

Teaching With Documents: The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo

Background

The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (gwah-dah-loop-ay ee-dahl-go), which brought an official end to the Mexican-American War (1846-1848) was signed on February 2, 1848, at Guadalupe Hidalgo, a city north of the capital where the Mexican government had fled with the advance of U.S. forces. To explore the circumstances that led to this war with Mexico, visit the Teaching with Documents lesson, "[Lincoln's Spot Resolutions](#)."

With the defeat of its army and the fall of the capital, Mexico City, in September 1847 the Mexican government surrendered to the United States and entered into negotiations to end the war. The peace talks were negotiated by Nicholas Trist, chief clerk of the State Department, who had accompanied General Winfield Scott as a diplomat and President Polk's representative. Trist and General Scott, after two previous unsuccessful attempts to negotiate a treaty with Santa Anna, determined that the only way to deal with Mexico was as a conquered enemy. Nicholas Trist negotiated with a special commission representing the collapsed government led by Don Bernardo Couto, Don Miguel Atristain, and Don Luis Gonzaga Cuevas of Mexico.

In *The Mexican War*, author Otis Singletary states that President Polk had recalled Trist under the belief that negotiations would be carried out with a Mexican delegation in Washington. In the six weeks it took to deliver Polk's message, Trist had received word that the Mexican government had named its special commission to negotiate. Against the president's recall, Trist determined that Washington did not understand the situation in Mexico and negotiated the peace treaty in defiance of the president. In a December 4, 1847, letter to his wife, he wrote, "Knowing it to be the very last chance and impressed with the dreadful consequences to our country which cannot fail to attend the loss of that chance, I decided today at noon to attempt to make a treaty; the decision is altogether my own."

In *Defiant Peacemaker: Nicholas Trist in the Mexican War*, author Wallace Ohrt described Trist as uncompromising in his belief that justice could be served only by Mexico's full surrender, including surrender of territory. Ignoring the president's recall command with the full knowledge that his defiance would cost him his career, Trist chose to adhere to his own principles and negotiate a treaty in violation of his instructions. His stand made him briefly a very controversial figure in the United States.

Under the terms of the treaty negotiated by Trist, Mexico ceded to the United States Upper California and New Mexico. This was known as the Mexican Cession and included present-day Arizona and New Mexico and parts of Utah, Nevada, and Colorado (see Article V of the treaty). Mexico relinquished all claims to Texas and recognized the Rio Grande as the southern boundary with the United States (see Article V).

The United States paid Mexico \$15,000,000 "in consideration of the extension acquired by the boundaries of the United States" (see Article XII of the treaty) and agreed to pay American citizens debts owed to them by the Mexican government (see Article XV). Other provisions included protection of property and civil rights of Mexican nationals living within the new boundaries of the United States (see Articles VIII and IX), the promise of the United States to police its boundaries (see Article XI), and compulsory arbitration of future disputes between the two countries (see Article XXI).

Trist sent a copy to Washington by the fastest means available, forcing Polk to decide whether or not to repudiate the highly satisfactory handiwork of his discredited subordinate. Polk chose to forward the treaty to the Senate. When the Senate reluctantly ratified the treaty (by a vote of 34 to 14) on March 10, 1848, it deleted Article X guaranteeing the protection of Mexican land grants. Following the ratification, U.S. troops were removed from the Mexican capital.

To carry the treaty into effect, commissioner Colonel Jon Weller and surveyor Andrew Grey were appointed by the United States government and General Pedro Conde and Sr. Jose Illarregui were appointed by the Mexican government to survey and set the boundary. A subsequent treaty of December 30, 1853, altered the border from the initial one by adding 47 more boundary markers to the original six. Of the 53 markers, the majority were rude piles of stones; a few were of durable character with proper inscriptions.

Over time, markers were moved or destroyed, resulting in two subsequent conventions (1882 and 1889) between the two countries to more clearly define the boundaries. Photographers were brought in to document the location of the markers. These photographs are in Record Group 77, Records of the Office of the Chief Engineers, in the National Archives. An [example of one of these photographs](#), taken in the 1890s, is available online through the [Archival Research Catalog](#) (ARC) database, identifier: [519681](#)

FROM: <http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/guadalupe-hidalgo/>

CALIFORNIA STATE STANDARDS (Grades 5, 8, & 11) relevant to the Mexican-American War

Grade 5:

5.8 Students trace the colonization, immigration, and settlement patterns of the American people from 1789 to the mid-1800s, with emphasis on the role of economic incentives, effects of the physical and political geography, and transportation systems.

1. Discuss the waves of immigrants from Europe between 1789 and 1850 and their modes of transportation into the Ohio and Mississippi Valleys and through the Cumberland Gap (e.g., overland wagons, canals, flatboats, steamboats).
2. Name the states and territories that existed in 1850 and identify their locations and major geographical features (e.g., mountain ranges, principal rivers, dominant plant regions).
3. Demonstrate knowledge of the explorations of the trans-Mississippi West following the Louisiana Purchase (e.g., Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, Zebulon Pike, John Fremont).
4. Discuss the experiences of settlers on the overland trails to the West (e.g., location of the routes; purpose of the journeys; the influence of the terrain, rivers, vegetation, and climate; life in the territories at the end of these trails).
5. Describe the continued migration of Mexican settlers into Mexican territories of the West and Southwest.
6. Relate how and when California, Texas, Oregon, and other western lands became part of the United States, including the significance of the Texas War for Independence and the Mexican-American War.

5.9 Students know the location of the current 50 states and the names of their capitals.

Grade 8:

8.5 Students analyze U.S. foreign policy in the early Republic.

1. Understand the political and economic causes and consequences of the War of 1812 and know the major battles, leaders, and events that led to a final peace.
2. Know the changing boundaries of the United States and describe the relationships the country had with its neighbors (current Mexico and Canada) and Europe, including the influence of the Monroe Doctrine, and how those relationships influenced westward expansion and the Mexican-American War.
3. Outline the major treaties with American Indian nations during the administrations of the first four presidents and the varying outcomes of those treaties.

8.8 Students analyze the divergent paths of the American people in the West from 1800 to the mid-1800s and the challenges they faced.

1. Discuss the election of Andrew Jackson as president in 1828, the importance of Jacksonian democracy, and his actions as president (e.g., the spoils system, veto of the National Bank, policy of Indian removal, opposition to the Supreme Court).
2. Describe the purpose, challenges, and economic incentives associated with westward expansion, including the concept of Manifest Destiny (e.g., the Lewis and Clark expedition, accounts of the removal of Indians, the Cherokees' "Trail of Tears," settlement of the Great Plains) and the territorial acquisitions that spanned numerous decades.

3. Describe the role of pioneer women and the new status that western women achieved (e.g., Laura Ingalls Wilder, Annie Bidwell; slave women gaining freedom in the West; Wyoming granting suffrage to women in 1869).
4. Examine the importance of the great rivers and the struggle over water rights.
5. Discuss Mexican settlements and their locations, cultural traditions, attitudes toward slavery, land-grant system, and economies.
6. Describe the Texas War for Independence and the Mexican-American War, including territorial settlements, the aftermath of the wars, and the effects the wars had on the lives of Americans, including Mexican Americans today.

Grade 11: Since this course focuses on 20th century history, there is no mention of the war.

11.1 Students analyze the significant events in the founding of the nation and its attempts to realize the philosophy of government described in the Declaration of Independence.

1. Describe the Enlightenment and the rise of democratic ideas as the context in which the nation was founded.
2. Analyze the ideological origins of the American Revolution, the Founding Fathers' philosophy of divinely bestowed unalienable natural rights, the debates on the drafting and ratification of the Constitution, and the addition of the Bill of Rights.
3. Understand the history of the Constitution after 1787 with emphasis on federal versus state authority and growing democratization.
4. Examine the effects of the Civil War and Reconstruction and of the industrial revolution, including demographic shifts and the emergence in the late nineteenth century of the United States as a world power.

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Teaching With Documents Lesson Plan: The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo

Teaching Activities

Standards Correlations

This lesson correlates to the National History Standards.

- Era 4 -Expansion and Reform (1801-1861)
 - Standard 1C -Demonstrate understanding of the ideology of Manifest Destiny, the nation's expansion to Northwest, and the Mexican-American War.

This lesson correlates to the National Standards for Civics and Government.

- Standard III. B.2. -Explain the major responsibilities of the national government for foreign policy and how foreign policies, including trade and national security, affect everyday lives and communities.
- Standard IV. A.1. - Explain how nation-states interact with each other.
- Standard IV. B.2 .- Describe the various means used to attain the ends of United States foreign policy, such as diplomacy; economics, military and humanitarian aid; treaties; sanctions; military intervention; covert action.

Constitutional Connection

This lesson relates to the power granted to the president and the Senate to make and approve treaties with foreign nations ([Article II, Section 2, Clause 2](#), of the U.S. Constitution).

Cross-curricular Connections

Share these lessons with your history, government, and language arts colleagues.

Analyzing the Document

1. Use the Teaching With Documents activity, "[Lincoln's Spot Resolutions](#)," to prepare the students for studying the Mexican War. Instruct the students to review their textbook and other source information about the time period and the events that led to the end of the Mexican War and the signing of the treaty.
2. Divide the students into groups of 3 to 5 and ask them to use the resources reviewed in #1 to identify the issues/causes that led to the Mexican War. Direct them to categorize the data as long-term, short-term, or immediate. Ask each group to report their results to the class in order to create a comprehensive classroom list of the issues/causes.
3. Distribute copies of the [Written Document Analysis Worksheet](#) to students. Instruct them to analyze document 1, page 1 , of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in either a classroom computer activity or a homework assignment. Upon completion of the assignment, discuss with the class the worksheet results, including the language and formality of the document.

4. Distribute the comprehensive list of issues/causes created in #2 and copies of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo to new groups of 3-5 students. Direct the groups to match or link the articles of the treaty with the causes/issues that lead to war. Groups should report to the class the information that they have compiled.

Note: A transcript of the treaty is available online from the California State University at <http://www.monterey.edu/other-sites/history/treaty.html>

5. Locate and distribute prepared map sets and direct students to use their textbooks and other related resources to identify the boundary changes that took place in the United States after the treaty. Ask the students to label the maps from the time period before the treaty (include boundary lines, territories, and major land features).
6. Distribute copies of document 3 , the photograph of the border marker being rebuilt in the 1890s, and instruct them to complete the [Photograph Analysis Worksheet](#). Discuss with the class the worksheet results, including possible methods that may have been used to determine the exact location of the marker. When completed, share with students the information about the border markers from the Historical Background section of the lesson.

In a follow up activity, discuss with students the following topics: how the Mexican-U.S. boundaries are determined and marked today; what ways public and private land boundaries are determined and marked; how disputes among the states or between the United States and foreign nations (ie. Mt. Vernon Conference-1785, Pinckney Treaty, Louisiana Purchase, settlement of the Oregon Territory-1846, etc.) have had an impact on U.S. history; and how boundary lines between private individuals have arisen and caused controversies between individuals.

7. Ask students to write a position paper supporting or opposing the following thesis: Considering the events that led to the Mexican War, the terms negotiated in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo were a just conclusion to this crisis
8. Direct students to read [Article II, Section 2, Clause 2](#), of the U.S. Constitution and then prepare a list of the actions taken by the executive and legislative branches in negotiating, ratifying, and enforcing the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.

The document included in this project is from Record Group 11, General Records of the United States. It is available online through the Archival Research Catalog ([ARC](#)) Identifier:[299809](#)

The photograph included in this lesson is from Record Group 77, Records of the Office of the Chief Engineers. It is identifier:[519682](#)

[ARC](#) replaces its prototype, the NARA Archival Information Locator (NAIL). You can still perform a keyword, digitized image and location search. ARC's advanced functionalities also allow you to search by organization, person, or topic.

ARC is a searchable database that contains information about a wide variety of NARA holdings across the country. You can use ARC to search record descriptions by keywords or topics and retrieve digital copies of selected textual documents, photographs, maps, and sound recordings related to thousands of topics. Currently, about 20% of NARA's vast holdings have been described in ARC. 124,000 digital images can be searched in ARC. In keeping with NARA's Strategic Plan, the percentage of holdings described in ARC will grow continually.

This article was written by Tom Gray, a teacher at DeRuyter Central Middle School in DeRuyter, NY.

Written Document Analysis Worksheet

1. TYPE OF DOCUMENT (Check one):

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper | <input type="checkbox"/> Map | <input type="checkbox"/> Advertisement |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Letter | <input type="checkbox"/> Telegram | <input type="checkbox"/> Congressional record |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Patent | <input type="checkbox"/> Press release | <input type="checkbox"/> Census report |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Memorandum | <input type="checkbox"/> Report | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

2. UNIQUE PHYSICAL QUALITIES OF THE DOCUMENT (Check one or more):

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Interesting letterhead | <input type="checkbox"/> Notations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Handwritten | <input type="checkbox"/> "RECEIVED" stamp |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Typed | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Seals | |

3. DATE(S) OF DOCUMENT:

4. AUTHOR (OR CREATOR) OF THE DOCUMENT:

POSITION (TITLE):

5. FOR WHAT AUDIENCE WAS THE DOCUMENT WRITTEN?

6. DOCUMENT INFORMATION (There are many possible ways to answer A-E.)

A. List three things the author said that you think are important:

B. Why do you think this document was written?

C. What evidence in the document helps you know why it was written? Quote from the document.

D. List two things the document tells you about life in the United States at the time it was written:

E. Write a question to the author that is left unanswered by the document:
