

LESSON EIGHT: IMMIGRATION

Enduring understandings:

The citizens of the state of Texas come from diverse cultural backgrounds. The immigration of Mexican-Americans to Texas has had a huge impact on the state, evident in Russell Lee's photo essay, *The Study of the Spanish-Speaking People of Texas*.

Essential questions:

What ethnic groups have immigrated to Texas?

Why did Mexican-Americans immigrate to Texas?

How do we see Mexican-Americans' influence on the state?

How does Russell Lee's photo essay help us better understand the history of Mexican-American immigration?

TEKS:

- 7.1 (B) apply absolute and relative chronology through the sequencing of significant individuals, events, and time periods
- 7.2 understand how individuals, events, and issues prior to the Texas Revolution shaped the history of Texas
- 7.7 understand how individuals, events, and issues shaped the history of Texas during the 20th century
- 7.7 (D) analyze the political, economic, and social impact of major wars, including World War I and World War II, on the history of Texas
- 7.11 (A) analyze why immigrant groups came to Texas and where they settled
- 7.11 (B) analyze how immigration and migration to Texas in the 19th and 20th centuries have influenced Texas
- (7.12) (C) explain the changes in the types of jobs and occupations that have resulted from the urbanization of Texas
- 7.19 (A) explain how the diversity of Texas is reflected in a variety of cultural activities, celebrations, and performances
- 7.19 (B) describe how people from selected racial, ethnic, and religious groups attempt to maintain their cultural heritage while adapting to the larger Texas culture
- 7.19 (C) identify examples of Spanish influence on place names, such as Amarillo and Río Grande, and on vocabulary in Texas, including words that originated from the Spanish cattle industry
- 7.21 (A) differentiate between, locate, and use primary and secondary sources such as computer software, databases, media and news services, biographies, interviews, and artifacts to acquire information about Texas
- 7.21 (B) analyze information by sequencing, categorizing, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, comparing, contrasting, finding the main idea, summarizing, making generalizations and predictions, and drawing inferences and conclusions

Materials:

1. Internet access with bookmarked link to *The Study of the Spanish-Speaking People of Texas* Web site: <http://www.cah.utexas.edu/ssspot/>

2. Handbook of Texas “Mexican-Americans” articles [1 per student]
3. Understanding Mexican-American Immigration handouts [1 per student]

Objectives:

- Students will identify the meaning of the following terms: immigrant, immigration, migrate, and assimilation.
- Students will identify reasons that immigrant groups came to Texas and explain where groups settled in Texas.
- Students will analyze the influence of immigrant groups on Texas.
- Students will explain Mexican-Americans’ contribution to the cultural diversity of Texas.

Anticipatory set:

Ask students:

When did your family come to Texas? Why did they immigrate here? Ask students to share the immigration stories of their families.

Procedure:

Explain to students:

In *The Study of the Spanish-Speaking People of Texas*, Russell Lee documented the lives of Mexican-Americans, an immigrant group with great importance in Texas. In today’s lesson, we will examine the immigration of this group, considering the reasons why Mexicans came to Texas, how they have influenced the state, and how we see the story of their immigration reflected in the work of Russell Lee.

Introduce the topic of immigration with a class discussion. Address general immigration questions, as well as issues that relate more specifically to Mexican-American immigration. The discussion should include consideration of important immigration issues during the mid-20th century, including the impact of the Great Depression on immigration, Mexican repatriation, the Bracero program, and Operation Wetback. Additionally, clarify the meaning of terms that describe the Mexican-American population (e.g. Latino, Hispanic, Tejano). [Note: for complete background information on these topics, see the Handbook of Texas Online.]

Other questions may include:

- What is an immigrant?
- Why is the United States sometimes called a “nation of immigrants”?
- Why would people want to leave the country of their birth to go to a new country?
- What immigrant groups have we studied this year? Where in Texas did these groups settle?
- What problems do all immigrants face?
- What is assimilation? Why is it important for immigrants to assimilate into the culture of their new country?
- How does immigration benefit Texas? What are the negative effects of immigration?

- What Latino groups have immigrated to Texas? Where did they come from? Why do you think they left their country of origin? What problems do Latino immigrants face in Texas?
- How have Mexican-American immigrants influenced Texas? Places names? Celebrations? Food?
- How is Mexican-American immigration beneficial to Texas?
- How have other immigrant cultures influenced Texas?
- How do people from different racial and ethnic groups maintain their cultural heritage?
- Why is it important for immigrant groups to keep ties to the culture of their birth country?
- Why do you think Russell Lee and Professor George Sanchez wanted to document the lives of Mexican-American immigrants?

Explain to students:

Next, we will look more closely at the history of Mexican-American immigrants and use the images of Russell Lee to understand their history. Pass out Understanding Mexican-American Immigration handout and Handbook of Texas “Mexican-Americans” article. Allow students at least an hour to read the passage and complete the handout. Students may require Internet access for the questions about images from *The Study of the Spanish-Speaking People of Texas*.

Closure:

Review the concept of immigration with students, and ask how the photographs of Russell Lee have helped them better understand Mexican-American immigration.

Evaluation:

Evaluate students’ answers to Understanding Mexican-American Immigration handout.

Extension:

Students may interview a family member about their family’s immigration to Texas.

Possible interview questions include:

- Where did our family come to Texas from?
- When did they immigrate?
- Why did they come to Texas?
- Where did they settle in Texas?

Students share the results of the interview with the class.

MEXICAN AMERICANS [excerpt]

People of Mexican descent in Texas trace their biological origins to the racial mixture that occurred following the Spanish conquest of Mexico in the 1520s. During the Spanish colonial period, population increases occurred as Spanish males mixed with Indian females, begetting a *mestizo* race. By 1821, when Mexico won its independence from Spain, the mestizo population almost equaled the size of the indigenous stock and that of Iberian-born persons. Mexicans advanced northward from central Mexico in exploratory and settlement operations soon after the conquest, but did not permanently claim the Texas frontierland until after 1710. In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the French became increasingly active along the Texas Gulf Coast, and in response, the viceroy in Mexico City made preparations for the colonization of the Texas wilderness. The first expedition in 1716 peopled an area that subsequently became the town of Nacogdoches; a second in 1718 settled present-day San Antonio; and a third established La Bahía (Goliad) in 1721. During the 1740s and 1750s, the crown founded further colonies along both banks of the Rio Grande, including what is now Laredo. At this early time, the crown relied primarily on persuasion to get settlers to pick up and relocate in the far-off Texas lands. Those responding hailed from Coahuila and Nuevo León, though intrepid souls from the interior joined the early migrations. In reality, few pioneers wished to live in isolation or amid conditions that included possible Indian attacks. They feared a setting that lacked adequate supplies, sustenance, and medical facilities for the sick, especially infants. Frontier living inhibited population growth so that at the beginning of the nineteenth century, when Spanish Texas neared its end, the Mexican-descent population numbered only about 5,000.

Between then and the time of the Texas Revolution in 1836, the number of Hispanics fluctuated, but then increased perceptibly, so that the first federal census taken of Texas in 1850 counted more than 14,000 residents of Mexican origin. Subsequently, people migrated from Mexico in search of agricultural work in the state, and in the last half of the century, moved north due to a civil war in the homeland (the War of the Reform, 1855-61) and the military resistance against the French presence (1862-67). But they also looked to Texas as a refuge from the poverty at home, a condition exacerbated by the emergence of President Porfirio Díaz (1876-1911), whose dictatorial rule favored landowners and other privileged elements in society. The Mexican Revolution (1910-1920) increased the movement of people across the Rio Grande. Mass relocation persisted into the 1920s as agricultural expansion in the southwestern United States also acted to entice the desperately poor. The total Mexican-descent population in Texas may have approximated 700,000 by 1930. The Great Depression and repatriation efforts and deportation drives undertaken during the 1930s stymied population expansion. Growth resumed during the 1940s, however, as labor shortages in the United States induced common people from Mexico to seek escape from nagging poverty in the homeland. Many turned to Texas ranches and farms, but also to urban opportunities, as the state entered the post-World War II industrial boom. Their presence, combined with births among the native-born population, augmented the Spanish-surnamed population to

1,400,000 by 1960. Though economic refugees from Mexico continued to add to the expansion of Tejano communities after the 1960s, the majority of children born since that date have had native-born parents. The 1990 census counted 4,000,000 people of Mexican descent in the state. Fewer than 20 percent of that population were of foreign birth.

In 1836, when Texas acquired independence from Mexico, Tejanos remained concentrated in settlements founded during the eighteenth century, namely Nacogdoches, San Antonio, Goliad, and Laredo. Other communities with a primarily Mexican-descent population in 1836 included Victoria, founded by Martín De León in 1824, and the villages of San Elizario, Ysleta, and Socorro in far west Texas. Spaniards had founded these latter settlements on the west bank of the Rio Grande during the 1680s as they sought to claim New Mexico, but the villages became part of the future West Texas when the Rio Grande changed course in the 1830s. Population dispersals until the mid-nineteenth century occurred mainly within the regions of Central and South Texas. In the former area, Tejanos spread out into the counties east and southeast of San Antonio seeking a livelihood in this primarily Anglo-dominated region. In South Texas, they pushed from the Rio Grande settlements toward Nueces River ranchlands and still composed a majority of the section's population despite the increased number of Anglo arrivals after the Mexican War of 1846-48. In the years after the Civil War, Mexicans moved west of the 100th meridian, migrating simultaneously with Anglo pioneers then displacing Indians from their native habitat and converting hinterlands into cattle and sheep ranches. By 1900, Tejanos were settled in all three sections. They formed a minority in Central Texas and a majority in South Texas; they held a demographic advantage along the border counties of West Texas, but were outnumbered by Anglos in that section's interior.

The rise of commercial agriculture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries summoned laborers for seasonal and farm work, and both recent arrivals from Mexico and native-born Tejanos answered the call by heading into South and Central Texas fields. During this period, they also made for Southeast Texas and North Texas, searching out cotton lands as well as opportunities in large cities such as Houston and Dallas. Between 1910 and 1929, migrant workers began what became a yearly migrant swing that started in the farms of South Texas and headed northward into the developing Northwest Texas and Panhandle cottonlands. They settled in smaller communities along the routes of migration, and by the 1930s the basic contours of modern-day Tejano demography had taken form. With the exception of Northeast Texas, most cities and towns in the state by the pre-World War II era had Tejano populations. Tejanos relied on a wide spectrum of occupations in the nineteenth century, though most found themselves confined to jobs as day laborers and in other unspecialized tasks. They worked as maids, restaurant helpers, and laundry workers, but the great majority turned to range duties due to the orientation of the economy and their skills as ranchhands and shepherds (*pastores*). A small percentage found a niche as entrepreneurs or ranchers. After the 1880s, Texas Mexicans turned to new avenues of livelihood, such as building railroads and performing other arduous tasks. During the agricultural revolution of the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, many worked grubbing brush and picking cotton, vegetables, and

fruits, primarily in the fields of South Texas, but also migrated into the other regions of the state as farmhands. In the urban settlements, an entrepreneurial sector-comprising shopowners, labor agents, barbers, theater owners, restaurateurs, and the like-ministered to Mexican consumers in familiar terms. Even as Texas society experienced increased urban movements following World War I, Tejanos remained preponderantly an agrarian people. In towns, many faced labor segregation and took menial jobs in construction work, city projects, railroad lines, slaughterhouses, cotton compresses, and whatever else availed itself. After World War II, however, increased numbers of Tejanos left agricultural work and found opportunities in the industrializing cities. Most found improvements in wages and working conditions in unskilled or semiskilled positions, though a growing number penetrated the professional, managerial, sales, clerical, and craft categories. Presently, the great majority of Tejanos hold urban-based occupations that range from high-paying professional positions to minimum-wage, unskilled jobs. An unfortunate minority remains tied to farm work as migrating *campesinos* (farmworkers).

Since the initial settlements of the early eighteenth century, a sense of community has given Tejanos a particular identity. On the frontier, common experiences and problems forced Texas Mexicans to adjust in ways different from those of their counterparts in the Mexican interior. Tejanos fashioned an ethic of self-reliance, wresting their living from a ranching culture, improvising ways to survive in the wilderness expanse, and devising specific political responses to local needs despite directives from the royal government. In barrios (urban neighborhoods) and rural settlements in the era following the establishment of American rule, Tejanos combined tenets of Mexican tradition with those of American culture. The result was a Tejano community that practiced a familiar folklore, observed Catholic holy days and Mexican national holidays, spoke the Spanish language, yet sought participation in national life. But Tejanos faced lynching, discrimination, segregation, political disfranchisement, and other injustices. This produced a community at once admiring and distrusting of United States republicanism. The arrival of thousands of Mexican immigrants in the early years of the twentieth century affected group consciousness as now a major portion of the population looked to the motherland for moral guidance and even allegiance. Recent arrivals reinforced a Mexican mentality, as they based familial and community behavior upon the traditions of the motherland. Many took a keener interest in the politics of Mexico than that of the United States. By the 1920s, however, birth in Texas or upbringing in the state produced newer levels of Americanization. Increasingly, community leaders sought the integration of Mexicans into mainstream affairs, placing emphasis on the learning of English, on acquaintance with the American political system, and acceptance of social norms of the United States. In modern times, a bicultural Hispanic community identifies primarily with United States institutions, while still upholding Mexican customs and acknowledging its debt to the country of its forefathers.

The complete version of this Handbook of Texas article is available online at: <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/MM/pqmue.html>.

Understanding Mexican-American Immigration

Name _____

Directions: Use the *Handbook of Texas* article “Mexican-Americans” and the Russell Lee *The Study of the Spanish-Speaking People of Texas* Web site to answer the following questions.

In the space provided below, create a timeline showing events important in the immigration history of Mexican-Americans. Include these five events on your timeline: the beginning of the Great Depression, the start of World War II, the passage of the Bracero law, the end of World War II, and Texas’ independence from Mexico. Reread the article about Mexican-Americans and add five other dates significant to the group’s immigration to Texas.

Using facts provided in the article, make a bar graph showing the number of people of Mexican descent in Texas during the following years: 1800, 1850, 1930, 1960, and 1990.

When did the population of people of Mexican descent increase the most? When did it increase the least?

Why did the Mexican viceroy want to settle Texas?

What were the first three Mexican colonies in Texas?

Why didn't many Mexican immigrants come to Texas before 1800?

What reasons compelled Mexicans to immigrate to Texas during the 19th century?

Why did immigration decrease during the 1930s?

Where did most people of Mexican descent live in the 1836? How did this change by 1900?

What kinds of jobs did most Mexican-Americans hold before World War II?

How did job opportunities change for Mexican-Americans after World War II?

How does the Mexican-American community combine Mexican traditions with American institutions?

According to the article, what percentage of Texas' Mexican-descent population was foreign-born in 1990? What can you infer from this statistic about the rate of immigration from Mexico?

Does Russell Lee's *Study of the Spanish-Speaking People of Texas* support what the article states about where Mexican immigrants settled in Texas? Explain.

Use the Russell Lee Web site to locate images showing people's occupations. Do these images support or refute what the article says about the kinds of jobs Mexican-Americans had after World War II?

How can we see evidence of the Bracero program in the images of Russell Lee?



Untitled

1949

Discrimination. Dimmitt, Texas. This is a small, west Texas wheat town with practically no permanent Spanish-American population. The sign is meant for the migratory agricultural worker.

How does this primary source support what the article says about segregation?



Untitled
1949

Mr. and Mrs. Alfonso Orea Velez, who own the Tex-Mex newsstand. They carry a large supply of Mexican medicinal herbs and traditional folk remedies. Corpus Christi, Texas.

How does this image show how Mexican-American immigrants maintained ties to their native culture?

Can you find evidence of assimilation and Americanization in the Russell Lee images? Explain.