“Image vs. Reality: Olvera Street”

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Mid-City Magnet

GRADES 7–8 Social Studies

INTRODUCTION
This lesson is about the remaking of Olvera Street as an Anglo-friendly version of California’s Spanish and Mexican past. Students will learn how and why Olvera Street was remarketed as a typical friendly Mexican village. They will also learn about and analyze the controversy surrounding David Alfaro Siqueiros’s “America Tropical.”

CALIFORNIA HISTORY-SOCIAL SCIENCE STANDARDS

7.7.4 Describe the artistic and oral traditions and architecture found in the three [Meso-American] civilizations.

8.8.5 Discuss Mexican settlements and their locations, cultural traditions, attitudes toward slavery, land-grant system, and economies.

8.8.6 Describe the Texas War for Independence and the Mexican-American War, including territorial settlements, the aftermath of the wars, and the effects the wars had on the lives of Americans, including Mexican Americans today.

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Sponsors
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MATERIALS (SEE APPENDIX)

1. Pantoum Form Handout

2. Photos
   From the University of Southern California Libraries Automobile Club of Southern California negatives, 1892-1963 Collection (Call Numbers)
   • “Olvera Street, 1930” (AAA-NG-1818-A)
     http://digarc.usc.edu/search/controller/view/acsc-m874.html
   • “Olvera Street, 1930” (AAA-NG-1818-I)
     http://digarc.usc.edu/search/controller/view/acsc-m879.html
   • “Olvera Street, Los Angeles, 1953” (AAA-NG-6605-F)
     http://digarc.usc.edu/search/controller/view/acsc-m1005.html
   • “Olvera Street, 1930” (AAA-NG-1818-E)
     http://digarc.usc.edu/search/controller/view/acsc-m877.html

   From the USC: Title Insurance & Trust/C.C. Pierce Photography Collection (Call Numbers)
   • “Mexican Hat Dance…ca 1932” (CHS-7562)
     http://digarc.usc.edu/search/controller/view/chs-m10038.html?x=1234568779857
   • “Mexican Ice Cream and Tamale Vendor…ca 1890” (CHS-365)
     http://digarc.usc.edu/search/controller/view/chs-m4907.html?x=1234568811717

   From the USC: Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce Collection (Call Number)
   • “Women Tortilla Makers in Olvera Street, ca. 1930” (CHS-40761)
     http://digarc.usc.edu/search/controller/view/chs-m12000.html?x=1234568835357

   From the Los Angeles Public Library Photo Database (Order Numbers)
   • “Early View of Olvera Street” (00008403)
     http://catalog1.lapl.org/cgi-bin/cw.cgi?fullRecord+9694+968+9694+2+0
   • “Olvera Street Before Improvement” (00008488)
     http://catalog1.lapl.org/cgi-bin/cw.cgi?fullRecord+9694+968+9460+3+2
   • “Man Sitting, Olvera Street” (00008425)
     http://catalog1.lapl.org/cgi-bin/cw.cgi?fullRecord+9694+968+9798+2+3
MATERIALS (CONTINUED)

- “Scenes of a Candle Maker, 1930” (00011160)
  http://jpg2.lapl.org/pics03/00011160.jpg

- “Dancers and Musician in front of Avila Adobe” (00008394)

- “Four Ladies at Olvera Street” (00011137)
  http://jpg1.lapl.org/pics17/00008394.jpg

- “Girl With Many Hats on Olvera Street, ca. 1930s” (00008397)
  http://jpg1.lapl.org/pics17/00008397.jpg

From the Los Angeles Public Library El Pueblo Monument Collection (Accession Numbers)

- “The Siqueiros Mural” (02\138-SM-0018)
  http://dbase1.lapl.org/images/el_pueblo/ws/02%5C138-SM-0018.jpg

- “Far Look of Siqueiros Mural” (02\138-SM-0001b)
  http://dbase1.lapl.org/images/el_pueblo/ws/02%5C138-SM-0001b.jpg

- “Close up of Siqueiros Mural” (02\138-SM-0001a)
  http://dbase1.lapl.org/images/el_pueblo/ws/02%5C138-SM-0001a.jpg

3. Magazine Articles
   From the Los Angeles Times describing the opening of Olvera Street
   1930 Map from California Vieja, Phoebe Kropp

4. A classroom poster of America Tropical, to be annotated

PREPARATION

1. Duplicate photos, articles, and map (see source information in appendix).
2. Duplicate pantoun poem and map analysis worksheets (in appendix).
3. Post photos for gallery walk.
ACTIVITIES

1. GALLERY WALK
   Students will look at pictures of Olvera Street, circa 1930. They will write a one-sentence description for each picture and create a Pantoum poem (See appendix). The class will discuss what the pictures are trying to show; in other words, what images are they trying to project? What kinds of people are they trying to attract to Olvera Street? They will then look at four pictures taken before the reopening of Olvera Street. The class will compare and contrast these pictures to the ones in the Gallery Walk and discuss how they might not fit in with the images that the other pictures were projecting.

2. NEWSPAPER AND MAP ANALYSIS
   In groups of four, students will look at one of three Los Angeles Times articles, “A Mexican Street of Yesterday…,” “Old Los Angeles…,” and “Throngs Inspect…,” which all describe the reopening of Olvera Street. They will also look at a map of Olvera Street and the surrounding area. They will fill out a chart with their new findings. Groups will then share out so all students can fill in their charts. Using this information, the students will once again discuss the pictures and try to figure out why Olvera Street was marketed the way it was.

3. MURAL ANALYSIS
   Students will look at images of David Alfaro Siqueiros’s mural, “America Tropical”. Students will be divided up into groups of three or four. Each group will be assigned a different part of the mural (the eagle, the native, the temple, etc) and write a description and analysis. Once groups are done, they will share and discuss their findings and create an annotated version of the mural.

4. REACTION INVESTIGATION
   Students will then look at three Los Angeles Times articles (see appendix), “Great Artwork to be Unveiled,” Siqueiros Plaza Art…,” and “Power Unadorned…” that were written at the time of the opening. In a Think-Pair-Share activity, students will describe the feelings people had as the mural was first revealed. (anticipation, excitement, enthusiasm, etc.)

5. SHORT ESSAY
   Students will then look at a picture of the mural when it was whitewashed, and the teacher will explain that it was quickly covered up and left to ruin. Using what they have learned about the history of the re-made Olvera Street, students will write a short essay answering the following prompt: “America Tropical” was whitewashed soon after it was completed. Why do you think this happened? How did the images in the mural conflict with how Olvera Street was marketed?”

EXTENSIONS

Students can research and report on the current status of the mural.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

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http://www.lapl.org/resources/en/el_pueblo.html

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“Poetry Form-The Pantoum.” Ariadne’s Web.
http://www.baymoon.com/~ariadne/form/pantoum.htm

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USC Digital Archives.
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Automobile Club of Southern California negatives, 1892-1963 Collection
Title Insurance & Trust/C.C. Pierce Photography Collection
Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce Collection
APPENDIX

1. PANTOUM FORM WORKSHEET
2. ARTICLE AND MAP ANALYSIS WORKSHEET

PANTOUM POEM
Write a one-sentence description of each picture to the matching number. Rewrite the sentence for the repeating numbers. An example is done for you.

1. Beautiful flowers blooming in the bright sun.

Form taken from Ariadne’s Web: http://www.baymoon.com/~ariadne/form/pantoum.htm
ARTICLE AND MAP ANALYSIS

With your group, fill out the chart and answer the map question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIST AND LOOK UP ANY UNFAMILIAR VOCABULARY</th>
<th>QUOTE AT LEAST ONE DESCRIPTION OF OLVERA STREET</th>
<th>WHO DO YOU THINK THIS ARTICLE WAS WRITTEN FOR?</th>
<th>WHAT GROUPS OF PEOPLE ARE THEY TRYING TO GET COME TO OLVERA STREET?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“A Mexican street of yesterday”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Old Los Angeles”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Throngs Inspect”</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Find Union Station and City Hall on your map and circle them. Find out what these two buildings are and why they are important. Write down your answer in the space below.