

Grade Four—California: A Changing State

- *Why did different groups of people decide to settle in California?*
- *What were their experiences like when they settled in California?*
- *How did the region become a state and how did the state grow?*

The history of California is rich with ethnic, social, and cultural diversity, economic energy, geographic variety, and growing civic community. The study of California history in the fourth grade provides students with foundational opportunities to learn in depth about their state, including the people who live here, and how to become engaged and responsible citizens. As students participate in investigations about the past, they will learn to identify primary sources, understand them as a product of their time and perspective, and put them in a comparative context. Students will also learn to make claims (through writing and speaking) about sources and how to use textual evidence to support a claim.

The story of California begins in pre-Columbian times, in the cultures of the American Indians who lived here before the first Europeans arrived. The history of California then becomes the story of successive waves of immigrants from the sixteenth century through modern times and the enduring marks each left on the character of the state. These immigrants include (1) the Spanish explorers, Indians from northern Mexico, Russians, and the Spanish-Mexican settlers of the Mission and Rancho period, known as “Californios,” who introduced European plants, agriculture, and a herding economy to the region; (2) the Americans who settled in California, established it as a state, and developed its mining, hide trade, industrial, and agricultural economy; (3) the Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Filipino, South Asians (predominantly Sikhs), and other immigrants

of the second half of the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth, who provided a new supply of labor for California’s railroads, agriculture, and industry and contributed as entrepreneurs and innovators, especially in agriculture; (4) the immigrants of the twentieth century, including new arrivals from Latin America and Europe; and (5) the many immigrants arriving today from Latin America, the nations of the Pacific Basin and Europe, and the continued migration of people from other parts of the United States. Because of their early arrival in the New World, primarily because of the slave trade, people of African descent have been present throughout much of California’s history, contributing to the Spanish exploration of California, the Spanish-Mexican settlement of the region, and California’s subsequent development throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. To bring California’s history, geography, diverse society, and economy to life for students and to promote respect and understanding, teachers emphasize its people in all their ethnic, racial, gender, and cultural diversity. Fourth-grade students learn about the daily lives, adventures, accomplishments, cultural traditions, and dynamic energy of the residents who formed the state and shaped its varied landscape. There can be multiple opportunities for students to learn what citizenship means by exploring the people and structures that define their state.