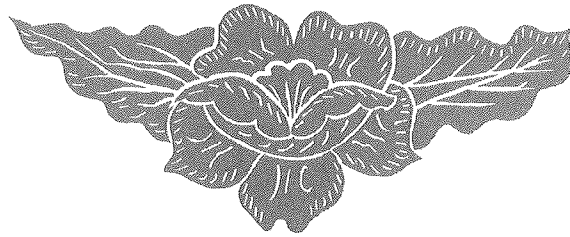


Part 1:

HISTORY AND IDENTITY



Parte 1:

HISTORIA E IDENTIDAD

TEACHER INTRODUCTION

The historical circumstances that led to the formation of the U.S.-Mexico border remain important today. This history is part of what makes the region so culturally distinctive. In the following section, students will view a 15-minute introductory video about border culture as it was presented at the Smithsonian's 1993 Festival of American Folklife. The video features many of the people who participated in the Festival. The video also includes a brief sketch of the historical events that helped create the border. A supplementary reading provides additional information. The cultural map also provides exercises for students.

In recent years, border culture has been the subject of a growing number of articles and books. Many of these writings suggest that the kinds of social and cultural interactions that take place in our increasingly multicultural cities are intensified in border regions. If you are interested in this topic, you may wish to consult some of the works listed in the Appendix.

The first exercise related to the video asks students to watch the video with a critical eye. Students may need to view the video more than once in order to complete their critique. The second exercise asks students to choose a quotation from the video and write an essay about it.

The cultural map has many different uses. The suggested exercises emphasize history, people, and border culture. Please note the information on the back of the poster as well as on the front.

By the end of this section, students will:

- *learn some basic facts about the history of the U.S.-Mexico border.*
- *view the first section of the video.*
- *use the cultural map for additional geographical, historical, and cultural information.*



Discussion Quotation

You are about to watch a video about the U.S.-Mexico border. The following quotation from Jim Griffith, a border resident, offers some perspective on the history of this region.

This cultural region stretches on both sides of the international border. The reason, of course, is that the border came into the country. There wasn't always a border. A border isn't something like the Grand Canyon. A border is an artificial line that gets drawn on a map, and later gets marked on the ground.

Jim Griffith, folklorist, Tucson, Arizona

What is the difference between a region defined by two governments and a region defined by cultures? What does Jim Griffith mean when he says that a cultural region stretches over two sides of an international border?

Think about Jim Griffith's statement, "There wasn't always a border." What do you think was there before the border between Mexico and the United States was defined by the two governments?



Video Viewing

Watch **History and Identity**, Part I of the video.
Discuss the following:

- What makes a border area different from other areas?
- How does living on the border affect its residents?
- What are some examples of "border culture"?

EXERCISES

I. VIDEO CRITIQUE

Watch the video again, this time very carefully. Did the video convince you that there is such a thing as border culture? Why, or why not? After watching the video, whom do you want to know more about? Which individual was most memorable? Why? Write a paragraph explaining what draws you to this person's story.

2. CHOOSE A QUOTATION

Choose one of the following passages from the video script. Write a one-page essay about what this excerpt means.

A) Blaine Juan: *My name is Blaine Juan, and I'm from a village called Wo:g I-Huduñk (Woog E Hudungk). Now, for the white people, it's the San Simon village. It's the Tohono O'odham Nation and where I live is about 105 miles west of Tucson, which is the main Tohono O'odham reservation, and we live by the Mexican border.*

Jim Griffith: *I suppose I could ask you a silly question. I could say, how come you settled so close to the border?*

Blaine Juan: *I guess the way I probably would answer that is it's the white people who put the border there.*

B) Enrique Lamadrid: *Immigration is a contradiction to us as Hispanics in the Southwest, because from our perspective the original immigrants are Anglo. Anglo-America came in and conquered us, in the Mexican-American War, and said, "Guess what, now you are Americans, and guess what, here is a new line that we are using to divide your communities, and guess what, now we are going to call you the migrants." And so, in the United States, we are a country of migrants, all of us are migrants except our Native American neighbors.*

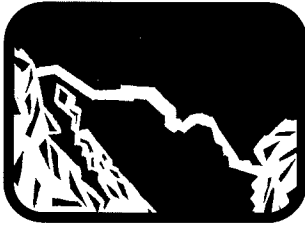
C) Jim Griffith: *When the border came through there were people, Mexican and Native American people, already living in that country, and the border came — whop — right down the middle, and it split our cultural region in half.*

Arturo Carrillo Strong: *A lot of the people that were Mexican citizens, and living in their homes that they had lived in for many years, all of a sudden became American citizens. Some wanted to stay, and a lot of them went back to Mexico.*



A woman passes through the turnstiles at a border crossing point in the 1950s. • Una mujer cruza la frontera en los años 1950.

Photo courtesy/foto cortesía Library of Congress



Cultural Map

The poster-sized cultural map includes information about the history, geography, peoples, and common symbols of the border region. Use this information and your own research to explore the following:

EXERCISES

1. HISTORY: INVESTIGATING OUR PAST

Read the Key Dates section of the poster.

- How many years ago did indigenous people settle in the border region? When did the first people settle in your area? **Clue:** Library research might help: look for local history books or pamphlets. Often they include a section on indigenous people, who were the first known inhabitants of the region.
- Who are some of the most recent migrants to the U.S.-Mexico border? What drew them to the border region? Who are the most recent arrivals to make a home in your area? Where did they come from? Why did they choose to come to your area?
- Pick an event from the Key Dates that interests you. Research the event to find out why it was important to border culture. If you are from another part of the country, research an event that happened around the same date in your area.

2. THE PEOPLE OF THE BORDER

Read the short texts that accompany the photographs on the cultural map. As you will see, people have come to the border for many different reasons.

- Remember Ofelia Santos López's story of coming to the border. Ofelia can be found on the cultural map, as well as in Part 1 of the video. If you need to refresh your memory, read the following transcription from the video:

I'm from Oaxaca, but I live in Baja California. I left Oaxaca when I was about 18 years old to go to Culiacán, Sinaloa, to pick tomatoes. I had two children; when I had a third child, I went to pick cotton.

My life was very sad. I worked hard in the fields. When I made some money in Sinaloa, I came to Baja California.

Julius Collins, a Cajun shrimper, told his story at the Festival of American Folklife as well:

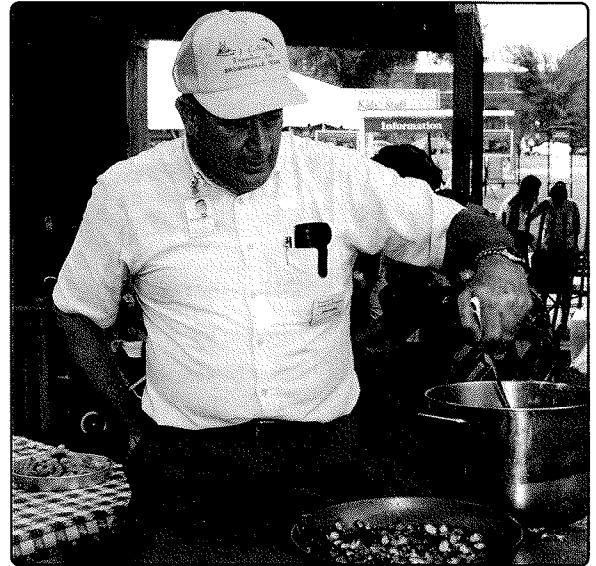
My flight to the border came during the Korean War, in which I served. That's when the shrimping industry in Louisiana waters was going down. New grounds opened in New Mexico and Texas. Ambitious people ventured to that part of the world, and I happened to be one of them. I went to Brownsville, Texas, in 1952, right after I got out of the war. I found that the border was very similar to Louisiana. People spoke a foreign language. They didn't understand me, but that was part of the game. I saw that they were raised as I was. Their first language was Spanish, mine was French. I had to battle all my life to try and achieve something, and they were doing the same thing.

- How does Ofelia's experience differ from that of Julius? How are the two stories similar?

3. IMAGES OF THE BORDER: INTERPRETING PHOTOGRAPHS

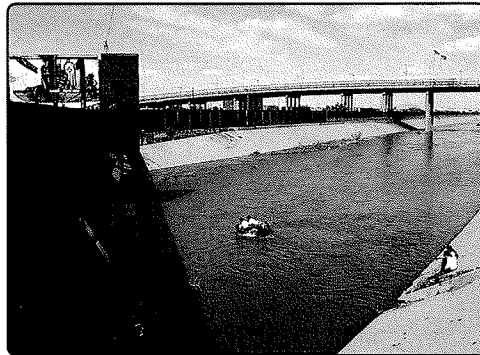
Look closely at the four photographs on the bottom of pages 48 and 49. Choose one, and write a paragraph describing what this photograph tells you about life on the U.S.-Mexico border. Possible questions to consider:

- What attracts people to the border as a place to live or to visit?
- If you were trying to represent the borders in your own neighborhood, what would you photograph?



Julius Collins, a Cajun shrimper, grew up in Louisiana but lives in Brownsville, Texas. ● Julius Collins, un camaronero cajún, creció en Louisiana pero ahora vive en Brownsville, Texas.

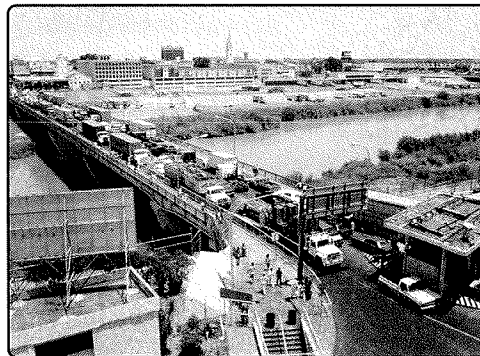
Foto del/photo by Rick Vargas, cortesía/courtesy Smithsonian Institution



Crossing the border between Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, and El Paso, Texas.

● *Cruzando la frontera entre Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua y El Paso Texas.*

Photo by/foto de Lyle Rosbotham



The bridge across the Rio Grande between Laredo, Texas, and Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas.

● *El puente sobre el río Bravo entre Laredo, Texas y Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas.*

Photo by/foto de Luis Barrera López

READING

BORDER HISTORY

BY OLIVIA CADAVAL

The signing of the Guadalupe Hidalgo Treaty in 1848 at the end of the United States-Mexico War (1846-48) and the Gadsden Purchase in 1853 fixed the location of the U.S.-Mexico border. But long before there was a border, Indian communities had settlements in this area, stretching from the Gulf of Mexico to the Pacific Ocean. In the 17th century, Spanish settlers claimed the same area as the northern frontier of New Spain. In the Spanish colonial period, this area attracted explorers and missionaries. On the Gulf Coast, Jewish families from central Mexico sought refuge from religious persecution in the 18th century and established businesses in Matamoros and in the Texas Valley. Their presence helped develop the area into a commercial region. After the Mexican War of Independence in 1810, new settlers from the north and south continued to come to the region.

The Rio Grande, or Río Bravo, as it is called in Mexico, makes up over half of the length of the border. El Paso del Norte, now known as El Paso, was the first and largest settlement built on the river. It

was built in the early 1600s and named for the mountain corridor “*el paso del norte*” (the passage to the north). Many small towns established before the creation of the border still dot the Texas Valley. In the decades following the U.S.-Mexico War, wealthy cattle barons and agricultural land merchants from the East and the Midwest of the U.S. succeeded in dominating the U.S.-Mexico trade across this border river between Texas and the Mexican states of Tamaulipas, Nuevo León, Coahuila, and Chihuahua. These merchants acquired extensive tracts of land in Texas and displaced local Mexican ranchers. The new arrivals from the East, who had access to capital and enjoyed more favorable political conditions, often became more powerful than the earlier Spanish and Mexican settlers. This created an environment of cultural and economic conflict that characterizes the border to this day.

In addition to these early communities, the border has

attracted many others. These successive arrivals continue to change life in the region. In the latter part of the 19th century, a Mexican gov-

ernment concerned by U.S. expansionism encouraged settlement in the border region. This led to migration to the western region of the border by groups as diverse as Chinese, Mennonites, Molokan Russians, Black Seminoles (known as Mascogos in Mexico), and Kickapoo Indians. Black Seminoles and Kickapoo were welcomed on the condition that they defend the territory against the Apache and Comanche raids.

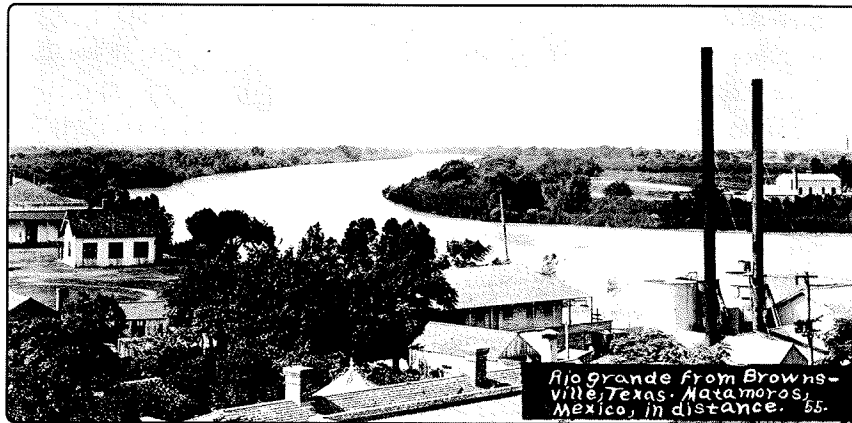
In the beginning of the 20th century, Chinese managers and laborers established residence in the towns of Mexicali and Calexico. The damming of the Colorado River converted the area, now called the Imperial Valley, into fertile agricultural land. Anglo landowners leased the land to Chinese businessmen from California, who smuggled agricultural laborers into Mexico from China.

During the Mexican Revolution, which began in 1910, the border population increased significantly, as many Mexicans

moved across the border seeking refuge, some temporarily, others permanently. Others simply migrated to the border without crossing.

Migration patterns reveal links between particular states in Mexico and particular regions or towns on the border. Refugees from central Mexico who settled in the Texas Valley were likely to be joined later by other immigrants from their home towns.

When economic hard times hit the United States, efforts were mounted to push citizens of Mexican descent and immigrants back to Mexico. In 1914-15, the U.S. side of the Rio Grande Valley experienced a winter of violence when hundreds of Mexicans, or “*mejicanos*” in border usage, were persecuted and killed by the Texas Border Patrol. The Great Depression of the 1930s brought a new wave of deportations in which many citizens of Mexican origin and immigrants who had lived for decades undisturbed in the United States were sent back to Mexico.



This photograph, circa 1915, shows the Rio Grande, which marks the border between Mexico and Texas. • En esta foto, circa 1915, se ve el río Bravo, la línea divisora de la frontera entre México y el estado de Texas. Photo courtesy/foto cortesía Library of Congress

World War II changed the immigration flow once more. The Bracero Program of 1942-64, first negotiated by the United States and Mexico as an emergency measure during the war, encouraged large migrations of Mexican workers to the United States. Under its terms, U.S. agricultural employers brought Mexican contract laborers across the border for seasonal work. In the off-season some workers returned to their home communities, while others stayed on the border, often in a region where people from their home state had already settled.

Like European and Asian immigrants, Mexicans continue to seek economic opportunities in the border region. Workers have been attracted to the border by the 1961-65 Mexican National Border Economic Development Program, followed in 1965 by the Indus-

trialization Program of the border, which introduced the *maquiladora* assembly plants to the region.

From the 1980s onward, economic and political refugees

from Central America have swelled populations at the border. Individuals, groups, and corporations throughout the world continue to be attracted to the border. These companies often destroy the environment and exploit people. The 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement became the latest in a long line of international economic arrangements that have had wide-ranging local impact.

The border today is the result of the histories of the people who settled there over the years: the things they brought with them and the things they built, destroyed, rebuilt, and continue to build. History is very much alive on the border in the physical landscape and in the memories and daily experiences of the people who live there.

For additional reading, consult the bibliography in the Appendix.

This photograph shows how the creation of the border physically divided a community, like Nogales, down the middle. ● Esta fotografía muestra como la creación de la frontera dividió físicamente la comunidad, como Nogales, por la mitad.

Photo courtesy/foto cortesía
Library of Congress



QUESTIONS EXERCISES

1. Name some of the groups of people who settled in the U.S.-Mexico border region. What were their reasons for coming to live in the border region?
2. Why has the border remained a magnet for economic opportunity?
3. What does the word “indigenous” mean? Who were the indigenous people on the border? Why did indigenous peoples from other parts of Mexico move from their homelands to the border? How do their experiences compare to the migration to the border of indigenous peoples in the United States?

1. Look for examples of history in the physical landscape of your community. Can you find older buildings? Murals portraying historic events? Statues of war heroes? Abandoned railroad tracks? Pick a feature of the historical landscape, and do some background research to uncover the history of your selection. Take a photo or sketch this feature, and write an explanatory paragraph to share with your classmates.
2. Pick a historical event in your community, and interview people about their impressions of this event. If you live on the border, you might choose one of the events discussed in this reading or listed on the poster’s Key Dates. If you do not live on the border, pick an event of national or local significance (anything from World War II to your community’s most recent elections). Are there any songs, tales, or jokes about this historical event? Gather some of the impressions, and write an essay about them. Do you notice any conflicting recollections of these events among the people you interview?

Summary of Part 1 **HISTORY and IDENTITY**

Ideas in this section:

- The culture of the U.S.-Mexico border has been shaped by historical events and by the people who have settled there over many years.
 - The border is a dynamic place, with constant interaction and exchange between people, goods, and cultures.
 - Uncovering geographical and historical facts helps students to better understand the stories and cultures of today's border residents.
-



What's Next?

In the next section, on **Celebrations and Identity**,
students will learn:

- *how many celebrations on the border link people and communities from both sides.*
 - *how ritual, art, food, and music all play a part in these celebrations.*
 - *how to investigate shrines and rituals in their own lives, and create their own imaginary fiesta.*
- *why the Virgin of Guadalupe is an important symbol on the border, and think about the symbols that are important in their own communities.*