



LIBERATED ETHNIC STUDIES

MODEL CURRICULUM CONSORTIUM

The Untold Story of Mexican Railroad Workers in the United States 1870-1930

Time: One day (4 hours)

Grade Level: 4th grade

Purpose (What will students learn from this lesson?):

The purpose of this lesson is to teach students about the Mexican railroad workers that have been invisible in our school text books for too long.

Students will learn

- about the Mexican railroad workers, the Traqueros, that built the US railroads
- about the origin of Mexican boxcar communities and the hardships involved
- how Traqueros are not acknowledged for their contributions in school textbooks and represent marginalized knowledge

Unit Enduring Understandings Alignment:

Unit 2 - Stories: The collective narratives of my people.

- We understand and embrace the historical contributions, intellectual knowledge and cultural wealth of our people.
- We understand and place a high value on the stories of resilience, survival and resistance of our people.

Lesson Guiding Questions:

- Have you ever done something without being recognized or acknowledged? How did that make you feel?
- Has someone in your family ever done something and not received credit for doing it? How did that make you feel?
- In your opinion, why do you think Mexican railroad workers are excluded from being represented in our textbook? Provide your reasoning.
- In your opinion, is it important to include Mexican railroad workers in our 4th grade textbook when learning about Who Built the Railroad? Provide your reasoning.
- In your opinion, do you think educating the community about the Traqueros would allow local Chicano/Latino youth to take pride in their culture? Provide your reasoning.

Essential Skills:

- Speaking in complete sentences
- Sharing an opinion with reasoning
- Engaging with others in discussion

Cultural Wealth (Yosso, p. 78):

- Linguistic Capital - Students will use their communication skills in multiple languages to express themselves.
- Familial Capital - Students will understand the importance of maintaining a healthy connection to their community.

Ethnic Studies Principles Alignment:

- Celebrate and honor Native People/s of the land and communities of color by providing a space to share their stories of struggle and resistance, along with their intellectual and cultural wealth;
- Center and place high value on pre-colonial, ancestral, indigenous, diasporic, familial, and marginalized knowledge;
- Connect ourselves to past and contemporary resistance movements that struggle for social justice on the global and local levels to ensure a truer democracy

Standards Alignment:

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.7 - Interpret information presented visually, orally, or quantitatively (e.g., in charts, graphs, diagrams, time lines, animations, or interactive elements on Web pages) and explain how the information contributes to an understanding of the text in which it appears.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.4.1 - Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 4 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

- CCSS.History-Social Science.4.4 - Discuss immigration and migration to California between 1850 and 1900, including the diverse composition of those who came; the countries of origin and their relative locations; and conflicts and accords among the diverse groups (e.g., the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act).

Materials:

Google Slides Presentation	Talking piece for community circle
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Modifications, Accommodations, Resources for Multilingual Students :

Sentence Frames Restate questions in simpler words	Student Engagement Strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Think Pair Share ● Community Circle ● Whole Group Discussion
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Critical Vocabulary:

CRITICAL VOCABULARY	Definition and Rationale for choosing this word, phrase, or concept	Idea for pre-teaching or front-loading the concept.
<i>Marginalized knowledge</i>	knowledge that has been devalued, ignored, suppressed, or disrespected, directly or indirectly by a dominant culture or institution.	Assess for prior knowledge through discussion. Show a visual along with the definition.
<i>Traqueros</i>	Traqueros ('track workers') were Mexican and Mexican American laborers who worked in the building and expansion of the railroad throughout the United States.	Assess for prior knowledge through discussion. Show a visual along with the definition.
<i>Mexican boxcar</i>	Traqueros and their families lived in converted	Assess for prior

<i>communities</i>	boxcars that were grouped together into settlements. These communities existed all over the country and in major cities including Chicago, Pittsburgh, Los Angeles, and San Diego.	knowledge through discussion. Show a visual along with the definition.
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C1: Cultural Ritual and/or Energizer

Title of Cultural Ritual/Energizer:

Description: The Cultural Energizer will be done on Day One of the lesson in two parts (Land Acknowledgement and Ancestor Acknowledgement).


STEP	DESCRIPTION	TIME
Step 1	Land Acknowledgement Let's take a moment to honor these ancestral lands we are collectively gathered upon and support the resilience and strength that all Indigenous people have shown worldwide. We are currently in _____ which is on the traditional unceded territory of the _____.	3min
Step 2	Ancestor Acknowledgement We also honor those that came before us, our ancestors. We carry our ancestors in our heart and in our minds. Share with students the ancestor you are honoring today and why?	3min







C2: Critical Concepts



Title of Lecture, Slidedeck/Presentation, and/or Activity:


Description: Google Slide Presentation where the teacher facilitates group discussion.

STEP	DESCRIPTION	TIME
Slide/	Title Page	1min

Step 1		
Slide/ Step 2	Guiding Values and Principles of Ethnic Studies	1min
Slide/ Step 3	California Common Core State Standards	1min
Slide/ Step 4	Land Acknowledgement	3min
Slide/ Step 5	Ancestor Acknowledgement	3min
Slide/ Step 6	 Put in Your Two Cents: Provide students with two pennies and a small cup at each table pod. Read the first question. Students then take turns speaking and drop the penny in the cup when they speak. Repeat for second question. Call on volunteers to share their responses to the whole group.	7min
Slide/ Step 7	Introduce the Traqueros and how they are still not recognized or given credit for building the U.S. railroad because it is marginalized knowledge.	3min
Slide/ Step 8-10	Write vocabulary words on the board and read the words out loud together. Ask students if they know the definition of any of the words. Discuss then begin slide visuals with vocabulary words.	10min
Slide/ Step 11	Have students take out their textbook (or read the slide if the textbook is unavailable) and ask them if they recall learning about the Traqueros in their textbook when they read Who Built the Railroad. Share how the Traqueros were working alongside the Chinese and Irish in the 1870's. Blacks and Native Americans also worked the railroad and are not discussed in the textbook.	5min
Slide/ Step 12	This is a map of the First US Transcontinental Railroad that was finished in 1869. Share how the entire right side of the map continues to be built after 1869 and they will learn that the Traqueros provided the labor for the majority of those railroad tracks.	2min
Slide/ Step 13	Refer back to the text book and ask them if they recall learning about the Traqueros in their textbook when they read After the Railroad. Another failed opportunity	2min
Slide/ Step 14	Share how Traqueros provided the majority of the cheap labor those ten years.	3min
Slide/ Step 15	Share how in Table 2.1 the US Immigration count shows an increase of Mexican workers from 1894-1920. Despite such large numbers they continue to be invisible when learning	3min

	about Who Built the Railroads.	
Slide/ Step 16	 Facilitate a group discussion around the following question: What information can you interpret from Table 2.2?	5min
Slide/ Step 17	Connect map visual to Table 2.2 showing the amount of railroad tracks the Traqueros built for the Sante Fe Railroad Company.	3min
Slide/ Step 18	Visual maps before and after the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882.	3min
Slide/ Step 19	 What do you notice? What do you wonder? Traquero Visual Text #1	3min
Slide/ Step 20	 What do you notice? What do you wonder? Traquero Visual Text #2	3min
Slide/ Step 21	Discuss the hardships traqueros faced and the ways they showed resistance.	5min
Slide/ Step 22	Share how the railroad companies began recruiting Mexican families by offering a boxcar for free housing. These communities were all over the country and many were here in Los Angeles.	5min
Slide/ Step 23	Discuss the hardships of living in a Mexican boxcar community.	3min
Slide/ Step 24	 What do you notice? What do you wonder? Mexican boxcar community visual text #1	5min
Slide/ Step 25	 What do you notice? What do you wonder? Mexican boxcar community visual text #2	5min
Slide/ Step 26	 Facilitate a group discussion around the following question: In your opinion, why do you think Mexican railroad workers are excluded from being represented in our textbook? Provide your reasoning.	7min

Slide/ Step 27	 <p>Facilitate a group discussion around the following question: In your opinion, is it important to include Mexican railroad workers in our 4th grade textbook when learning about Who Built the Railroad? Provide your reasoning.</p>	7min
Slide/ Step 28	<p>Share how others in the Venice community believed it was important to teach others about the hard work traqueros did to build our nation’s railroads so they began community organizing for a monument to be built. They created the Venice Mexican American Traqueros Monument Committee led by Laura Ceballos.</p>	3min
Slide/ Step 29	 <p>Read the quote together. Then, facilitate a group discussion around the following question: In your opinion, do you think educating the community about the Traqueros would allow local Chicano/Latino youth to take pride in their culture? Provide your reasoning.</p>	7min
Slide/ Step 30	<p>Share how the Venice Mexican American Traqueros Monument Committee participated in grassroots community organizing. They held fundraisers and circulated online petitions to get support for the monument.</p>	3min
Slide/ Step 31	<p>Share how Dolores Huerta supported the monument and spoke at the LA City Council before the vote.</p>	3min
Slide/ Step 32	<p>Share how after a year of community organizing the Traqueros Monument was approved. Read the quote and share how community organizing has positive results.</p>	3min
Slide/ Step 33	<p>After securing the monument, the Venice Mexican American Traquero Committee continues to build community by connecting with the family members of Traqueros to capture their pictures and stories.</p>	3min
Slide/ Step 34	<p>Not a lot of media coverage so a local newspaper L. A. Taco wrote a story celebrating the legacy of the Traqueros and the accomplishments of community activists in Venice.</p>	3min
Slide/ Step 35	<p>L.A. Times finally covered it in 2022. Read the captions of the pictures with students.</p>	3min
Slide/ Step 36	<p>Share how the Stop and Check question on the textbook could not be answered correctly unless ethnic studies lessons are</p>	5min

	also included because that is the only way to ensure our stories in the Chicano community will be taught in our schools.	
Slide/ Step 37	 Community Circle (Refer to C3: Community Collaboration)	20min
Slide/ Step 38	Each One Teach One Task: Students will share what they learned about the Traqueros and the Mexican boxcar communities with someone else. Then they will encourage them to share this marginalized knowledge with someone else too.	3min

C3: Community Collaboration and/or Critical Cultural Production

Title of Main Activity(ies): Community Circle

Description: Students sit in a circle and take turns speaking and answering questions while actively listening to one another. A talking piece is used and everyone gets a turn to speak. Teachers or students facilitate the circle.

STEP	DESCRIPTION	TIME
Step 1	Opening: Begin the community circle with a Breathe In and Out exercise.	1m
Step 2	Review the Community Circle guidelines with students and introduce the talking piece.	3m
Step 3	Check In Question: Pick one word that describes how you feel after learning this marginalized knowledge about the Traqueros and the Mexican boxcar communities.	5m
Step 4	Community Building Question: What did you find interesting or surprising about this lesson? Provide one statement.	5m
Step 5	Check Out Question: What is one question you would ask a Traquero if he were in front of you today?	5m
Step 6	Closing: End the community circle with a Breathe In and Out exercise.	1m

C4: Conclusive Dialogue/Critical Circular Exchange

<p>Connection: How is this relevant to students? How is it relevant to the unit? How do you bring back to the PURPOSE of the unit?</p>	<p>Each One Teach One: Students will have the opportunity to assist in sharing marginalized knowledge with others. They will also encourage those they teach to share with others.</p>
<p>Assessment: How will the students be assessed?</p>	<p>Students will be assessed on their speaking skills. Did they speak in complete sentences? Did they state their opinion? Did they provide reasons to support their opinion?</p>
<p>Evaluation: How will the effectiveness of this lesson plan be evaluated?</p>	<p>Student participation and engagement will provide instant feedback on the effectiveness of the lesson.</p>

RESOURCES AND NOTES

- Resources

Articles

<https://smdp.com/2020/01/09/residents-look-to-honor-local-history-with-monument/>

<https://www.change.org/p/mike-bonin-support-the-creation-of-the-venice-mexican-american-traquero-monument>

https://clkrep.lacity.org/onlinedocs/2021/21-0353_misc_03-31-21.pdf

<https://www.lataco.com/venice-monument-mexican-train-workers/>

<https://www.latimes.com/california/newsletter/2022-04-15/essential-california-venice-monument-traqueros-mexican-american-railroad-workers-essential-california>

<https://smdp.com/2021/09/07/two-classic-car-shows-honoring-hispanic-history-ar>

[e-rolling-into-town/](#)

<https://smdp.com/2020/12/22/traquero-sculpture-would-bring-first-mexican-american-monument-to-westside/>

https://clkrep.lacity.org/onlinedocs/2021/21-0353_misc_03-31-21.pdf

<https://www.ilhumanities.org/news/2016/04/explore-history-of-the-mexican-railroad-boxcar-communities-in-chicago/>

<https://learninglab.si.edu/collections/traqueros-part-1-the-mexican-american-railroad-workers/WwoUbCJXdAmtma5W>

<https://smdp.com/2021/05/20/looking-for-traqueros/>

<https://forgotten-illinois.org/film-on-mexican-boxcar-communities/>

Pictures

<https://hchm.org/tag/mexican-american/>

<https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.dailyherald.com%2Farticle%2F20160413%2Fsubmitted%2F160419396%2F&psig=AOvVaw3T0iURPUgV VdH8nGLHs5g&ust=1672332906450000&source=images&cd=vfe&ved=0CA4QjRxq FwoTCIC1kJknPwCFQAAAAAdAAAAABAD>

<https://learninglab.si.edu/collections/traqueros-part-2-chain-migration-and-boxcar-communities/4Rp9WpMY67AvdWTe>

<https://www.cardcow.com/408633/from-great-lakes-pacific-coast-gulf-mexico-along-santa-fe-transportation-trains-railroad/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_transcontinental_railroad#/media/File:Transcontinental_railroad_route.png

<https://mchenrycountyhistory.org/rr-boxcar-communities>

<https://www.shutterbug.com/content/old-railroad-boxcars>

<https://www.needpix.com/photo/1370284/railroad-rail-train-tracks-pennsylvania-muddy-creek-maryland-antique>

<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph63243/>

Videos

<https://youtu.be/y4nWFBn9FLg>

<https://www.pbs.org/video/boxcar-people-hzhj7n/>

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