

**REVIEW****CALIFORNIA CONTENT
STANDARD 11.8.2***Mexican Immigration*

Specific Objective: Describe the significance of Mexican immigration and its relationship to the agricultural economy, especially in California.

Read the summary to answer questions on the next page.

Braceros

- Since the end of the Civil War, growers depended on migrant workers to pick crops in California and the Southwest.
- During World War II, there was a labor shortage in the United States because so many workers were in the army and in defense industries.
- One area where there was a critical shortage was in low-paying agricultural work.
- The U.S. and Mexican governments started a program to allow Mexicans to come to the United States temporarily to work picking crops and doing other manual labor.
- The Mexican workers were called *braceros* (from the Spanish word for arm, *brazo*), a common term for workers.
- Pay was low, and the governments made all arrangements for food, shelter, transportation, and medical care.
- When their contract for work was done, the braceros were returned to Mexico. However, many stayed in the United States illegally and continued as migrant farm workers. About 4 million people worked through the program until it ended in 1964.
- Farm owners supported the program because it was a source of cheap labor. Those who sought better working conditions for migrant farm workers opposed it. In the context of the civil rights movement of the 1960s the program was finally ended.
- Two Mexican Americans, César Chávez and Dolores Huerta, succeeded in organizing a union in 1962 that became the United Farm Workers of America.

Mexican Immigration

- Beginning in the 1950s, millions of Mexicans began immigrating to the United States. Most immigrated legally. About 4.8 million came in illegally.
- More came to California than any other state. Almost one-third of all Mexican Americans in the United States live in California.
- Today, Hispanic people are the largest minority group in the United States. The 2000 census showed there were about 35.3 million Hispanics (about 60 percent of whom are Mexican Americans), about 12.5 percent of the population.
- California has the largest Hispanic population in the country; more than 30 percent of Californians are Hispanic.
- Most now live in cities, but migrant workers are still important to agriculture in California and other states.



**CALIFORNIA CONTENT
STANDARD 11.8.2**

Mexican Immigration

Directions: Choose the letter of the *best* answer.

- 1 **How did Mexican immigrants affect the growth of agriculture in California?**
 - A Migrant farm workers from Mexico were a critical source of cheap labor.
 - B Mexican immigrants brought modern farming methods that were taught to California farmers.
 - C The influx of immigrants made it hard for California to keep its food prices competitive.
 - D Mexican immigrants had little impact on agriculture.

- 2 **Why was the bracero program created during World War II?**
 - A The United States wanted to strengthen its alliances with its neighbors.
 - B American farm workers wanted too much money.
 - C The government wanted to prevent labor unrest during the war.
 - D The war created a labor shortage all over the United States.

- 3 **The bracero program began as an agreement between**
 - A the U.S. and Mexican governments.
 - B individual workers and labor agencies in the United States.
 - C the government of California and the Mexican government.
 - D growers and workers who were willing to travel to the United States.

- 4 **When their contract for farm work was completed, braceros were intended to**
 - A take jobs in defense industries.
 - B stay on the farm until the next picking season.
 - C return to their families in Mexico.
 - D stay in the United States and become citizens.

- 5 **Why did the United Farm Workers union oppose the bracero program?**
 - A The union wanted to keep minority groups from joining.
 - B It thought farm owners exploited the braceros as a source of cheap labor.
 - C The braceros often brought diseases from Mexico that harmed the crops.
 - D The U.S. government wanted to expand the program to include factory jobs.

- 6 **What is *one* way in which Mexican immigration has affected the population of California?**
 - A A majority of people in California are of Hispanic origin.
 - B Mexican immigrants have only affected rural areas of the state.
 - C California has the largest Hispanic population of any state.
 - D California has made Spanish its official language.