

Study Guide

Chapter 12, Section 3



For use with textbook pages 369–374

WAR WITH MEXICO

KEY TERMS

rancho	An expansive section of land that includes large properties (page 371)
ranchero	A person who owns a rancho (page 371)
Californios	Mexican people who lived in California (page 373)
cede	To give up or relinquish (page 374)

DRAWING FROM EXPERIENCE

Have you ever tried to learn another language or about a culture different from your own? What might be some difficulties in understanding that group of people? Could some aspects of the culture conflict with your own background? How could the conflict be resolved? What impact could other cultures make on your own culture?

In the last section, you learned about the annexation of Texas. This section focuses on the continued growth of the United States to include the Southwest and California.

ORGANIZING YOUR THOUGHTS

Use the chart below to help you take notes as you read the summaries that follow. Think about the commanders that helped President Polk obtain his vision of Manifest Destiny.

President James Polk's Plan for Manifest Destiny			
Commander	Commander	Commander	Commander
Polk's Order	Polk's Order	Polk's Order	Polk's Order

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READ TO LEARN

- **The New Mexico Territory** (pages 369–370)

The area called New Mexico in the early 1800s encompassed present-day New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, and sections of Colorado and Utah. The area belonged to Spain as a colony of Mexico. When Mexico gained independence from Spain in 1821, it also gained control of the New Mexico territory. Unlike Spain, the Mexican government initially encouraged American trade to the area in hopes of stimulating the economy.

William Becknell initiated trade in Santa Fe. He discovered he could gain more profit in the West where goods were in short supply. The path he traveled from Missouri to Santa Fe became known as the Santa Fe Trail. Other traders soon followed Beckner's example. American interest in the western land of New Mexico and California increased. Discussion had started about the benefits of this land for American acquisition.

1. How did American interest in New Mexico begin?

- **California's Spanish Culture** (pages 370–371)

Spain encouraged the use of missions to colonize California. The missions served to convert Native Americans to Christianity and to make use of Native American labor for farming and craftwork. California became a Mexican state in 1821 after Mexico's independence from Spain. The Mexican government banned the operation of the missions and gave some land to the Native Americans. The remaining land was sold to Mexican settlers. The settlers developed these huge properties of land, or **ranchos**. The **rancheros**, ranch owners, persuaded the Native Americans to work the land. Compensation for their work was limited to food and shelter.

Americans started arriving by ships and by land to California to engage in trade. Settlers included shipping company agents, Oregon fur traders, New Mexican merchants, and eventually families. Many Americans recognized the benefit of including California to the nation. It would eliminate any foreign country on either shore and provide direct access to the Pacific Ocean. President James Polk, a supporter of Manifest Destiny, offered twice to buy both California and New Mexico from Mexico. Mexico refused.

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2. How could ownership of California benefit the United States?

- **War With Mexico** (pages 371–374)

Mexico had never acknowledged the independence of Texas. Therefore, it claimed that the United States had illegally acquired Texas. Another disagreement between the nations concerned the Texas-Mexico border. The United States claimed the border was at the Rio Grande River. Mexico claimed it was 150 miles farther north. President James Polk sent agent John Slidell to negotiate an agreement about the border. Mexico refused, and Polk sent General Zachary Taylor to build an American fort on the disputed section of land. When the Mexican army attacked the fort, Polk convinced Congress to declare war on Mexico in 1846. Supporters of President Polk, the Democrats, supported the war. Northerners, the Whigs, and African American leader Fredrick Douglass opposed the action on the grounds that the real purpose of the war was to spread slavery. Abraham Lincoln, an Illinois congressman, supported the boundary established by Mexico and strongly opposed the act as justification of war.

Polk's goals were to secure the American border at the Rio Grande, to take control of New Mexico and California, and to attack Mexico City, the capital of Mexico. Zachary Taylor was able to meet the first goal of securing the Texas border by defeating the Mexicans in 1847.

General Stephen Watts Kearney was responsible for the capture of Santa Fe, New Mexico's capital in 1846. The governor abandoned the city before Kearney's arrival, making the capture nonviolent.

A group of Americans took control of Sonoma, California, and declared it the independent Republic of California. They named the country the Bear Flag Republic. John C. Frémont and Kit Carson soon joined the American group. Frémont announced plans to conquer California and angered the **Californios**, the Mexicans living in California. United States Navy Commodore, John Sloat, captured San Francisco and San Diego, declaring that California was annexed to the United States. He replaced the Bear flag with the American flag. Sloat, Carson, Frémont, and Kearney traveled across the territory declaring California to be under American control. There was conflict with the Californios as a result. By early 1847, California was completely under the control of the United States.

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President Polk's final goal was to capture the Mexican capital, Mexico City. General Winfield Scott carried out Polk's plan by attacking the Veracruz port and marching 300 miles into Mexico City, fighting the Mexican army and civilians along the way. They eventually overtook the capital.

The cost of war was damaging to both sides, though Mexico suffered more. In the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Mexico agreed to the Rio Grande border and *ceded*, or gave up, both California and New Mexico to the United States. The United States later conducted the Gadsden Purchase that gave the United States a section of land along the Arizona and New Mexico border. These acquisitions provided the United States with the mainland borders still recognized today.

3. Why was California more difficult to acquire than New Mexico?
