

FROM DEMOCRACY'S BORDERLANDS: HISPANIC CONGRESSIONAL REPRESENTATION IN THE ERA OF U.S. CONTINENTAL EXPANSION, 1822–1898

LESSON PLAN ONE



RECOMMENDED GRADE LEVEL: Grades 7 to 12



OVERVIEW

This activity is designed to accompany the contextual essay “*From Democracy’s Borderlands: Hispanic Congressional Representation in the Era of U.S. Continental Expansion, 1822–1898*,” from the *Hispanic Americans in Congress* website, history.house.gov/Exhibitions-and-Publications/HAIC/Hispanic-Americans-in-Congress/. Students have the opportunity to learn more about the Hispanic Americans who served in Congress from 1822 to 1898. Students are encouraged to analyze the role Hispanic-American Delegates and Representatives and played in Congress during the era, as well as the ways in which they may have changed the institution.



CURRICULUM CONNECTION

- U.S. History, American Government, Social Studies, Latino Studies
- Louisiana Purchase, Mexican-American War, Civil War, Slavery, Reconstruction, Spanish-American War



OBJECTIVES

1. Students should be able to identify the Hispanic Americans who served in Congress from 1822 to 1898.
2. Students should be able to recognize the ways in which Hispanic Americans won elective office from 1822 to 1898.
3. Students should be able to identify important issues and trends surrounding the Hispanic Americans who served in Congress during this era.



LESSON PLAN

1. To help introduce students to the upcoming activity, lead a brief discussion using the questions below:
 - a. What were some of the important issues and events in the United States from 1822 to 1898?
 - b. If asked to describe an average Member of Congress during this period, how would you answer?
 - c. Have there been many Hispanic Americans who have served in Congress? (Ask students to compile a quick list.) Why or why not?
2. Ask students to read the contextual essay “*From Democracy’s Borderlands: Hispanic Congressional Representation in the Era of U.S. Continental Expansion, 1822–1898*,” either independently or in groups. Encourage students to take notes and to write down any unanswered questions they encounter during the reading.
3. Once students have completed the reading, have them answer the **Comprehension Questions**. Review the answers as a class.
4. Next have students answer the **Critical Thinking Questions**. Review the answers as a class.
5. Choose one of the options listed under the category **Main Exercise** (Cooperative or Hypothetical). If necessary, students can use the online resources listed at the end of the activity to complete the **Main Exercise**.
6. Time permitting, conduct one of the **Suggested Extended Activities**.



COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS ON THE SURFACE

1. Who was the first Hispanic American to serve in Congress? When did he serve?
2. Who was the first Hispanic American elected to the House of Representatives as a Representative?
3. What state or territory sent the largest number of Hispanic-American Members to Congress during this era?
4. What were some of the similar backgrounds shared by Hispanic Members? How did Hispanic-American Congressmen of this era differ from the average Hispanic citizen?
5. What are contested elections? Did contested elections help or hinder Hispanic Americans seeking congressional seats? Explain your answer.
6. What were some of the major legislative issues affecting Hispanic Members during this era? Describe one issue that affected a number of Hispanic Members.
7. Territorial representation is similar to, yet different from, the roles that U.S. Representatives and Senators play in the United States Congress. How did territorial representation develop within Congress? What actions did territorial representatives take to successfully represent their constituents?



CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS DIGGING DEEPER

1. Describe the different factions within the Republican Party in the New Mexico Territory. How did Hispanic Members interact with these factions? Provide two specific examples.
2. What effect did slavery have on the lives of the early Hispanic Members of Congress? Provide two examples of Hispanic Members who dealt directly with the question of slavery in their districts. How did these experiences help or hinder their careers?
3. List the names of the Hispanic Members elected from the New Mexico Territory from 1853 through 1898. Why were there so many more Hispanic Members from New Mexico Territory than from any other territory or state?
4. What effect did American Indian relations have on the lives of Hispanic Members of Congress? Provide two examples of Hispanic Members who dealt with the question of Indian relations in their districts. How did these experiences help or hinder their careers?



MAIN EXERCISE OPTION 1: COOPERATIVE

Working in small groups, choose a Hispanic Member of Congress from this era and follow the directions below:

- a. Read the profile for your Member.
- b. Write down any important notes.
- c. Scenario: You have been assigned the task of designing a museum exhibit to describe the life of your Member. The exhibit should include information on all aspects of his life, but should focus on the Member's congressional service.

What should be included:

- Original title of exhibit that helps explain his legacy
- 50-word exhibit label that summarizes his congressional career
- Three artifacts chosen by you that best represent the Member's legacy
- A creative teaching tool for museum visitors that covers the highlights of his career in Congress (committees, key legislation, state or district he represented, etc.)

OPTION 2: HYPOTHETICAL

1. You are a Hispanic candidate for Congress from Bernalillo County in the New Mexico Territory in the 1860s. You were born in the territory but were educated in the Midwest and East Coast of the United States. You fought in the Civil War for the Union and became a successful merchandising entrepreneur. How will you get elected? What is your campaign slogan? What are the local and national issues on which you will campaign?
2. You are a Hispanic Congressman serving on the Committee on Public Lands in the late 1870s. You are sponsoring a bill that will provide funding for improving the railroad networks in your district and in neighboring states. However, opponents of the bill will pass it only if a portion of the funding is allocated toward resettling American Indians onto reservations that are far from their current homes. Will you accept the compromise? Write a one-page editorial to submit to your hometown newspaper defending your position.
3. You are a Hispanic Delegate in the early 1820s who has been asked by the congressional leadership to make a five-minute floor speech in which you encourage the migration of settlers into your territory and surrounding areas. Draft a speech and deliver it to your class.

**SUGGESTED EXTENDED ACTIVITIES**

1. Design a timeline of significant events for the Hispanic-American Members of Congress who served during this era.
2. Write a 100-word obituary for one of the Hispanic Members who served during this era.
3. Design a campaign poster for a Hispanic candidate for Congress during this period.
4. Draft language for a resolution sponsored by a Hispanic-American Congressman in the 1880s on one of two hypothetical topics:
 - a. Posting of federal troops to guard the new railroad networks in the state
 - b. Appropriating funds for the construction of a courthouse in state capital



ONLINE RESOURCES

History, Art & Archives | U.S. House of Representatives

A collaborative project between the Office of the Historian and the Clerk of the House's Office of Art and Archives. Together, the offices serve as the House's institutional memory, and a resource for Members, staff, and the general public.

history.house.gov

[@USHouseHistory](#)

Online *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*

Searchable database that contains biographical information on every person who served in Congress.

bioguide.congress.gov

Senate Historical Office

Includes information on the history and art of the U.S. Senate such as facts and milestones, historical statistics, featured biographies, and a photographic collection.

senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/generic/Senate_Historical_Office.htm

Congress.gov | Library of Congress

Searchable database of congressional legislation from 1973 to present (bill text and roll call votes are available from 1989 to present).

congress.gov

GPO Federal Digital System

Includes links for searchable databases of the *Congressional Record* and *House Journal* (1994 to present) as well as information on how to find the nearest federal depository library.

gpo.gov/fdsys