

Lesson Plan: From Conquistadors to the Rio Grande Valley

World History

- I. Brief Introduction
 - a. As far back as the Sixteenth century, the area of the Rio Grande Valley has been explored by Spanish Conquistadors, most notably by Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca. Later on, in the mid Eighteenth century, Jose de Escandon would establish Nuevo Santander, which would pave the way to what the Rio Grande Valley is today. The Rio Grande Valley is rich with history that few, especially students today, are unaware of. This lesson will provide a fun and eye-opening way for students to be able to connect history of this region from centuries ago to their own family's history.
- II. Guiding Questions
 - a. How does learning about the early colonization of the Rio Grande Valley connect to your own family's history?
- III. Learning Objectives
 - a. WH.7A: Analyze the concepts of European expansion from 1450 to 1750.
 - b. WH.7B: Explain the impact of Columbian Exchange on the Americas and Europe.
 - c. WH.16A: Locate places and regions of historical significance directly related to major eras and turning points in world history.
- IV. Detailed Background (Notes for the Valley's history lesson)

Brief History of the Rio Grande Valley

The history of the Rio Grande Valley is one of the most important, yet sometimes, the most forgotten among its own people. Little do many know, but our history can be traced back to the sixteenth century, with the coming of the famous conquistadors. However, the actual settlement of our area can be traced back to the eighteenth century with the coming of civilians, militia, and clerical figures.

As Spain was expanding their empire, the crown would send the well-known Jose de Escandon to establish Nuevo Santander in 1749. Escandon would lead the first *entrada*, which was sent by the crown to explore the new and foreign region of the Rio Grande Valley. Soon after, famous cities such as Laredo, Coahuila, and San Luis Potosi, would emerge and become

our region's founding cities. By 1790, the Hispanic population in Nuevo Santander would reach approximately 20,000.

The land allotment process was much more sophisticated than you might think. Land would be given out, or divided, to certain families, in *porciones* which were measured by *varas* (1 vara=33.3 in). The question of what families would receive the land is easily answered. Prominent wealthy families were, for the most part, grantees. However, some land was also given to a long-time servant of the crown. Usually, the head of the family would then portion out land to his/her family members, breaking up the region even more.

By 1821 Mexico would win its freedom. However, the coming of Anglo-Americans into the region would begin the quick extermination of Hispanic and Mexican land owners. While Hispanics and Mexicans were becoming more organized with their livestock (by creating brands and registering them), Soon after, in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, this occupation for both would decline. Some major reasons for decline in Mexican and Hispanic land owners/ranchers were bad weather, no access to credit, and, most importantly, land loss. Sadly, because of language barriers, loss of warranties, and even intermarriages, these peoples' land was falling to wealthy, Anglo, land owners (all information from presentation by Dr. Sonia Hernandez, The University of Texas Pan-American).

V. Preparation Instructions

- a. Lesson will take a place over a week's time.
- b. Teacher will need certain materials to provide for their students for the multiple projects they will complete including: Drawing paper (white , preferably but construction paper will do), colored pencils/crayons/markers, tag board paper or poster board (depending on the size for their Coat of Arms), scissors and any other materials you would like to provide for your students' Coat of Arms (i.e. glitter, yarn, paint, etc.)

- c. It is best if teacher looks over the *Detailed Background* notes before beginning this lesson. These notes must be given to the students in any manner (I prefer the students actually writing them in their notebooks) and are essential for the success of this lesson.

VI. Lesson Activities (One activity period is 90 minutes)

a. Day One (90 minutes):

1. Begin lesson by giving your own lesson on Spanish Colonization in South Texas. This will become the building blocks into the Rio Grande Valley's history.
2. To each student, hand out one sheet of white (or construction) paper and have them draw one line horizontally and one line vertically, creating four even squares (do on BOTH sides of sheet). In each square, have students write a different date: 1550, 1750, 1850, and 1950.
3. Have students draw what they think they Rio Grande Valley looked like in each century given. Tell them to include people, landscapes, architecture, etc.
4. On the back side of the sheet of paper, have students write an explanation of why they drew what they drew, for each of the four drawings they created
5. End lesson with an exit card asking, "If you were a Spanish colonist, centuries ago, what three items would you have brought with you from your home country?"

b. Day Two(90 minutes):

1. Bell Ringer: "How do you think history of Spanish colonization ties into the Rio Grande Valley's history, and more importantly, your own family's history?" Allow 10 minutes to answer.
2. Begin note-taking (as stated above, any way you provide the given notes in *Detailed Background*) of the Rio Grande Valley's history. This will probably take all period long.
3. When finished (if time allows), introduce the Coat of arms Project (see attached rubric and list of requirements). Explain to students that their last names go farther back than they think! Give students at least 2 days to complete (and let them take it home for homework!)
4. Exit ticket: "Now that you know they Valley's history, what three items would you bring from Spain?"

c. Day Three (90 minutes):

1. Place students in groups (of 4 or 5) and assign each group a different city in the Rio Grande Valley. (Students should use the internet and find each city's web page to find information as well as using their notes)
2. Have students create a brochure for their assigned city.
3. They must include pictures, both old and new, a brief history of the city, a list of what the city offers, etc.

VII. Assessment

a. Students will write an opinionated essay on:

1. What they think of their home now that they know its history
2. Whether or not they believe history books should be changed to provide a longer section or chapter over our history
3. How they plan to change the way their own family, friends, and communities feel about the Rio Grande Valley

VIII. Skills that Will be Targeted

- a. Create written, oral, and visual presentations of social studies information

- b. Identify and support with historical evidence a point of view on a social studies issue or event
- c. Use a decision-making process to identify a problem, gather information, list and consider options, consider advantages and disadvantages, chose and implement a solution, and evaluate the effectiveness of the solution

IX. Resources

- a. Links for creating a coat of arms:
 - 1. <http://genblog.myheritage.com/2010/02/create-your-familys-coat-of-ar-1/>
 - 2. <http://www.storyboardtoys.com/gallery/coat-of-arms-lesson-plan.htm>
- b. Links for Teachers
 - 1. Jose de Escandon
 - a. <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fes01>
 - 2. Cattle Brands
 - a. <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/auc01>
 - 3. Rio Grande Valley
 - a. <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/ryr01>
 - 4. Printable Worksheets for textbooks
 - a. <http://www.studenthandouts.com>