Objectives:

• Students will carefully review one section of the California History Gallery.

• Students will know/understand what makes this time period important in California history through an examination of the people, maps, artifacts, developments, and displays within this section of the History Gallery.

• Students will also be able to compare events/developments that occurred in California with events/developments that they are studying in eighth grade history.

Pre-Museum Activity

The Oakland Museum of California (OMCA) History Gallery is divided into different time periods. With this lesson students will become “experts” in one of these time periods.

1. Explain to students that becoming an expert means learning everything there is to learn about the period of time, and most significantly trying to determine what were the most important things that occurred during that period of time. Also explain that it takes more to become an expert than one visit to a history gallery, but for purposes of this lesson, they will become “experts. To practice, students will do two warm-up activities in class:

   • Have students think of a person who made an important contribution to history (during any time period and/or place) and then have them explain why the contribution is important and for whom.

   • Take some objects you use in class and have the students think about their use and what the objects might tell people in the future about life in California today.

2. Review some of the vocabulary that students need to understand (cultural diversity, challenges/conflict, etc.) so that when students are at the Museum they will be able to successfully complete the tasks assigned.

Explain that OMCA focuses on California history. Students will find exhibits to show some of the maps, artifacts, people, events, etc. that were influential during California’s growth. Although California is not directly related to the eighth grade curriculum, explain that many of the events covered in eighth grade happened at the same time but mostly in the Eastern part of the country. It will be interesting for them to learn what was going on in California and to know that Americans were watching the developments on the East Coast, even as other events were taking place here in California.

The Overview worksheet is designed for post-visit work, to be completed after students have returned to school.
Before the Visit

Assign students to work in pairs and/or small groups. If you choose pairs, several pairs can go to the same sections (depending on your students, effectively working with groups can be challenging). Students will work to become “experts” on different periods of California history by carefully examining the resources available in the History Gallery for their particular time period.

There are five different worksheets, each covering a unique period of history in California. You can assign student teams (or they can volunteer) to the following sections of the Museum:

- 1770–1820: Spaniards Claim This Land
- 1848–1860: Coming for Gold
- 1869–1930: The Railroad Brings People
- 1929–1940: Trying to Escape the Great Depression
- 1941–1945: Off to War

With these assignments, students will spread out to different parts of the Museum to complete their work.

Vocabulary

Make sure students understand and are familiar with the following words and ideas that they may see in the Gallery and on the worksheet:

- Artifact
- Gallery
- Exhibit
- Display
- Periods of history (named periods, such as Mission era, Gold Rush, etc.)
- Events/developments
- Cultural diversity
- Immigrant
- Contributions
- Challenges/conflict
- Audio/video
- Overview
- Impact/importance
- Foreign policy
- Motto
- Advertising campaign
- Comparison
- Detailed plan
- Narrative account
Museum Visit

Give copies of the worksheets to students. Each student should have his or her own copy, even though students will be working with a partner or small group. Encourage students to get a general overview of the exhibit before they start filling in the worksheet. Remind students that their answers should reflect choices that give evidence of an understanding of the time period they are reviewing. Even though they will each have their own sheets, most of the answers will be better if there is some discussion within their group or with their partners about what they choose to include.

There is a section at the end of the worksheet where students can record questions they may have, comments, or other ideas they want to note. Take some time to go over the worksheet so students know what they will be looking for as they review the exhibit.

You might want to consider modeling one exhibit with the whole class before sending students to the other areas to work independently. You can have students discuss and share the information asked for while you talk about choosing artifacts, etc. that represent the period that is being examined. Help students by modeling the kinds of answers that will help them to become “experts” for the time period they are reviewing.

Note: This worksheet is designed to assist students with recording information so it does not need to be a final draft for your review. It is instead a note-taking tool for their use.

The Museum prefers that students use pencils rather than ink pens for recording so please remind students of this before they get started.

Collect student worksheets at the Museum, before they leave, so the information doesn’t get misplaced. Students will use them for activities after you return to school.

After the Visit

Have students review their worksheets and notes from the Museum. Allow time for students to complete the Overview section of the forms working with the same partners and/or teams from the Museum visit. They can then share (by groups or teams) their overviews along with anything they found particularly interesting or noteworthy with the whole class. Also encourage students to share any questions or comments they recorded on their worksheets. Students who visited the same exhibits might be encouraged to compare information they collected and see if they came to similar or different conclusions.

Students should think about how developments they learned about in California are related to events they have (or will) study in eighth grade (such as the founding of the nation, U. S. foreign policy with Mexico, Spain, France, and other nations, industrialization, Manifest Destiny, and the Civil War). The knowledge they gain about California’s history should help them to better understand events, people, and other information that they encounter in your class study. This comparison is rarely covered in textbooks, and though California did not officially become a state until after the Gold Rush, things were happening here that had a direct and indirect impact on the development of the future United States.
Activities/Projects

- Have students create an interesting motto or short phrase that could be used as part of an advertising campaign to “sell” this period of history to others in your class. They can then make posters, slideshow presentations, or use other media to share their ideas with the class.

- Have students develop a project that compares the time period they learned about in California with developments at a similar time period on the East Coast and/or the Midwest. Students could compare a person or an event from California history to someone from the same period in American history; for example James Beckwourth with Lewis and Clark, the wave of Chinese immigrants with the wave of Irish immigrants, changing boundaries of California with changing boundaries of the United States, etc. Projects should explain how the events or developments were similar and/or different and their importance and contributions. Students could use a two-sided poster or other artistic comparison, a two-sided fact sheet or narrative account, or any other format of their or your choosing to display and share their results.

- Have students design a small poster to share the important and relevant points for this part of history in California. Have them consider what things to include, how to portray their ideas, and if their poster captures the overall importance of the period they studied. The students can actually draw the posters and share them with the class, or they can explain how you would design it (provide a detailed plan) without having to do the actual artwork.

Overview  (to be completed at school after the visit)

After viewing and examining this exhibit, explain what makes this an important (interesting) part of California’s history. Use evidence you collected from the History Gallery and think about the questions and comments you may have recorded. Think about how the information you collected helps to give you an overview of this period of California’s history.