

# Impact of the California Missions on Native Americans

The History Project at UC Davis

<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>HSS Content Standards</u></b></p> <p>4.2 Students describe the social, political, cultural, and economic life and interactions among people of California from the pre-Columbian societies to the Spanish mission and Mexican rancho periods.</p> <p>4.2.5 Describe the daily lives of the people, native and nonnative, who occupied the presidios, missions, ranchos, and pueblos.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>CCSS Standards</u></b></p> <p><u>CCSS.ELA Reading Standards Information Texts K-5</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.</li> <li>2. Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text.</li> <li>3. Explain events, procedures, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text, including what happened and why, based on specific information in the text.</li> <li>8. Explain how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text.</li> <li>9. Integrate information from two texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably.</li> </ol> <p><u>CCSS.ELA. LANGUAGE STANDARDS K-5</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on <i>grade 4 reading and content</i>, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Use context (e.g., definitions, examples, or restatements in text) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.</li> </ol> </li> <li>6. Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, including those that signal precise actions, emotions, or states of being (e.g., <i>quizzed, whined, stammered</i>) and that are basic to a particular topic (e.g., <i>wildlife, conservation, and endangered</i> when discussing animal preservation).</li> </ol>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Language, Literacy, Disciplinary Skill</u></b></p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 10px;"> <div style="text-align: left;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Context</li> <li>❖ Perspective</li> </ul> </div> <div style="text-align: left;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Evidence</li> <li>❖ Analysis</li> </ul> </div> </div>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>HSS Framework Question(s)</u></b></p> <p>What impact did cultural encounters have upon Native peoples, Spanish missionaries and military, the Spanish/Mexican settler population, and California’s natural environment?</p> <p>How did the lives of California Indians change during the Mission period?</p> <p>How were peoples’ lives affected by missions?</p>	

## Investigation Question (IQ)

What were the advantages and disadvantages of life in the missions for California Indians?

### Rationale/context

With so few colonists, Spanish authorities believed they could transform Indian peoples into loyal Spanish subjects by converting them to Christianity, introducing them to Spanish culture and language, and intermarriage. While soldiers arrived to defend the territory, Franciscan missionaries came to convert native peoples to Christianity. Initially, missions attracted many Indians who were impressed by the pageantry, material wealth, and abundant food of the Catholic Church. Over time, as Spanish livestock depleted traditional food sources and the presence of the Spanish disrupted Indian village life, many other Indians arrived at the missions seeking a reliable food supply. Once Indians converted to Catholicism, missionaries and presidio soldiers conspired to forcibly keep the Indians in residence at the missions. The historical record

of this era remains incomplete due to the limited documentation of Native testimony, but it is clear that while missionaries brought agriculture, the Spanish language and culture, and Christianity to the native population, American Indians suffered in many California missions. The death rate was extremely high; during the mission period the Indian population plummeted from 72,000 to 18,000. This high death rate was due primarily to the introduction of diseases for which the native population did not have immunity, as well as the hardships of forced labor and separation from traditional ways of life. Moreover, the imposition of forced labor and highly structured living arrangements degraded individuals, constrained families, circumscribed native culture, and negatively impacted scores of communities. Nonetheless, within mission communities, Indian peoples reconstituted their lives using Catholic forms of kinship—the *compadrazgo* (god parentage)—to reinforce their indigenous kinship relations... Some mission Indians sought to escape the system by fleeing from the padres, while a few Indians openly revolted and killed missionaries. Sensitizing students to the various ways in which Indians exhibited agency within the mission system provides them with a more comprehensive view of the era. It also allows students to better understand change and continuity over time, as well as cause and effect. (text from HSSF Framework, Chapter 7)

This lesson is one piece of the puzzle to reconstruct the complicated interactions between Native Americans and Spanish missionaries. A larger unit should demonstrate the complexity of mission life and be taught as an investigation into the various perspectives. This lesson in particular looks at life in the missions and the impact that mission life had on Native Americans. It is important to remind students that there are very few sources from the Native American perspective to corroborate or contradict European accounts. The final primary source “Military Interrogations” is the only one that provides information from the Indian perspective. Students should read all of these sources with perspective in mind, understanding that an advantage in the eyes of one person may not be seen as an advantage by another person (such as prepared food for the Indians living in the missions may seem like an advantage to outside observers, but a disadvantage to some Indians who preferred to hunt or gather traditional food items). In order to help students understand perspective, you may ask them to reflect on the different stories the following people would tell on the students’ own lives: their parents, their teachers, their friends, their siblings. You may want students to grapple with what story could we tell about their own lives one hundred years from now if they themselves never record their own experiences, and we can only go by what others said about the students’ lives?

## Input

### 1. “San Francisco One Hundred Years Ago,” The Diary of Kotzebue, 1816

Edward Mornin, Otto von Kotzebue, et al. “Through Alien Eyes: The Visit of the Russian Ship to San Francisco in 1816 and the Men Behind the Visit,” *North American Studies in 19<sup>th</sup> Century German Literature* Vol 32.

### 2. Journal of La Perouse, A French naval explorer to California, 1786

John Dunmore translation, “Journal of Jean-Francois de Galaup de la Perouse, 1785-1788,” London: Hakluyt Society. Available online <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/002938911>

### 3. Military Interrogations of San Francisco Indians by Jose Arguello, 1797

Rose Marie Beebe and Robert M. Senkewicz, *Lands of Promise and Despair: Chronicles of Early California 1535-1846*, University of Oklahoma Press, 2015.

### 4. Father Junipero Serra report on the Monterey mission, 1784

Junipero Serra, "Report on the Missions July 1, 1784, Monterey" in Tibesar, ed. and trans., *Writings of Serra IV*.

## Process

This lesson allows students to build confidence in recognizing cause and effect as well as long and short-term consequences. Each step is a buildup of ideas so that by the time students complete the assessment, they are ready to make some arguments themselves.

### Providing historical context

- ❖ This lesson should come after you've already discussed with your students the life of California tribes. Answering the questions: What was life like for native Californians before other settlers arrived? How did the diverse geography and climate affect native people?
- ❖ It is critical that students have something to compare the mission experience to and therefore, context is very important with this topic.

### 1. Pre-reading

- ❖ Working either in structured pairs or as a whole class, students should complete the SOAP chart for each of the sources.
- ❖ Highlight the importance of knowing the perspective of the authors so students can be critical of the documents.

### 2. Reading and annotating the primary sources

- ❖ In groups, have the students read the documents with evidence in mind.
- ❖ As they read, have them highlight the advantages in one color, and the disadvantages in another. This will help them fill out the charts.
- ❖ After they annotate their documents, have them collect and then summarize their findings into the provided chart. Emphasize that they are collecting evidence that they will analyze later.
- ❖ Groups will share their findings with the class and students will select 3 effects they think are most significant. This can be done individually, in groups, or as a class depending on the level of your students.

## Output

### 3. Analyzing their findings

- ❖ Students take the evidence in the Close Reading and Annotation page and analyze it using the provided graphic organizer. The goal is to demonstrate to students that there are different levels of analysis of consequences, short-term and long-term.
- ❖ Depending on your students' level, you might want to do this step as a whole class or in groups. If you feel they are ready, have them fill out the chart individually, and then confer with a partner.
- ❖ This assessment is a quick way for students to practice analysis without a structured paragraph. They can see the progression of stakes and the exercise helps them understand cause and effect. It is also a quick way for you as the teacher to see if students are recognizing the different levels of analysis.

## Step #1: SOAP – Sourcing the Documents

<b>Investigative Question</b>	
<b>Title of Source</b>	
<b>S</b> <b>(Source)</b>	<p><i>What type of source is this?</i></p> <p><i>Who wrote the document?</i></p> <p><i>What do you know about the author's life?</i></p>
<b>O</b> <b>(Occasion)</b>	<p><i>When was this document created?</i></p> <p><i>What mission is this document talking about?</i></p> <p><i>What was happening when this document created?</i></p>
<b>A</b> <b>(Audience)</b>	<p><i>Who do you think would read this document?</i></p> <p><i>Did the author have any reason to lie, exaggerate, or distort the truth? Explain.</i></p> <p><i>Is this document meant to be seen by the public or in private? What makes you think that?</i></p>
<b>P</b> <b>(Purpose)</b>	<p><i>Why did the author create this document?</i></p>
<b>+</b> <b>(Investigative Question)</b>	<p><i>How can this source help you answer the Investigative Questions?</i></p>

Source: Adapted from "Building Success Program: Participant's Manual" New York, The College Board, 1998

[http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/apc/public/preap/teachers\\_corner/45200.html](http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/apc/public/preap/teachers_corner/45200.html)

# SOAP+

(Source, Occasion, Audience, Purpose,  
+ Investigation Question)

*Who/what is the*

## Source?

What type of source is this?  
What person or group produced this document?

*What is the*

## Occasion?

When and where was this evidence created?  
What context or situation encouraged the creation of this document?

*Who is the*

## Audience?

Who would be expected to see or read this piece of evidence?

*What is the*

## Purpose?

What was this document intended to accomplish?  
What was its creator's aim?

## + Investigation Question

How can this source help you answer our investigation question?

Source: Adapted from "Building Success Program: Participant's Manual" New York, The College Board, 1998  
[http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/apc/public/preap/teachers\\_corner/45200.html](http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/apc/public/preap/teachers_corner/45200.html)

## Step #2 – Close Read and Annotation

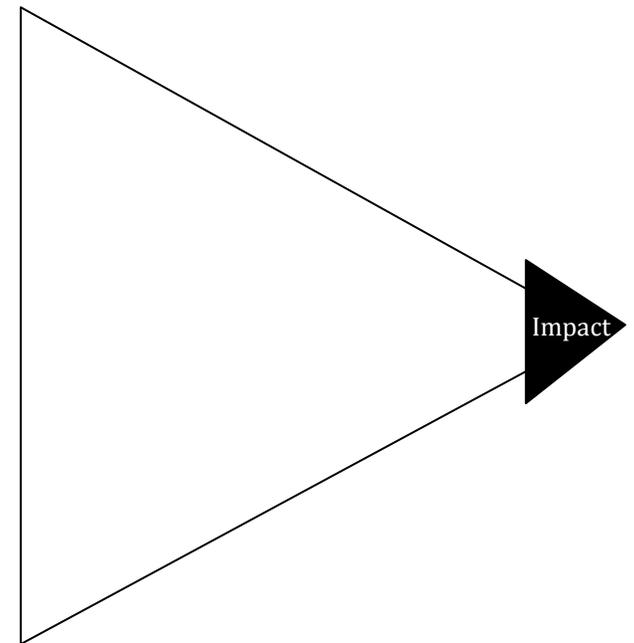
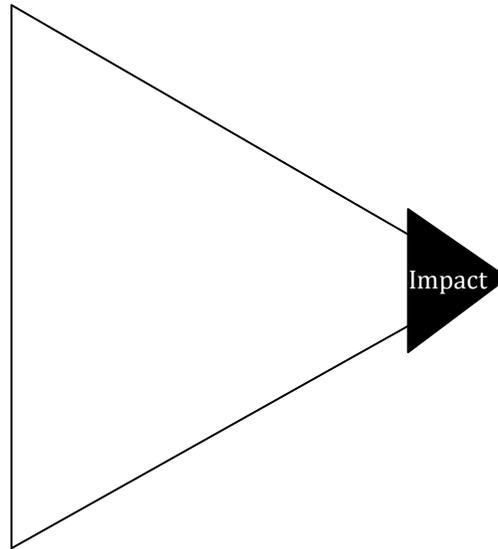
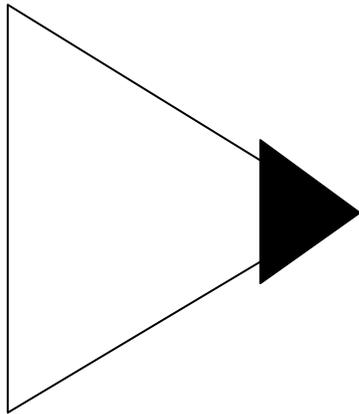
Investigative Question:	
What can you learn from each source about the advantages of Mission life for California Indians?	What can you learn from each source about the disadvantages of Mission life for California Indians?
<i>Diary of Kotzebue</i>	<i>Diary of Kotzebue</i>
<i>Journal of La Pérouse</i>	<i>Journal of La Pérouse</i>
<i>Military Interrogation of San Francisco Indians</i>	<i>Military Interrogation of San Francisco Indians</i>
Father Junipero Serra report	Father Junipero Serra report
Summarize the advantages and disadvantages in your own words	
What might California Indian's have liked about living in the Missions?	What would be hard for the California Indians about living in the Missions?

*IQ: What were the advantages and disadvantages of life in the missions for California Indians?*

### Step #3 – Analyze evidence

Select one advantage from Step 2 to complete the chart. Plug the advantage into the first triangle and then fill in the rest of the chart determining the short-term and long-term impact on California Indians.

Advantage for California Indians	Short-Term Impact for California Indians	Long-Term Impact for California Indians
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*IQ: What were the advantages and disadvantages of life in the missions for California Indians?*

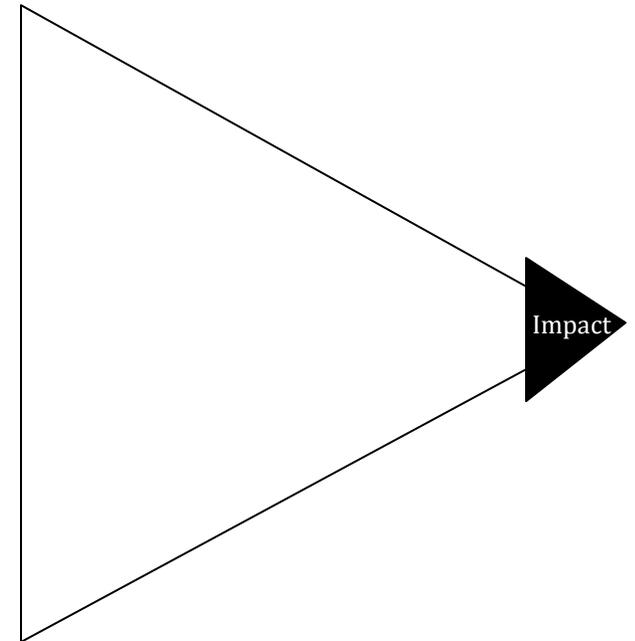
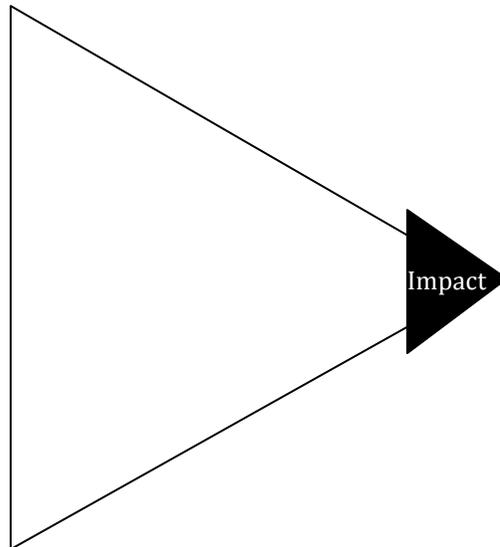
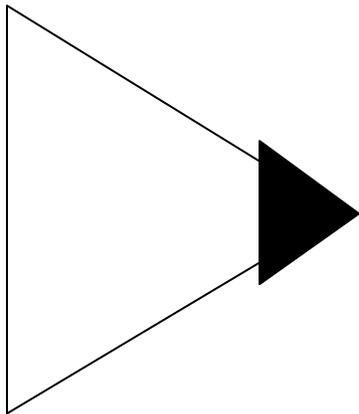
### Step #3 – Analyze evidence

Select one disadvantage from Step 2 to complete the chart. Plug the disadvantage into the first triangle and then fill in the rest of the chart determining the short-term and long-term impact on California Indians.

**Disadvantage  
for California Indians**

**Short-Term Impact  
for California Indians**

**Long-Term Impact  
for California Indians**



## Source #1

### “San Francisco one Hundred Years Ago,” The Diary of Kotzebue, 1816

*Background: Otto von Kotzebue (1787-1846) was a Russian explorer of California in 1816, who observed life at the Mission San Francisco. Kotzebue was one of the many Russian explorers and scientists to use Fort Ross in Northern California as a base for exploration. They often ventured down the Sacramento and American Rivers toward what is now Sutter’s Fort interacting with Native Americans and Spanish settlers.<sup>1</sup>*

Vocabulary	Primary Source Text
<p><u>Inhabited-</u> <i>occupied</i></p> <p><u>Ration-</u> <i>allowance</i></p> <p><u>Apportioned-</u> <i>assigned to</i></p>	<p>Two leagues to the southeast of the presidio and on the southern shore of the harbor is the Mission of San Francisco, which makes a fair-sized village. ... The mission always has a guard of three or four soldiers from the presidio. The village is <b>inhabited</b> by fifteen hundred Indians; there they are given protection, clothing, and an abundance of food. In return, they cultivate the land for the community. Corn, wheat, beans, peas, and potatoes – in a word, all kinds of produce – are to be found in the general warehouse. ... a general cooking of food takes place, at a given hour each day, in the large square in the middle of the village; each family comes there for its <b>ration</b> which is <b>apportioned</b> with regard to the number of its members. They are also given a certain quantity of raw provisions. Two or three families occupy the same house. In their free time, the Indians work in gardens that are given them; they raise therein onions, garlic, cantaloupes, watermelons, pumpkins, and fruit trees. The products belong to them, and they can dispose of them as they see fit.</p>
<p><u>Bands of Indians-</u> <i>groups</i></p>	<p>In winter, <b>bands of Indians</b> come from the mountains to be admitted to the mission, but the greater part of them leave in the spring. They do not like the life at the mission. ...After several months spent in the missions, they usually begin to grow <b>fretful</b> and thin, and they constantly gaze with sadness at the mountains which they can see in the</p>

<sup>1</sup> Source: Stephen Watrous, “Russian Expansion to America” *Fort Ross*, Fort Ross Interpretive Association: Fort Ross Conservancy, 1998. Available online <http://www.fortross.org/russian-american-company.htm>

<p><u>Fretful - worried</u></p> <p><u>Disposed to adopt- more willing to accept</u></p> <p><u>Sexes- gender; male or female</u></p> <p><u>Ornamented – decorated</u></p> <p><u>Severe fevers- dangerous, deadly</u></p> <p><u>Maladies- illnesses, diseases</u></p> <p><u>Out of existence- no longer occur</u></p>	<p>distance. Once or twice a year the missionaries permit those Indians upon whose return they believe they can rely to visit their own country, but it often happens that few of these return...</p> <p>The Indian children are <b><u>more disposed to adopt</u></b> to mission life. They learn to make coarse cloth from sheep’s wool for the community. ... Other young Indians are instructed in various trades by the missionaries. There is a house at the mission in which some two hundred and fifty women ... reside. ... They are placed there at the request of the Indians ... to protect them from mischief.</p> <p>On Sundays and holidays they celebrate divine service. All the Indians of both <b><u>sexes</u></b>, without regard to age, are obliged to go to church and worship.</p> <p>On Sunday ... Indians gather in the cemetery ... and dance. ... Men adorn themselves with feathers and with girdles <b><u>ornamented</u></b> with feathers and with bits of shell that pass for money among them, or they paint their bodies. ...</p> <p><b><u>Severe fevers</u></b> occur constantly among the Indians. These <b><u>maladies</u></b> commonly carry off a very great number. Several missions in Lower California have gone <b><u>out of existence</u></b> in the pasty twenty years by reason of the extinction of their Indians.</p>
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Source: Edward Mornin, Otto von Kotzebue, et al. "Through Alien Eyes: The Visit of the Russian Ship to San Francisco in 1816 and the Men Behind the Visit," *North American Studies in 19<sup>th</sup> Century German Literature* Vol 32.

## Source #2

### Journal of La Pérouse, a French naval explorer to California, 1786

*Background: Jean-Francois de Galaup de la Perouse was a French explorer and part of a French voyage to California in 1786. They were the first foreign vessel to visit Spain's colony in California since its establishment in 1769. While they brought goods to trade, the most important item they brought was news from Europe and familiar European faces. The Spanish showered their guests with gifts and held masses and celebrations in their honor.<sup>2</sup>*

Vocabulary	Primary Source Text
<p><u>Converts</u>- group they want to change, to persuade to adopt their religion</p> <p><u>Sexes</u>- gender, male or female</p> <p><u>Labor</u>- hard work</p> <p><u>Corporal punishment</u>- penalty, punished</p> <p><u>Neglect the exercises of piety</u>- don't believe or show faithfulness.</p> <p><u>Punished by irons and the stocks</u>-</p>  <p>shutterstock · 26027173 irons</p>  <p>shutterstock · 58893692 stocks</p>	<p>The church is neat though thatched with straw. It is ... adorned with some tolerable pictures, copied from originals in Italy. Among them is a picture of hell ... it is absolutely necessary to strike the imagination of these <b>converts</b> with the most lively impressions.</p> <p>The Indian village stands on the right, consisting of about fifty huts which serve for seven hundred and forty persons of both <b>sexes</b>, including their children... The Indians say that they love the open air, that it is convenient to set fire to their house when the fleas become troublesome, and that they can build another in less than two hours. The independent tribes, who as hunters so frequently change their residence, have of course an additional motive.</p> <p>The day consists in general of seven hours <b>labor</b> and two hours prayer, but there are four or five hours of prayer on Sundays and feast days. ... <b>Corporal punishment</b> is inflicted on the Indians of both sexes who <b>neglect the exercises of piety</b>, and many sins, which in Europe are left to Divine justice, are here <b>punished by irons and the stocks</b>. And lastly, to complete the similarity between this and other religious communities, it must be observed that the moment an Indian is baptized, the effect is the same as if he had pronounced a vow for life. If he escapes to reside with his relations in the independent villages, he is summoned three times to return; if he refuses, the missionaries apply to the governor, who sends soldiers to seize him in the midst of his family and conduct him to the mission, where he is condemned to receive a certain number of lashes with the whip. As these people are at war with their neighbors, they can never escape to a distance greater than twenty or thirty leagues. ...</p>

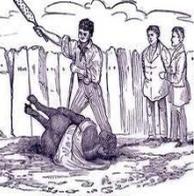
<sup>2</sup> Malcolm Margolin "Introduction" *Life in a California Mission: The Journal of Jean Francois De La Perouse*, Berkeley: Heyday Books, 1989.



## Source #3

### Military Interrogations of San Francisco Indians by Jose Arguello, 1797

*Background: In the summer of 1797 Governor Borica authorized an expedition to the eastern side of San Francisco Bay to try to bring back some of the Indians who had fled from San Francisco. The group captured a number of Saclan and Huchuin people. These natives people were put on trial at the presidio of San Francisco. What follows are excerpts from their interrogations, when they were asked why they had fled the mission.*

Vocabulary	Primary Source Text
<p><u>Whipped-</u> Punished with a whip, beaten</p> 	<p><i>Tiburcio:</i> He testified that after his wife and daughter died, on five separate occasions Father Dantí ordered him <b>whipped</b> because he was crying. For these reasons he fled.</p> <p><i>Macario:</i> He testified that he fled because his wife and one child had died, no other reason than that.</p> <p><i>Magín:</i> He testified that he left due to his hunger and because they had put him in the stocks when he was sick, on orders from the <i>alcalde</i>.</p> <p><i>Tarazón:</i> He declared that he had no motive. Having been granted license to go on <i>paseo</i> to his land, he had felt inclined to stay.</p> <p><i>Ostano:</i> He testified that his motive for having fled was that his wife, one child, and two brothers had died, and because he had fought with another Indian who had been directing their work group.</p> <p><i>Román:</i> He testified that he left because his wife and a son had gone back to their land, because of the many whippings, and because he did not have anyone to feed him.</p> <p><i>Claudio:</i> He declares that he fled because he was continually fighting with his brother-in-law Casimiro and because the <i>alcalde</i> Valeriano was <b>clubbing</b> him every time he turned around, and when he was sick, this same Valeriano made him go to work.</p>
<p><u>Clubbing-</u> beat with a club</p> 	<p><i>José Manuel:</i> He testifies that when they went to bring wood from the mountains, Raymundo ordered them to bring him water. When the declarant wouldn't do it, this same Raymundo hit him with a heavy <b>cane, rendering</b> one hand useless. He showed his hand. It was a little puffed up but had movement. That was his reason for having left the mission.</p> <p><i>Homobono:</i> He testifies that his motive for fleeing was that his brother had died on the other shore, and when he cried for him at the mission they whipped him. Also, the <i>alcalde</i> Valeriano hit him with a heavy <b>cane</b> for having gone to look for mussels at the beach with Raymundo's permission.</p>
<p><u>Cane-</u> stick</p>	<p><i>Malquiedes:</i> He declares that he had no more reason for fleeing than that he went to visit his mother, who was on the other shore.</p>
<p><u>Rendering-</u> making</p>	<p><i>Liborato:</i> He testifies that he left because his mother, two brothers, and three nephews died, all of hunger. So that he would not also die of hunger, he fled.</p> <p><i>Timoteo:</i> He declares that the <i>alcalde</i> Luis came to get him while he was feeling ill and whipped him, After that, Father Antonio hit him with a heavy cane. For those reasons</p>

he fled.

*Milán:* He declared that he was working all day in the tannery without any food for either himself, his wife, or his child. One afternoon after he left work he went to look for clams to feed his family. Father Dantí whipped him. The next day he fled to the other shore, where his wife and child died.

*Patabo:* He says that he fled just because his wife and children died and he had no one to take care of him.

*Orencio:* He declared that his father had gone several times with a little niece of his to get a ration of meat. Father Dantí never gave it to him and always hit him with a cudgel. Because his niece died of hunger, he ran away.

*Toribio:* He stated that the motive for his having fled was that he was always very hungry, and that he went away together with his uncle.

*López:* He explained that his reason for having run away was the following: he went one day over the the *presidio* to look for something to eat. Upon returning to the mission, he went to get his ration, but Father Dantí did not want to give it to him, saying that he should go to the countryside to eat herbs.

*Magno:* He declared that he had run away because, his son being sick, he took care of him and was therefore unable to go out to work. As a result he was given no ration and his son died of hunger.

*Próspero:* He declared that he had gone one night to the lagoon to hunt ducks for food. For this Father Antonio Dantí ordered him stretched out and beaten. Then, the following week he was whipped again for having gone out on *paseo*. For these reasons he fled.

Having concluded the preceding declarations that were legally gathered and which follow the testimony of the interpreters, and in the belief that they represent the truth, I and my assistants sign it at the San Francisco *Presidio* on August 12, 1797.

José Argüello, José Miranda, Joaquín Pico, José González, Claudio Galindo

Source: Rose Marie Beebe and Robert M. Senkewicz, *Lands of Promise and Despair: Chronicles of Early California 1535-1846*, University of Oklahoma Press, 2015.

## Source #4

### Father Junipero Serra report on Monterey Mission, 1784

*Background: Father Junipero Serra was a Catholic priest hired by the Spanish to settle California for Spain. He was appointed head of the missions in 1767 and led the exploration of California. He personally founded 10 missions including one in San Diego and San Francisco. While in the missions, he tried to convert the local Native Americans to Catholicism.<sup>3</sup>*

Vocabulary	Primary Source Text
<p><u>Confess</u> – to say or admit when you have done something wrong</p>	<p>The Christianized native pray twice daily with the priest in the church. More than 120 of them <u>confess</u> and many who have died used to do it as well. The others confess as best they can. They work at all kinds of mission labor, such as farm hands, herdsmen, cowboys, shepherds, milkers, diggers, gardeners, carpenters, farmers, irrigators, reapers, blacksmiths, and everything else that come along for their physical and spiritual welfare.</p>

Source: Junipero Serra, "Report on the Missions July 1, 1784, Monterey" in Tibesar, ed. and trans., *Writings of Serra IV*.

<sup>3</sup> "Junipero Serra" PBS: *New Perspectives on The West*, 2001. Available online [http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/people/s\\_z/serra.htm](http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/people/s_z/serra.htm)