

DISCUSSION GUIDE



Readings and Discussion Prompts for:

- American History
- Border Studies
- Latinx Studies
- Sociology
- Museum Studies
- Educational
- Geography
- Pedagogy

HOW BOTH COUNTRIES REMEMBER THE US- MEXICAN WAR



"The war Americans never remember and Mexicans never forget."

- Why might Americans not remember this history?
- Why might Mexicans never forget it?
- What might be some consequences of Americans' "amnesia" or Mexicans' "obsession?"
- How might "memory" and "amnesia" affect the treatment of Mexican-Americans and Latinxs today?

Additional Reading

Perea, Juan 2003. "A Brief History of Race and the U.S.-Mexican Border: Tracing the Trajectories of Conquest." *UCLA Law Review* 51:283-312.

Telles, Edward E., and Vilma Ortiz. 2008. "The Historical Context" *Generations of Exclusion: Mexican-Americans, Assimilation, and Race*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Wagenen, Michael Van. *Remembering the Forgotten War: The Enduring Legacies of the U.S.-Mexican War*. University of Massachusetts Press, 2012. <https://www.umass.edu/umpress/title/remembering-forgotten-war>

MANIFEST DESTINY



The film uses cut out images from the famous painting, American Progress (1872) by John Gast to illustrate American immigrants going to Mexico.

- How did 19th c. Americans define "Manifest Destiny?"
- How was the concept of Manifest Destiny used to legitimate the US-Mexican War?
- Are the ideas that supported Manifest Destiny in the 19th century still present?
- How do modern issues of immigration, territory, and borders relate to Manifest Destiny?

Additional Reading

Hudson, Linda. *Mistress of Manifest Destiny, A Biography of Jane McManus Storm Cazneau, 1807-1878*. Texas State Historical Association, 2001.

O'Sullivan, J. (1845, July/August). Annexation. *United States Magazine and Democratic Review*, 17(1), 5-10.

QUESTIONS OF IDENTITY

BORDERS



Eric remarks that he felt most Mexican when going to a predominantly white area. Jose, when dressed as a charro, experiences people locking doors, which never happened at home.

Much has been written about the maintenance of the US-Mexico border. The film's animation shows the creation of the border as a ripping of Mexico's map.

- What do you make of these two experiences?
- What might Eric mean when he said he felt "more Mexican?"
- Have you ever experienced anything similar to Eric or Jose?
- How does your identity affect your experience in classrooms, museums, and other settings?
- How does your identity inform your understanding of history?

- What other ways can you imagine showing a new border being created using other art materials and animation techniques?
- How do you understand the history of the US/Mexican border?
- How does historical knowledge about the US/Mexican border influence your views about the modern border?
- How do we understand the relationship between indigenous people and land, when maps define only nation states?

Additional Reading

Chavez, Leo. 2013. *The Latino Threat: Constructing Immigrants, Citizens, and the Nation*. Stanford: Stanford University Press

English, D. (2015, May 31). "Don't be intimidated by museums. They belong to everyone" Darby English. Retrieved July 02, 2020, from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/may/31/museums-not-white-spaces-belong-everyone>

Gilpin, C. C. (2017, September 27). Why Is Race So Hard to Talk About? Retrieved July 02, 2020, from <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/27/learning/why-is-it-so-hard-to-talk-about-race.html?module=inline>

Additional Reading

Douglas, S. W. (Director). (2017). *Through the Repellent Fence* [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.throughtherepellentfence.com/>

Montezemolo, F. (Director). (2012). *Rastros/Traces* [Video file]. Retrieved from <http://www.fiammamontezemolo.com/traces>

St. John, Rachel, *Lines in the Sand, A History of the Western U.S.- Mexico Border*, Princeton University Press, 2012. <https://press.princeton.edu/titles/9454.html>

Valerio-Jiménez, Omar, *River of Hope, Forging Identity and Nation in the Rio Grande Borderlands*, Duke University Press, 2013. <https://www.dukeupress.edu/river-of-hope>

CLASSROOM TECHNIQUES IN HIGH SCHOOL AND HIGHER ED.



In the film, we see Professor Van Hoy engage her students through experiential learning. For example, the students put General Santa Anna on trial and do research not just for class, but for the "Remembering Lincoln" project at Ford's Theatre.

- What is experiential learning?
- How can it contribute to a curriculum?
- What are some of the limitations and complexities of experiential learning?
- To what extent can teaching extend outside of the classroom?
- How might you design a curriculum for the material used by Professor Van Hoy and her students?

Additional Reading

Hoover, J. D. (1974). "Simulations, Games and Experiential Learning Techniques." *Developments in Business Simulation and Experiential Learning*, 1.

Remembering Lincoln. (2014). Retrieved from <https://rememberinglincoln.fords.org/>

Smith, M. K. (2013, June 20). "David A. Kolb on experiential learning." Retrieved from <https://infed.org/david-a-kolb-on-experiential-learning/>

HEROES AND VILLAINS



The students challenge the use of "heroes" and "villains" when understanding history. Specifically we hear about Davy Crockett as a universal "hero" and Santa Anna as a "villain."

- Who were some "heroes" or "villains" you learned about in your past history education?
- Why were they branded as either "hero" or a "villain?"
- What purpose is served by having national/regional "heroes" and "villains?"
- Can you think about these figures in other ways?
- Which primary sources might be useful to reveal the complexities of historical figures?

Additional Reading

D'Costa, K. (2017, March 28). "Perspective Drives Our Interpretation of Heroes and Villains in History." Retrieved from <https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/anthropology-in-practice/perspective-drives-our-interpretation-of-heroes-and-villains-in-history/>

Miles, J. (n.d.). "Heroes and Villains." Retrieved from <https://historicalthinking.ca/blog/598>

"The other baggage of Confederate symbols: Anti-Mexican sentiment." (2015, August 15). Retrieved from <https://www.mysanantonio.com/opinion/commentary/article/The-other-baggage-of-Confederate-symbols-6444433.php>

MUSEUM ETHICS REGARDING ARTIFACTS



In the film, the students propose that Santa Anna's leg be sent to Mexico. The curators counter that museums are under increased pressure as people challenge their holdings, and are in danger of being "emptied out."

- How did you feel watching the interaction between the students and the museum staff?
- How are museums affected by repatriation requests?
- Discuss the motivation and methods of those leading and supporting repatriation efforts?
- What are your thoughts about where the leg should be?
- How do you understand the mission of museums in relation to artifacts?
- What ethical, legal, or educational guidelines advise museums about their collections?

Additional Reading

Cuno, J. (2014). "Culture War: The Case Against Repatriating Museum Artifacts." *Foreign Affairs*, 93(6), 119-129.

McCarthy, J. (2018, December 11). "U.S. Returns Balangiga Church Bells To The Philippines After More Than A Century." Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/2018/12/11/675505073/after-117-years-balangiga-bells-will-be-returned-to-the-philippines>

National Park Service, N. (Producer). (2011, October 12). The Development of NAGPRA [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w0wZIEggi-I>

"Obelisk returned to Ethiopia after 68 years." (2005, April 20). Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/apr/20/italy.ethiopia>

PRESS AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



Press Coverage of the Trip

- "The War of Santa Anna's Leg Takes a Big Step Forward." *The Wall Street Journal*. November 6, 2016. <https://on.wsj.com/2tw61cT>
- St. Mary's students go to Illinois to see Santa Anna's leg." *San Antonio Express-News*. October 23, 2016. <https://bit.ly/2SNPqQX>

Press Coverage of the Film

- Veinrich, A. B. (2019). *Teaching Sociology*, 48(2).