

Mexican-American War – Educator Guide

The following activities and assessment ideas will help students address one or more of these guiding questions for this interactive.

- What were the key events leading up to and during the Mexican-American War?
- What policies and motivations influenced the United States' push for acquiring more land in the American South and West?
- How did those policies and motivations impact the growing tensions and ultimate war with Mexico?

Grades 8-12

Learning Objective: Students will understand the importance of evaluating differing perspectives on historical events by critically examining varying viewpoints on the Mexican-American War.

- Introduce the topic by asking students: *What was Manifest Destiny?* For an overview of the concept of Manifest Destiny and its role in U.S. westward expansion, access the **Westward Expansion** interactive map (<http://mapmaker.annenberg.org/Fyszda6jOctfmy7ymM1AM/>) and click on the Manifest Destiny bookmark. Project the information on that bookmark for the class and read through the information provided. Discuss the concept and ask students if they think the concept of Manifest Destiny has influenced our foreign policy.
- Introduce students to the **Mexican-American War** interactive map (<http://mapmaker.annenberg.org/fWV4X2bf3Pc9YBAWjiEN9i/>) and show them how to access the information in the bookmarks and markers. Tell students the maps provide an overview of the events leading up to and during the Mexican-American War, including the treaty that ended the war. Give students time to work individually or in pairs to read through the information in the maps.
- Tell students historians agree that the U.S. push for territory in the South and West was more than a result of beliefs in Manifest Destiny. Ask students to brainstorm some other reasons our country may have wanted the land owned by Mexico. (Student responses should include ideas about the need for more land for our growing population, income from mineral deposits in western territories, desire for expansion of transportation routes/methods from the Atlantic to Pacific oceans, among other responses.) Note: You may wish to expand this discussion by having students read through the maps and information in the resource “**United States History Map: The Nation Expands**” at <http://www.learner.org/interactives/historymap/states.html>.
- Tell students that the Mexican-American War was controversial at the time, with many Americans questioning the U.S. government's actions and motivations. And, of course, the Mexican government and people saw the war from a totally different perspective. Provide students to the links in the list below. These resources

Mexican-American War – Educator Guide

illustrate and describe differing perspectives on the war. Tell students that they will use these resources to present the perspectives in a class “fishbowl” activity. Divide the students into two groups of equal or nearly equal size. One group should read the All Students and For American Policies on the War resources. The other group should read the All Students and Against American Policies on the War resources. Tell students they should take notes on the perspectives they are reading in enough detail so they can refer back to them when they speak. Remind students to also use the information gathered from the interactive map bookmarks as they prepare to discuss their perspectives on the war.

All Students - Overview: “The Mexican-American War” -
<http://www.ushistory.org/us/29d.asp>

For U.S. Policies on the War:

- “The Mexican War” – a text from 1911 that was written to explain the Mexican War to students of the early 20th century. It was still in use in classrooms as late as the 1940s.
<http://www.sfmuseum.org/hist6/muzzey.html>
- “President James K. Polk, To the Congress of the United States: A Special Message Calling for a Declaration War against Mexico, Washington, May 11, 1846” <http://bit.ly/1Gq48S8>

Against U.S. Policies on the War

- “A Mexican Viewpoint on the War” <http://to.pbs.org/1W6dObT>
 - “Congressman Joshua Giddings, Debate on the Mexican War, House of Representatives, Washington, May 13, 1846” <http://bit.ly/1krGLxQ>
- After students have studied their assigned readings, set up the fishbowl. Arrange a circle of chairs in the middle of the room, with enough room around the outside of the circle for the rest of the class to observe. Have an equal number of “for” and “against” students sit in the circle, leaving about half the class as observers. Explain to students that the first group in the circle will take on the roles of the “for” and “against” perspectives on the Mexican-American War, respectfully debating the perspectives. The rest of the class will observe, taking notes on key points. After 10 minutes, the students will switch, with observers taking seats in the circle. They will continue the debate, taking their assigned roles/perspectives.
 - Implement the fishbowl, ensuring active participation by all students and maintaining respectful dialogue.
 - After both fishbowl sessions, lead students in debriefing the activity. As a whole class ask students to reflect on how they think the discussions went and what they learned from them.

Mexican-American War – Educator Guide

- Student Self-Assessment: Have students write a short reflection on their role in the fishbowl activity. Ask them to evaluate their participation as listeners and speakers.

Connections to National Standards

National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies (National Council for the Social Studies) - Middle school and high school

Theme #2: Time Continuity, and Change

Theme #3: People, Places, and Environments

National Geography Standards - Grades K-12

- Geography Standard 1: How to use maps and other geographic representations, geospatial technologies, and spatial thinking to understand and communicate information.
- Geography Standard 3: How to analyze the spatial organization of people, places, and environments on Earth's surface.
- Geography Standard 6: How culture and experience influence people's perception of places and regions.
- Geography Standard 12: The processes, patterns, and functions of human settlement.
- Geography Standard 17: How to apply geography to interpret the past.

National History Standards (National Center for History in the Schools)

United States Era 4: Standard 1C: The student understands the ideology of Manifest Destiny, the nation's expansion to the Northwest, and the Mexican-American War.

Grades 5-12:

- Explain the economic, political, racial, and religious roots of Manifest Destiny and analyze how the concept influenced the westward expansion of the nation.

Grades 9-12:

- Analyze different perspectives on the Mexican-American War.

Historical Thinking Standard 3: The student engages in historical analysis and interpretation: Therefore, the student is able to:

- Compare and contrast differing sets of ideas, values, personalities, behaviors, and institutions by identifying likenesses and differences.
- Consider multiple perspectives of various peoples in the past by demonstrating their differing motives, beliefs, interests, hopes, and fears.

Mexican-American War – Educator Guide

Common Core State Standards—English Language Arts: Grades 6-12 Literacy in History/Social Studies

- Key Ideas and Details: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.PH.9-10.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.
- Key Ideas and Details: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.PH.11-12.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text.
- Comprehension and Collaboration: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.2 Analyze the purpose of information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and evaluate the motives (e.g., social, commercial, political) behind its presentation.

Common Core State Standards—English Language Arts

- Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.
- Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks.