

Our New Mexico

A Twentieth Century History

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Introduction

Why another semester of New Mexico history?" you ask. Maybe you wonder, "Has anything happened that is new since the other two times I took it?"

To answer the first question, let me ask you one: "How many times have you taken courses in math, English, or science?" More times than you have studied New Mexico's history, right? If you have gone to school in New Mexico since fourth grade, you have twice before studied the state's history.

Do you remember what you studied in math, English, or science in fourth grade and seventh grade? It was at a different level and you learned basics, right? Now you are in ninth grade. You are still taking some or all of those subjects again. Why? The answer is the same as the answer to why you are taking another class in New Mexico history. You are now going to build on and expand what you learned in your earlier classes. You are moving into a more advanced level and well beyond the basics.

You also asked if anything new has happened since you last studied New Mexico history. Again, to answer the question I need to ask you one: "Are you the same person in every way as when you were in seventh or fourth grade?" Of course you are not. You understand and know much more now than you did a couple of years ago. You are maturing.

You are also using new skills. One of these skills is critical thinking. In fact, this course is all about developing critical thinking. So what does it mean to use "critical thinking" in studying New Mexico history? Two traits of critical thinking will be most frequently used. The first is grasping what is most important to know in a selection. The second is understanding point of view, or interpretation.

Your textbook, *Our New Mexico: A Twentieth Century History*, is organized to challenge you to think independently. It does so by having you read at two different levels. One level is for information; the other is for intent or point of view. For these latter readings, you are going to be asking and answering questions and using lots of critical thinking skills.

The first level of reading is found in brief narratives. These give you information to introduce topics or help you put events and people's responses into context. They were written by a high school teacher who spent thirty years teaching New Mexico's students.

Then there are fifty-six in-depth discussions about topics in New Mexico's history. In these you are going to explore new ideas, evaluate what is being presented, analyze it for a point of view or interpretation, and see connections and similarities as well as contrasts among the discussions. These fifty-six accounts are written by people who have spent years studying the topic about which they write.

This book is about New Mexico's history since statehood in 1912. It has eleven chapters organized into sections in which you have a brief overview of a period or a topic. These are followed by a selection in which an expert tells you more about the subject based on their years of study. *Our New Mexico* has two goals: 1) to help you learn more about New Mexico's history over the past one hundred years; and 2) to have you apply critical thinking skills.

Your teacher is going to help you with both the learning and the critical thinking. So will your classmates. Together you will have activities, worksheets, and other class exercises to help you succeed. At the end of the semester, you will be able to read and discuss ideas and points of view that are important to understand because you live in New Mexico. You are going to study the twentieth century to help prepare you for a

productive life in the twenty-first century.

The future in New Mexico is shaped by what has gone before. In a few years you will be out of high school and beginning to make a life for yourself. Your future is linked to and a part of what is ahead for New Mexico. You will be impacted by and have to deal with issues all New Mexicans face. This book introduces you to three themes important in New Mexico's past, present, and future. These are resources, culture, and continuity amid change.

These three themes may seem remote to your interests today, but when you finish this semester you will understand why they are ever-present and important. These three themes are at the foundation of everything else in New Mexicans' daily lives. Resources, culture, and continuity amid change define who we are and what we can become. Let's look at each of the three briefly.

Resources include water and land and the wise use of each. Think about this: Can you survive without water? Can you travel around without having your trip conform to where roads are placed, homes, restaurants, and schools are built, or where fences or natural barriers like rivers, canyons, or mountains exist? How New Mexicans built on the land created patterns for how people move about today. The water found in the state's rivers, lakes, reservoirs, and irrigation canals are part of the natural landscape or environment. The other key part are the lands over and through which water flows—farm and ranch lands, towns and cities, valleys, mountains, or deserts. These, too, are essential elements in the natural landscape or environment. Understanding how people have used the state's landscape will help you make choices in your life about the future of those resources.

Culture is all around us and it is very diverse. It is all the people from many backgrounds who live in New Mexico. It is also the way these people express themselves. It is found in their language, their creativity in art and writing, their celebrations, their work and accomplishments, and all the ways that blend each person into a group. New Mexico is a multicultural state, perhaps one of the most diverse in all of the United States. Our cultural heritage enriches us. By studying it, you will better see how your life is part of traditions or patterns of living inherited from earlier generations.

The third and final theme is continuity amid change. This simply means that while things change around us, underneath these changes is a level where things are long-lasting and fundamentally unaltered. Anything that is long-enduring is continuity in our life. Think of it this way: you started going to school years ago. You have had many teachers, sat in many difficult classrooms, known many other kids, and had some good times and maybe a few you would rather forget. All these are aspects of change in your life. But the continuity is that you are still learning and you are still growing up. Continuities, then, tend to be processes or stages. Change tends to be the specifics or the details that swirl around the processes.

Now we are going to combine the ideas introduced so far. We are going to do so through two sample selections. Each is an example of what you will read throughout *Our New Mexico*. Each selection also discusses one or more of the themes of resources, culture, and continuity amid change. These selections also require you to think critically about what is being said. You need to read these with two questions in mind: "What is it I need to know or remember?" and "What is their point of view, and how would I put it into my own words?"

The first reading talks about tourism in New Mexico by looking at our capital city, Santa Fe. Tourism is a major industry in the state and very important to our

economy. But tourism brings in more than money. Tourism can change people, and this reading talks about tourism's impact on culture and makes us aware of continuity amid change.

In 1999 the 287th Santa Fe Fiesta occurred. Here is what one person saw and thought about as he watched the parade.

Selection from *Santa Fe Hispanic Culture: Preserving Identity in a Tourist Town*

The afternoon of Sunday, September 12, 1999, was a typically sunny day in Santa Fe, New Mexico. As I sat on the curb in front of the Santa Fe Public Library on Washington Avenue, I could not help but smile at the scene that passed before my eyes. I was witnessing the *Desfile de la Fiesta*, more commonly known as the Historical/Hysterical Parade, one of the highlights of the 287th Fiesta de Santa Fe.

To the uninitiated, the scene might have seemed surreal. The parade procession included the 1999 Fiesta Queen (who was my sister); the honorary Don Diego De Vargas and his *Cuadrilla* (staff); local politicians waving to the crowds in souped-up, lowrider cars; an Elvis impersonator; a four-piece band in the back of a pickup truck playing "La Bamba"; bodybuilders lifting weights on a flatbed truck; high school marching bands; floats advertising local businesses including a funeral home, pizza place, and motorcycle shop; a huge snorting papier-maché bull with flashing eyes promoting the Rodeo de Santa Fe; senior citizens in buses throwing candy to the crowd; and lots of horses.

This colorful collage that paraded through the streets of downtown Santa Fe during the 1999 Fiesta was in some ways a reflection of the nature and character of the Santa Fe that has evolved through the years and that exists today.

Santa Fe is a city of ancient traditions, but also of "invented traditions." It is deeply influenced by its cultural roots. At the same time, it has been willing to reshape its cultural symbols for sale to the highest bidder. It is both a small town and rather cosmopolitan. In short, Santa Fe is a tourist town. It is a community that loves its roots and simultaneously generates its livelihood from those roots.

As a native Hispanic resident of Santa Fe, I have witnessed these contradictions and experienced this unique blend of fact and fantasy. (pp. xi–xii)—Andrew Leo Lovato

In terms of the two questions you always need to keep in mind, let's see what we can offer as answers. First we want to figure out what is it this writer wants us to remember after reading this selection? One answer would be that he really likes the Santa Fe Fiesta but that the city uses the Fiesta in some ways that make him uncomfortable. You may have come up with a different answer to the question. That is fine as long as it is the result of you thinking about and basing your answer on what he said.

The second question we need to answer is this: What is his point of view, what is the meaning to him of what he sees? Sometimes it is easiest to begin answering this question by finding a phrase or sentence that you believe sums up his interpretation. Let's look at this sentence: "It is a community that loves its roots and simultaneously generates its livelihood from those roots."

How would you put that in your own words? One way is to see how it relates to one or more of the three major themes: resources, culture, and continuity amid change. This excerpt certainly relates to the latter two. So, we can say that Santa Fe uses its

cultural heritage to honor its past; however, it does so in ways that appeal to many diverse people. It sells them an event that is “a unique blend of fact and fantasy.”

What is important in critical thinking is asking and answering questions. Let me ask you five more questions about this selection. What most struck you about it? Were you surprised that while he took pride in seeing his sister as Fiesta Queen, he also thought about what the Fiesta revealed about his city? What is meant by the statement that Santa Fe is a city of “fact and fantasy”? What examples does he give to support that claim? How are politicians in lowrider cars and bodybuilders lifting weights on a flatbed truck “a reflection of the nature and culture of Santa Fe that has evolved through the years and that exists today”? An exercise in the student activity materials provided your teacher will help you think about each question. The process of discussing different possible answers with classmates is an important part, too, in critical thinking.

The second selection in the next few paragraphs is quite different in tone from the first. Throughout *Our New Mexico* you will find that the authors take different approaches to their topics. Some are personal accounts; others are summaries of historical events; and still others are new ways of looking at familiar things. This selection is the latter. It gives you a way to think about how different people in New Mexico attach value and importance to land. It also relates these cultural views to understanding the Zia symbol in our state flag. Finally, it touches on all three of the themes: resources, culture, and continuity amid change.

Selection from *The Lore of New Mexico*

New Mexican lore about land or place focuses on centers and peripheries, or edges. The Indian world is bounded by mountains and centered in ceremonials stemming from the place of emergence. Hispanos erected crosses and constructed plazas surrounded by common lands for grazing and wood gathering. Anglo ranchers and homesteaders fenced domains centered on springs, windmills, and later crossroads of commerce. Such settlements became sanctuaries, protecting and sustaining their inhabitants. Beyond their bounds were the wilds, the elemental, and the alien.

Herders, hunters, trappers, miners, and prospectors regularly ventured onto the peripheries and, upon their return from “the wilds” or “below” were often viewed as special, marked by their outside experiences. Those who, like raiders, warriors, traders, and freighters, periodically crossed and recrossed boundaries between centers of people were also marked as heroic figures. Whether traveling trackless wastes, corn pollen ways, foot trails, horse and cart roads, highways, or rails, these heroes engaged in profound commerce—a communication of powerfully expressive and materially important symbols, goods, plants, and animals. Their commerce is a voluntary journeying, far different from the dislocation of captives and the conquered and encroached upon. Nevertheless, those who brave the wilds, those who communicate across boundaries, and those who are uprooted bring into focus traditional notions of settlement and centering.

These traditional notions have also been embodied in the Zia symbol on the New Mexico flag. Seen from Indian, Hispanic, and Anglo perspectives, it incorporates fundamental concepts of settlement and movement. Indians’ sacred space is centered inward along corn pollen roads and surrounded by mountains, rivers, oceans, and under and upper worlds. For Hispanos, the lines form a cross,

symbolic of the central Christian sacrifice, which makes sacred and establishes place and people wherever it is properly raised. Anglos view the sixteen lines as radiating outward—whether along roads and rails to homes and commercial centers elsewhere, down into mines and pits, or out into space. (pp. 229–30)—
Marta Weigle and Peter White

A thought-provoking few paragraphs, right? I bet you will look at the Zia symbol differently after reading the selection. In fact, that is maybe the piece's main point. To help you see familiar things in new ways and understand that the meaning we attach to things springs from our traditions and values. This is probably the most challenging selection in *Our New Mexico*. I wanted to introduce it early on so you can think about it during the semester. As you gain confidence in your critical thinking skills, come back to this piece. Keep asking yourself what it is the writers want you to know and what is their point of view or interpretation. Your answers may be different from the first time you read it, which is a sign of your growth and skill in critical thinking. A change in answers also means you are seeing and understanding New Mexico and its history at a deeper level. That is the purpose of *Our New Mexico*.

So, why are you once again studying New Mexico history? The understanding and insights you gain in this class will enrich your life and prepare you for the challenges of citizenship.

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