

# The Path to Statehood: Texas, Oregon, and California

When the United States first became a country, it was made up of 13 colonies which became the first states. In 1959, the United States added its 50th state. Have you ever wondered how or why your state became a part of the United States? In this activity you are going to learn why and how Texas, California and Oregon became part of the U.S., and about its **inhabitants** (people who lived in each state).



Map of the United States including Western Territories, December 1848; Records of the U.S. House of Representatives. RG 233. [www.archives.gov/legislative/features/nm-az-statehood/us-map.html](http://www.archives.gov/legislative/features/nm-az-statehood/us-map.html)

In the 1840s, the area of land occupied by the United States stopped just west of the Mississippi River. These lands included the homelands of Native people who have lived there for centuries, newly arrived Americans, and enslaved and free people from Africa. It also included lands claimed by European countries.

The U.S., with its growing population, wanted western lands because of their **resources** (things that people can use) and land for settlement. The U.S. **acquired** or gained land across the west through war, agreements with other countries, and removal of Native communities.

In **Part I-A**, you will learn about who lived in California, Oregon, and Texas, the importance of this land to the U.S. and how each became part of the U.S.

In **Part I-B**, you will summarize the information on maps of California, Oregon, and Texas.

**Part II** asks you to make connections to your own state.

# The Path to Statehood: Texas, Oregon, and California

**PART 1 - Learn about who lived in California, Oregon, and Texas territories, the importance of territories to the U.S., and how the U.S. acquired each.**

## CALIFORNIA

**Task A - Learn about the U.S. acquisition of California circling key information as you read.**

### Why was California important to U.S.?



This is the Merchants' Exchange in San Francisco, California, that was created during the Gold Rush for **merchants** (businessmen) to trade or exchange goods. It was an important trading center on the West Coast.

**As you read, circle important California resources.**

California is on the West Coast of North America next to the Pacific Ocean. This made the area attractive to the U.S. so merchant ships, which trade goods with other countries, would have a direct trade route to Asia.

California's weather and soil also made it a good place for farming. Crops like grapes, olives, and oranges grew easily. Grasslands also allowed for raising animals.

Discovery of gold in Northern California in 1848 attracted people from all over the world to come to California. Many did not find gold and returned home. Those who stayed started businesses, built

buildings and railroads, and created important cities for trade. This made California **desirable** (something someone wants) to or wanted by the U.S.

### Who lived in California before it became a state?



This California-style sombrero was worn by Californios, those of Spanish or Mexican **descent** (family line) living in California.

**As you read, circle the people who lived in California.**

Around 2,000 Native American tribes lived in California when the Spanish arrived in the mid-1530s. Many Native Californians died due to disease, forced labor, and killings by invading settlers. When the U.S. acquired California in 1850 there were less than 100 tribes left.

Since the 1600's, Spanish and Mexican families lived in California. Their **descendants** (relatives, family) were called Californios. At the time of U.S. statehood, 14,000 Californios lived in California.

African people arrived in California with the Spanish in the mid-1500s, most without choice. During the 1848 Gold Rush, more African Americans came to California, both free and enslaved. Although California was admitted to the U.S. as a **slave-free state\***, some African Americans were still enslaved.

**\*At the time, states were added to the United States as either states that allowed slavery (slave-holding state) or states that did not allow slavery (slave-free states).**

The Gold Rush also brought to California an estimated 300,000 people from other parts of the U.S., as well as from Mexico, South America, Canada, China, and Europe. American and European settlers feared competition and discriminated against Chinese, Mexicans, Native Americans, and other non-White people.

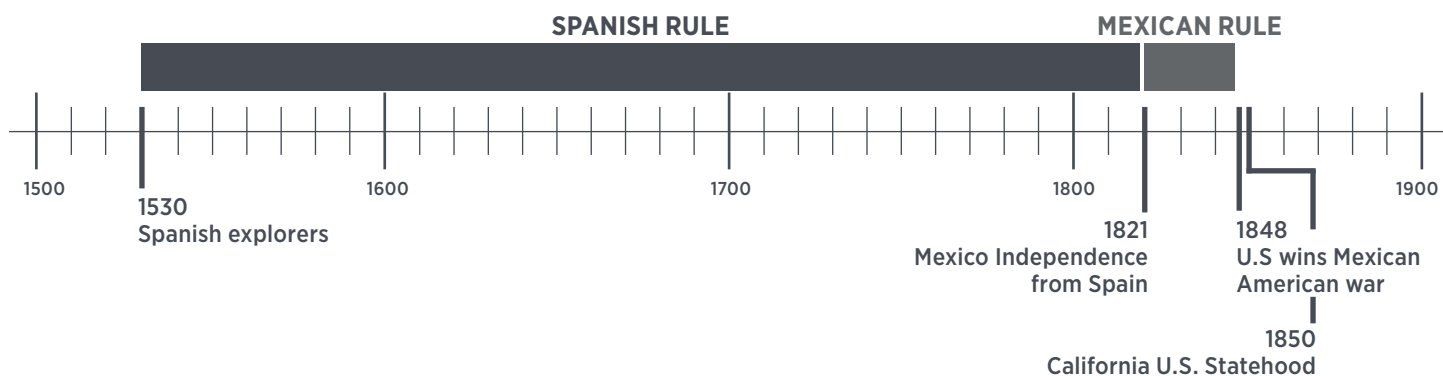
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## California Statehood

As you read, circle the countries/people that claimed control of California.

Spanish soldiers arrived in California in the 1530s, later claiming the area for Spain. In 1821, Mexicans overthrew the Spanish government in their War for Independence and took over governing California. The ruling government changed again in 1848 when the United States won a war against Mexico (Mexican American War). Mexico was forced to give up California and other lands to the U.S.

In 1850, California became the 31st state.



**Task B -** Using the information you read about California, answer the questions that summarize who lived in and ruled California prior to United States statehood and why the land was important to the U.S.



Why did the U.S. want California? *Pick 2 resources found in California and draw them on the map.*

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Name two groups of people who lived in California.

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Which two countries was California previously a part of?

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# The Path to Statehood: Texas, Oregon, and California

## OREGON

Task A - Learn about the U.S. acquisition of Oregon circling key information as you read.

### Why was Oregon important to U.S.?



This image represents the farms of Oregon and harvesting the crop, wheat. Land in Oregon was good for farming.

In the 1800s American and British fur companies established trading settlements. By the time of Oregon statehood many of these ports and settlements were important centers of trade with growing communities.

*As you read, circle important Oregon resources.*

For Americans moving west and looking to settle, Oregon was a place of open land even though Native Americans already lived there and tended its resources. Natural resources provided food, clothing, and shelter among other needs.

Oregon's rivers, lakes, and access to the Pacific Ocean allowed for food and trade in otter, whales, sea lions, and fish. Oregon's lush forests and valleys supported other forms of wildlife such as rabbits, deer, and beaver for food and trade as well as timber from trees. The valleys in Oregon were also good for farming new crops like wheat, which attracted American farmers.

Oregon's rich resources created opportunities for trade. Trading ports were set up along the coast by various European countries and American traders.

### Who lived in Oregon before it became a state?



This basket was made by a Klamath woman who lived in Oregon at the time when Oregon became a Territory of the U.S.

*As you read, circle the people who lived in Oregon.*

The area that is now modern-day Oregon is the homeland of many Native American tribes. At the time Oregon became a U.S. territory, there were an estimated 33,400 Native Americans living in Oregon despite disease, war and illegal settlement on tribal lands. By statehood, most Oregon tribes had been forced onto reservations.

In the mid-1500s the Spanish explored the Pacific Northwest. They were followed by Russians, Canadians, British, and Americans. American and British fur companies established settlements in the 1800s. Small numbers of Hawaiians and Polynesians stayed in Oregon working for shipping companies. By the 1840s, thousands of Americans came to the region on the Oregon Trail, many who illegally settled on the land.

African Americans came to Oregon as fur trappers and homesteaders (people who got land through U.S. laws allowing them to claim property). But African Americans, along with Chinese, were banned by a temporary government of settlers of Oregon in 1844. While Oregon was admitted to the U.S. as a slave-free state\*, it still excluded or limited African Americans and Hawaiians from the right to claim a homestead (home and land occupied by individuals or families) in Oregon.

*\*At the time, states were added to the United States as either states that allowed slavery (slave-holding state) or states that did not allow slavery (slave-free states).*

# The Path to Statehood: Texas, Oregon, and California

## Oregon Statehood

As you read, circle the countries/people that claimed control of Oregon.

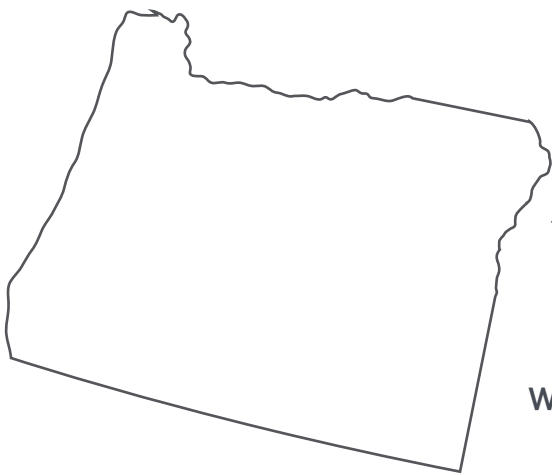
Great Britain and the U.S. claimed control of a region that included modern day Oregon, Washington, and part of western Montana. In 1818, they agreed to **occupy** (live in) Oregon together, but that didn't last long. Soon, the U.S. wanted all of Oregon, and Great Britain signed the Oregon Treaty in 1846 giving up the territory to the U.S.

The U.S officially recognized Oregon as a U.S. Territory in 1848. Oregon became the 33rd state in 1859



**Task B** - Using the information you read about Oregon, answer the questions that summarize who lived in and controlled Oregon prior to United States statehood and why the land was important to the U.S.

Why did the U.S. want Oregon? *Pick 2 resources found in Oregon and draw them on the map.*



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Name two groups of people that lived in Oregon.

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Which countries claimed Oregon?

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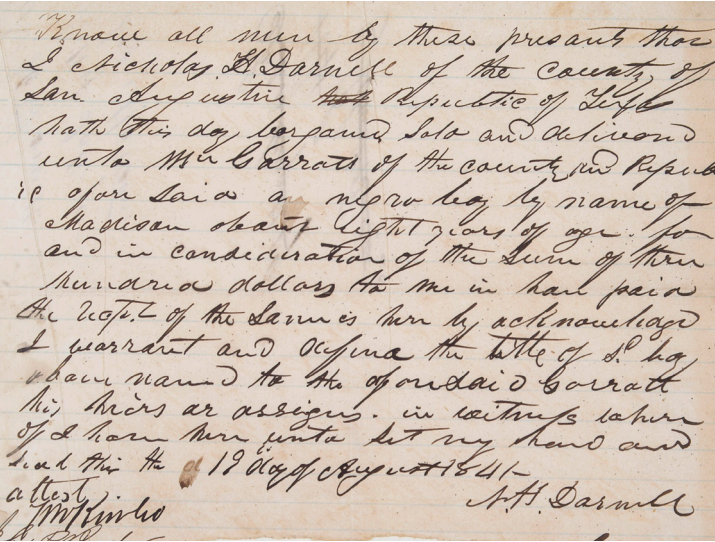
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# The Path to Statehood: Texas, Oregon, and California

## TEXAS

Task A - Learn about the U.S. acquisition of Texas circling key information as you read.

### Why was Texas important to U.S.?



The San Augustine, Texas Papers 1830-1890 show land and sales of enslaved people in Texas by American settlers.

**As you read, circle important Texas resources.**

Texas was important to the U.S. because the area of Texas was large and would give more Americans a place to settle. Many had already settled in Texas under Mexican rule and more came after Texas independence from Mexico.

Texas' large grasslands were good for livestock and ranches were established to raise and sell cattle. Texas was also important because of its geographic location. In the southeast was the Gulf of Mexico with trading ports. In the southwest, Texas created a natural border with Mexico.

### Who lived in Texas before it became a state?



The Branding iron from Tejano ranch in Texas represents the Spanish Mexican peoples living in Texas at the time of annexation.

**As you read, circle the people who lived in Texas.**

The Texas area was home to over 50 Native American tribal nations. Under Spanish and Mexican rule, Native Americans in Texas experienced death from new diseases and conflict with settlers. Despite this, many tribes remained powerful empires. By 1836 when American settlers declared independence from Mexican rule, the 20,000 Native Americans remaining in Texas were forced onto reservations.

**Tejanos** (Texas Mexicans) were a large part of the population at the time of Texas independence from Mexico. As more Americans moved into Texas, their numbers decreased. American settlers took Tejano land, made laws that were unfair to Tejanos and discriminated them in daily life. By the time of Texas statehood, many Tejanos in Texas moved out of Texas.

American settlers—German, Danish, Swiss, Jewish, and French peoples—came to the Texas Republic because they wanted land. Some American slave holders settled in Texas at the invitation (request) of the Mexico. As such, most African Americans came to Texas as slaves. When Texas was admitted as a slave-holding\* state in 1845, there were 30,000 African American enslaved persons living in Texas.

*\*At the time, states were added to the United States as either states that allowed slavery (slave-holding state) or states that did not allow slavery (slave-free states).*

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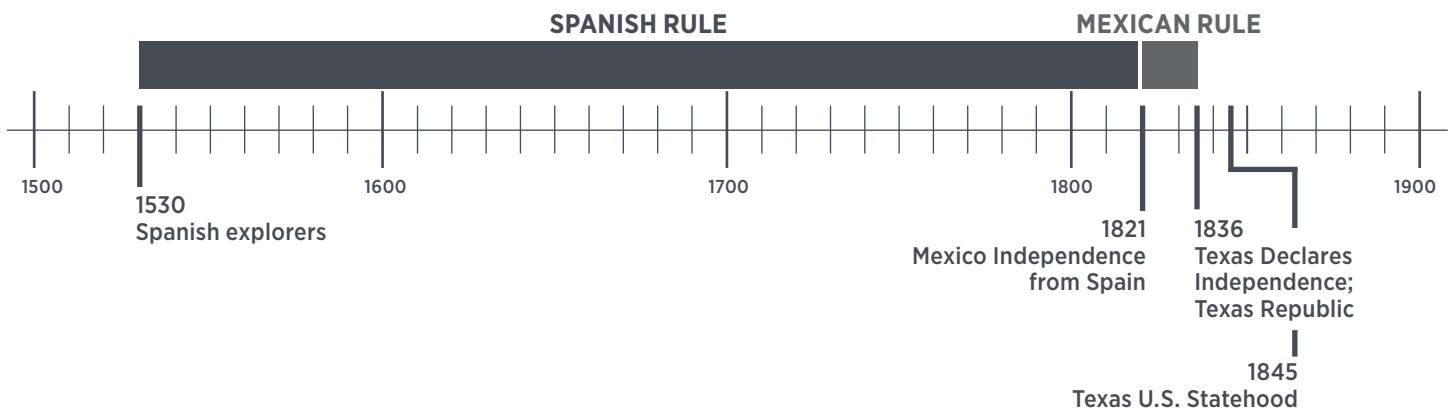
## Texas Statehood

*As you read, circle the countries/people that claimed control of Texas.*

In the mid-1500s Spanish rulers sent soldiers to explore the Texas area, and in 1731 they claimed it as Spanish colony. By 1821, Mexicans in Mexico and Texas won a war for independence from Spain and the area became part of the new country of Mexico. Mexicans and American settlers living in Texas disagreed with many of Mexican laws, including the **abolition** (end) of slavery. They fought a war for independence from Mexico, won, and in 1836 created the Republic of Texas.

Wanting the protection of the larger U.S., the Republic of Texas asked the U.S. to become a state. Many Americans opposed adding a new slave-holding state\*, but in 1845, the U.S. **annexed** (added to) Texas and made it the 28th state.

*\*At the time, states were added to the United States as either states that allowed slavery (slave-holding state) or states that did not allow slavery (slave free states)*



**Task B -** Using the information you read about Texas, answer the questions that summarize who lived in and ruled Texas prior to United States statehood and why the land was important to the U.S.



Why did the U.S. want Texas? *Pick 2 resources found in Texas and draw them on the map.*

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Name two groups of people that lived in Texas.

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Which countries claimed Texas?

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## **PART 2 - Connect your learning about to your own state today.**

Complete the tasks below for your state today. If your state is California, Texas or Oregon, remember this activity is about your state today.

**Task A** - Use your own knowledge and any extra research to and write down “Special Things About Your State” today in the spaces below.

### **Special Things About My State**

My state is \_\_\_\_\_

It became a state in \_\_\_\_\_

My state is special because of its location. My state is located \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

My state is special because of its natural resources. Two natural resources in my state are

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

My state is special because of the people who live here. The first people who lived in my state are

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Other people who make my state special are \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

My state has its own unique history. An important fact from my state’s history is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I like my state because \_\_\_\_\_

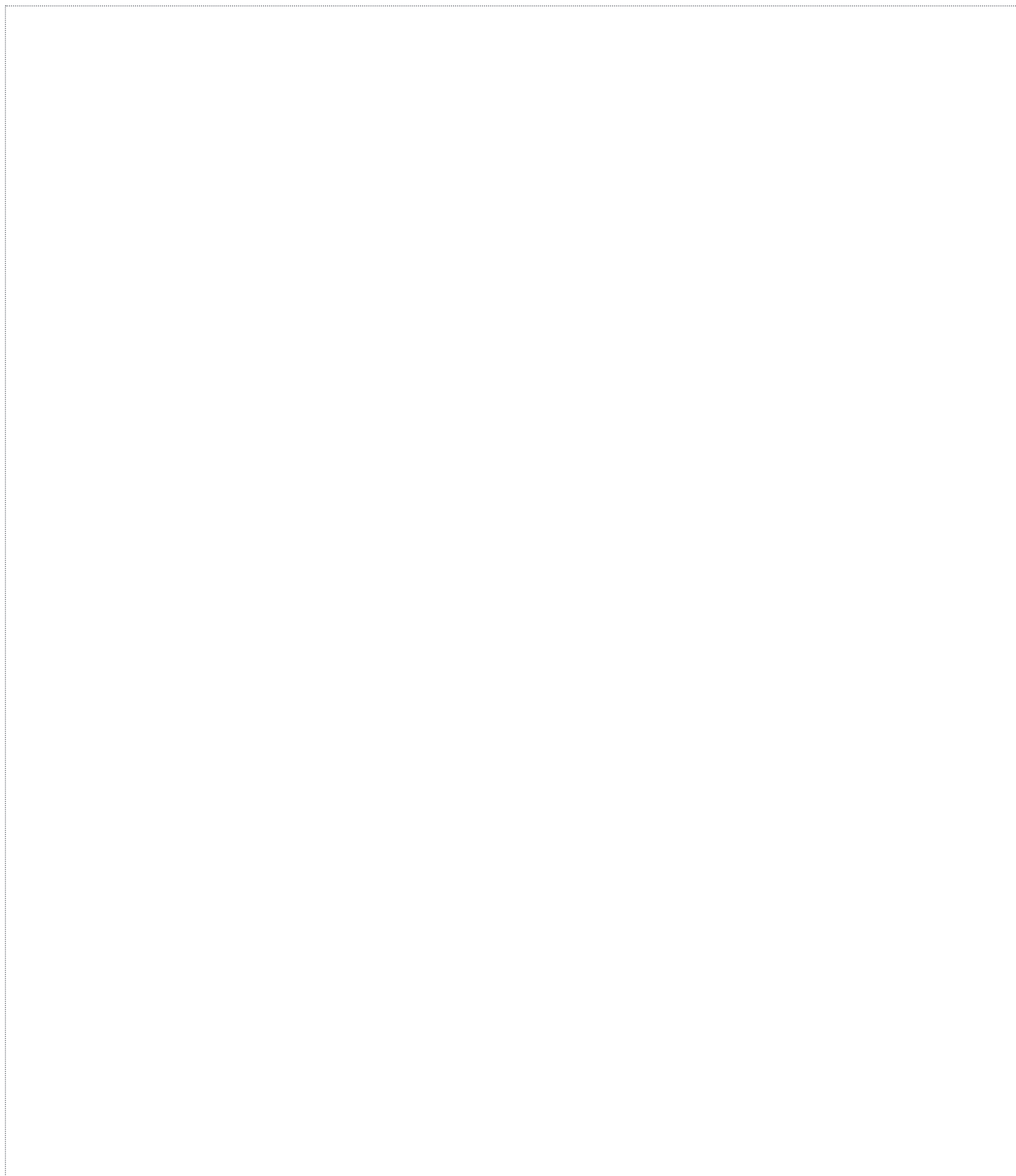
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**Task B** - Draw an outline map of your state. In the map, copy the **Special Things About My State** you researched in **Task A**. See examples with the California, Oregon, and Texas maps and information in **Part I**.



# Resources

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Map of the United States including Western Territories, December 1848; Records of the U.S. House of Representatives. RG 233. [www.archives.gov/legislative/features/nm-az-statehood/us-map.html](http://www.archives.gov/legislative/features/nm-az-statehood/us-map.html).

Stereograph photograph titled “South Side of California Street, From Montgomery, Looking East, Merchant’s Exchange, San Francisco” by Thomas Houseworth & Company, created late 1800s, early 1900s. Autry Museum; 98.13.19.3

California style pressed felt sombrero, created mid-1800s. Autry Museum; 88.4.1

Hand-colored lantern slide of horse-drawn harvester at a farm, titled “10,000 acres of wheat,” created late 1800s. Autry Museum; 2001.73.20.3

Klamath Indian basket, made from tule twined over tule cordage wraps, created early 1900s. Autry Museum; 811.G.718

Bill of sale for slave, Madison (8 years old), to William Garrett for \$300, San Augustine, Republic of Texas, dated August 19, 1841. Autry Museum; 90.253.4100

Branding iron of Flower Pot Bench brand, from cattle ranch in Texas, created late 1800s. Autry Museum; 89.136.126