Timeline: California Missions and Native Americans

1760 – Population of Native Americans in California was approximately 300,000.

1769 – Junipero Serra founded Mission San Diego, the first of 21 Spanish missions built in California.

1771 – In one of the first acts of resistance by Native Californians against the mission system, Tongva leaders attacked the San Gabriel Mission in response to Spanish soldiers’ violence against Tongva women.

1821 – Mexico gained independence from Spain. California became part of Mexico.

1823 – The final mission to convert Native Americans was established in Sonoma.

1834 – Mission lands were given to private families.

1845 – California missions were sold at public auction.

1845 – Native American population in California was approximately 150,000.
Oriana Weatherbee, an artist who moved from Massachusetts to California in 1877, made this painting of the Mission Solano de Sonoma in 1884. Between 1867 and 1884 she painted all 21 of the California missions. The paintings were commissioned by Dr. Platon Vallejo, son of General Mariano Vallejo, who served as a military commander while California was part of Mexico. During his time as a commander, he crushed several Native Californian revolts. Mariano Vallejo lost most of his land to Americans after California was annexed by the United States. The Vallejos planned to use Weatherbee’s paintings to illustrate a book they were writing about the history of California, but the book was never finished.
Image B: San Francisco Presidio, 1816

This painting was created by Louis Choris in 1816. Choris was a German-Ukrainian artist who traveled to Northern California as part of a Russian expedition in 1816. He made several drawings and paintings of the expedition.
### Visual Analysis Questions

<table>
<thead>
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### Source Analysis Questions

C) **Source Analysis Questions**

**Who made this painting?**

- When was it made?
- Is it likely that the artist saw this scene firsthand? Explain.
- Why was it made?
- How might the reason for its creation have influenced its content?

- What impression do you think the artist wanted to present about California missions?
- What details from the image provide evidence to support your answer?

| How strong is this image as evidence of how Native Americans were treated under the mission system? |  |
## Visual Analysis Questions

### Image B

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### C) Source Analysis Questions

**Who made this painting?**

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**When was it made?**

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**Could the artist have seen the scene in the image firsthand? Explain**

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### D) Compare/Contrast

**How is this image similar to Image A?**

How is this image similar to Image A?

**How is this image different from Image A?**

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**How strong is this image as evidence of how Native Americans were treated by the Spanish under the mission system in Alta California?**

How strong is this image as evidence of how Native Americans were treated by the Spanish under the mission system in Alta California?
Document A: Helen Hunt Jackson (Modified)

Helen Hunt Jackson was a novelist who wrote about California Native Americans in the 1880s. In one of her books, she wrote a positive description of life in the missions. She did this, in part, to contrast the early mission period of California to the brutal treatment of Native Americans in the decades after California became part of the United States. Below is an excerpt from the book.

There was little active hostility on the part of the savage tribes. They looked kindly to the ways and restraints of the new life. This is the strongest possible proof that the methods of the friars in dealing with them must have been wise and humane.

The rule of the friars was in the main kind. No doubt there were individual instances of cruelty. absolute control of hundreds of human beings could not exist without some abuse. But the Indians were, on the whole, well treated and cared for. The fact that so many thousands of them chose to remain in the missions is proof.

The picture of life in one of these missions during their period of prosperity is attractive. The whole place was a hive of industry: work indoors and outdoors; planters, herders, children in schools; women spinning; bands of young men practicing on musical instruments; at evening, all sorts of games of running, leaping, dancing, and ball-throwing.

Vocabulary

- hostility: unfriendliness or opposition
- restrain: to keep under control
- friar: similar to a priest, a leader in the Catholic church
- humane: kind and gentle

Source: Helen Hunt Jackson, Glimpses of California and the Missions, 1883.
Document B: Hugo Reid (Modified)

Hugo Reid was a Scottish-born citizen of Mexico who lived in Los Angeles in the 1830s. Reid was married to a Native American woman of the Tongva tribe named Victoria. He wrote a series of newspaper letters describing the Tongva people. Below is an excerpt from one of the letters about living conditions in the San Gabriel Mission.

Indians of course deserted. Who would not have deserted? Those who did had hard times of it. If they went to other missions, they were picked up immediately, flogged and put in irons until they were returned to undergo other flagellations. . . .

The Padre was both severe and cruel in his punishments. I know of acts of barbarity from trustworthy people. The Padre must have considered whipping like food for the Indians, for they had it morning, noon, and night. Although so severe to the Indians, he was kind in the extreme to other visitors. There being so much beef, mutton, pork, and poultry, with fruits, vegetables, and wines that a splendid public table was spread daily, which he hosted.

Vocabulary

desert: to leave or run out on
flogged: beat someone with a whip or a stick
flagellations: whippings
barbarity: cruelty

Source: Hugo Reid, The Indians of Los Angeles County, 1852.
Document C: Jean Francois de La Perouse (Modified)

Jean Francois de La Perouse was a French naval officer and an explorer. He visited missions in Northern California in 1786 while on a worldwide scientific expedition. Below is an excerpt from his journal about the mission at Monterey Bay.

Everything reminded us of a West Indian slave colony. The men and women are lined up by the sound of the bell, one of the religious (Spanish Friars) conducts them to their work, to church, and to all other exercises. We mention it with pain, the resemblance to a slave colony is so perfect, that we saw men and women loaded with irons, others in the stocks; and at length the noise of the strokes of a whip struck our ears.

Vocabulary

exercises: activities
resemblance: looking alike, similarity
stocks: devices used to physically constrain and punish

Document D: Julio Cesar (Modified)

Julio Cesar was a Native American born at the San Luis Rey Mission in 1824. In 1878, historian Hubert Howe Bancroft interviewed Cesar about his life on the mission, which was later made into a book. Below is an excerpt from the interview.

When I was a boy the treatment given to the Indians at the mission was not at all good. They did not pay us anything, but merely gave us food and a breechclout and blanket, which was renewed once a year. They flogged us for any fault, however slight. We were at the mercy of the administrator, who ordered us to be flogged whenever and however he wanted.

Vocabulary

breechclout: shorts
slight: small or insignificant
administrator: person in charge of running something

Source: Julio Cesar, Recollections of My Youth at San Luis Rey Mission: The Memories of a full-blooded Indian, of affairs and events witnessed at one of California’s most famous “cathedrals of the sun,” translated by Nellie Van De Grift Sanchez, 1878.
### Round One Organizer

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**Compare/Contrast:** In what ways are these documents similar and different?

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How reliable do you think these documents are as evidence of how Native Americans were treated under the mission system? Explain your answer.
## Round Two Organizer

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