and in helicopters as well as with drones, electronic sensors, video monitors, and night vision scopes.
# Terminology (in order of mention)

- **Far West**—of, relating to, or situated in the part of the U.S. west of the Mississippi River or especially west of the Great Plains

- **Indigenous**—originating or occurring naturally in a particular place; native; people who have retained social, cultural, economic, and political characteristics distinct from those of the dominant societies in which they live

- **Hispanic**—person of Latin American or Spanish descent who resides in the United States

- **Mexican**—a native or inhabitant of Mexico, or a person of Mexican descent

- **Collective amnesia**—collective forgetting by a group of people; can be a result of “forcible repression” of memories, ignorance, shame, changing circumstances, or the forgetting that comes from changing interests

- **Forced amnesia**—being forced to forget your history, language and culture; society’s repression of remembrance of one’s past

- **U.S.–Mexico Border**—2,000 miles of militarized, partitioned, and surveilled land

- **Conquest**—act of conquering a country or group of people

- **Venomous**—spiteful, malicious; harmful or destructive

- **Annexation**—the incorporation of territory into an existing political unit such as a country, state, county, or city

- **Settlers**—refers to Europeans who were part of settling new lands on indigenous territories

- **Genocide**—the deliberate killing of people who belong to a particular racial, political, or cultural group with the purpose of destroying the ability of that group to function

- **Protestant Pioneers**—theologians whose careers, works, and actions brought about the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century; in context of Reformation, Martin Luther was the first reformer, sharing his views publicly in 1517

- **Manifest Destiny of the United States**—cultural belief in 19th-century United States that American settlers were destined to expand across North America

- **Chief Wahoo**—controversial logo that was used by the Cleveland Indians, a Major League Baseball (MLB) franchise based in Cleveland, Ohio, from 1951 to 2018

- **Redskins**—offensive and dated slang term for Native Americans in the United States and First Nations in Canada

- **Zuni Pueblo**—one of the oldest native American settlements at the crossroads of Arizona and New Mexico

- **Migration**—movement of people to a new area or country in order to find work or better living conditions

- **Dowa Yalanne**—“Corn Mountain”; sacred Zuni mountain southeast of the present Pueblo of Zuni on the Zuni Indian Reservation

- **Nature Worship**—any of a variety of religious, spiritual, and devotional practices that focus on the worship and the veneration of natural phenomena

- **Savage**—offensive and dated European term based on European understandings and culture; lacking complex or advanced culture; “the other,” someone of a different culture and moral code
Conquistador—from Spanish, meaning “he who conquers”; those men who took up arms to conquer, subjugate, and convert native populations in the New World

Coronado—Francisco Vázquez de Coronado; Spanish conquistador and explorer who led a large expedition from what is now Mexico to present-day Kansas through parts of the southwestern United States between 1540 and 1542

Pilgrim—person who goes on a long journey often with a religious or moral purpose, and especially to a foreign land; one of the English colonists who founded the first permanent settlement in New England at Plymouth in 1620

Mayflower—English ship that transported a group of English families, known today as the Pilgrims, from England to the New World (specifically the Americas) in 1620

Colonist—people who start a colony or the people who are among the first to live in a particular colony (e.g., from Spain); an inhabitant of the 13 British colonies that became the United States of America

Petroglyph—rock carving, especially a prehistoric one

Francisco Missionary—any member of a Roman Catholic religious order founded in the early 13th century by St. Francis of Assisi; Franciscan priest Father Junipero Serra founded the first mission in 1769, known as Mission San Diego de Alcalá and was located in present-day San Diego

Pueblo Revolt of 1680—uprising of most of the indigenous Pueblo people against the Spanish colonizers in the province of Santa Fe de Nuevo México, an area larger than present-day New Mexico; drove the remaining 2,000 settlers out of the province; Spaniards reconquered New Mexico twelve years later

Massacre—an act of complete destruction; the act or an instance of killing a number of usually helpless or unresisting human beings under circumstances of atrocity or cruelty

Concession—a grant of land or property especially by a government in return for services or for a particular use

Spanish Empire—colonial empire governed by Spain and its predecessor states between 1492 and 1976

Genealogy—an account of the descent of a person, family, or group from an ancestor or from older forms

Californiano—a term used to designate a Hispanic Californian, especially those descended from Spanish and Mexican settlers; originally applied by and to the Spanish-speaking residents of Las Californias during the periods of Spanish California and Mexican California, between 1683 and 1848

Spanish Trail—historical trade route, approximately 700 miles long, that connected the northern New Mexico settlements of Santa Fe, New Mexico with those of Los Angeles, California, and southern California

Mulatto—a person of mixed white and black ancestry, especially a person with one white and one black parent

Coyote—colonial Spanish American racial term for a mixed-race person that usually refers to a person born of parents, one of whom is Mestizo (mixed Spanish and indigenous) and the other indigenous

Pío Pico—short for Don Pío de Jesús Pico, a Californio politician, ranchero, and entrepreneur, famous for serving as the last governor of California (present-day U.S. state of California) under Mexican rule
Immigrant—a person from one country who comes to another country to take up permanent residence

Nation-State—a form of political organization under which a relatively homogeneous people (e.g., shared ethnicity, language, and culture) inhabits a sovereign state

The Alamo (Battle of)—battle in 1836 that rallied the rest of Texas to fight against the Mexican army, eventually leading to a victory over Santa Ana at the Battle of San Jacinto

Davy Crockett—American folk hero, frontiersman, soldier, and politician; commonly referred to in popular culture as “King of the Wild Frontier”; represented Tennessee in the U.S. House of Representatives and served in the Texas Revolution

Texas Revolution—also called War of Texas Independence; war fought from October 1835 to April 1836 between Mexico and Texas colonists that resulted in Texas’s independence from Mexico and the founding of the Republic of Texas (1836–1845)

Hypocritical—characterized by behavior that contradicts what one claims to believe or feel

Bear Flag Revolt—from June to July 1846, a small group of American settlers in California rebelled against the Mexican government and proclaimed California an independent republic; soon after the Bear Flag was raised, the U.S. military began occupying California, which went on to join the union in 1850

Insurrectionist—person who rises up against authority, often as part of an organized and usually violent act of revolt or rebellion against an established government or governing authority of a nation-state or other political entity by a group of its citizens or subjects

Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo—peace treaty that was signed on February 2, 1848 that ended the Mexican–American War (1846–1848) between the United States and Mexico

Mexican Cession—region in the modern-day southwestern United States that Mexico ceded to the United States in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 after the Mexican–American War

Gadsden Purchase—29,670-square-mile region of present-day southern Arizona and southwestern New Mexico that the United States acquired from Mexico (signed in 1853, finalized in 1854); purchase included lands south of the Gila River and west of the Rio Grande, where the United States wanted to build a transcontinental railroad along a deep southern route

Mestizo—of mixed race; generally used throughout Latin America to describe people of mixed ancestry with a mixture of indigenous, European, and African background

Chicano—someone who is native of, or descends from, Mexico and who lives in the United States

Latinx—person of Latin American origin or descent (used as gender-neutral or nonbinary alternative to Latino or Latina)

Chicana—someone born in the United States whose family comes from Mexico; used as a gender-neutral or nonbinary alternative to Chicano or Chicana, or to refer to a group

Vaquero—a cowboy; a cattle driver

Tribal Names Mentioned:
Acoma
Apache
Ashiwi
People in *Far West: The Hidden History*

Producers
Elodie Mailliet Storm, CEO, CatchLight
Mathilde Damoisel, Co-Director
Tomas van Houtryve, Co-Director

People
Simon Romero, National Correspondent for *The New York Times*; covers the border between Mexico and United States
Anita Otilia Rodriguez, artist and advocate in Taos, New Mexico
Gomeo Zacharias Bobelu, descendant of the Zuni tribe
Kenny Bowekaty, archaeologist of Zuni Pueblo
Leonard “Lenny” Frank Trujillo, member of Los Californianos, a group of descendants of the first Mexican pioneers in California
Raul Ramos, Mexican-American historian from Texas
Anastasio Bonnie Sanchez, vaquero from Rancho de los Sanchez, San Luis, Colorado
Far West: The Hidden History Film Timeline

1540 Francisco Vasquez de Coronado expedition; 1.5-day battle between the Spanish and Ashiwi (July 7)
1598 Oñate Expedition
1610 Pedro de Peralta founded Santa Fe
1620 Arrival of pilgrims on the Mayflower at Plymouth
1680 Pueblo Revolt expelled the Spanish from the region for 12 years
1690 Colonization of Texas
1769 Colonization of California
1776 Fate of North America reached a tipping point; United States declared independence. The Spanish empire continued to expand on the west coast—Juan Bautisa de Anza led an expedition that opened a new overland route to Alta California; Monterey (1770), San Francisco (1776), Los Angeles (1781) founded
1810 Mexico rose up against Spanish monarchy
1821 Mexico declared independence
1824 Mexico enacted constitution that installed a representative federal republic; citizenship and voting rights granted to all men regardless of race
1829 Slavery abolished in all Mexican provinces
1836 Battle of the Alamo (February to March); Battle of San Jacinto (April 21); Independent Republic proclaimed in Texas
1845 Texas officially joined the United States as a slave state under President James Polk
1846 Beginning of American conquest of the west; Polk declared war and invaded Mexico (May); The Bear Flag Revolt in California (June)
1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo signed (February) and United States annexed all of northern Mexico
VIEWING QUESTIONS

You are about to watch Far West: The Hidden History, a 55-minute documentary film where photographer Tomas van Houtryve examines what he calls “America’s collective amnesia” and reveals the hidden legacy of the far West. You will learn how some of the descendants of the forgotten period confront the myths and forced amnesia that cloud the understanding of the region’s past. The film also highlights the role that photography and cinema played in the colonization of the American West. The project is based on van Houtryve’s book Lines and Lineage.

Use the space below to answer each question; you may want to take notes on another sheet of paper as you watch the video.

1. According to the film, how is Mexico viewed by the United States?

2. How do the clips from the Western movie, How the West Was Won, compare to the key concepts or themes of the film?

3. According to the filmmaker, how does the United States write its own history?

4. What is the key difference, mentioned in the film, between enslaved Africans in Mexico and enslaved people in the United States?

5. What were the fighters who died in the Alamo fighting for? What was their cause?

6. What hypocrisy is Simon Romero referring to?

7. According to the film, how is California history the biggest example of forced amnesia? What is an example of forced amnesia presented in the film?
8. What is the effect of romanticizing only one part of a person’s heritage (in the film, Spanish) and denying other parts (in the film, African or indigenous heritage)?

9. According to Raul Ramos, why does using the term “immigrant” (when referring to Anglo-Americans) give people pause? What is significant about this response?
1. According to the film, how is Mexico viewed by the United States?
Mexico is viewed as a lawless place and as a threat to the United States; the United States does not recognize or appreciate the contributions that Mexico has made to U.S. society.

2. How do the clips from the Western movie, *How the West Was Won*, compare to the key concepts or themes of the film?
According to the film, much of how the West came to be was based on myth. The movie focused on a romanticized idea of an ever-expanding frontier, where settlers came in caravans from the East and brought civilization and liberty to the uncharted wilderness. However, the expansion of the United States was in fact a history of brutal conquest and often genocide. Instead of confronting its past, the country created its own legends and heroes, which it promoted and spread through imagery, including popular Western films.

3. According to the filmmaker, how does the United States write its own history?
Americans created their own legends and myths of uncivilized land using photographs.

4. What is the key difference, mentioned in the film, between enslaved Africans in Mexico and enslaved people in the United States?
Spanish law in Mexico allowed for enslaved people to buy their own freedom; United States law did not. Enslaved people in Mexico also mixed with and married locals. However, in the United States enslaved people were kept separate. The dominant culture did not want to blend with anyone else.

5. What were the fighters who died in the Alamo fighting for? What was their cause?
They wanted freedom and liberty to bring their civilization and culture, which they felt was superior to Mexican and indigenous culture. The fighters thought that Mexicans and indigenous people were wasting valuable resources, and they saw the abolition of slavery by the Mexican government as taking away their freedom (to enslave others).

6. What hypocrisy is Simon Romero referring to?
James Polk believed in expanding the United States. He was also a slave-owning southerner, concerned about the balance of free states of the north vs. the slave-owning states of the south. It was hypocritical to “free” the West to keep slaves working for the United States. The whole idea of Manifest Destiny and the Americans bringing freedom and liberty with them was a hypocrisy as well because they were actually introducing, strengthening and expanding the institution of slavery in what was the North of Mexico.

7. According to the film, how is California history the biggest example of forced amnesia? What is an example of forced amnesia presented in the film?
California was not made a slave state when it was annexed, but only white males could vote. California Governor Peter Burnett emphasized that a “war of extermination would continue until the Indian [indigenous] race became extinct.”
8. What is the effect of romanticizing only one part of a person’s heritage (in the film, Spanish) and denying other parts (in the film, African or indigenous heritage)?
Denying a part of oneself can erase that part of one’s identity.

9. According to Raul Ramos, why does using the term “immigrant” (when referring to Anglo-Americans) give people pause? What is significant about this response?
Historically, Anglo-Americans are referred to as colonists and settlers rather than immigrants, even though they were immigrants. To call them settlers is to normalize their presence and to ignore the historical border and existing nation-states of that particular time. The response implies that the only nation-state that matters is the American nation-state.
Part 1

Directions: With members in your group, discuss the following two questions and write down your group’s responses on a blank sheet of paper.

What words or images come to mind when you hear the term “far West”?
Where did these images come from?

Part 2

Directions: Read the following three paragraphs and then answer the questions posed at the end on the same sheet of paper.

Many people associate the western United States with images of the frontier period and the rough and lawless “Wild West” portrayed in Western pop culture. As you saw in the film, the Western movie *How the West Was Won* describes it as “reckless adventure and awesome violence” and depicts Anglo-American cowboys as heroes engaging in gun fights, fighting off the “savage” natives. In reality, the original cowboys in the West were from Hispanic culture. The Spanish word *vaquero* was used by Spanish ranchers to refer to their Hispanic and Native American horsemen. But that is not the image most people have of a traditional cowboy. *Buffalo Bill’s Wild West*, a popular Western TV show from 1883 until 1916, gave Americans a narrow glimpse of the lives of Anglo frontier people in the West, romanticizing the brave and adventurous spirit of the pioneers and promoting racist attitudes toward Native Americans. Dime novels, also popular in the late 1800s/early 1900s, further perpetuated the myths. Western pop culture has portrayed the West as largely unpopulated before Anglo-Americans arrived, even though many cultures were already thriving, and glorified brutality and violence against Native Americans in the name of Manifest Destiny.

The filmmaker, Tomas van Houtryve, undertook this project to debunk the myths of the West and increase awareness about a historical gap, about what is missing or distorted from the image of Western culture. As you learned in the film, van Houtryve bought a 19th-century wooden camera and learned an old-fashioned wet plate collodion technique, a labor-intensive and time-consuming photography process, to achieve his desired results. Consider the significance of this technique, and how it helps achieve his goal of recreating a missing photo album.

What is the role of photography in telling history? Because our mind often remembers still images better than text, photographs are especially significant to the understanding and remembering of historical events and people. There are no images or photographs from the time period when the West was under Mexican rule, but there are many images from 1849 onward, starting with the Gold Rush and the railroad era. This lack of visual record caused some identities to be embedded in our knowledge of history while others are unknown or minimized. This is why van Houtryve refers to the pioneers’ cameras as “weapons.” The Anglo-American settlers used photographs to write their history and to spread their legends and heroes that the West would be remembered for. van Houtryve recalls from his childhood that school history in California was often taught as though everything important started in 1849 with the California Gold Rush, while the rich history of centuries before was largely ignored.
What are the myths of how the West was won?
What is the reality of the West?
Why do you think native people have often been portrayed in a negative, dehumanizing way?
What was the result of there being no visual record of the West before 1848?

Part 3
Directions: Look carefully at the photographs below and read the descriptions. van Houtryve photographed these descendants of people who lived in the west before the pioneers arrived to create what he calls a “missing photo album of our common history.” They are descendants of Spanish, Hispanic, Native American, and enslaved Africans, and many are mixed. For each of the photographs below, answer the following question on the same sheet of paper used above:
How do they compare to images you have seen in movies, TV shows, books, and photographs of the West?

Plate 12: Susan Calderon Bellman

Her ancestors were some of the earliest indigenous settlers to California from Mexico. Many of the original settlers were freed slaves of Afro-Mexican descent. She is also a relative of Pio Pico, the last Mexican governor of California, who named Los Angeles as the capital. She is of African, Native American, and Hispanic ancestry.

Plate 40: Maya Felice Bernal Smestad

A descendant of Hispanic settlers who arrived in Monterey, California in 1774
Plate 41: Arthur Pliny Jones
A descendant of the Hupa tribe

Plate 46: Dorian Carranza
A descendant of the Spanish settlers that in 1774 started the community that would become San Francisco; of Spanish, Native American, and African ancestry

Plate 49: Patricia Vialpando
Of Spanish and Native American ancestry; her father was a cowboy
Part 4

Task: Choose one of the important places or events in early Western history below to research and create an informative poster, including images, to share with the class.

- El Morro National Monument, New Mexico near Zuni Pueblo; where ancient petroglyphs are mixed with etchings from later inhabitants in the sandstone cliffs
- Ruins of Gran Quiverra, New Mexico where Franciscan missionaries took indigenous slaves to work in salt mines in the 17th century under the justification that they were being converted to Christianity.
- Native cliff dwellings in Canyon de Chelly in Chinle, Arizona
- San Geronimo Church and ruins, Taos, New Mexico; the only ruin from the Mexican–American war
- Pueblo Revolt of 1680; native tribes united and overthrew Spanish rule in New Mexico for 12 years
- Bear Flag Revolt in Sonoma, California in 1846, ending Mexican rule in California
Examination of Quotes from *Far West: The Hidden History*

Part 1

Directions: With the members of your group, read and discuss the following quotations from the film, and respond to the questions below on a separate sheet of paper.

“We can’t even find ourselves. We have been so thoroughly erased, we have been so not mirrored. And that is violence and conquest at the threshold of the soul. Yes, they took the land, and they hung [sic] people and all these things happened. But to impose this invisibility is so destructive and so corrosive.”—Anita Rodriguez, artist and advocate in Taos, New Mexico (7:48)

“When I think of Coronado and how much our world has changed, I always think about—when I go to the museum—what they left behind. They left behind a lot of metal; they left behind a lot of weapons; and they also shared a little bit of their culture that our people carry now. We adapt, we assimilate, and we just grow.”—Gomeo Zacharias Bobelu, descendant of the Zuni tribe (15:38)

“My view is that people of Mexican descent are portrayed as outsiders in the United States even though they’ve been here longer than many of the people—especially when we’re talking about the southwest where people were here for hundreds of years. I’ve never felt like an outsider here because I can exist in this land, in my world, whether whatever somebody tells me, I can still exist here and they can’t take that away. We didn’t cross the border, the border crossed us.”—Leonard “Lenny” Frank Trujillo, member of Los Californianos, a group of descendants of the first Mexican pioneers in California (43:45)

Each of the quotations above relates to the speaker’s identity and heritage.

- What do you know of your own family heritage?
- What issues of identity are most important to you?
- Have you ever felt like your identity was ignored or misunderstood? If so, explain.
- What do you notice about the resilience demonstrated in the quotes above?

Part 2

Directions: With your group members, continue to read the quotes and answer the set of questions below each quote on the same paper used above.

“When I look at the picture, it tells me that I’m Zuni. See, that’s the distinctive part, I don’t look like any other tribe. I don’t look like the Plains; I don’t look like Athabaskan. I look Pueblo. I want to be that Indian in the picture without being anybody’s token Indian. I don’t want to be Chief Wahoo. I don’t want to be Redskins.”—Gomeo Zacharias Bobelu (9:32)

The photograph of Gomeo is a validation of his identity, and he is proud to be Zuni.

- Why are photographs so important to people?
- Why are they important to the way people perceive themselves, and the way others perceive them?
- What is the significance of Gomeo saying he doesn’t want to be a token Indian?
- Are you familiar with differences between various Indian tribes? Why or why not?

When asked if he is angry about the Spanish conquistadors coming to battle with the Ashiwi
in 1540, Kenny Bowekaty responds, “No. It fascinated me because I mean I look at it this way, ‘What if the Spanish never came? Would we dominate our country, or you know, what would the factors have been?’ I’m pretty sure we would have gone to war anyway with somebody—the people coming in.”—Kenny Bowekaty, archaeologist of Zuni Pueblo (13:43)

- Do you agree with his comment that the native people probably would have gone to war in any case? Explain.
- In this quote, Kenny demonstrates a positive attitude about hurtful events of the past. What positive effects do you think this has on him as well as others?

In reference to the salt mines where indigenous people were enslaved in the 17th century, Simon Romero states, “I think there’s been kind of a willful ignorance about what happened because those memories are pretty painful. What happened here was a history of conquest and exploitation and religious dominance. And you know, it’s the reality. It’s what kind of made us who we are today. It takes the good and the bad, I think, combined together. And I think it’s just really powerful to still have a place like this that you can go to and use it, hopefully to reflect on what happened and to learn from it and also just to like teach people about the basic history of this place.”—Simon Romero, national correspondent for The New York Times who covers the U.S.–Mexico border (20:10)

- What other historical places are you familiar with that people can visit to learn about important events from the past? Have you visited any of these places? If so, describe your experience.
- Why do people enjoy visiting historical places, even if they represent destructive events and painful memories?

“These people were all very, very mixed. In Mexico, they enslaved the indigenous people and threw them into the mines. And they imported many, many African slaves to much more than people ever know about. But the difference was in Mexico, the African slaves blended in, married in with the local populations. In the United States, they didn’t. They were kept separated, and to this day that’s why we still have the deep racial divisions that we have in this country. It’s because the culture—the dominant culture—did not want to blend with anyone else.”—Lenny Trujillo (25:25)

- Do you agree or disagree with Lenny’s comment about why the United States still has a problem with racism? Why or why not?
- In your opinion, what other factors are involved?

“They didn’t use the word immigrant then, but what were they doing? They were going from one country to another. That’s immigration, right? And so for me to use that term immigrant gives people pause. They say, ‘Oh he’s talking about the colonists or the settlers.’ but it’s the same people, right? They’re doing the same action, but to call them settlers is to normalize their presence and to ignore the historical border, to ignore nation-states at that particular time. So the only nation-state that matters is the American nation-state.”—Raul Ramos, Mexican American historian from Texas (28:43)

- Why is it common for the dominant culture’s story to be recognized and remembered, while other cultures’ stories remain unknown or untold?
- Why are borders so significant? What do they represent to people?
- Do you think the term immigrant is controversial? Why or why not?
“It’s hypocritical, I think, in a way that’s really blatant, you know, just to think the whole idea of Manifest Destiny and Americans bringing freedom and liberty with them and liberating, you know, what’s now the West, you know, wasn’t in some sense actually introducing and strengthening and expanding the institution of slavery in what was then the north of Mexico. But of course, you know, that’s uncomfortable to talk about so many people prefer not to do it.” —Simon Romero (36:40)

- Explain in your own words why Simon thinks Manifest Destiny is hypocritical. Do you agree? Why or why not?
- What is your opinion of Manifest Destiny?

“So then the question becomes where do you put that Mexican population that was there before Americans arrived, that were there before American expansion, who essentially become rendered immigrants. There’s a saying that they become foreigners in their own country. And that’s very much true in this case, but to become a foreigner in your own country really means to be historically rendered foreign, right? And rendered foreign in a particular telling of history.” —Raul Ramos (45:03)

Part 3

Directions: Consider the attitudes of the people in the film. They want to learn and share their ancestors’ stories and use them to promote knowledge and understanding. Discuss the question below with your group members.

- How do these quotes help us understand different perspectives and the feelings and experiences of native people in the west?

Part 4

Task: With your group members, choose one quotation from above. On the same piece of paper, compose four or five thoughtful questions you would ask the speaker if you could interview them.
TEXTBOOK/FILM COMPARISON

When learning about a topic, it is helpful and enriching to learn from a variety of sources and multiple perspectives. The film Far West: The Hidden History presents some different perspectives than those typically found in history textbooks. It aims to provide a greater understanding about the history and people living in the far West before American expansion.

For this activity you will be working in small groups.

Part 1

Directions: Read the textbook sections 15.4 Texas and 15.6 War with Mexico below. While alternating turns reading with your group, every member of the group should take approximately one-half page of notes. Then read the questions below and discuss your responses with your group.

The following are excerpts reprinted with permission from History Alive!, a textbook by Teachers Curriculum Institute, Chapter 15 “Manifest Destiny and the Growing Nation,” pp. 205–207 and 210–212.

15.4 Texas

There was a reason many Americans felt that Texas was so valuable. Much of this region was well suited for growing cotton, the South’s most valuable cash crop, and many southerners hoped that one day it would become part of the United States.

Americans Come to Texas

The Texas tale begins with Moses Austin, a banker and businessman who dreamed of starting an American colony in Spanish Texas. In 1821, Spanish officials granted Austin a huge tract of land. When Moses died suddenly that year, his son Stephen took over his father’s dream.

Stephen arrived in Texas just as Mexico declared its independence from Spain. Now Texas was a part of Mexico. Mexican officials agreed to let Austin start his colony—under certain conditions. Austin had to choose only moral and hardworking settlers. The settlers had to promise to become Mexican citizens and to join the Catholic Church.

Austin agreed to the Mexican terms. By 1827, he had attracted 297 families—soon known as the “Old Three Hundred”—to Texas.

Rising Tensions

The success of Austin’s colony started a rush of settlers to Texas. By 1830, there were about 25,000 Americans in Texas, compared to 4,000 Tejanos, or Texans of Mexican descent. Soon tensions between the two groups began to rise.
The Americans had several complaints. They were used to governing themselves, and they resented taking orders from Mexican officials. They were unhappy that all official documents had to be in Spanish, a language most of them were unwilling to learn. In addition, many were slaveholders who were upset when Mexico outlawed slavery in 1829.

The Tejanos had their own complaints. They were unhappy that many American settlers had come to Texas illegally. Worse, most of these new immigrants showed little respect for Mexican culture and had no intention of becoming Mexican citizens.

The Mexican government responded by closing Texas to further American immigration. The government sent troops to Texas to assert its authority and enforce the immigration laws.

The Texans Rebel

Americans in Texas resented these actions. Hotheads, led by a young lawyer named William Travis, began calling for revolution. Cooler heads, led by Stephen Austin, asked the Mexican government to reopen Texas to immigration and make it a separate Mexican state. That way Texans could run their own affairs.

In 1833, Austin traveled to Mexico and presented the Texans’ demands to the new head of the Mexican government, General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna. The general was a power-hungry dictator who once boasted, “If I were God, I would wish to be more.” Rather than bargain with Austin, Santa Anna tossed him in jail for promoting rebellion. Soon after Austin was released in 1835, Texans rose up in revolt. Determined to crush the rebels, Santa Anna marched north with approximately 6,000 troops.

The Alamo

In late February 1836, a large part of Santa Anna’s army reached San Antonio, Texas. The town was defended by about 180 Texan volunteers, including eight Tejanos. The Texans had taken over an old mission known as the Alamo. Among them was Davy Crockett, a famous frontiersman and former congressman from Tennessee. Sharing command with William Travis was James Bowie, a well-known Texas “freedom fighter.”

The Alamo’s defenders watched as General Santa Anna raised a black flag that meant “Expect no mercy.” The general demanded that the Texans surrender. Travis answered that with a cannon shot.

Slowly, Santa Anna’s troops began surrounding the Alamo. The Texans were outnumbered by at least ten to one, but only one man fled.

Meanwhile, Travis sent messengers to the other towns in Texas, pleading for reinforcements and vowing not to abandon the Alamo. “Victory or death!” he proclaimed. But reinforcements never came.
For 12 days, the Mexicans pounded the Alamo with cannonballs. Then, at the first light of dawn on March 6, Santa Anna gave the order to storm the fort. Desperately, the Texans tried to stave off the attackers with a hailstorm of rifle fire.

For 90 minutes the battle raged. Then it was all over. By day’s end, every one of the Alamo’s defenders was dead. By Santa Anna’s order, those who had survived the battle were executed on the spot.

Santa Anna described the fight for the Alamo as “but a small affair.” But his decision to kill every man at the Alamo filled Texans with rage. It was a rage that cried out for revenge.

Texas Wins Its Independence

Sam Houston, the commander of the Texas revolutionary army, understood Texans’ rage. But as Santa Anna pushed on, Houston’s only hope was to retreat eastward. By luring Santa Anna deeper into Texas, he hoped to make it harder for the general to supply his army and keep it battle-ready.

Houston’s strategy wasn’t popular, but it worked brilliantly. In April, Santa Anna caught up with Houston near the San Jacinto River. Expecting the Texans to attack at dawn, the general kept his troops awake all night. When no attack came, the weary Mexicans relaxed. Santa Anna went to his tent to take a nap.

Late that afternoon, Houston’s troops staged a surprise attack. Yelling “Remember the Alamo!” the Texans overran the Mexican camp. Santa Anna fled, but he was captured the next day. In exchange for his freedom, he ordered all his remaining troops out of Texas. Texans had won their independence. Still, Mexico did not fully accept the loss of Texas.

To Annex Texas or Not?

Now an independent country, Texas became known as the Lone Star Republic because of the single star on its flag. But most Texans were Americans who wanted Texas to become part of the United States.

Despite their wishes, Texas remained independent for ten years. People in the United States were divided over whether to annex Texas. Southerners were eager to add another slave state. Northerners who opposed slavery wanted to keep Texas out.

Others feared that annexation would lead to war with Mexico. The 1844 presidential campaign was influenced by the question of whether to expand U.S. territory. One of the candidates, Henry Clay, warned, “Annexation and war with Mexico are identical.” His opponent, James K. Polk, however, was a strong believer in Manifest Destiny. He was eager to acquire Texas. After Polk was elected, Congress voted to annex Texas. In 1845, Texas was admitted as the 28th state.
15.6 War with Mexico

You might think that Texas and Oregon were quite enough new territory for any president. But not for Polk. This humorless, hardworking president had one great goal. He wanted to expand the United States as far as he could.

Polk’s gaze fell next on the huge areas known as California and New Mexico. He was determined to have them both—by purchase if possible, by force if necessary.

These areas were first colonized by Spain, but they became Mexican territories when Mexico won its independence in 1821. Both were thinly settled, and the Mexican government had long neglected them. That was reason enough for Polk to hope that they might be for sale. He sent a representative to Mexico to try to buy the territories. But Mexican officials refused even to see him.

War Breaks Out in Texas

When Congress voted to annex Texas, relations between the United States and Mexico turned sour. To Mexico, the annexation of Texas was an act of war. To make matters worse, Texas and Mexico could not agree on a border. Texas claimed the Rio Grande as its border on the south and the west. Mexico wanted the border to be the Nueces River, about 150 miles northeast of the Rio Grande.

On April 25, 1846, Mexican soldiers fired on American troops who were patrolling along the Rio Grande. Sixteen Americans were killed or wounded. This was just the excuse for war that Polk had been waiting for. Mexico, he charged, “has invaded our territory and shed American blood on American soil.” Two days after Polk’s speech, Congress declared war on Mexico.

To Mexico, the truth was just the opposite. Mexican president Mariano Paredes declared that a greedy people “have thrown themselves on our territory…. The time has come to fight.”

The Fall of New Mexico and California

A few months later, General Stephen Kearny led the Army of the West out of Kansas. His orders were to occupy New Mexico and then continue west to California.

Mexican opposition melted away in front of Kearny’s army. The Americans took control of New Mexico without firing a shot. “General Kearny,” a pleased Polk wrote in his diary, “has thus far performed his duties well.”

Meanwhile, a group of Americans led by the explorer John C. Fremont launched a rebellion against Mexican rule in California. The Americans arrested and jailed General Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo, the Mexican commander of Northern California. Then they raised a crude flag showing a grizzly bear sketched in blackberry juice. California, they declared, was now the Bear Flag Republic.

When Kearny reached California, he joined forces with the rebels. Within weeks, all of California was under American control.
The United States Invades Mexico

The conquest of Mexico itself was far more difficult. American troops under Zachary Taylor battled their way south from Texas. Taylor was a no-nonsense general who was known fondly as “Old Rough and Ready” because of his backwoods clothes. After 6,000 troops took the Mexican city of Monterey, an old enemy stopped them. General Santa Anna had marched north to meet Taylor with an army of 20,000 Mexican troops.

In February 1847, the two forces met near a ranch called Buena Vista. After two days of hard fighting, Santa Anna reported that “both armies have been cut to pieces.” Rather than lose his remaining forces, Santa Anna retreated south. The war in Northern Mexico was over.

A month later, American forces led by General Winfield Scott landed at Veracruz in southern Mexico. Scott was a stickler for discipline and loved fancy uniforms. These traits earned him the nickname “Old Fuss and Feathers.” For the next six months, his troops fought their way to Mexico City, the capital of Mexico.

Outside the capital, the Americans met fierce resistance at the castle of Chapultepec. About 1,000 Mexican soldiers and 100 young military cadets fought bravely to defend the fortress. Six of the cadets chose to die fighting rather than surrender. To this day, the boys who died that day are honored in Mexico as Los Ninos Heroes—the heroic children.

Despite such determined resistance, Scott’s army captured Mexico City in September 1847. Watching from a distance, a Mexican officer muttered darkly, “God is a Yankee.”

The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo

Early in 1848, Mexico and the United States signed the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Mexico agreed to give up Texas and a vast region known as the Mexican Cession. (A cession is something that is given up.) This area included the present-day states of California, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, and New Mexico, as well as parts of Colorado and Wyoming. By this agreement, Mexico gave up half of all its territory.

In return, the United States agreed to pay Mexico $15 million. It also promised to protect the 80,000 Mexicans living in Texas and in the Mexican Cession.

In Washington, a few senators spoke up to oppose the treaty. Some of them argued that the United States had no right to any Mexican territory other than Texas. They believed that the Mexican War had been unjust and that the treaty was even more so. New Mexico and California together, they said, were “not worth a dollar” and should be returned to Mexico.

Other senators opposed the treaty because they wanted even more land. They wanted the Mexican Cession to include a large part of northern Mexico as well.

To most senators, however, the Mexican Cession was a Manifest Destiny dream come true. The senate ratified the treaty by a vote of 38 to 14.
“From Sea to Shining Sea”

A few years later, the United States acquired still more land from Mexico. In 1853, James Gadsden arranged the purchase of a strip of land just south of the Mexican Cession for $10 million. Railroad builders wanted this land because it was relatively flat and could serve as a good railroad route. With the acquisition of this land, known as the Gadsden Purchase, the nation stretched “from sea to shining sea.”

Most Americans were pleased with the new outlines of their country. Still, not everyone rejoiced in this expansion. Until the Mexican War, many people had believed that the United States was too good a nation to bully or invade its weaker neighbors. Now they knew that such behavior was the dark side of Manifest Destiny.

Part 2

**Directions:** Once all group members have finished reading the above text, discuss the following questions.

- How was the issue of slavery related to the Texas revolution in 1836?
- What did some Americans consider the “dark side” of Manifest Destiny?
- What is your opinion of Manifest Destiny and the strategies used to achieve it?
- Is the concept of Manifest Destiny unique to Americans? Explain your answer.

Part 3

**Directions:** You will now view the 10-minute section (29:00-39:00) of the film covering Texas, Manifest Destiny, and War with Mexico again. While watching, take note of how it compares to the textbook coverage. Discuss with your group, and write down any similarities and differences you notice in the information presented, tone, perspectives, language, etc. on one piece of paper.

- In what ways are the film and textbook coverage similar?
- In what ways are they different?
- In what ways do they complement each other?

Part 4

**Task:** If you were to write an informational piece or create your own documentary about the history of the far West, what topics would you cover? After listing the topics, circle the ones that you would prioritize, and explain why.

Then with your small group, discuss your lists and share ideas. Be prepared to summarize your small group discussion with the class. You can make changes to your list during your group discussion, as well.
Quotes by Anita Rodriguez

Part 1

Directions: With your group members, take turns reading the quotes by Anita Rodriguez from the film and respond to the questions below on a separate sheet of paper.

“We have so many different names and almost none of them have been chosen by ourselves. They have all been imposed by the bureaucracy and each one with its own agenda. And so I use the word “Hispanic” not because I like it or because it is in any way specific, but just because everybody knows what it means. And I’ve kind of given up and now it’s become even more complex. I mean I started out, let’s see, I started out as a Mexican Am—no—we started out as Spanish American. Then we became Mexican Americans, and then we were Chicanos, and it just went on and on and on. And now there’s LatinX and ChicanX and it’s really confusing.” (45:52)

“I tell my people’s stories in art so I’ve spent my life trying to preserve, you know, like the architectural traditions, the legends, the stories of a people who are vanishing. And this is something I inherited from my father who knew his culture was on the cusp of being swallowed and he was a great storyteller, you know, and he told the stories and suffused me with this passion to save it, to keep it.” (47:04)

“It was forbidden to speak Spanish at school. If you spoke Spanish at school, you would be punished. Then there was all this incredible prejudice against local people who were described as drunken and dirty and ignorant and primitive. There was never any mention of the American conquest. We woke up one morning and ‘Todos Gringos. We’re all Americans now,’ and it was not explained. And neither was the Spanish conquest. I mean that wasn’t talked about either. And so we were erased, and our history was erased. And we became invisible. … They wanted our land, but not us.” (47:46)

Anita mentions her people being labeled by different names at different times and says it was always changing (i.e., Spanish American, Mexican American, Chicano, LatinX) and confusing.

- What impact might that have on the people and their identity and sense of belonging?
- What do you think Anita means when she says her people were erased, her history was erased, and they became invisible?
- How does that statement make you feel?
- Have you ever felt erased or invisible? Do you think you’ve ever made someone else feel that way?
- What impact does that have on you?

Background information:

Anita’s ancestors lived in the region that is present-day Taos, New Mexico for 300 years. Taos has a history of fighting and conflict, enduring three conquests and a revolution. Anita describes Taos as charming and enchanting but with a racially segregated and deeply traumatized community, with high addiction and overdose, poverty, and infant mortality rates. The city has a diverse population with Natives, Hispanics, and Anglos as the three major groups. She believes the problems in her city are a result of historical trauma and conflict between the three groups, but she also believes healing is possible. As such, she is involved with the Taos Healing and Reconciliation Project, which aims to fight racism and cure the wounds of the past with indigenous healers from Africa, New Zealand, and Mexico who teach and support healing.
through practices passed on by indigenous oral traditions.

- In what ways is Anita making the best of difficult memories from history, her own life, her ancestors’ lives, and her community?
- Do you think healing is possible in situations like this? Why or why not?
- Consider a difficult experience or relationship in your own life. Think of ways you could turn it into something positive. Write down your ideas and how you think they could improve the situation and/or your perception of it.

Part 2

Directions: View Anita Rodriguez’ artwork entitled, “Pie for My Deceased” and respond to the prompts below.

Take several minutes to carefully look at Anita’s painting. “Pie for My Deceased” is an illustration of a conversation among her deceased relatives while eating their Day of the Dead
feast. The Day of the Dead is a Mexican holiday celebrated in early November when families share a feast and make food offerings to their deceased ancestors. The piece is also featured on the cover of her book, *Coyote in the Kitchen: A Memoir of New and Old Mexico*.

- Write down what you notice about the subjects, colors, details, etc.
- What emotions and message does the painting convey?
- What elements create the mood or message of the piece?
- In what ways does knowing Anita’s background affect your appreciation of her artwork?

**Part 3**

**Directions:** Read Anita Rodriguez’s poem below from the film, and answer the questions that follow on a separate sheet of paper.

*Like a cold, pale wind*

*Vale de frio* (it’s cold) they came

*Buying the land, then the plazas*

*And then nuestros casas* (our homes)

*No mas van, mijo* (do not go, my child)

- Are you familiar with the Spanish terms? If so, which ones?
- What images does the language of this poem create?
- What emotions does it elicit?

**Part 4**

**Task:** Underline words or phrases from her quotes and information above that you find especially powerful or meaningful. Then use them as inspiration to write your own poem or song lyrics, or create your own piece of art that captures Anita Rodriguez’ perspective and experience.

**Optional Extension Activities:**

- Learn more about Anita Rodriguez from her website anitaridriguez.com.
- Visual presentation to share with the class.
- Research indigenous healing practices and present your findings to class in a creative way.