

The Mexican-American War: Fulfilling America's Dreams

Charles Coursey
Pershing Middle School

From the age of five to ten years old, I would lie on the floor in front of my great grandparents' fireplace and listen to the stories that my great grandmother would tell of her father and his exploits during the Civil War. She would recount his growing up in frontier Florida. I was nurtured on family history as a youth. My great grandmother would add historical tales to her family lessons, in order to entertain me in the evenings. This is when the seed for the love of history was implanted in me. She would show me her father's Civil War pistol, and tell me that when Hose, her father, learned that the Civil War was over, he grabbed his horse and pistol and rode straight for his family in Florida.

My Aunt Opal was also nurtured on family history, and as she grew older, she researched our ancestors in order to find our roots. This opened the door for her joining the Daughters of the American Revolution after she found several ancestors that had participated in the American Revolution. Immersed in her family research, she found that on her matrilineal mother's side we were descendents of Zachary Taylor, and cousins to James K. Polk. She and I share this love of history, and knowing that these historical people were in our family history caused me to research their life and times.

I discovered that very few people know much about this important period in American History. This was an expansion period in American History that is sometimes called Manifest Destiny. The frontier was moving westward, and more immigrants were migrating to the United States from Europe. Agriculture was king; Americans wanted their own farms and there was plenty of land west of the United States. Mexico and Great Britain claimed this western land, but people from the United States felt that it was their land because God would will the usurpation. The United States had the benefit of not losing to Great Britain in both the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812. England was more interested in Asia than the American wilderness, so she would not risk much for her ownership in Oregon Country. To the southwest of the United States' frontier, Mexico laid claim to the land. Mexico had just lost its northeastern state of Texas in 1836 to American rebels. The Mexican government was in a state of decline and flux. One government would overthrow their predecessor, and then be overthrown themselves. The Mexican government was very weak monetarily and militaristically. Mexico felt a false sense of power because of the vast amount of terrain she controlled, feeling that a vast expanse of territory equals power. In the 1844 election, James K. Polk ran on the expansionist platform against Henry Clay, who saw that annexation of Texas would lead inevitably to war with Mexico. When the governor of Tennessee, James K. Polk, won, his first action as president of the United States was to invite Texas to join the Union. President Polk then offered to buy New Mexico and California from Mexico. The Mexicans were infuriated by the attempts to purchase their territory, and the annexation of Texas to the United States was an added insult because Mexico still claimed the Texas

state as theirs, and they did not recognize the right of Texas' secession. Of the insults given by the United States to Mexico, the annexation of Texas was the most significant. James K. Polk and the Democrats added the Oregon Country to the territory of the United States with an agreement with Great Britain to make the 49th parallel as the northern border of the United States' Oregon Country. Texas and the Oregon Country now expanded westward the borders of the United States. President Polk wanted to expand from Texas west to the Pacific Ocean. To accomplish this feat, President Polk insisted that the border between Mexico and Texas was the Rio Grande River, not the Nueces River that most Texans and Mexicans had previously recognized as the border. President Polk ordered General Zachary Taylor and his American troops to cross the Nueces River and build a fort on the northern banks of the Rio Grande River, in order to force a war with Mexico to fulfill the American dream of Manifest Destiny. That dream was all the land west of the United States to the Pacific Ocean for the price of a war – the Mexican-American War.

The Mexican-American War has been shadowed in American history by the Civil War and Twentieth Century wars such as World War I and World War II. In most textbooks in American history, the Mexican-American War progressively gets less paragraphs and emphasis for the students to study from year to year. This oversight wrongly affirms to the students that the Mexican-American war is diminishing in importance to students and to the American history scholar. Most students need to realize how much impact the Mexican-American War had on the economic, political, military, and social structure of the time, and the importance of this crucial event in later phases of American history.

The Mexican-American War was a historical war that had a great impact on Texas. In 1846, a new Mexican government headed by Santa Anna came to power and asserted that the Mexican Territory ended at the Sabine River. They announced that the Mexican government claimed most of Texas. The government, in 1846, proclaimed that it was ready to go to war in order to defend this claim. This new Mexican leadership scared Texas and the United States, who had just annexed Texas the year before.

Texas had claimed that the southern border of the state was the Rio Grande River, but Mexico asserted that the southern border of Texas was the Nueces River, which is further to the north of the Rio Grande River. Texas had a highly doubtful claim to the land south of the Nueces River, but Texas had the backing of the “annexation happy” United States under President James K. Polk. Texas needed a southern and western border that was unquestionable and secure. Texas needed security from their southern and western neighbor, Mexico: the United States could be that security blanket. President James K. Polk said in his inaugural address on March 4, 1845:

To Texas the reunion is important because the strong protecting arm of our government would be extended over her, and the vast resources of her fertile soil and genial climate would be speedily developed, while the safety of New Orleans

and of our whole southwestern frontier against hostile aggression, as well as the interests of the whole Union, would be promoted by it. (Polk 287)

This war had a tremendous impact on Mexico in that it demonstrated the weak condition of the Mexican army and the inept political leadership in Mexico. Mexico won independence from Spain and had felt a growth in power, like her neighbor to the north. When Mexico lost Texas in the Revolution of 1836, Mexico felt the beginning of a political and military decline and was embarrassed at having lost this territory (Texas) to rebels, but Mexico still felt secure in her military power.

With a possible threat of a future war between the United States and Mexico, most Americans did not want to admit Texas into the Union in 1837-1842. Mexico saw this inability of Texas to join the United States as a political victory for them. Mexico felt that her military power was far more relevant in power than it actually was.

The impact of the Mexican-American War on the United States was the ability to recognize the completion of the dream of “Manifest Destiny.”

Expansionist fever over what was known as “Manifest Destiny” had seized and inflamed the American imagination. In December of 1845, the editor of the New York Morning News, John O’Sullivan, wrote of “our manifest destiny to overspread and to possess the whole of the continent, which Providence has given us for the development of the great experiment of liberty and federated self-government.

Manifest destiny! It had a Godly as well as a golden ring to it. Not only was the wealth to be had in California, but the will of God was to be executed there by His newly Chosen. (Leckie 325)

For decades the United States had sought to extend their borders to the shores of the Pacific Ocean and make that ocean the United States’ western boundary. Since James K. Polk was a southerner from Tennessee, he wanted the support of the northern voters. To avail their vote for him, he used as a campaign slogan “Fifty-four forty or fight,” which meant that the United States wanted the Oregon Country’s northern border, or they would go to war with Great Britain for the territory. The northern border of the Oregon Country was the parallel of 54 degrees 40 minutes.

Even though James K. Polk was a dark horse candidate, he had his finger on the pulse of the American voters. Americans felt that it was the destiny of the country to own the land from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean. They felt that the oceans were natural boundaries, and England did not want to go to war over this distant piece of real estate. A newspaper wrote, in 1844, that it was the Manifest Destiny of the United States to own the land between the oceans. These expansionists believed that not only was it a benefit to the country, but that it was inevitable. The treaty with Britain in 1846 secured part of

the dream of an ocean to ocean nation when the United States received the Oregon Country (Davidson 443). But the piece of the puzzle that was missing for the completion of Manifest Destiny was the land west of Texas, between Texas and the Pacific Ocean, which was also owned by Mexico. As war with Mexico could secure this final section of land for the United States, thereby realizing her dream of a country that covered the content in a defendable rectangle. President James K. Polk sent General Zachary Taylor to build a fort north of the Rio Grande River, but south of the Nueces River. Mexican troops forded the Rio Grande and attacked General Taylor's camp, killing eleven United States dragoons. Thus, a war between the United States and Mexico began. With Mexico's humiliating defeat three years later, the peace treaty was decided by the victorious United States. With the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the United States expanded its landmass by taking almost half of the northern part of Mexico as the prize for the United States having won the Mexican-American War. Mexico was in shock after she received a decisive military defeat by the United States, a realization that Mexico's leadership was ineffective. At the close of the Mexican-American War, the United States had usurped California and the disputed Texas territory as well.

From 1836 to 1842, Texas had unsuccessfully petitioned the United States for statehood. Two reasons kept Texas from her ambitions. First, the United States would not admit Texas into the union because this annexation could provoke Mexico into a war that the Americans were unwilling to fight at this time. Some Americans felt that the United States was unprepared for a war at this period of its history. The second major cause for controversy was the extension of slavery farther west. Texas, as a country, embraced slavery for a labor force on their plantations and farms. About twenty-five percent of Texans owned slaves in 1840 (Anderson 298). This fact, of Texas being a slave-owning country, alienated the abolitionists of the North to the admittance of Texas becoming a state in the Union. The abolitionists were concerned that Texas would bring into the United States Congress more pro-slave votes, and thereby undermine the ability of the abolitionists to remove the institution of slavery from the boundaries of the United States (Ayers 353).

The Mexican-American War and the admittance of Texas into the union both brought an end to the disputed southern boundary by making the Rio Grande the border between Mexico and Texas. By winning the war, the United States legitimized their claim to the Rio Grande as the southern border of Texas. It also added a huge land mass to Texas and thus added land to the United States. Not stopping with Texas, the United States took the land of California and the New Mexico Territory in order to fulfill the Manifest Destiny dream. Peace commissioner Nicholas Trist signed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, February 1848.

Mexico, for \$15 million and the abandonment of American claims against the Mexican government and its people, agreed to sell California, New Mexico, and all of Texas above the Rio Grande. When the treaty finally appeared before Congress for ratification the following month, many doubted that it would pass,

so bitter was the opposition to the war, to Polk, and to expansion. The various cliques, however, found a way to swallow their disagreements long enough to ratify the treaty in March so that the war could end. A prominent newspaper pronounced the treaty “a peace which every one will be glad of, but no one will be proud of.” The Mexicans signed the treaty in May and the war finally closed.

The United States did not stop with just Texas. The United States took the land of California and the New Mexico Territory from Mexico, in order to fulfill their Manifest Destiny dream.

This war was also important as an internship for some of the most important future military and political leaders during the Civil War Era. Participating in the Mexican-American War trained many of the future Civil War generals in military skills and gave them a familiarity with each other. Northern and Southern generals were aware of each others’ personalities and war strategies. Some military personnel during the Mexican-American War had become friends but in 1861 had chosen different sides in the national dispute.

The Mexican-American War was a major contributor in the development of the United States’ expansionism of the 1840s decade. America had collected three large sections of land for their push to reach the Pacific Ocean. Texas was annexed in 1845 and the Oregon Country was agreed on between Britain and the United States in 1846, and last, because of the Treaty of Guadeloupe Hidalgo the United States was able to add the Mexican Cession and the Texas disputed territory in 1848 (Garcia 394-5). Five years later in 1853, the United States agreed to pay \$10 million to Mexico for a small strip of land that is part of New Mexico and Arizona, which was known as the Gadsden Purchase. The dream of Manifest Destiny had been completed. The dream had become a reality. The United States had reached its goal of having borders from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean.

To reach her goal of land acquisition, the Mexican-American War was the best execution of military strategy that the United States could have undertaken. This was the first war that the United States had fought that was an aggressive war, not a defensive war like the Revolutionary War or the War of 1812. Since the Mexican-American War was fought outside the boundaries of the United States, the citizens of the United States had less involvement, and thus had less impact on them than if the war had been fought on American soil. Another positive effect on American citizens was that it was a quick war, one that had gone well for the United States from the very beginning. There were some people who wrote eloquent papers on the resistance to the war, such as Henry David Thoreau, in his essay “On Civil Disobedience.” He believed that the government was controlled by a few individuals that were using the government for their own benefit, not the good of the country or of mankind. Thoreau claimed that there was a higher law of individual conscience. James Russell Lowell published on June 17, 1846, in the Boston Courier, what is now called The Biglow Papers. It continued for the duration of

the war, and pleaded the case that the Mexican-American War was instigated by a conspiracy of slaveholders headed by President James K. Polk to extend slavery to the west. This resistance had less impact on the duration of the war because the United States army had so many military successes. Most Americans took pride in this outstanding military accomplishment. Thus the pacifists had less of a voice in determining the course of the war. The accumulation of two huge tracks of land, the disputed Texas territory and the huge Mexican Cession, gave most citizens of the United States a feeling that the Mexican-American War was worthwhile. They were given their long sought Manifest Destiny.

Seventh grade students have been introduced to the history of Texas and its Republic in the required Texas History course. The proposed lesson will be for eighth graders who take the required American History class (from 1607 Jamestown Colony to 1877 the end of Reconstruction). In a two week period of time, eighth grade students will study how the Mexican War gave legitimacy to the disputed Texas territory and allow students to study the United States' expansion from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean by way of the Mexican Cession and Mexican – Texas disputed land. One of the ways the United States had developed their geography was by way of wars, and the Mexican-American War was a good example of what is viewed as a “good” American victory and a great reward for being the victor. The student will see that the Americans lost relatively few men in battle, that the war was a short duration of time, and that the United States won most of the battles. In the Mexican-American War the battle death rate was 1,733 as opposed to the Revolutionary War that had a battle death rate of 4,435 and the War of 1812 which had a higher per year battle death rate of 2,260 soldiers. The Revolutionary War lasted from 1775 to 1783 or nine years and the War of 1812 lasted from 1812 to 1815 or four years while the Mexican-American War lasted from 1846 to 1848 or less than three years (Leckie 376-377). As a result of the Mexican-American War victory, the United States gained a huge tract of land.

It was the highpoint of a great career, and Scott had earned it. He had led one of the most momentous fighting marches in all history. Cortez may have conquered Mexico City for Spain, but the Mexican Nation is no longer Spanish; whereas Winfield Scott, in conquering the same capital, was the chief instrument in adding 1,193,061 square miles of territory – an area more than five times the size of France – to the national domain of the United States.

That area was ceded after Nicholas Trist negotiated the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, signed on February 2, 1848. Trist had been recalled by Polk, but after Santa Anna abdicated, Trist saw his opportunity and deliberately disobeyed orders. In the return for the ceded land, the United States agreed to assume the unpaid claims and pay Mexico \$15 million. (Leckie 376-377)

This unit will explain to the eighth graders how and why the United States acquired California and all the land west of Texas and south of Oregon Country.

With the study of the Mexican-American War, the students will be able to trace the three invasions of Mexico by the United States. First, Stephen Kearny and John C. Fremont left Ft. Leavenworth to take California from Mexican control. John C. Fremont took the northern half, taking San Francisco and Monterey, while Stephen Kearny took Santa Fe and San Diego, which secured the southern half of California for the United States. General Zachary Taylor marched from Corpus Christi, Texas, into northern Mexico and captured Monterrey and defeated General Santa Anna at the Battle of Buena Vista. This second invasion secured the northern part of Mexico and lowered the effectiveness of the main Mexican force. The third invasion was by General Winfield Scott who came by boat to capture Vera Cruz and marched inland to defeat the last resistance of the war in Mexico City, their capital (Dupuy 809-11).

West of Mexico City, General Scott met fierce resistance from Mexicans protecting Chapultepec. Chapultepec was a military school that was defended by one thousand Mexican soldiers and fifty cadets from the military academy. They fought to the death, to protect the fortification at Chapultepec. Even though there was determined resistance, Mexico City fell to General Scott and his troops in September of 1847, and the war was over. This final assault brought the military and government of the proud Mexicans to their knees, and then Mexico was forced to accept a humiliating treaty of peace that forced her to forfeit California, New Mexico Territory, and the disputed Texas Territory.

The students will also realize that the Mexican-American War became a learning tool for future United States leaders, both politically and militarily, for participation in the Civil War. Men such as Ulysses S. Grant, Jefferson Davis, Robert E. Lee, George B. McClellan, Joseph E. Johnson, William T. Sherman and many more famous heroes of the 1861 to 1865 conflict began their careers in this war (Leckie 328-9). The students will be able to link the young men in the Mexican-American War with the same people that became the leaders during the Civil War.

The students will be able to view attitudes of the war of the pacifists, the War Hawks, and the abolitionists. The students will be presented writings of pacifists, such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau. The students will study War Hawks such as James K. Polk, Zachary Taylor, and Winfield Scott and view how these men forced the war with Mexico to further their own political aspirations.

Mexico was so offended by the American offer to annex Texas that she broke off diplomatic relations with the United States shortly after Polk took office. After Texas did join the Union, Mexico resounded to cries for war with the United States. Polk replied by ordering General Zachary Taylor to a position “on or near” the Rio Grande to repel invasion. Taylor took the station at Corpus Christi, on the south side of the Nueces River. Thus he highlighted the continuing Texas-Mexico border controversy. (Leckie 324-325)

Lastly, the students will study the attitudes and writings of abolitionists such as James Russell Lowell, Charles Sumner, William Lloyd Garrison and Frederick Douglas to see why these people felt that the war was a Southern and pro-slavery venture that they vehemently opposed. Charles Sumner wrote very persuasively in his "Report on the war with Mexico," when he condemned the Mexican-American War with the words:

IT IS A WAR FOR THE EXTENSION OF SLAVERY

A war of conquest is bad; but the present war has darker shadows. It is a war for the extension of slavery over a territory which has already been purged by Mexican authority from this stain and curse. Fresh markets of human beings are to be established; further opportunities for this hateful traffic are to be opened; the lash of the overseer is to be quickened in new regions; and the wretched slave is to be hurried to unaccustomed fields of toil. It can hardly be believed that now, more than eighteen hundred years since the dawn of the Christian era, a government, professing the law of charity and justice, should be employed in war to extend an institution which exists in defiance of these sacred principles.

It has already been shown that the annexation of Texas was consummated for this purpose. The Mexican War is a continuance, a prolongation, of the same efforts; and the success which crowned the first emboldens the partisans of the latter, who now, as before, profess to extend the area of freedom, while they are establishing a new sphere for slavery. (361)

This unit will take two weeks. The strategies for teaching the Mexican-American War will be in six forms of study. One will be for the students to read selected papers to show how the United States got into a state of war with Mexico and how the armed forces strategy was to divide the United States' army into four forces to overcome Mexican resistance and conquer them in a short and quick war. The students will also read selected papers on the Treaty of Guadeloupe Hidalgo and the acquisition of the Mexican Cession and the disputed Mexican-Texas territory to the United States. Through these papers the students will acquire background knowledge of the Mexican-American War and its final outcome. The papers will start with the election of James K. Polk as president of the United States in 1845. Then, the students will read how President Polk sent General Zachary Taylor to Texas to build a fort on the disputed land, just north of the Rio Grande. The students will read of the invasion of Mexico by John C. Fremont, Stephen Kearny, Zachary Taylor, and Winfield Scott. Through discussion and lecture, the class will hear selected topics on the war so that students will be able to understand this conflict. The students' opinions will be sought in discussions to evaluate their understanding of these readings.

Second, the teacher will give the students a selected list of people who fought in both the Mexican-American War and the Civil War. The students will select one of these soldiers to research and will write a short paper about his role in both wars. This will

acquaint the students for the future study on the Civil War and will allow the students to view the link between the two wars. Each student will give a short presentation to their class in order for all the students to be exposed to many different military personals, not just the subject that the individual student did his research project on.

Third, the students will be given a map of the western United States and Mexico to trace the routes of John C. Fremont, Stephen Kearny, Zachary Taylor, and Winfield Scott. This will show the students the strategy that the United States army used in the Mexican-American War and how the defeat of Mexico was accomplished. The students will also use the maps for visualizing the idea of Manifest Destiny. The land acquisition will show how the United States extended their territory by winning the Mexican-American War. In addition, it will show the shrewd negotiations of the Treaty of Guadeloupe Hidalgo which helped extend the United States' territory to the Pacific Ocean. The students will color the state of Texas one color, the disputed area between the United States and Mexico another color, and will color the Mexican Cession a third color. Then the students will show on their map all the states that were included in the disputed area and the Mexican Cession; this will involve ten western states for the students to draw on their maps.

Fourth, the students will be given selected pictures dealing with different aspects of the Mexican-American War and they will write their interpretation of what they see in the artists' portrayals. Artists and the government used paintings and other forms of artwork for propaganda. American artists painted the Mexican citizen as poor, but happy to be liberated by the Yankees. The Mexican Army was pictured as inept and always having the most dead and wounded. This demonstrated to American audiences that the war lost few United States soldiers, and the Mexican population was glad that the United States won – a cheap price to pay for a vast amount of land. Some pictures will show how American artists presented Stephen Kearny, Zachary Taylor, and Winfield Scott in battle. Other pictures will show Winfield Scott entering Mexico City as a triumphant United States General. Afterwards, students will discuss their assigned artwork and share these findings with the class.

Fifth, during this decade, many important writers and politicians spoke out in newspapers, essays, speeches, and poems to express their view of the Mexican-American War. The teacher should select a reading that is for the war, and a reading that is opposing the war. There are many writings that oppose the Mexican-American War, that the teacher can select from, such as: Henry David Thoreau's "On Civil Disobedience", Walt Whitman's "The Duty of a Government", Charles Sumner's "A War to Strengthen the Slavery Interest", Albert Gallatin's "The Unjust War with Mexico", or James Russell Lowell's "War and Slavery". On the other hand, the teacher should select one writing that is in favor of the war, such as: John L. O'Sullivan's "Our manifest Destiny", James K. Polk's "California and Mexico", George C. Beckwith's "War and its Remedies". The teacher will read aloud from selected primary sources while the students follow along with the oral reading from their own copy. After the readings, the students will discuss

their ideas of protests during war. They will debate the morality of the concept of Manifest Destiny. Depending on the academic level of the class, the teacher will determine the level and composition of the questions. Nonetheless, all students should have some input as to how the primary sources impacted them.

Sixth, if time permits, the students could debate the many topics in this unit that avail themselves for discussion. Debate topics could range from whether the United States should or should not go to war with Mexico or “Was it morally right to conquer areas for Manifest Destiny?” Another topic could involve whether the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was just and fair for Mexico and the United States. Once the topics are issued by the teacher, the students would have to be given at least one or two class periods to prepare for the debate. The students would be allowed to pick either side of the topic and would be graded by a rubric that was handed out to every student that was to participate in the debate. The students would have had to do prior research to be able to speak on the debated topic.

This proposed unit on the Mexican-American War would have meaning for the students and could have a lasting effect on them after the unit was covered. This would prepare them for the next great American conflict – the Civil War. The students would be exposed to future political and military leaders that would be in an upcoming chapter in their study of American history. They would be exposed to more than just learning the facts of American history – they would leave this unit with tools to use later in life.

LESSON PLANS

The following lesson plans were written as a two week unit. The teacher may select from three different approaches for the study of the Mexican-American War. The teacher can choose what they feel most comfortable with and what they feel would be most effective with their classroom students from the following lesson plan offerings.

Pre-Unit Teacher Preparations

Students should begin the study of the Mexican-American War by reading both the text in their textbook and a short summary of the Mexican-American War that each student will be provided by the teacher. This paper, that the teacher will provide, should include the 1844 presidential election to show that James K. Polk won the election over Henry Clay because Clay was opposed to expansion. James K. Polk won by a small margin, but he felt that it was a mandate. The paper should show that President Polk sent General Zachary Taylor to Texas to build a fort on the disputed land north of the Rio Grande River. This forced the Mexican army to attack General Taylor and during the attack some United States soldiers were killed. Thus, the United States Congress declared war on Mexico because Mexico drew the first blood.

The paper should discuss each of the four major route attacks that the United States forces used to win the war. One, Stephen Kearny marched American soldiers from Fort Leavenworth to Santa Fe, New Mexico, and then moved his troops into California to take San Diego and Los Angeles, thus severing the Mexican land north of the Gila River from Mexico's control. The second force, led by John C. Fremont, left Bent's Fort in the unorganized territory of the United States to capture Sutter's Fort and San Francisco, California, from the Mexicans. Stephen Kearny took the Southern part of the Mexican Cession, while John C. Fremont took the northern part. Third, the paper must include the march of Zachary Taylor and his troops into Monterrey and the Battle of Buena Vista, near Saltillo. Fourth, the invasion by the United States was with Winfield Scott and his troops by sea. The paper should describe Scott capturing Matamoros, Tampica and Veracruz, and then describe Winfield Scott's entry into the capital, Mexico City in 1847, as well as the battle of Chapultepec. Last, the paper should include some of the major provisions of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, such as the United States paying fifteen million dollars to Mexico for California, New Mexico and all of Texas north of the Rio Grande River. This paper will give the student a background for the upcoming unit that is to be taught on the Mexican-American War. After the students have read the paper, this will give them a background from which to complete the other assignments for this unit.

Lesson Plan One

The teacher should lead a discussion of the events that are pointed out in the teacher prepared paper. This way, the teacher can focus his or her attention on the major historical points, and this will help with a general understanding of the subject matter. At the beginning of the unit of study, the teacher will also present the students with a list of men who fought in both the Mexican-American War and the Civil War. Each student will choose one of the following young officers that served in both wars: Ulysses S. Grant, Robert E. Lee, Thomas Beauregard, Hooker, Joseph E. Johnston, Albert Sidney Johnston, Burnside, Bragg, Kearny, Pope, Meade, McClellan, McDowell, Stonewall Jackson, Jefferson Davis, Longstreet, Pickett, Armistead, Hebert, Pemberton, Simon Bolivar Buckner, Sherman, Halleck, Hills, Reynolds, Hancock, Buell, Ewell, Jubal Early, and the admirals DuPont, Buchanan, and David Glasgow Farragut.

The students will research and write a two-page paper on their officer. Each student will present to the class a three minute oral presentation with a poster. These posters will be used as visual props to show the picture of the subject and achievements that were accomplished during the officer's life. After the presentations, the posters will be displayed on the walls for the duration of the unit. With the oral presentations, the whole class will be introduced to many different military personages and the students will be able to see, during the study of the Civil War, that many officers on both sides were friends and acquaintances.

A blank map of the land from the Mississippi River west to the Pacific Ocean, and from the southern boundary of the Oregon Country south to the southern border of Mexico, will be given to all of the students. The map will have two purposes. One, the students will trace the routes of John C. Fremont, Stephen Kearny, Zachary Taylor, and Winfield Scott as each officer enters the war arena. The student will be able to visualize the strategy used by the United States to defeat Mexico and Santa Anna in a very short war. As they trace the routes of each officer, the students will label each path with the officer's name and the year of the accomplishment. The students will also label the following on their maps: Fort Leavenworth, Bent's Fort, Santa Fe, San Diego, Los Angeles, Saltillo, New Orleans, Matamoros, Corpus Christi, Tampico, Veracruz and Mexico City. The students could be given a map that the teacher had labeled with some routes, cities, and battles, but other items would be left out, so that the students' comprehension could be tested.

Assignments

1. Teacher and students will hold a discussion of the teacher-prepared paper from the Election of 1844 to the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.
2. Teacher assigns students the name of one military officer that served in both the Mexican-American War and the Civil War. The students must write at least two pages on their assigned officer, and also make a poster on the designated military officer that should include a picture of the officer and events that involved their subject, historically. The teacher will make a chart for the date and time that the students will orally present their research.
3. The teacher will hand out blank maps showing the land from the Mississippi River, west to the Pacific Ocean, and from the southern boundary of the Oregon Country, south to the southern border of Mexico. Students will trace the routes of John C. Fremont, Stephen Kearny, Zachary Taylor, and Winfield Scott, concerning their participation in the Mexican-American War. They will label each route by the military leader's name. The students also must identify, on their maps, the location of Fort Leavenworth, Bent's Fort, Santa Fe, San Diego, Los Angeles, Saltillo, New Orleans, Matamoros, Corpus Christi, Tampico, Veracruz, and Mexico City.
4. At the end of the unit of study, the students will be graded on their research paper, poster, oral presentation, and a test, consisting of questions of the text, teacher-prepared paper, and a blank map, on which students must locate selected routes of military leaders and selected towns or forts.

Lesson Plan Two

The teacher should lead in a discussion of the events that are pointed out in the teacher prepared paper. This way, the teacher can focus his or her attention on the major historical points, and this will help with a general understanding of the subject matter. Another blank map of the Mexican Cession and disputed territory by the United States and Mexico should be given to the students with the outline of all the present states located within the boundaries of the 1848 land acquisition. The students will fill in the

names of the states on the map. This will help the students to visualize how much land the United States obtained with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. This map will demonstrate to students that by winning the Mexican-American War, the United States fulfilled their dream of Manifest Destiny by owning the land from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean. Using another blank map of the land west of the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean, and the land from Oregon Country to Saltillo, Mexico, the students will color the 1845 United States one color, the land mass that was in dispute between the United States and Mexico a second color, and the territory known as the Mexican Cession a third color. This will make visible to the students the large amount of land and its location in relationship to the United States in 1848.

There are many drawings and paintings whose subject is the Mexican-American War, and these will be shown to the students to either discuss aloud as a class or the students could write their interpretations of what they see in the artists' portrayals. Most artists exaggerated the abilities of United States heroes such as Stephen Kearny, Zachary Taylor, and Winfield Scott in battle, or artists of the period belittled the Mexicans' loyalty or ability in battle. Some artists picture Winfield Scott as a conquering hero marching into Mexico City with the well-dressed Mexicans joyfully greeting the triumphant United States general. Students will discuss the assigned art works and share their findings with the class. These art works can be found in the works listed in the bibliography.

Assignments

1. Teacher and students will hold a discussion of the teacher-prepared paper from the Election of 1844 to the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.
2. Students will be given a blank map of the Mexican Cession and the disputed territory between the United States and Mexico. The map should have the outline of all of the states that are included in the two territories of land. Students will fill in the names of each state, and color the United States, Mexico, the Mexican Cession, and the disputed Texas territory, four different colors. After the students have read the textbook selection and the teacher-prepared paper on the Mexican-American War, the teacher should discuss the Mexican-American War and use the maps, as the discussion proceeds to end at the culmination of the war in 1847. The teacher could ask different students to trace routes and strategies of the war to involve the now informed students.
3. The teacher will present four contemporary drawings, paintings, or cartoons, whose subject is the Mexican-American War. The students will write what is viewed in each, and whether the scene is historically realistic or whether it is exaggerated. The students will then orally share their interpretations with the class.
4. At the end of the unit of study, the students will be graded by questions on the teacher-prepared text, a blank map of the Mexican Cession, and the Texas-Mexican disputed territory, with some blank states for students to identify. On the test map, students must also locate the Mexican Cession, the disputed Texas-Mexican territory, and Texas in 1845. Students will be given a contemporary drawing, painting, or

cartoon of the Mexican-American War, on which they will write a paragraph describing the picture and identifying any exaggerations.

Lesson Plan Three

The teacher will make a class set of Henry David Thoreau's "On Civil Disobedience" and hand out one copy to each of the students. The teacher will read aloud to the students the first seven paragraphs while the students follow along with the oral reading from their own copy. After each paragraph the class should discuss the information read aloud in relationship to the Mexican-American War. When the reading is concluded the students will discuss their ideas of protests during wartime. Some students could debate Thoreau's point of view toward the Mexican-American War and other students could defend the right of the government to go to war in 1846. Each group should provide evidence to support their arguments. Another way to approach learning about the Mexican-American War would be to have the students present a one-act play or a short skit with Thoreau in jail defending his point of view with other students that take the side of defending their right to go to war in the Mexican-American War. One student could be a narrator and explain the historical setting and the background information on Henry David Thoreau. Another student could be Henry David Thoreau, who is in jail for his strong belief, and he could relate these beliefs as arguments to several students that could defend the right of the government to go to war in 1846. The teacher could write a few questions and give them to the students to see if they have grasped Thoreau's point of view.

If time permits, the teacher could pick several debate topics for interested students to debate issues on the Mexican-American War, such as: "The United States had a right to go to war with Mexico in 1846"; "It was morally right to conquer land for Manifest Destiny"; "The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was just and fair for Mexico." The teacher could post the topics on a bulletin board, after the class had read the reading for the unit. Students could sign up for the debate topic they would like to argue. Two class periods after the teams were appointed, the debates could be presented at the closing thirty minutes of each class period, for the amount of debates chosen by the students. Each side of the debate could have three minutes to defend their side of the debate, having two students on either side. Then there could be two minutes allotted for rebuttals. Finally, the class could vote on the most persuasive team. This exercise will allow students to do research and orally present to the class the topic of the Mexican-American War.

Assignments

1. Teacher and students will hold a discussion of the teacher-prepared paper from the Election of 1844 to the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.
2. Students will be given a copy of Henry David Thoreau's "On Civil Disobedience." The teacher will read the first seven paragraphs, and after each paragraph, a discussion will follow. The discussion should cover the historical significance of the time, and also the right to protest during times of war. The teacher should encourage

two points of view towards protesting, one being Thoreau's point of view concerning the Mexican-American War, and two, the right of the government to engage in the 1846-1848 war.

3. For interested students, the teacher could assign the writing of a one-act play, or short skit, which involve dialogues between Henry David Thoreau, in prison defending his points of view, a jailor, pro-government citizens, and loyal friends, who give their opinion of the Mexican-American War, and the right to protest during the time a country is at war. This one-act play or skit would be presented to the class near the end of the unit of study.
4. Students who aren't involved in the writing of the play will be assigned a topic to debate. They could choose from one of the following topics: "It was morally right for the United States to conquer land for Manifest Destiny"; "The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was just and fair for Mexico"; "Citizens should not have the right to protest during times of war", or "The war strategy of the United States in 1846 insured a short and victorious outcome." The debates will be presented to the class, and each of the debaters will have a four-minute time allotment for presenting their opinion statement, following with a second round of three-minute duration for each side's rebuttal and conclusion of their arguments.
5. Students will be given a test on the textbook as well as the teacher-prepared paper on the Mexican-American War. Students should be given an essay to write, concerning the pros and cons of Thoreau's Mexican-American War protest.

Once these lessons have been carried out by the teacher and students, everyone should have a thorough understanding of a historical topic that needs to be understood by students in order to appreciate Manifest Destiny, the Mexican-American relationship, and the actors in a future historical event – the Civil War. This unit, the Mexican-American War, could last from one to two weeks at the discretion of the teacher, but the impact on the students could last a lifetime.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Works Cited

- Anderson, Adrian, et al. *Texas and Texans*. New York: Glencoe McGraw-Hill, 2003.
A textbook that discusses the Mexican-American War through the eyes of Texans.
- Ayers, Edward K., et al. *American Passages, A History of the United States*. Vol. 1. Fort Worth: Harcourt College Publishers, 2003.
Chapter 12, "Expansion and Reaction: 1846-1854," is a short narrative of the events that led up to the Mexican-American War, the war, and the consequences of that war. Very good reading.

Davidson, James West and Kathleen Underwood. *American Journey the Quest for Liberty to 1877*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1991.

Very good maps. Good information in concise form of the Mexican-American War.

Dupuy, R. Ernest and Trevor N. Dupuy. *The Encyclopedia of Military History*. New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1977.

Chapter 17, "The Era of Napoleon; 1800-1850," an excellent reference source for concise technical details of the Mexican-American War. Describes battle, lists number killed and wounded, and gives conclusion of the event.

Garcia, Jesus, et al. *Creating America*, Evanston, IL: McDougal Littell, 2003.

Chapter 13, "Manifest Destiny: 1810-1853," is a text that concentrates on the United States politics leading into the Mexican-American War and the Mexican Cession after the war. There is very little about the war itself.

Leckie, Robert. *The Wars of America*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers, Inc., 1992.

A very complete account of the Mexican-American War in narrative form. The sixty pages are filled with facts.

Supplemental Resources

Collier, Christopher and James Lincoln Collier. *Hispanic America, Texas, and the Mexican War*. Tarrytown, NY: Benchmark Books, 1999.

The Mexican-American War is only dealt with in Chapter IV, and gives only the basic facts about the war.

Hakim, Joy. *Liberty for All*. New York: Oxford UP, 2003.

Chapter 1, "Fighting Over a Border," provides good cartoons and pictures that could be viewed by students for discussion in class.

Jacobs, William Jay. *War With Mexico*. Brookfield, CT: The Millbrook Press, 1993.

A few colorful prints of the Mexican-American War with the majority of pages devoted to basic storytelling of the war.

Mexican American War. February 2002. 10x Marketing. March 2004.

<<http://www.worldhistory.com/wiki/R/Republic.of.Texas.htm>>.

A brief description of the reasons for the United States going to war with Mexico in 1846 and the text describes a few of the battles during the Mexican-American War. It also discusses the peace treaty.

Mexican War 1846-1848. February 2002. 10x Marketing. March 2004.

<<http://www.worldhistory.com/wiki/R/Republic.of.Texas.htm>>.

This map shows the disputed land between the United States and Mexico. It shows the land ceded by Mexico in 1848 to the United States and shows the campaigns of the Americans and the Mexicans.

Nardo, Don. *The Mexican-American War*. San Diego: Lucent Books, Inc., 1991.
Half of the book is devoted to the Texas Revolution and the other half discusses the Mexican-American War. The pictures are black and white with information about the major battles.

Nevin, David. *The Mexican War*. Alexandria, VA: Time-Life Books, 1979.
A very detailed account with beautiful stories of the Mexican-American War. It is filled with pictures, period photographs, and drawings of the war. A very good resource. For advanced students and teachers.

Sanchez, Richard – *Wars of Independence*, Edina, Minnesota, Abdo and Daughters, 1994. A two page defense of Hispanic points of view after the Mexicans lost the war in 1848. This shows the ill feeling of the Hispanics in the Mexican Cession.

“Stephan Watts Kearny.” February 2002. 10x Marketing. March 2004.
<<http://www.worldhistory.com/wiki/R/Republic.of.Texas.htm>>.
A short biography of Stephan Watts Kearny.

Teed, Paul E. “The Politics of Sectional Memory: Theodore Parker and the Massachusetts Quarterly Review, 1847-1850.” *Journal of the Early Republic*. Vol. 21. February 2002. 10x Marketing. March 2004.
<<http://www.worldhistory.com/wiki/R/Republic.of.Texas.htm>>.
Theodore Parker denounces New England’s people for not more forcefully opposing the Mexican-American War. Parker sees the war as an attempt to extend Southern slavery.

U.S. Campaigns on the Mexican American War. 1996. Magellan Geographix. Santa Barbara. March 2004. <<http://www.worldhistory.com/wiki/R/Republic.of.Texas.htm>>.
This is an overview of the United States campaigns of the Mexican-American War.

“Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna.” February 2002. 10x Marketing. March 2004.
<<http://www.worldhistory.com/wiki/R/Republic.of.Texas.htm>>.
A short biography of Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna.

World History: The Modern Era. “Winfield Scott.” February 2002. 10x Marketing. March 2004. <<http://www.worldhistory.com/wiki/R/Republic.of.Texas.htm>>.
A short biography of Winfield Scott.

World History: The Modern Era. “Zachary Taylor.” February 2002. 10x Marketing. March 2004. <<http://www.worldhistory.com/wiki/R/Republic.of.Texas.htm>>.
A short biography of Zachary Taylor.

World History: The Modern Era. "Henry David Thoreau." February 2002. 10x Marketing. March 2004. <<http://www.worldhistory.com/wiki/R/Republic.of.Texas.htm>>. A short biography of Henry David Thoreau.

Pictures

Battle of Buena Vista. Library of Congress. February 2002. 10x Marketing. March 2004. <<http://www.worldhistory.com/wiki/R/Republic.of.Texas.htm>>. This drawing shows the battle of Buena Vista, which was between General Santa Anna's Mexican army and General Zachary Taylor's U.S. army.

Battle of Churubusco. Library of Congress. February 2002. 10x Marketing. March 2004. <<http://www.worldhistory.com/wiki/R/Republic.of.Texas.htm>>. A painting of American soldiers climbing a wall, fighting Mexican soldiers.

Battle of Mexico City. Library of Congress. February 2002. 10x Marketing. March 2004. <<http://www.worldhistory.com/wiki/R/Republic.of.Texas.htm>>. This picture shows General Winfield Scott and his army facing a small Mexican army with a white flag of surrender.

Cartoon about the Wilmot Proviso. Library of Congress. February 2002. 10x Marketing. March 2004. <<http://www.worldhistory.com/wiki/R/Republic.of.Texas.htm>>. Shows an 1848 lithograph that chastises President Zachary Taylor's ambiguous stance on the Wilmot Proviso.

Gen. Winfield Scott enters Mexico City. Library of Congress. February 2002. 10x Marketing. March 2004. <<http://www.worldhistory.com/wiki/R/Republic.of.Texas.htm>>. This picture shows a proud American General with troops entering a street in Mexico City in 1847. The peasants are well dressed.