

Project Based Learning

4th Grade Social Studies

The following are project based learning ideas that you may choose to do to take the place of regular curriculum units. These may be turned into your ST as a sample and may be a more fun and interactive way to learn the material. Here is a list of all 4th grade standards: [4th Grade California Social Studies Standards](#)

California Standard 4.1 Students demonstrate an understanding of the physical and human geographic features that define places and regions in California.

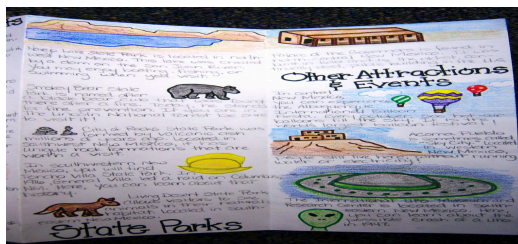
Salt Dough California elevation map project: Watch this video on how to create a salt dough California elevation map. [Salt dough map Prezi](#)

After it dries, your student can paint the mountains and valley etc.

- 1) Label the border states of California.
- 2) Label the Sierra Nevada, coastal mountain ranges, valley, ocean, rivers, and desert.
- 3) Label major cities.
- 4) Label Death Valley, Lake Tahoe, and San Francisco Bay.
- 5) Label anything else you would like on the map.

California Brochure Project: The purpose of the brochure is to highlight California and advertise what California has so people might want to come visit.

- 1) Fold a piece of paper into thirds
- 2) Include a section on climate/weather, regions, state parks, cities to visit, attractions/theme parks, and state facts.
- 3) Draw or print pictures that represent the best part of what the state has to offer in the brochure.



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.

Diary of a Native American living in a Mission:

Research what life was like on a California Mission. Research these Spanish colonizers: (Juan Crespi, Junipero Serra, Gaspar de Portola). Pick one of the 21 missions. Have your student pretend that they are an Native American living on that mission. Describe what it looks like, who is in charge, how you are treated, where do you live, what is life like on an average day? The diary entry can be written on paper that is made to look old. [How to make paper look old](#)

Diary of a worker of a California Explorer:

Research a California Explorer: (Captain James Cook, Vitus Bering, or Juan Cabrillo)

Pretend you work for this explorer. Write a diary entry about what it is like to work for this explorer. Why is he famous? What did he explore or find? What country does he work for?

4.3 Students explain the economic, social, and political life in California from the establishment of the Bear Flag Republic through the Mexican-American War, the Gold Rush, and the granting of statehood.

Draw the California State Flag: Students will draw the state flag and include facts about when California became a state. Students can also include other facts about the state on the back. Include what the Bear Flag Revolt was. Why was a bear on the flag? Who owned California before the USA?

Here is the how to video: [How to Draw the State Flag](#)

*An extension would be to have your student draw their own flag and symbol.



Gold Rush Project: 1) After studying the gold rush, have your student make a newspaper from a day in 1849. Include a local section and a national section. The newspaper can include an editorial from a gold miner about what life was like mining for gold. The paper can also include prices of mining supplies and other related information. The paper could include the announcement of gold found by James Marshall at Sutter's Mill. The paper could include information about the different ways to get to the gold fields (horse, wagon, boat, etc). Gold boom towns can be discussed as well as claims and where to take gold and how to get paid for the gold that is found. Drawings or pictures are also encouraged.

2) A gold rush diorama can be made to show what a claim or mining town might have looked like. The diorama can include different ways of mining like pans, rockers, and hydraulic. Here are some examples.

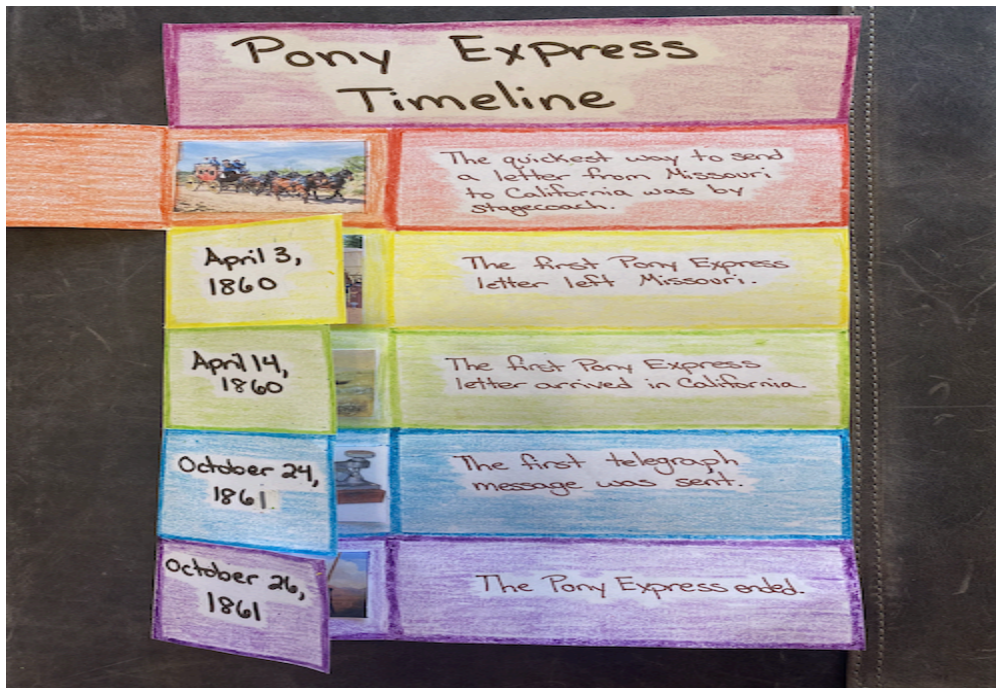


[Gold Rush Video](#)

Joke: Where can you always find gold?
In the DIGtionary!

4.4 Students explain how California became an agricultural and industrial power, tracing the transformation of the California economy and its political and cultural development since the 1850s.

Pony Express Project: After studying the Pony Express, students can create a Pony Express Timeline. [How to Pony Express Timeline](#)



These videos can help students answer these questions: 1)What was the importance of the Pony Express to the settlement and expansion of the American West? 2)What was the purpose of the Pony Express? 3) What challenges did the Pony Express riders face?[Pony Express Video](#)
[A Cowboy's Horse Video](#)

- **Pony Express Relay (PE)** If you have 3-5 students, you can give them a "mail bag" and have them run around your yard or neighborhood to simulate the stations where the mail would be passed and given to a fresh horse and rider along the way from Missouri to California.

Transcontinental Railroad Project:

-Lay a line of cardboard down the middle of the room on the floor. Tell the children that the cardboard represents American land from Missouri to California.

- Have the girls stand on one short side of the cardboard. The girls will represent the Central Pacific. They will begin in Sacramento, California and will build eastward.

-Have the boys stand at the other short side of the cardboard. The boys will represent the Union Pacific. They will begin next to the Missouri River near Omaha, Nebraska and will build westward.

-Space out all the children so that they will each have a section of cardboard on which they will work. Make sure to keep the girls on one side and the boys on the other side. Have the oldest children work in the middle and the youngest child work closest to the beginning of each side.

-Give each child handful (about 25) craft/popsicle sticks.

-Explain that railroad workers used a T-shaped gauge to position the rails on the ties to make sure they were straight and properly placed.

-Have each child break off a short piece off one popsicle stick and glue the longer piece to another stick to make a T.

-Explain that after a bed of stones and sand was prepared, heavy wooden ties were dropped on it. Surveyors then leveled each tie.

- Have the children pour a couple lines of glue along the cardboard and then glue the popsicle sticks along the cardboard about 1 finger (2 inches) apart. The distance doesn't have to be exact.

-Tell the children that a cart pulled by a horse supplied the rails. It took 5 men on each side to lift a single iron rail and drop it onto the ties. They used the T-gauge to make sure the rails were spaced the correct distance apart. Then they hammered spikes through the rails into the ties.

-Give each child about 10 pipe cleaners or straws. These will represent the rails. Have them lay the pipe cleaners/straws (the “rails”) along their popsicle stick “ties.” They can use their T-gauges to position them.

-The staples will represent the spikes. With the stapler opened, have them staple the pipe cleaners/straws through the ties into the cardboard.

-The Central Pacific group’s tracks should eventually lead up to the Union Pacific group, and each group’s tracks should form a continuous track.

-Explain that when the two companies finally met up at Promontory Summit, Utah, they had a huge ceremony to hammer in the last spike that would connect the two rails together.

-Pick one volunteer from each side (a girl and a boy) to finish the connecting track. Give them each a yellow thumbtack as the “golden spike” to connect the two rails together.

-Mention that they actually used 2 gold spikes. As soon as the ceremony was over, they replaced the gold spikes with regular ones so that the gold wouldn’t be stolen.

Supplies: a big box craft/popsicle sticks (at least 840), 280 pipe cleaners or straws, 2 yellow/gold thumb tacks or brads, large piece of cardboard & items brought by families: glue and staplers



[Transcontinental](#)

[Railroad Video](#)

4.5 Students understand the structures, functions, and powers of the local, state, and federal governments as described in the U.S. Constitution.

Visit the state capitol: [State Capitol](#) [State Capitol Educational Resources](#)

4th Grade Field Trip Ideas

- 1) [Railroad Museum](#)
- 2) [Sutter's Fort](#)
- 3) [State Indian Museum](#)
- 4) [Gold Rush Museum Auburn](#)
- 5) [Marshall Gold Discovery State Historic Park and Museum](#)
- 6) [Sacramento History Museum](#)
- 7) [Empire Mine State Historic Park](#)
- 8) [Effie Yeaw Nature Center Carmichael](#)
- 9) [San Francisco Solano Mission](#)
- 10) [California State Capitol](#)
- 11) [Malakoff Diggins State Historic Park](#)
- 12) [Indian Grinding Rock State Park](#)

