

Lesson 5: California Becomes a State

Focus Questions

- What challenges did California’s leaders face after statehood?
- How did California’s new government differ from those during the Spanish and Mexican periods?

Materials needed for students: Harcourt *Reflections*: Chapter 6, Lesson 2, pages 236-243

Activity # 1 Section, Summary, Share

Procedure:

Step 1: Organize the class into 8 groups. Have each group study a different section of Chapter 6, Lesson 2 (pages 236-243). These sections include: *The Monterey Convention*, *A Constitution for California*, *The Thirty-first State*, and *The End of the Ranchos*. (Note: Make two groups for each section of the lesson.) Review the focus questions posted above and on page 236.

Step 2: Students read their section and work together to write a summary of what the group learned.

Step 3: The two groups with the same section meet together to compare their summaries.

Step 4: Distribute butcher paper and markers to each group. Have students list three to five main points under the heading of their section. Then post students’ lists in front of the class and have a spokesperson from each briefly discuss their group’s chart.

Step 5: Each student reads the lesson independently and then writes summary sentences to answer the focus questions of the lesson.

Activity # 2 The Great Seal of the State of California

Materials needed: A copy of *The Great Seal of the State of California* (Handout #5.1); Harcourt *Reflections*: page 472, or at <http://www.learncalifornia.org/GoDocUserFiles/687.great-seal.jpg>

Display *The Great Seal of the State of California*. Using the notes provided in Handout #5.1, discuss the meaning of the various parts of the seal. The seal contains the state motto – “Eureka,” which is a Greek word meaning, “I have found it.” Other features of the State Seal include: the Greek Goddess Minerva, a grizzly bear, a gold miner, a bay with ships, and 31 stars for the 31st state in the U.S.

Activity # 3 Living History Bio-Sketches

Have the 5 students who are portraying the General Riley Bennett, Peter H. Burnett, Delegate #1 to the Monterey Convention, Delegate #2 to the Monterey Convention and Bridgit “Biddy” Mason present their *Living History Oral Presentation* to the class.

Activity # 4 The Living History Museum

All of the Living History Oral Presentations have now been presented. Review the procedure for the creating *The Living History Museum* detailed on pages 1 to 5. Have students design invitations to send to family members, friends, and local dignitaries. Third grade classes may also be invited so they can have a preview of what they will do next year.

The Great Seal of the State of California

The Constitutional Convention of 1849 adopted a “Great Seal of the State of California.” The seal was designed by Major Robert Selden Garnett of the United States Army, and presented to the convention by Caleb Lyon, one of the clerks of the convention. The explanation accompanying the seal, as read to the convention on October 2, 1849, is as follows:

“Around the bevel of the ring are represented thirty-one stars being the number of states of which the union will consist upon the admission of California.” [California became the thirty-first state to join the union. That is why there are thirty-one stars on the shield that Minerva is holding.]

“The foreground figure represents the Goddess Minerva having sprung full grown from the brain of Jupiter. [Minerva is the Roman goddess of wisdom.] She is introduced as a type of political birth of the State of California without having gone through the probation of a Territory.”

“At her feet crouches a grizzly bear feeding upon clusters from a grape vine emblematic of the peculiar characteristics of the country.” [The grape vine and wheat at Minerva’s feet stand for California’s many agricultural products.]

“A miner is engaged with a rocker and bowl at his side, illustrating the golden wealth of the Sacramento upon which whose waters are seen shipping typical commercial greatness and the Snow-clad peaks of the Sierra Nevada make up the background while above is the Greek motto ‘Eureka’ (I have found it) applying either to the principle involved in the admission of the State, or the success of the miner at work.”

This seal, as designed and submitted to the convention, with some slight changes, has been made the official State Seal by statute and is called “The Great Seal of the State of California.” [An amendment adding the words, “The Great Seal of the State of California,” to the design was adopted on October 11, 1849.]

The Great Seal is located in the office of the Secretary of State, where its impression is affixed to official state documents.

Any person who maliciously or for commercial purposes uses or allows to be used any reproduction or facsimile of the Great Seal or the seals of the Senate or Assembly of the State of California in any manner whatsoever is guilty of a misdemeanor.

<http://www.goldenstatemuseum.org/greatseal.htm>

The Great Seal of the State of California

