

## Prompt 6.12 - The California Gold Rush

**Warm-up:** Imagine if Santa Monica didn't sell pencils and you became its first pencil shop. Would you have high prices or low prices? Why?

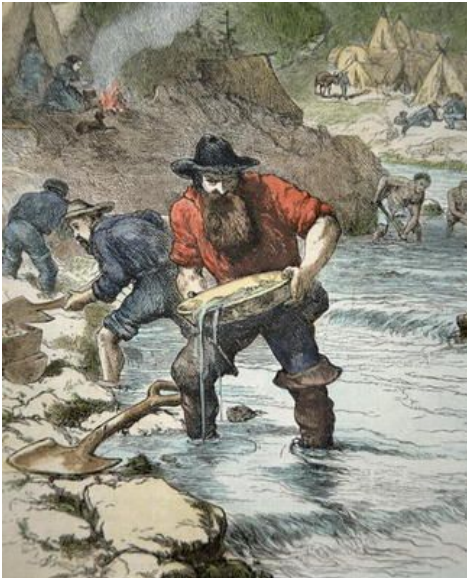
### Introduction

In 1848, James Marshall was building a sawmill on the American River in northern California. Suddenly, he spotted something shining in the water. "I reached my hand down and picked it up," he wrote. "It made my heart thump, for I felt certain it was gold."

When word of Marshall's discovery spread, people across California dropped everything to race to the goldfields. "All were off to the mines," wrote a minister, "some on horses, some on carts, and some on crutches." By 1849, tens of thousands of gold seekers from around the world had joined the California gold rush; they were known as the "Forty-Niners."



About two thirds of these "Forty-Niners" were Americans. The rest came from Mexico, South America, Europe, and China. Most forty-niners were young, and almost all were men. When Luzena Wilson arrived in Sacramento with her family, a miner offered her \$5 for her biscuits just to have "bread made by a woman." When she hesitated, he doubled his offer. "Women were scarce in those days," she wrote. "I lived six months in Sacramento and saw only two."



Wherever gold was spotted, mining camps popped up overnight. At "Coyote Diggings," Luzena found only one row of canvas tents. But a few months later, "there were two thousand men...and the streets were lined with drinking saloons and gambling tables." Most people, however, did not make money from gold. Since gold was often too difficult to find, some made larger fortunes as merchants. As there weren't too many other merchants in mining camps, they began to charge high prices for the food, clothes, and mining tools that "The Forty-Niners" needed.

However, profit did come with risk. With no police to keep order, camps became rough places. Miners frequently fought over land and took it upon themselves to punish criminals. "In the short space of twenty-four hours," wrote Louise Clappe, "we have had murders, fearful accidents, bloody deaths, a mob, whippings, a hanging, an attempt at suicide, and a fatal duel."

Soon "The day of quick fortune-making [was] over." By 1852, the Gold Rush was over but the "Forty-Niners" left a lasting impact. About 250,000 people had flooded into California from all over the world so, by 1850, California had enough people to become the first state out west. These new Californians helped to transform the "Golden State" into a diverse and prosperous land.

**Directions:** Answer the questions below and **highlight** the evidence on page 1 to support your responses.

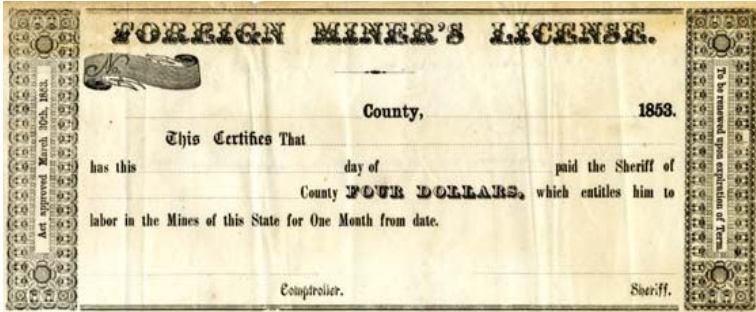
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| <p>What happened when gold was discovered in California?</p> <hr/> <p>Describe most 49ers:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <p>Who made a lot of money in the camps? Why?</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> | <p>Were the mining camps safe? Why?</p> <hr/> <hr/> <p>What effect did immigration have on California?</p> <hr/> <hr/> <p>What might happen to immigrants as gold runs low?</p> <hr/> <hr/> |
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**Discrimination**

The California Gold Rush caused a massive wave of immigration from all over the world. Originally, these immigrants were welcomed. However, as gold mining became more difficult, attitudes began to change.

"The Yankee regarded every man but...an American as an [intruder] who had no right to come to California [for] gold." A group of white, racist miners called on the government to drive foreigners out.

So, California passed a law called the "**Foreign Miners Tax**," requiring foreigners to pay a monthly fee to mine gold. Some foreigners left, however, many chose to stay. Those who did stay helped to make California a culturally diverse state, with many different peoples. However, they often experienced racism and discrimination as a result.



**Why and How** did immigrants face **discrimination**?

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**Journal:** Read about people who faced discrimination and create a fictional journal entry about their experiences. **Highlight** the facts you use.

### Chinese Americans

Gam Saan, "Gold Mountain," was what people in China called California in 1848. To many poor Chinese, Gam Saan sounded like paradise. They were told, "You will have great pay, large houses, and food and clothing of the finest description.... Money is in great plenty." So, by 1852, more than 20,000 Chinese had come to California. In fact, one in ten Californians was Chinese.

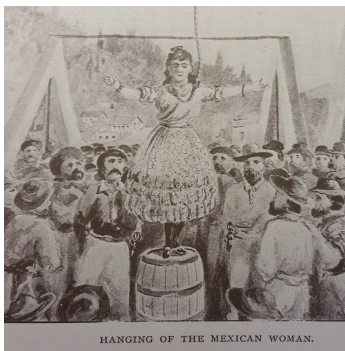
At first the Chinese were welcome. The governor of California praised Chinese immigrants as "one of the most worthy classes of our newly adopted citizens." As gold became scarce, however, **Anglo Americans** (white Americans) demanded their removal. One way the Californian government tried to remove the Chinese was through the **Foreign Miners Tax**. The Chinese, however, paid the tax and stayed. When the tax failed to drive off the Chinese, Anglo Americans tried to bully them into leaving. Whites hacked off the long braids, worn by Chinese men, burned their shacks, and beat them.

Discouraged Chinese immigrants left the mining camps to open restaurants, laundries, and stores in California's growing cities. "The best eating houses in San Francisco," one miner wrote, were those opened by the Chinese. So many Chinese-Americans settled in San Francisco that local newspapers called their neighborhood Chinatown. Chinatown remains the oldest and largest Chinese community in the country.

Other Chinese put their farming skills to work in California's fertile Central Valley. They drained swamps and dug irrigation ditches to make California's profitable farmland. Today California produces nearly half of all the fruits and vegetables in the country. Other Chinese-Americans went on to build the Transcontinental Railroad, which connected the East coast with the West for the first time. Immigrants like the Chinese largely made California the great state that it is today.



### Mexican Americans



HANGING OF THE MEXICAN WOMAN.

Mexican Americans had been greatly affected by the California Gold Rush. Originally, California was Mexican land. However, after the **Mexican-American War**, Mexican Americans living in California now found themselves suddenly on foreign soil. The **Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo** protected Mexican Americans for a time. The law stated that the official language of California needed to be both English and Spanish, it let Mexican Americans become US citizens, and it protected their homes and culture.

During the Gold Rush, thousands of Mexicans moved to California with their families. By 1849, there were an estimated six thousand Mexicans mining for gold. As gold became scarce, however, all Mexican Americans became targets of racism. Whites would discriminate against, beat, and sometimes **lynch** (kill) Mexican Americans for living in land that used to be Mexico. Eventually, The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was ignored, allowing White Supremacists to take Mexican-American land, destroy their culture, prevent the speaking of Spanish, and enacting laws of **segregation** (separation of different people).

### African Americans

African Americans also played a key part in changing the United States during The Gold Rush. Many African Americans originally were forced to come to California to mine gold as slaves. However, many free African Americans also moved to California for economic opportunity.

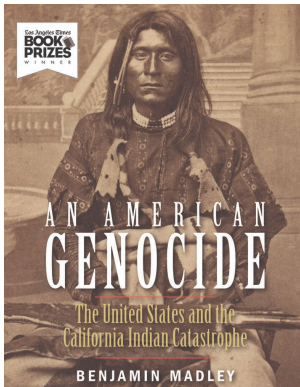
Free African Americans used their gold to free slaves, fight discrimination, start newspapers, build schools, and create churches. After a hard fight, African Americans eventually succeeded in causing California to ban slavery in the entire state.

Even though slavery became illegal, racism remained. In fact, one of the reasons why Californians were against slavery was not necessarily to help African Americans, but to prevent slaveowners from mining all the gold for themselves with free labor. As a result, legal protections provided by the Constitution were not extended to African Americans. African Americans could not vote, were not guaranteed a trial, and could not even defend themselves in court.

Under the **Fugitive Slave Act**, **Anglo Americans** (white Americans) could simply accuse African Americans of being slaves and often get away with enslaving free people. One man, named Stephen Hill, was accused of being a runaway slave and was quickly thrown in jail until his alleged “master” arrived. Fortunately, Hill was able to escape but others were not as lucky.



### Native Americans



Two years after gold was discovered, California’s first governor decided that he wanted to make sure that only **Anglo Americans** (white Americans) could mine gold. Not only did California pass laws making it more difficult for immigrants to mine gold, but it also passed violent laws preventing Native Americans from mining gold as well. Governor Burnett decided to pay local **militias** (volunteer military) to “protect” mining camps. In reality, this law gave the governor the power to pay militias for delivering proof of dead Native Americans.

By 1850, Governor Burnett announced the state’s policy of allowing **genocide** (mass killing) “as the only solution to the Indian problem.” The state offered \$10 to \$25 dollars for each Native American killed. For proof, these bounty hunters delivered their heads, scalps, hands, or whole bodies to local government offices in exchange for state money. California paid around 1.5 million dollars for the genocide of Californian Native Americans.

Between 1850 and 1860, Native American adults were outright murdered for profit while their children were enslaved. As gold became scarce, more and more Anglo Americans found killing Native Americans more profitable than mining gold. Soon, Native American deaths numbered in the thousands. Within the first two years of the Gold Rush, some 100,000 Native Americans were killed and California had lost two thirds of its Native American population.

**Cooldown:** What was the most significant way in which Manifest Destiny & the Gold Rush affect California? Were these effects inevitable?