

Imperialism and the mexican-american war essay example

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Knowing the history of a place enables a person to gain a better understanding about the contemporary culture of its inhabitants. Tracing the history of Mexico has shown that the population is a combination of European settlers and native inhabitants. Over several decades the groups in Mexico has resulted from intermarriages of different combinations. Residents may be natives, peninsulares, criollos, and mestizos. Further intermarriages result in additional groupings to the existing ones.

Mexico declared its independence from Spain in 1821. Fifteen years later, while still a young nation struggling with political and economic difficulties, Mexico faced a new enemy. In 1836, President James K. Polk of the United States was able to convince the US Congress to declare war with Mexico. When the war ended in 1848, Mexico lost its northern territories. California was taken by the US troops. Texas had earlier revolted against Mexico and became part of the United States in 1845 (Sonneborn, 5-6).

Historical Event: The Mexican – American war

The events that led to the Mexican – American war, as graphically presented by the video, show that different perspectives would result in a war. These differences were in two areas (a) the boundary between the two countries; and (b) ownership of Mexico's northern territories. For the first item, the US claims that the boundary is the Rio Grande while Mexico stands by Nueces River as the border. As regards the second item, the US intends to expand its land area and the President wants to purchase the provinces of California and New Mexico, both of which are part of Mexico's northern territories.

Selling these lands means letting go of half of Mexico; which is not acceptable to the Mexican government as these lands belong to their

country.

The war was triggered by an ambush of American troops by the Mexican army. According to the Mexican-American documentary, the Mexicans were provoked to take the first shot. Both troops were occupying the contested land, an area between the Nueces River and Rio Grande. Each of the soldiers, whether Mexican or American believed that the land he was standing on belong to his country. The invasion of Mexico by American armies was a realization of Polk's campaign which was the " expansion of America's western border to the Pacific," his belief that it was a fulfilment of America's " manifest destiny" (History. com).

What happened to Mexico (being invaded by US troops) is already a repeat of historical events of Mesoamerica. In the 16th century, European troops arrived in the Aztec City of Mexico, and were welcomed as gods coming home. What they did however was to slaughter the people and empty the city of its gold (Leon-Portilla, II-321). Three centuries later, Mexico was again invaded, this time half of its lands were lost to the enemy.

My understanding of American history

Learning about Mexican history opened my eyes to the realities that a country goes through to establish its strength as a nation. This has given me a new insight about the decisions made by American leaders to expand the territories of the United States. I felt a deeper respect towards the war officers who strategized and made effective use of their available human and military resources. However, the US imperialistic policy actualized in 1846 has caused the lives of many individuals and these are harsh realities that

come with policy of territorial acquisition. Through the video Mexican-American War, I have come to understand more about US-Mexican relations. It is also now clear to me why some of my Mexican friends would be offended when they would hear Americans say “ did you just swim across the Rio to come to America.”

The anthropology of Mesoamerica

The consideration about the history of Mexico complicates my understanding of the anthropology of Mesoamerica. Mesoamerica does not have these political boundaries. Mesoamerica refers to this whole area that shares a common cultural ancestry. Different indigenous groups inhabit areas that may transcend present political boundaries. They are distinct from each other because of the language each group speak. In going through the history of Mexico, different nations declared their independence one after the other beginning in 1816 with the United Provinces of the Rio dela Plata becoming Argenina. Soon after the nations of Venezuela, Ecuador, Colombia, Brazil, Guatemala followed.

Another aspect that complicates my understanding of Mesoamerica is the Mexican government’s conflict with the Indians. The question of who then rightfully belongs to Mexico arises. Are the European settlers who have married the natives the real Mexicans? Or is it the natives who have lived in the lands of Mesoamerica for centuries?

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