

Activity: Life of Ferdinand Deppe, Painter of *Mission San Gabriel*

1) Timeline Activity

Objective: Discuss the life of migrant to Mexico's province of Alta California, Ferdinand Deppe. He was a gardener, naturalist, merchant and painter. Create a timeline of his life's events.

Definition of Naturalists -- those men who collected as many plant and animal specimens as possible and sent them back to their home countries for study, at places like museums and universities.

From 1821-1846, during the twenty-five year period that California belonged to Mexico, diverse peoples' lives mutually affected and influenced each other: California Indians of at least six cultural areas and at least ninety distinct languages, indigenous peoples from what is Alaska today, people from Prussia, Britain, France, the U.S., Russia, Portugal, Chile, Peru and various locations throughout Mexico such as Mazatlan, Vera Cruz, and of course, Mexico City. Deppe's life serves as one example of the convergence in Mexican-era California of people from around the world. This shaped the evolution of California's international character today.

Connecting to the Standards: European naturalists like Deppe documented, but also changed California in their quest to study and classify its plants, animals and cultural objects into European systems of knowledge.

Target Standards:

2016 California HSS Framework (Grade 4)

#s 4, 25, 196-197: Why did different kinds of people decide to visit or settle in California?

5, 26, 197: What were their experiences like?

179: Why did Europeans come to California?

180, 198: How did European explorers change the region?

Materials:

- Grade Level or Advanced Reading about Deppe's life
- Timeline cut-outs
- Color pencils, markers, scissors, tape or glue

Directions:

- After reading Deppe's story either individually or in pairs, ask students to proceed to the timeline.
- Have students cut out timeline pieces and assemble them in an artistic way

Target Standards Met:

History and Social Science Analysis Skills, Grades K-6

Historical Interpretation Skills

- Students summarize the key events of the era they are studying and explain the historical context of those events.
- Students identify and interpret the multiple causes and effects of historical events.

Chronological and Spatial Thinking Skills

- Students place key events and people of the historical era they are studying in a chronological sequence and within a spatial context; they interpret time lines.
- Students correctly apply terms related to time, including *past, present, future, decade, century and generation*.
- Students explain how the present is connected to the past, identifying both similarities and differences between the two, and how some things change over time and some things stay the same.

California Visual Arts Content Standards

Careers and Career-Related Skills

5.4 Read biographies and stories about artists and summarize the readings in short reports, telling how the artists mirrored or affected their time period and culture.

2) Map Activity

In this activity, students apply historical and geographical knowledge. They visually answer the question: how many stops were required for Deppe to travel from Berlin to Mexico over four months?

Materials:

- Your own world map print out
- World Map with Deppe's stops highlighted
- Color Pencils, Highlighters, Markers

Directions: Have students draw a line connecting the route Deppe took. He went from Berlin to Hamburg to Cuxhaven to London to Falmouth to Barbados to Jamaica and then finally to the port of Vera Cruz, Mexico

Target Standards Met:

California History-Social Science Standards

- 4.1 – 1 Explain and use the coordinate grid system of latitude and longitude to determine the absolute location of places in California and on Earth
- 4.1 – 2 Distinguish between the North and South Poles; the equator and the prime meridian and the hemispheres, using coordinates to plot locations
- 4.1 – 4 Identify the location of the Pacific Ocean

California History-Social Science Standards -- Framework

83-86: By the fourth grade, students' geographic skills have advanced to the point where they can use maps to identify latitude and longitude, the poles and hemispheres, and plot locations using coordinates. Students locate California on the map and analyze its location on the western edge of North America...

#181: How did the region's geography impact settlement?

#198-201: In mapping the routes and settlements of these diverse explorers, students observe that access to California was difficult because of the physical barriers of mountains, deserts, and ocean currents and also due to the closing of land routes by Indians defending their territories from foreigners." [They may conversely see how the coast would have been the natural place for visitors to arrive and influence change.]

3) Drawing Activity - Early Scientific Classification originating in California

Deppe collected plant and animal specimens from Mexico and then from the province of Alta California. Deppe sent his collections to Berlin for study and classification in museums. As many of the plants or trees Deppe collected were named after him, his work in Mexico and in Mexican-era California during the 1830s is integral to classification of plants in our present world. This process is also indicative of colonization processes: that is, who has control of the archive and control of the way knowledge is created?

Primary sources in the advanced reader show how information about Deppe's collections from Mexico were published in an 1830 Journal of Botany. Another source shows an example of a tree named after Deppe as more than 86 plants are named after Deppe today. Plants and animals from the Americas were often named after the naturalist that 'found' them. These same names and classification systems are still used today.

Materials:

- Advanced Reader about Ferdinand Deppe

Optional Activities:

- Have students draw a picture of the **Deppeana tree** (see Wikipedia/Wikimedia photographs). Have them draw in and label its defining characteristics (can be looked up online as well):
 - Up to 65 feet high
 - Bark resembles alligator skin
 - Bark cracked into small square plates



- Talk to students about the Aztec, Spanish and informal English names for the tree. Talk about how knowledge is created at particular times in history for different kinds of people.

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