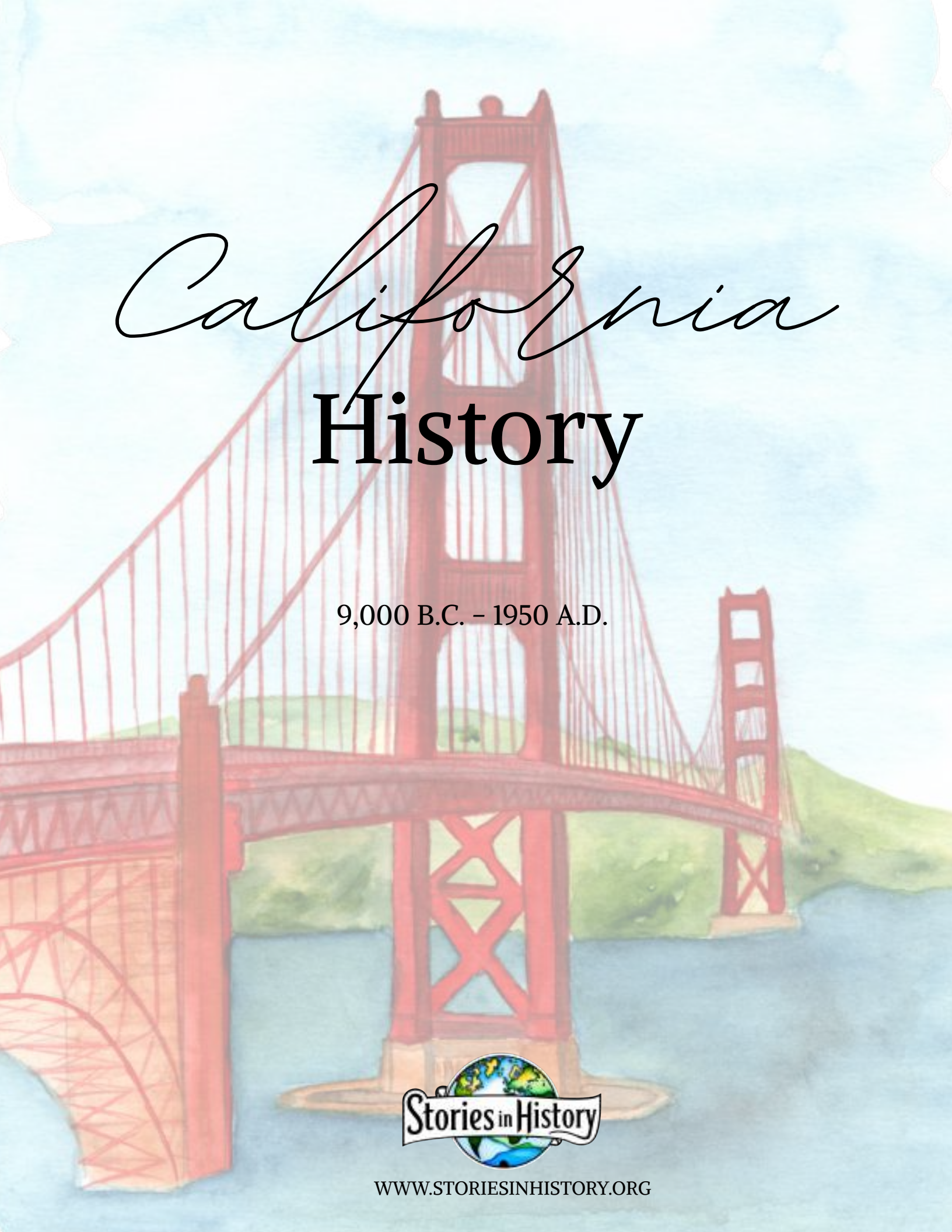


California History

9,000 B.C. – 1950 A.D.

Stories in History

WWW.STORIESINHISTORY.ORG

How to Teach a Unit

To be done at the beginning of each Unit:

1. Read the **unit introduction card**.

   These are the colorful half-page cards on cardstock.

To be done in any order:

1. Read **books**.

   Choose from the picture books and/or chapter books to read throughout the unit. Choose as many books as you would like. Through living books, history comes to life so we highly recommend including as many books as possible. While we recommend you read the physical books together, we know that it may not always be possible, so alternatively we have marked the books we've found on YouTube with the following symbol.🔊

2. Watch **videos**.

   Choose from the YouTube videos for each unit to further highlight the topic.

3. Discuss the **questions**.

   As you work through the unit, discuss the questions that are aligned with the California State Framework.

4. Complete **activities**.

   Complete a few or all of the activities for the unit. The activities vary in complexity. You'll find worksheets, crafts, recipes, and more.

5. Add **stickers** to the timeline.

   Tape the timeline together and have your student cut out the circle stickers for each unit.

6. Complete the **quiz**.

   Optional, but a great way for you to gauge what your student has retained. 5–10 questions based on key concepts from the unit. Answer key is at the end.

Pacing

How much time should I spend on each Unit?

3–4 Lessons on Unit 1: California Geography & History Overview
3–4 Lessons on Unit 2: California Indigenous People
2–3 Lessons on Unit 3: European Exploration
3–4 Lessons on Unit 4: Spanish Missions & Ranchos
2–3 Lessons on Unit 5: The Bear Republic & Becoming a State
3–4 Lessons on Unit 6: The Gold Rush
3–4 Lessons on Unit 7: Booming California
2–3 Lessons on Unit 8: California State Government

How many lessons should I teach per week?

You can teach multiple lessons per week or one per week. How quickly you move through the course is entirely up to you. If a particular topic is more interesting to children, stay on the Unit longer and add more books, activities, projects, field trips, etc.

How much time should I spend on each lesson?

Lessons should take between 30 minutes to one hour.

How long will it take me to complete the course?

Depending on how many lessons you choose to do in each unit, this course will be complete after 25–30 lessons total. If you do one lesson per week, it would take you 25–30 weeks (a little less than one school year). If you do 2 lessons per week, it would take you half a school year.

Where can I find a full list of the California State Standards?

You can find them listed on the California Department of Education's website (www.cde.ca.gov). This is the direct link to the 4th grade History Social Science Standards– https://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/documents/histsocscistnd.pdf

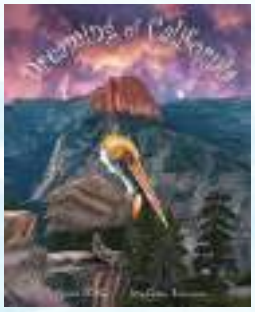
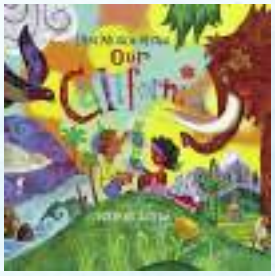
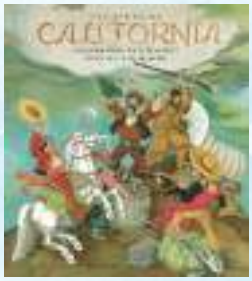
Unit One

California Geography & History Overview

Books:

Picture books

1. Welcome to California by Asa Gilland
2. Dreaming of California by Grant Collier and Stephanie Lowman
3. Our California by Pam Munoz Ryan
4. The Story of California by May Yonge McNeer

Videos:

1. California Overview Video- 7m
2. PragerU- Unboxed- California- 12m
3. California Overview- 14m

1 2 3

Questions:

1. How does the climate and geography vary throughout the state?
2. How do these features affect how people live?

Unit One Continued

California Geography & History Overview

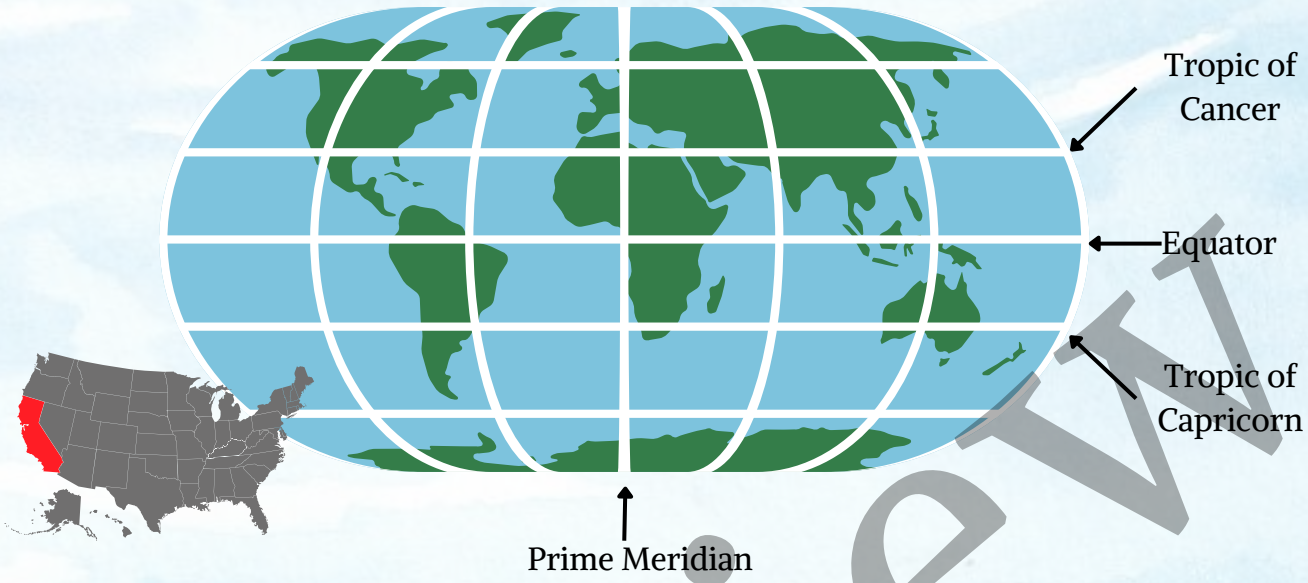
Activities:

1. **California Regions Coloring Page**
2. **California Regions Sort Facts**–Cut and paste the attributes of the 4 regions into the correct boxes on the following page.
3. **Reading a Map–** answer questions about longitude and latitude and where California fits into the world
4. **Map of California–** answer questions about California
5. **California Regions Diagram**– use rocks, crushed seashells, sand, colored paper scraps, uncooked beans, rice, etc. to create a map of the regions of California. The template for this craft is included. See a sample of the finished product below.
6. **California Regions Symbols–** create a symbol that represents each region

California State Standards Covered in this Unit:

4.1.1, 4.1.2, 4.1.3, 4.1.4, 4.1.5

Reading a Map



Instructions/Questions:

1. Trace the Equator line in **red.**
2. Trace the Prime Meridian line in **green.**
3. Does the Equator run through North America? _____
4. Is The United States closer to the Tropic of Cancer or Capricorn? (circle one)
5. Areas closer to the Equator are hotter. Name 2 states that experience hotter temperatures and 2 that experience colder temperatures. Are they closer or further from the equator? _____

_____

6. What are the longitude and latitude coordinates for San Francisco? Los Angeles?

_____

_____

7. Are the latitude lines getting smaller or bigger the closer they get to the Equator?

_____

8. Are the longitude lines getting smaller or bigger the closer they get to the Prime Meridian?

_____

Preview

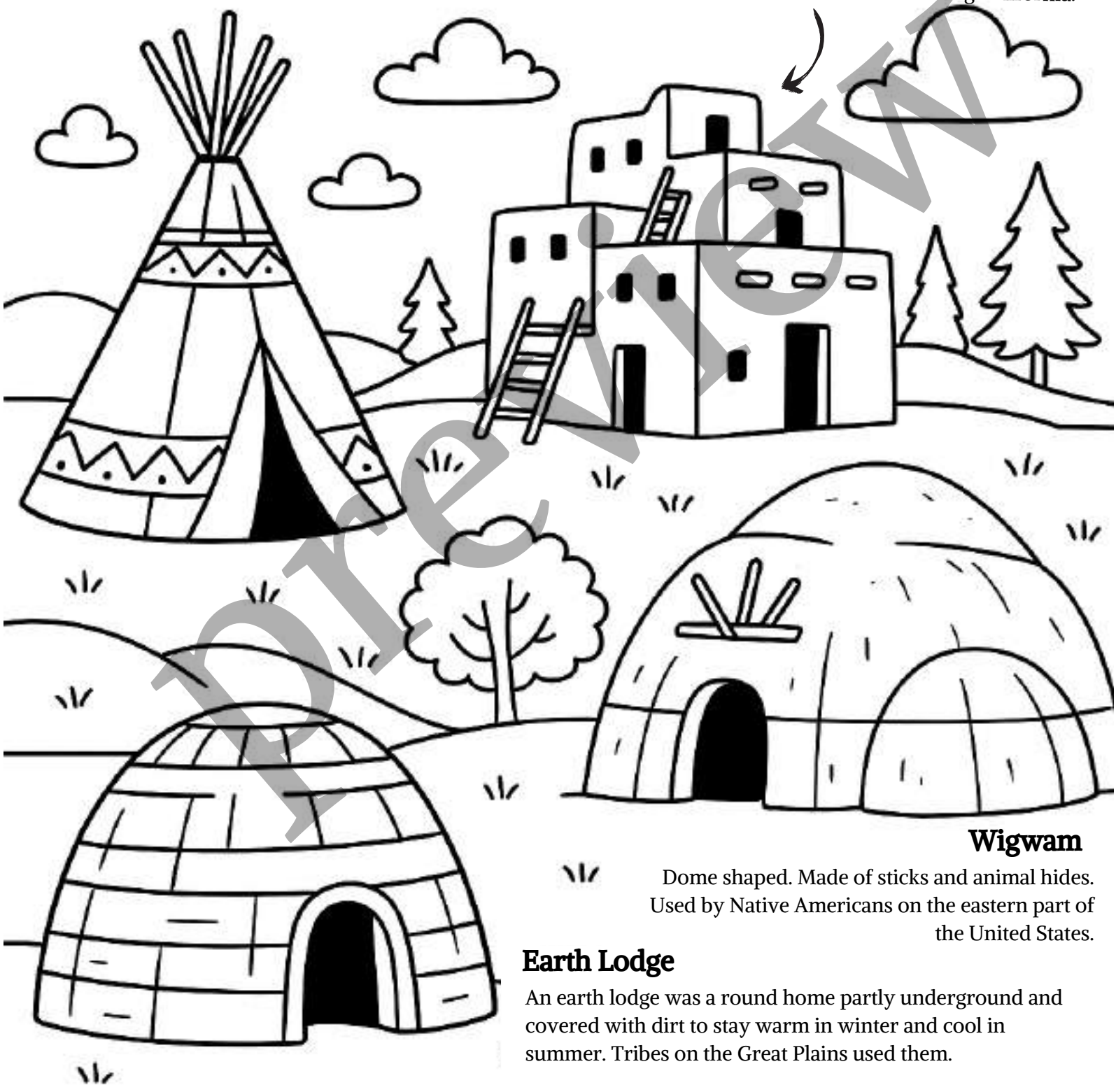
Indigenous Peoples' Dwellings Coloring Page

Teepee

Cone shaped. Made of wooden polls and Buffalo hides. Used by Native Americans who lived on the Plains. Easily transportable.

Pueblo

Multi-storied adobe brick villages. Primarily used by tribes in the Southwestern part of the United States including California.



Preview

Wigwam

Dome shaped. Made of sticks and animal hides. Used by Native Americans on the eastern part of the United States.

Earth Lodge

An earth lodge was a round home partly underground and covered with dirt to stay warm in winter and cool in summer. Tribes on the Great Plains used them.

Indigenous Tribe Report

Instructions: Learn more about 6 of the indigenous tribes of California by reading the facts pages, reading books, and searching the internet. Then choose one of those tribes to fill out the report. Alternatively, select the tribe that lives(d) closest to you and complete the report on them.

Tribe Name:

Color where they live(d) on the map

Paste a picture of the tribe here

They traded:

Food eaten:

Housing:

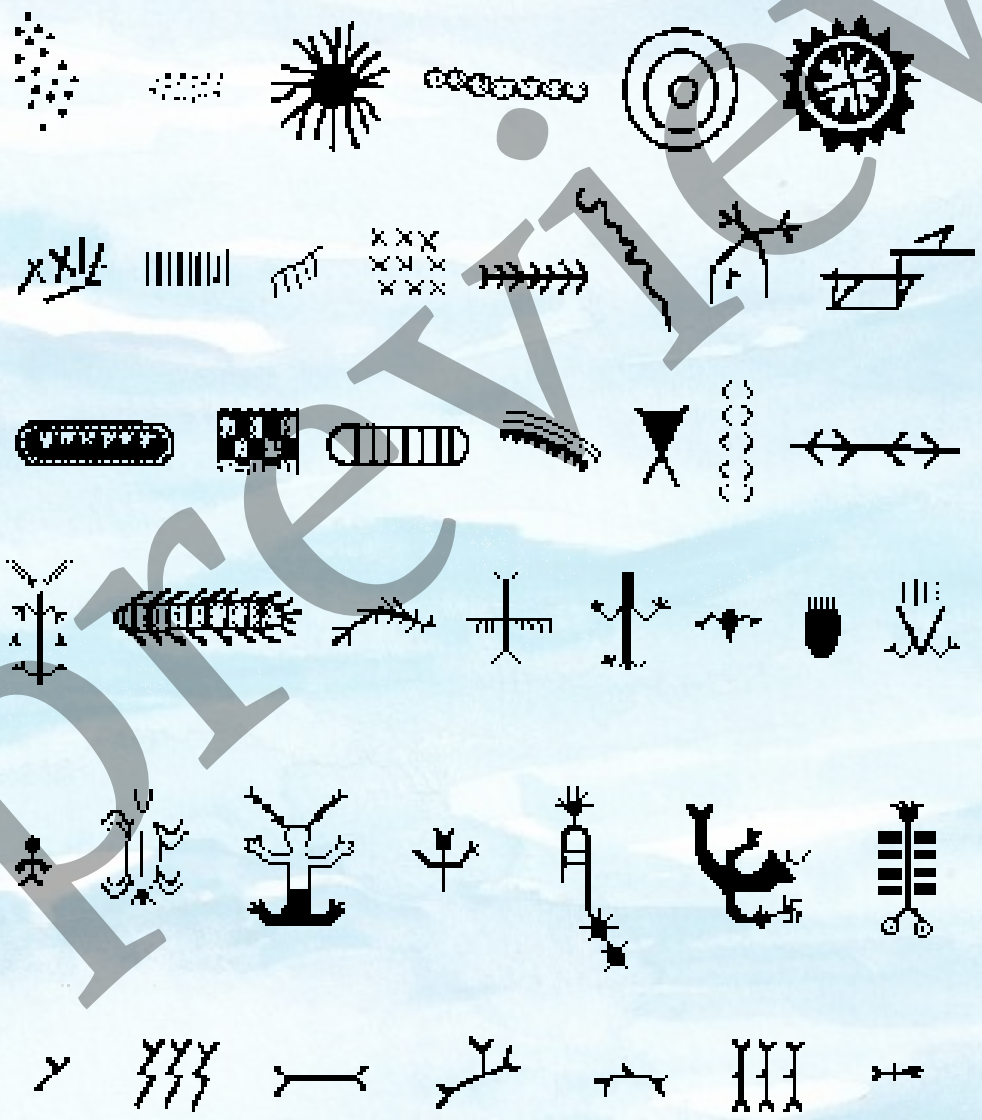
Interesting Facts:

preview

Chumash Rock Painting

The Chumash Native Americans were known for their elaborate “rock art”. They painted pictographs on caves and rock faces throughout southern California.

Instructions: Find a rock and paint a pictograph copying one of the examples above or create your own.



preview

All About the California Missions

Instructions: Read the next 2 pages about the California Missions and then answer the questions on the following page.

Long ago, before California became a state, Spanish explorers and missionaries arrived on the land. Between 1769 and 1833, they built 21 missions along the coast of California. These missions were like small communities, each with a church, homes, gardens, and workshops. They were built to teach Native Americans about the Spanish way of life, including farming, religion, and language.

Your paragraph text

Each mission was about a day's journey apart by horse or foot, stretching from San Diego in the south to Sonoma in the north. This trail is known today as El Camino Real, which means "The Royal Road." You can still see markers with bells along highways where this trail once passed.

The missions were built by Franciscan priests, with Father Junípero Serra leading the first one—Mission San Diego de Alcalá. Serra helped establish nine of the missions and is remembered as a key figure in mission history.

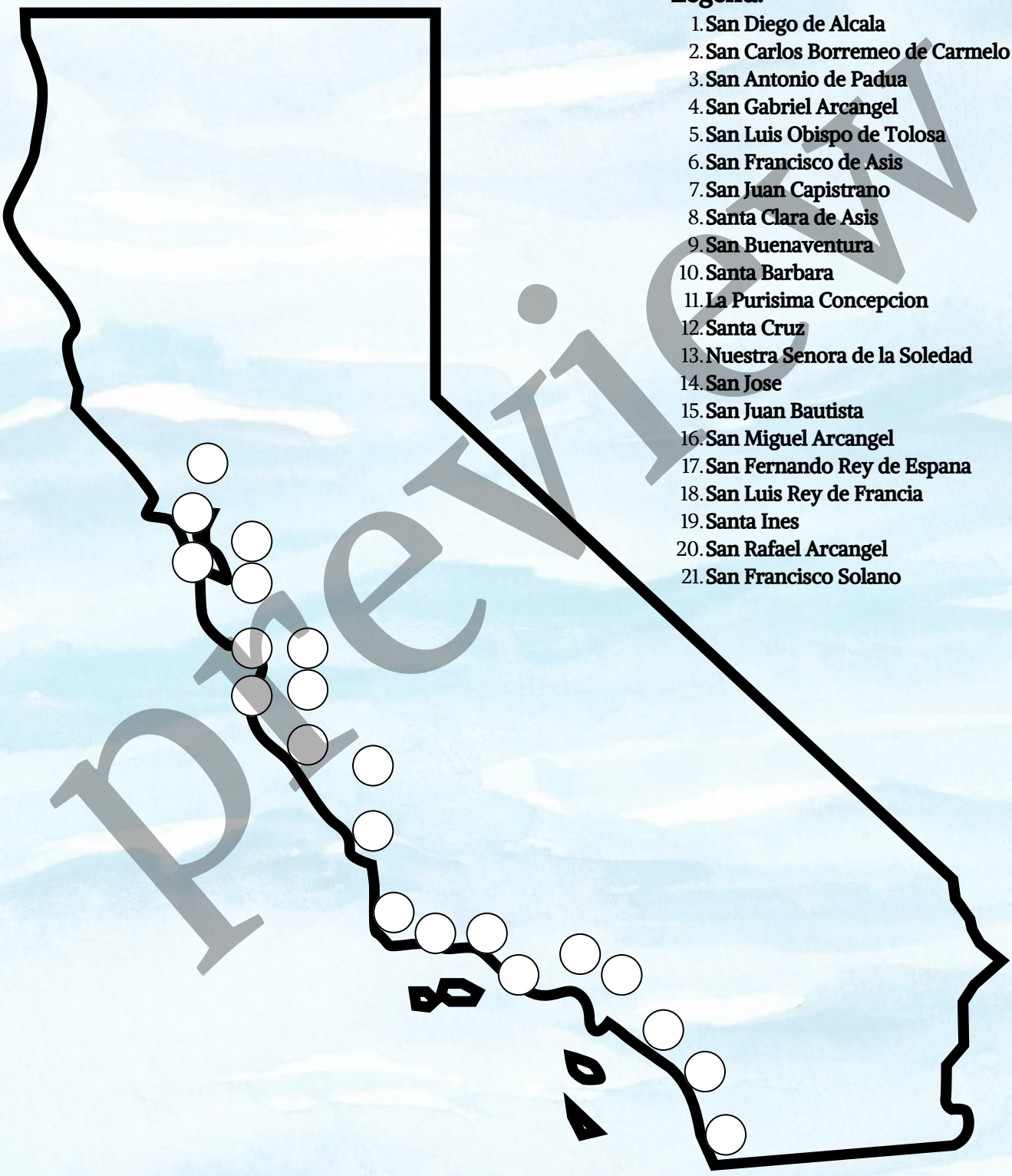
The Native American people, like the Chumash, Tongva, and Ohlone, played a big role in building and maintaining the missions. They learned new skills like blacksmithing, farming, and weaving—but their lives also changed in difficult ways. Many were forced to give up their traditions, and some were treated unfairly.

Even though many missions fell into ruin after Mexico took control of California in the 1830s, many have been restored and are still standing today. They are now museums, churches, or historical landmarks.

preview

Map of California's 21 Missions

Instructions: Use the map on the following page to label the missions. Put the number in the circle The missions are in order by the year they were established. Color the one you live closest to.



Legend:

1. San Diego de Alcala
2. San Carlos Borremeo de Carmelo
3. San Antonio de Padua
4. San Gabriel Arcangel
5. San Luis Obispo de Tolosa
6. San Francisco de Asis
7. San Juan Capistrano
8. Santa Clara de Asis
9. San Buenaventura
10. Santa Barbara
11. La Purisima Concepcion
12. Santa Cruz
13. Nuestra Senora de la Soledad
14. San Jose
15. San Juan Bautista
16. San Miguel Arcangel
17. San Fernando Rey de Espana
18. San Luis Rey de Francia
19. Santa Ines
20. San Rafael Arcangel
21. San Francisco Solano

Preview

California Missions- A Native American Perspective

When Spanish explorers and missionaries arrived in California in the late 1700s, they built a series of buildings called missions. There were 21 missions in all, stretching from San Diego to Sonoma. The Spanish wanted to teach the Native Peoples about their religion, farming, and ways of life. But for the Native Americans who already lived in California, the missions brought big changes—some helpful, but many very hard.

Life Before the Missions

Before the missions, Native Americans lived freely on the land. They hunted, fished, and gathered food like acorns, berries, and seeds. They built homes from natural materials and had strong traditions, languages, and spiritual beliefs. Each tribe had its own way of life and special connection to the land.

Life Inside the Missions

When the missions were built, Native Americans were often invited—or sometimes forced—to live there. At first, some joined because they were curious or because food and safety were offered. But once inside, their daily lives became very different.

Native people had to follow strict schedules. They worked long hours farming, caring for animals, or building mission walls. They were taught the Spanish language and Catholic religion and were not allowed to speak their native languages or practice their own customs. Many became sick from new diseases that the Spanish brought, and sadly, thousands died.

What Native Americans May Have Felt

For many Native Americans, the missions were not places of peace but places of loss. They lost much of their culture, freedom, and land. Families were often separated, and many traditional ways were forgotten or hidden to keep them safe. Some Native people resisted by leaving the missions or trying to keep their traditions alive in secret.

Remembering and Learning Today

Today, we remember both sides of the mission story. The missions are an important part of California history, but it's also important to understand the Native American perspective. Many California Native communities today—like the Chumash, Ohlone, Tongva, and others—are keeping their languages, stories, and traditions alive.

By learning both sides, we can show respect for the people who lived here first and understand the full story of California's past.

preview

California Missions- A Spanish Catholic Perspective

In the late 1700s, Spanish explorers and Catholic missionaries traveled to California. They came from a faraway land across the ocean, bringing with them their faith, language, and customs. Their goal was to build a new community and share their religion with the Native Peoples who lived in California.

Why the Missions Were Built
Spain wanted to claim California as part of its land, and the Catholic Church wanted to teach about Christianity. The missionaries believed it was their duty to help Native Americans learn about the Bible, farming, reading, and building. They hoped the missions would become peaceful villages where Spanish and Native people lived and worked together.

Life Inside the Missions
Missionaries, like Father Junípero Serra, worked hard to build churches, homes, workshops, and farms. They taught Native Americans how to grow crops, care for animals, and make things like candles, tools, and clothing. Every day began and ended with prayer, and the church was at the center of mission life.

For the missionaries, the mission system was a way to bring faith and community to the land. They believed they were helping by teaching new skills and a new way of life.

Challenges and Differences
Even though the missionaries thought they were doing good, life in the missions was not easy. Many Native Americans missed their old ways and didn't want to give up their traditions. The missionaries didn't understand how important those traditions were, and this caused sadness and conflict. Some missionaries were kind and tried to care for the Native people, while others were strict and demanding.

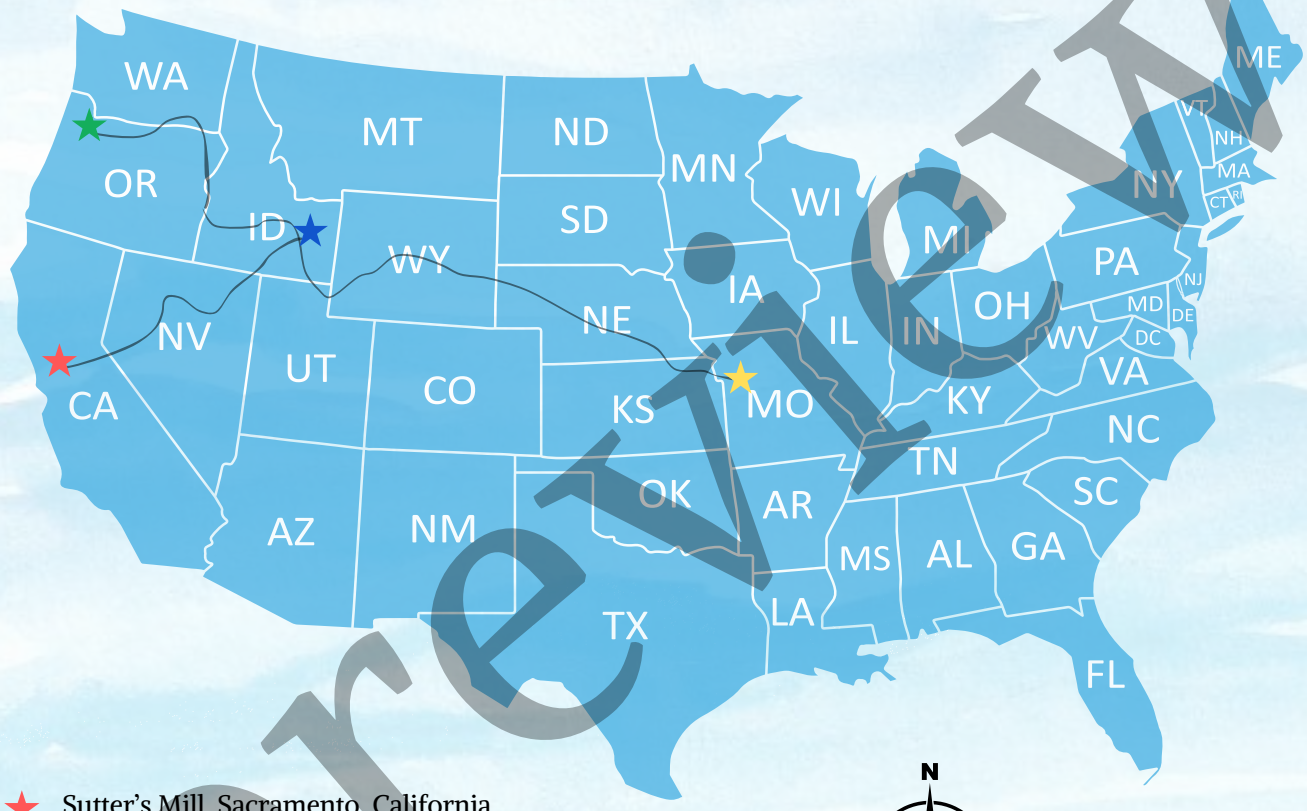
How We Remember Today
From the Spanish Catholic point of view, the missions showed faith, courage, and hard work. They helped shape early California by bringing new farming methods, buildings, and ideas.

But today, people also know that the missions brought pain and loss to many Native Americans. Learning about both sides helps us understand that history is complex. The missions were both a time of hope and of hardship, and remembering all perspectives helps us see the full story of California's past.

preview

Trails To The West

The Oregon Trail and the California Trail were popular routes used to travel west in the United States during the 1800s. Both the California and the Oregon Trail started at Independence, Missouri. The trails then split in Idaho where the California trail led to Sacramento, California and the Oregon trail led to Oregon City, Oregon.



- Sutter's Mill, Sacramento, California
- Independence, Missouri
- Fort Vancouver, Oregon City, Oregon
- Fort Hall, Idaho

Instructions:

1. Label the blue star "Fort Hall, Idaho".
2. Trace the start of both the Oregon and California Trail from Independence Missouri to Fort Hall, Idaho in **dark blue**. Label "**Start**" at Independence, Missouri.
3. Trace the route of the Oregon Trail from Fort Hall, Idaho to Fort Vancouver, Oregon City, Oregon in **green**. Label "**Oregon Trail**" on the map.
4. Trace the route of the California Trail from Fort Hall, Idaho to Sutter's Mill, Sacramento, California in **red**. Label "**California Trail**" on the map.

preview

The Bear Flag Revolt

Instructions: Read about the Bear Flag Revolt and where we got the California flag. Then, design your own state flag on the following page. Pretend the U.S. is adding a state and you are in charge of designing the flag. Draw the flag and answer the questions.

In 1846, a small group of American settlers in California decided they didn't want the land to be under Mexican rule anymore. They wanted California to be its own country. So they took over a town called Sonoma and raised a homemade flag with a grizzly bear, a red star, and the words "California Republic." This event is known as the Bear Flag Revolt.

The revolt only lasted about a month. Not long after it started, the United States took control of California during the Mexican–American War. But the bear flag remained an important symbol of California's journey to becoming part of the United States.

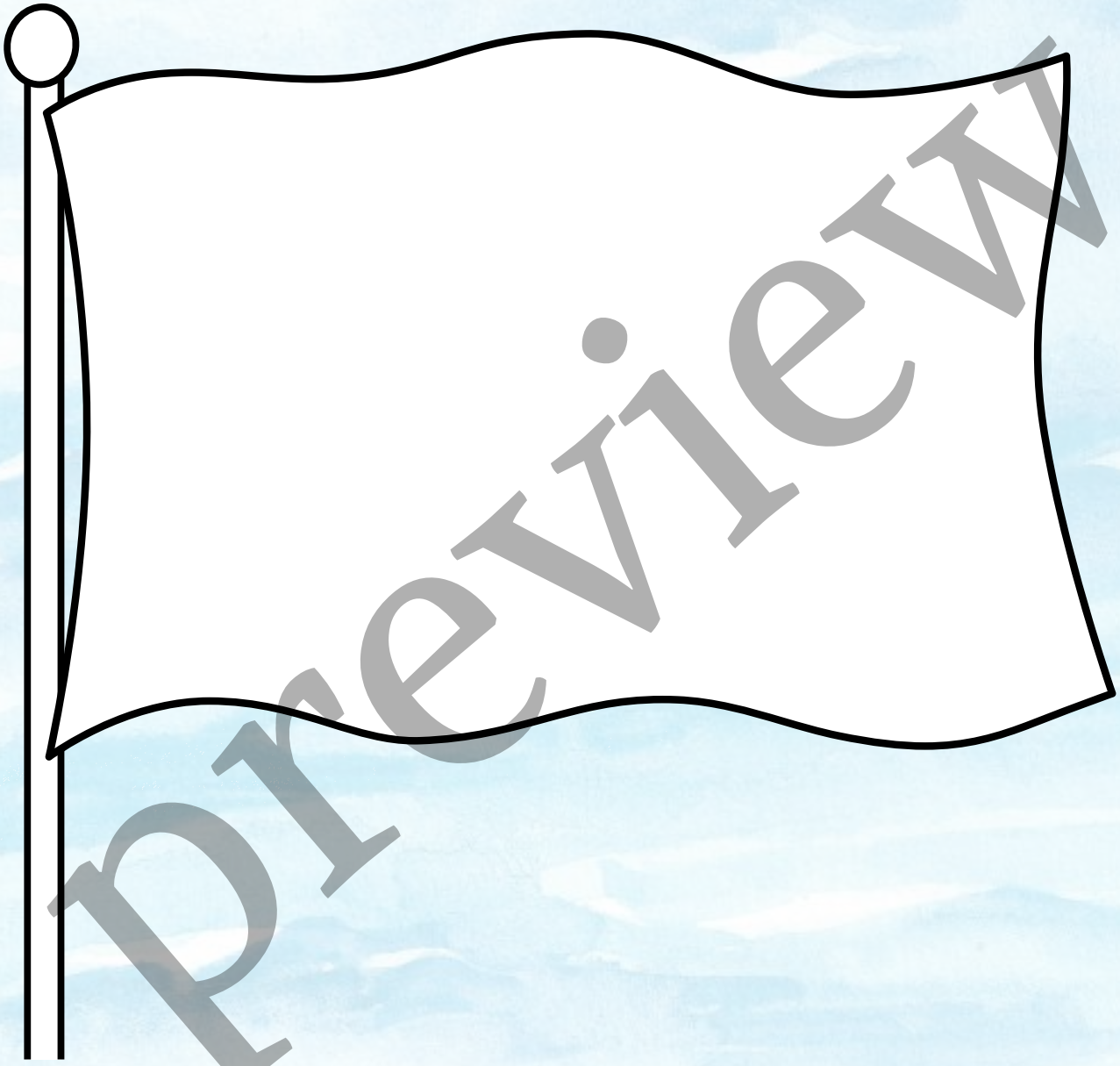
When California became the 31st state in 1850, people remembered the brave settlers who raised the bear flag. Years later, in 1911, California made a version of that original flag its official state flag.

Today, the California state flag still shows the grizzly bear, the red star, and the words "California Republic"—a reminder of the short but important Bear Flag Revolt in California's history.

preview

Design Your Own State Flag

Now that you've learned about how California chose its flag, pretend the U.S. is adding a state and you are in charge of designing the state flag. Use the template below and answer the questions at the bottom.



preview

1. What is the name of your state?

2. Did you include any symbols? If so, what do they represent?

3. What colors did you choose and why?

4. Is your flag symmetrical?

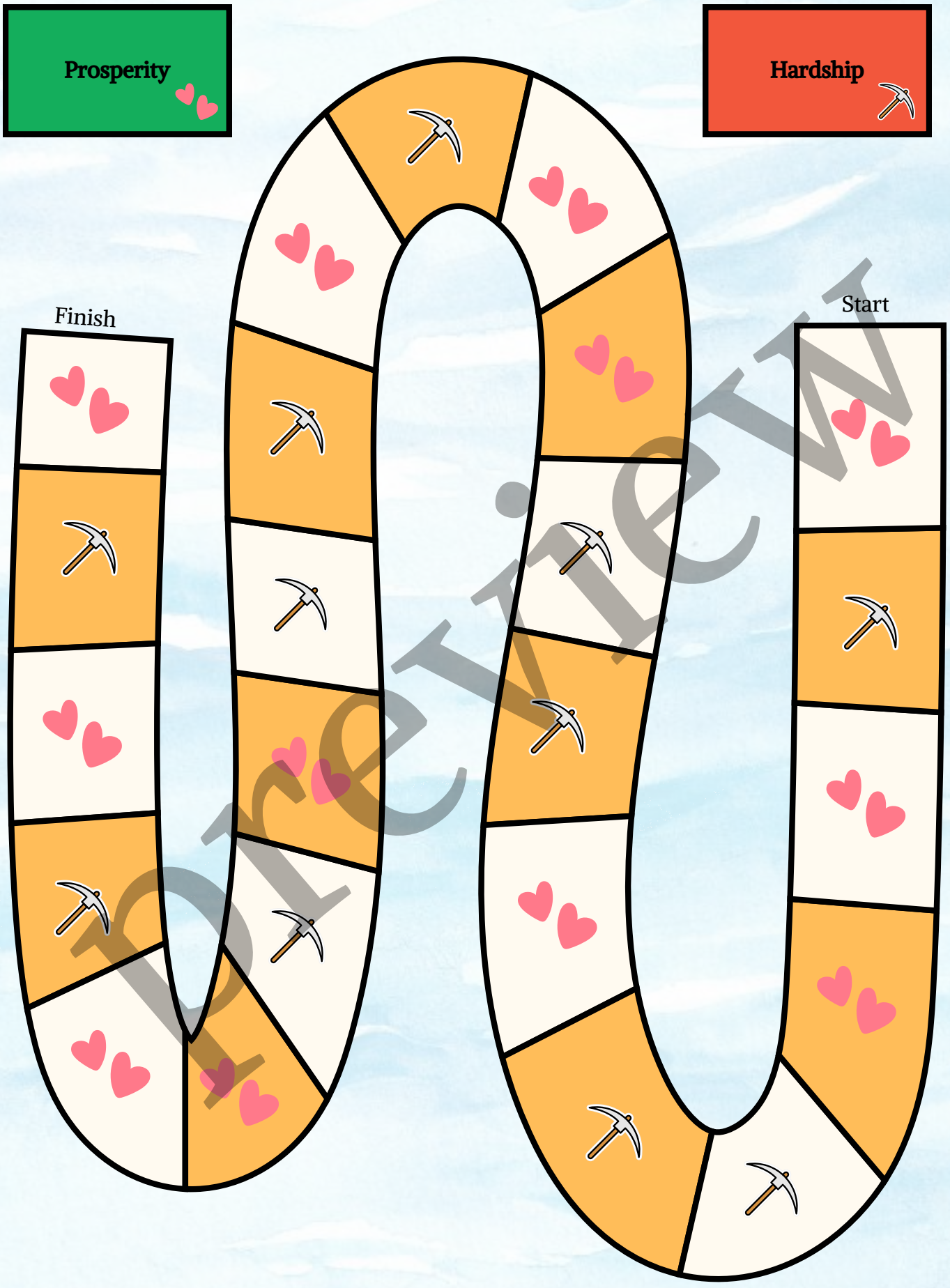
Gold Rush Simulation Game

Object: To have the most amount of gold at the end of the game.

Getting Started: Cut out the game pieces below. Stack the “prosperity” and “hardship” cards on the labeled areas of the game board. Each person selects a character token and starts with 3 pieces of gold. Select one person to be in charge of handing out the gold. The youngest player goes first.

How to Play: Use a 6-sided die to roll. Move the number of spaces you roll. Based on where you land, either pick up a “hardship” card or a “prosperity” card. Do what it says on the card. When all players reach the finish line, the game ends. Whoever has the most gold wins! *Note- if you run out of gold, do nothing until your next turn.

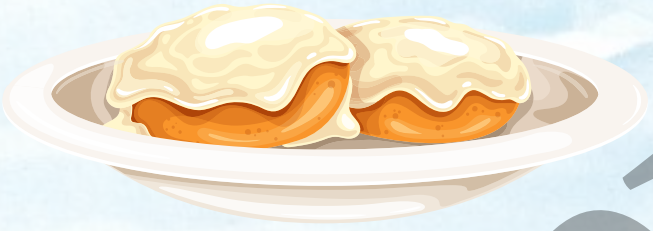
preview



Preview

Gold Rush Biscuits and Gravy Recipe

This recipe is from TastingHistory.com–
https://www.tastinghistory.com/episodes/biscuitsandgravy



Ingredients:

Biscuits
2 cups flour
Heaping 1 1/2 teaspoons of cream of tarter
1/2 teaspoon salt
4 Tablespoons butter at room temperature, cut into 4 or 5 pieces
Heaping 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
3/4 cup milk or evaporated milk
2 1/2" round cookie cutter

Gravy
1 lb fatty meat such as sausage, bacon, or salt pork (rinsed)
Flour, amount will depend on how much fat you end up with
Evaporated milk, amount will depend
Salt and Pepper to taste

See next page for instructions.

preview

The Transcontinental Railroad

Instructions: Follow the instructions below to create your own transcontinental train ticket using the template on the following page.

"Transcontinental Railroad." Britannica Kids, kids.britannica.com/students/article/transcontinental-railroad/629320.

1. Choose a starting city (East coast or Midwest).

Pick one city where your traveler begins their journey. For example:

- New York City
- Boston
- Chicago
- St. Louis

Write this on your ticket as "Departure City."

2. Choose an Arrival City in California

Most trains ended in Sacramento, but you may also choose:

- San Francisco
- Oakland
- San Jose

Write this as "Arrival City."

3. Add the Dates and Travel Time

The trip used to take 4–6 months, but by train, it took only about 7 days. Remember, the Transcontinental Railroad started in 1869 so the date should be after 1869.

Include a departure date and an arrival date that make sense for a one-week train trip.

preview

The Transcontinental Railroad

4. Add Features of a Real Ticket

Add the following:

- Passenger Name
- Car Number / Seat Number (make it up!)
- Price of Ticket (you decide—tickets cost $65 for 3rd class, $75 for 2nd class, and $135 for 1st class. This was approximately $1,300–$2,700 in today's money).
- Train Company (Central Pacific or Union Pacific)

Optional: Add a conductor's signature or a stamp.

5. Add a Catchy Advertisement Line

Railroad companies used to write ads to attract travelers. Add one fun line such as:

- "Ride West in Comfort and Style!"
- "See the Beautiful Sierra Nevada by Train!"
- "The Fastest Way to the Golden State!"

Departure City:

Arrival City:

Departure Date:

Arrival Date:

Passenger Name:

Seat: **Price: $** _____

Class: (check one):

1st ☐ **2nd** ☐ **3rd** ☐

Train Company:

preview

Unit 7 Quiz

1. Which industries began to flourish in California?

   a. movie
   b. farming
   c. transportation
   d. all of the above

2. True or False, the Pony Express was very successful and lasted for 50+ years. Circle one.

3. True or False, once the gold was gone in California, most people left. Circle one.

4. True or False, the transcontinental railroad connected the eastern and western United States. Circle one.

5. What year was the devestating San Francisco earthquake and fire?

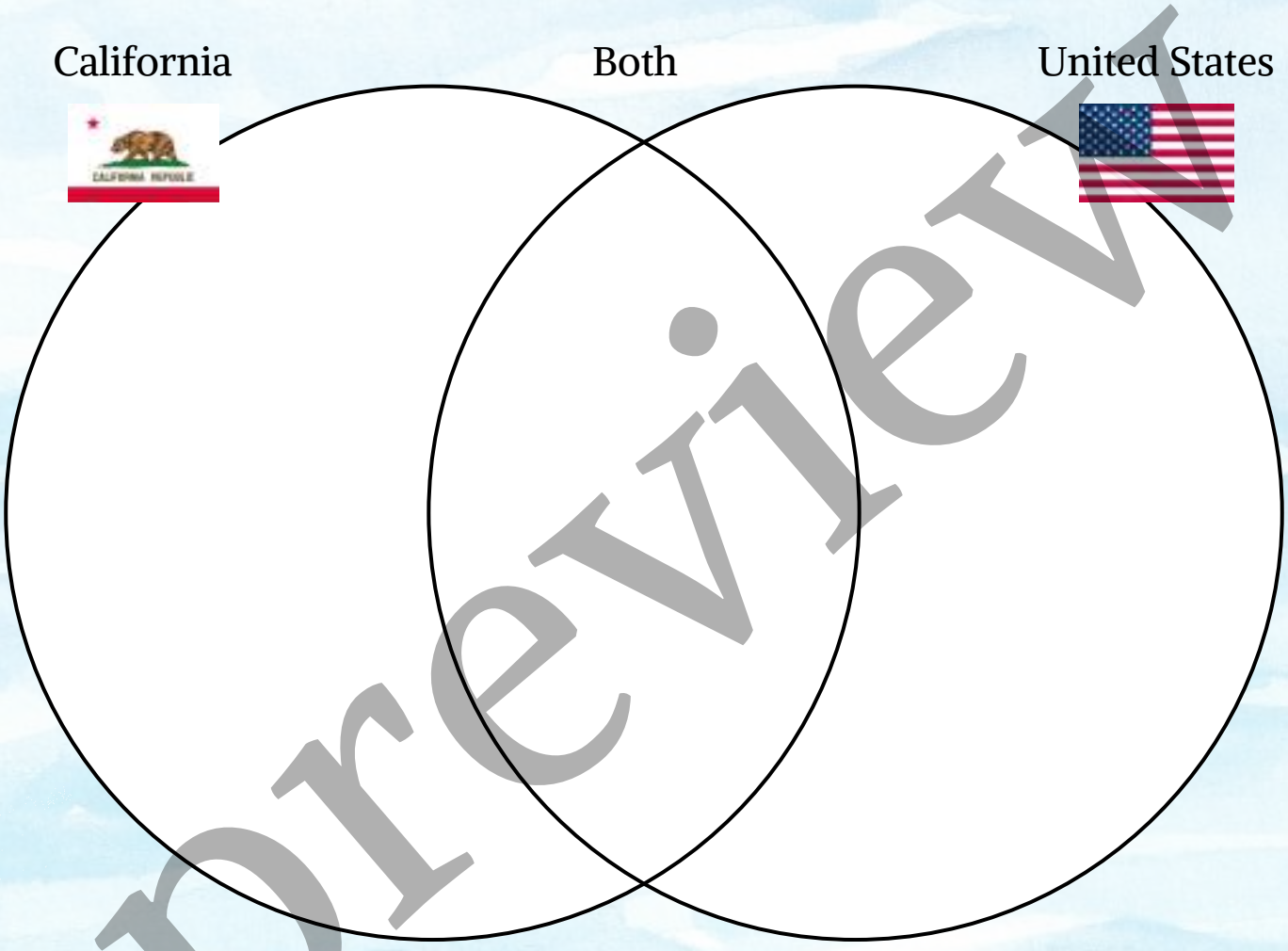
   a. 1506
   b. 1965
   c. 2000
   d. 1906

6. True or False, many immigrants (people from other countries) helped build the transcontinental railroad. Circle one.

preview

California Constitution vs. U.S. Constitution Venn Diagram

Instructions: Read the paragraph below on the California Constitution vs. the U.S. Constitution to complete the Venn diagram.



preview

The California and United States Constitutions are similar in many ways. Both divide the government into three branches– Legislative, Executive, and Judicial, which allows for checks and balances. In addition, both constitutions include the protection of individual rights. However, the California Constitution further expands on what those rights include which makes it longer at 35 articles compared to 7 articles in the U.S. Constitution. California's Constitution was written at the Monterey Convention in 1849 and resides in Sacramento. The U.S. Constitution is the 'Supreme Law of the Land' meaning it supersedes all state constitutions. The U.S. Constitution's first 10 amendments are called the Bill of Rights. It was written at the Constitutional Convention in 1787 and resides in Washington D.C..