Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Period: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Mexican-American War Guided Reading**

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Directions: As you are reading the Mexican-American War packet, answer the questions in the space provided. As you come to important dates, individuals, and the results, add them to the chart.

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| --- | --- |
| **Dates of the war** | Began – Ended – Treaty –  |
| **Important individuals and their titles** | United States | Mexico |
| **Results of the war** |  |

1) What made this war different from previous wars in which the United States was involved?

2) Who did the Mexican-American War give important military experience to?

3) What were the two causes of the war?

4) What did Mexico do in response to the United States annexing Texas?

5) Who actually lived in the disputed territory between the Nueces River and Rio Grande?

6) How much **total** money was offered to Mexico for its land?

7) What did President Polk order Zachary Taylor to do after Mexico would not accept their envoy?

8) Why do you believe Polk gave Taylor those orders (from question above)?

9) What did Polk do and say after the April 25th skirmish on the Mexico/American border?

10) What did supporters say about the war? What did opponents say?

11) What happened in California after the war started? Explain in detail.

12) What did Winfield Scott do that was significant in the war?

13) Why do you believe the Mexicans refused to surrender?

14) What were the three opinions about what America should do to Mexico upon surrender?

15) What was the significance of Nicholas Trist in the peace negotiations?



MEXICAN-AMERICAN WAR

Fifteen years before the United States was plunged into Civil War, it fought a war against Mexico that added half a million square miles of territory to the United States. Not only was it the first American war fought almost entirely outside the United States, it was also the first American war to be reported, while it happened, by daily newspapers.

It was a controversial war that bitterly divided American public opinion. It was the war that gave young officers named Ulysses S. Grant, Robert E. Lee, Thomas ("Stonewall") Jackson, William Tecumseh Sherman, and George McClellan their first experience in a major conflict. They would go on to become key leaders in the American Civil War.

The underlying cause of the Mexican War was the movement of American pioneers into lands claimed by Mexico. The immediate reason for the conflict was the annexation of Texas in 1845. After the defeat at San Jacinto in 1836, Mexico made two abortive attempts in 1842 to reconquer Texas. Even after these defeats, Mexico refused to recognize Texan independence and warned the United States that the annexation of Texas would be tantamount to a declaration of war.

In early 1845, when Congress voted to annex Texas, Mexico expelled the American ambassador and cut diplomatic relations. But it did not declare war.

President Polk told his commanders to prepare for the possibility of war. He ordered American naval vessels to position themselves outside Mexican ports and he dispatched American forces in the Southwest to Corpus Christi, Texas.

Peaceful settlement of the two countries' differences still seemed possible. In the fall of 1845, the President offered $5 million if Mexico agreed to recognize the Rio Grande River as the southwestern boundary of Texas. Earlier, the Spanish government had defined the Texas boundary as the Nueces River, 130 miles north and east of the Rio Grande. No Americans lived between the Nueces and the Rio Grande, although many Hispanics lived in the region.

The United States also offered up to $5 million for the province of New Mexico--which included Nevada and Utah and parts of four other states--and up to $25 million for California. Polk was anxious to acquire California because in mid-October 1845, he had been led to believe that Mexico had agreed to cede California to Britain as payment for debts. Polk also dispatched a young Marine Corps lieutenant, Archibald H. Gillespie, to California, apparently to foment revolt against Mexican authority.

The Mexican government, already incensed over the annexation of Texas, refused to accept an American envoy. The failure of the negotiations led Polk to order Brigadier General Zachary Taylor to march 3,000 troops southwest from Corpus Christi, Texas, to "defend the Rio Grande River” (clearly to provoke Mexico). Late in March of 1846, Taylor and his men set up camp along the Rio Grande, directly across from the Mexican city of Matamoros, on a stretch of land claimed by both Mexico and the United States.

On April 25, 1846, a Mexican cavalry force crossed the Rio Grande and clashed with a small American squadron, forcing the Americans to surrender after the loss of several lives. On May 11, after he received word of the border clash, Polk asked Congress to acknowledge that a state of war already existed "by the act of Mexico herself...notwithstanding all our efforts to avoid it." "Mexico," the President announced, "has passed the boundary of the United States, has invaded our territory and shed American blood upon the American soil." Congress responded with a declaration of war.

The Mexican War was extremely controversial. Its supporters blamed Mexico for the hostilities because it had severed relations with the United States, threatened war, refused to receive an American emissary or to pay the damage claims of American citizens. In addition, Mexico had "invaded our territory and shed American blood on American soil." Opponents denounced the war as an immoral land grab by an expansionistic power against a weak neighbor that had been independent barely two decades.

The war's critics claimed that Polk deliberately provoked Mexico into war by ordering American troops into disputed territory. A Delaware Senator declared that ordering Taylor to the Rio Grande was "as much an act of aggression on our part as is a man's pointing a pistol at another's breast." Critics also argued that the war was an expansionist power play dictated by aggressive Southern slave owners’ intent on acquiring more slave states.

American forces quickly conquered Mexico's northernmost provinces. In less than two months, Colonel Stephen Kearny marched his 1,700-man army more than a thousand miles, occupied Santa Fe, and declared New Mexico's 80,000 inhabitants American citizens.

Meanwhile, American settlers in California's Sacramento Valley, fearful that Mexican authorities were about to expel them from the region, revolted. They overthrew the Mexican government in northern California in what came to be known as the Bear Flag Revolution. The settlers carried a flag showing a grizzly bear facing a single red star. In early July, U.S. naval forces under Commodore John Sloat captured the California town of Monterey and proclaimed California a part of the United States.

General Zachary Taylor crossed the Rio Grande and captured the city of Monterrey after a hard-fought battle. Five months later, Taylor defeated Santa Anna and a large Mexican army at the Battle of Buena Vista. Santa Anna at the time was the president of Mexico as well as the commander of the armed forces. Taylor’s great victory at Buena Vista made him a hero in the U. S. and helped him win the presidency in 1848.

Despite the unbroken string of American victories, Mexico refused to negotiate. In disgust, Polk ordered General Winfield Scott to invade central Mexico from the sea, march inland, and capture Mexico City. On March 9, 1847, the Mexicans allowed Scott and a force of 10,000 men to land unopposed at Veracruz on Gulf of Mexico. Scott's troops then began to march on the Mexican capital. On September 14, 1847, the Americans entered the Mexican capital, and raised the American flag over Mexico City-- an event memorialized in the Marine Corps hymn with the line "from the halls of Montezuma.”

In spite of the capture of their capital, the Mexicans refused to surrender. Hostile crowds staged demonstrations in the streets, and snipers fired shots and hurled stones and broken bottles from the tops of flat-roofed Mexican houses. Outside the capital, belligerent civilians attacked army supply wagons, and guerrilla fighters harassed American troops. Senator Daniel Webster of Massachusetts expressed the prevailing sentiment: "Mexico is an ugly enemy. She will not fight--and will not retreat."

As Americans waited impatiently for a final peace settlement, they grew increasingly divided over their war aims. Ultra-expansionists, who drew support from northeastern cities as well as from the West, wanted the United States to annex all of Mexico. Many Southerners, led by John C. Calhoun, called for a unilateral withdrawal to the Rio Grande. They opposed annexation of any of Mexico below the Rio Grande because they did not want to extend American citizenship to Mexicans. Most Democratic Party leaders, however, wanted to annex at least the one-third of Mexico south and west of the Rio Grande.

Then suddenly on February 22, 1848, word reached Washington D.C. that a peace treaty had been signed. Earlier in February, Nicholas Trist, a Spanish-speaking State Department official, signed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, ending the Mexican War. Trist had actually been ordered home two months earlier by Polk, but he had continued negotiating anyway, fearing that his recall would be "deadly to the cause of peace."

According to the treaty, Mexico ceded to the United States only those areas that Polk had originally sought to purchase. Mexico ceded California, Nevada, Utah, New Mexico, and parts of Arizona, Colorado, Kansas, and Wyoming to the United States for $15 million and the assumption of $3.25 million in debts owed to Americans by Mexico. The treaty also settled the Texas border dispute in favor of the United States, placing the Texas-Mexico boundary at the Rio Grande River.

Ultra-expansionists called on Polk to reject the treaty. William Tecumseh Sherman called the treaty "just such a one as Mexico might have imposed on us had she been the conqueror." But a war-weary public wanted peace. Polk quickly submitted the treaty to the Senate, which ratified it overwhelmingly. The war was over.