

◆ Classroom Spice ◆

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George McJunkin

The Mexican Repatriation

Who was George McJunkin? He was a somewhat non-typical cowboy, more interested in science than the cattle business. He was African American, born a slave in 1851 on a ranch in Texas. His father had saved up and bought his own freedom, and was in the process of buying George's when Union soldiers showed up on the ranch in 1865 to tell them that all slaves were free. When George was seventeen he took the name of his former owner John McJunkin, and left the ranch working cattle drives. He settled in the Cimarron River Valley in New Mexico, finding it a more diverse and accepting community. As was typical of the day George could neither read nor write, but in exchange for teaching the sons of one of the ranchers to ride and rope, they in turn taught him to read. He loved reading, and read everything he could get his hands on. He found he loved science, especially astronomy, geology, natural history, and meteorology; he taught himself Spanish, how to play the guitar and fiddle, surveying, and helped create the modern system of barbed wire fenced pastures.

In 1908 following a torrential rain on Folsom, NM, McJunkin was checking fence when he noticed some freshly exposed bones. He knew they were of the bison group, but knew they were much larger and older than

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If asked about the Trail of Tears, many Americans, especially Oklahomans, would be able to respond that it was a shameful time in U.S. history dealing with the forced removal of Native Americans. If asked about Manzanar, some would recognize it as one of the Japanese internment camps where Japanese Americans were forced to stay during World War II, and yet another shameful time in U.S. history. But if asked about The Mexican Repatriation, how many would respond "What?"

The Mexican Repatriation was the largest involuntary migration in the United States up to that time. It was greater than the Native American removals of the nineteenth century, or the Japanese American relocations of World War II. It is estimated up to two million Mexicans and Mexican Americans were "repatriated," sent back to Mexico, between 1929 and 1944! Why do so few know of this tragic period of our history? Part of the reason is the Mexican culture itself, a culture of "silence and forgetting." One Mexican survivor said, "Forgetting is to Mexi-

cans what remembering is to Jews." Each culture has their own coping mechanisms. But descendants of survivors have started pressuring them to tell the story.

This was not the first time that Mexicans were repatriated. In 1848, following the Mexican War, was perhaps the first large scale repatriation (estimated at several thousand). While periodic smaller scale repatriations continued over the years, the next large scale repatriation happened in 1915, as a reaction to a plan to have Mexican Americans rebel against the



United States and to re-conquer land lost by Mexicans to the United States. This resulted in thousands more Mexicans being sent back to Mexico.

However, The Mexican Repatriation of 1929-1944 was different, not only in its size but in the

number of *American citizens* who were sent to Mexico. It is estimated that approximately 60 percent of those deported were legal American citizens of Mexican descent. The program was first started under the Hoover administration as a means to get rid of illegal immigrants and open up jobs for "real" Americans suffering during the Depression. It was based in large part on racism and the prejudice against those who did not speak English and who looked different. However, most of those rounded up and deported were not given a hearing. And those who could prove citizenship or legal work papers often found their papers suspected as forgeries and torn up, sending the individuals back to Mexico. Although "back" is not the correct term for the many who were born in the U.S. of Mexican descent but had never even been to Mexico.

There are more and more stories being published of forced deportation during this era. One example is a nine-year-old girl who was born in Los Angeles of Mexican descent, who was suddenly deported. She

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Hubbub

Taken from Laurie Carlson's More than Moccasins: A Kid's Activity Guide to Traditional North American Indian Life

The following is a game played by Arapaho in Oklahoma. It is similar to many games played around the nation and the world. A more complicated form is The Bowl and Dice game, Wa'lade hama'gan," played by the Penobscot. These games incited much excitement, celebration, and wagering, with may cheering "hub hub hub..." thus the name hubbub. It was originally played with two players or two teams, bones or plum pits as dice, and counting sticks. Use the adaptations for the playing pieces as shown below, and incorporate the activity as part of social studies (culture, Native Americans), or math (probability, patterns, relations, and data analysis).

Materials: 5 stones or plastic milk/water caps; 50 popsicle sticks or flat toothpicks; basket; Fine-point permanent black marker.

Players: 2 players or 2 teams

Setup: Decorate 1 side of the dice (stone or cap) only! On each of the 3 dice draw a large star, on each of the other 2 dice an X. See example below.



To Play: Decide who goes first. Take turns tossing the dice out of the basket and onto the ground and collecting the points as shown on the chart below using the counting sticks. The game is over when all 50 of the counters are gone. The object of the game is to get the most counting sticks.

To Score:

Side up	Point
1 star or 1 x, & 4 blanks; Or 2 stars & 3 blanks	0
2 x's, 1 star and 2 blanks	3
3 stars & 2 blanks	3
2 x's & 3 blanks	3
4 marks (3 stars, 1 x; or 2 of each) & 1 blank	1
5 blank sides	1
3 stars & 2 x's	8

(McJunkin—cont'd from page 1)

the modern day bison. He also found pieces of hand worked flint. George tried to tell people about his discovery, but the locals did not care. He wrote to Carl Schwachheim, a blacksmith in Raton, NM, and to Fred Howarth, a local banker, both amateur paleontologists. He even showed Fred some of the bones, and while Carl was interested, neither Carl nor Fred were willing to make the two-day, thirty mile trip. Years passed, and while George never gave up believing he had discovered something of significance, he was never able to convince scientists of the importance of his find. In 1922, following his cabin being struck by lightning and burning to the ground, George died of a subsequent illness.

Four months after his death, and 14 years after his discovery, Carl and Fred decided to visit George's "Bone Pit." They found the pit, and more bones and decided they were indeed from an extinct elk or bison. It took another four years before Carl and Fred were able to take samples of the bones to the nearest museum. Their discovery led to the overturning of the then current theory that human presence in the New World was no more than 4,000 years old. It took a great deal of excavation and the finding of several spearpoints embedded in the matrix of the skeletons to prove that human beings had been in the New World for "at least 10,000 years!" It was years after his death and almost twenty years after his discovery that his finding of "Folsom Man" and the Folsom points was recognized as one of North America's most important archaeological finds.

Not one of the scientific publications about the Folsom discovery mentioned George McJunkin, but he will not be forgotten. He was the inspiration for Jack Williams' song "Shoebay's Son (the ballad of George McJunkin)," telling the story of the Black Cowboy with the telescope, books, and bones, who changed the understanding of Natural History in the New World.



The Literature Connection

The 2002 Pura Belpre Award book, *Esperanza Rising* by Pam Munoz Ryan, is a great story about overcoming tragedy and hardship. Set in Mexico and California it follows the life of a young girl who goes from riches to rags. The Author's Note at the end tells how this relates to her own family, and the Mexican Repatriation. It includes literature circle questions and extension activities. The book has a fourth grade reading level but is of interest up to about eighth grade. ISBN 0-439-57617-2.

Another upper elementary/middle school book is *Sleep on It!* by Kevin Kelly and Erin Jaeb. It shows bedding and sleep customs from around the world, and through history. It is amazing how simple bedding can be in one culture, and how ornate/complicated in another, and how beds can reflect a culture's beliefs and values. The range of materials used is also enlightening, including dried mud, fur, wood, sticks, leaves, etc. It discusses sleeping outdoors, keeping cool and keeping warm, how babies sleep in different countries, and even the need for special beds. One that will really intrigue the reader is the capsule hotels in Japan. Published by Children's Press, ISBN 0-516-



08175-6.

Faithful Elephants: A True Story of Animals, People and War by Yukio Tsuchiya points out the grief, fear, and sadness of war. This story is read every year on Japanese Radio to mark the surrender of Japan in WWII. And while a simple children's book, it is a real tear jerker, and not appropriate for the very young. Fifth grade and up can probably deal with the sensitive topic of war, and death, but animal lovers will particularly have a great deal of difficulty with it. Tsuchiya makes a very powerful statement in this book.

Cool Women: The Thinking Girl's Guide to the Hippest Women in History, by Dawn Chipman, Mari Florence, and Naomi Wax, ISBN 0-439-28495-3, was nominated by ALA as one of the Best Young Adult Books of 1998. It is a fascinating book about fifty famous and/or successful women (a few are fictional). It does not put them on pedestals but tries to tell their stories of courage, including mistakes, and most importantly their humanity. From Nancy Drew to Queen Njinga, from Althea Gibson to Jane Goodall, from Madame Walker to Wu Zhao, from Rosie the Riveter to the Harlem Renaissance Women, this is a "must" read for secondary students, and not just girls!

Who was Wilma Briggs?

Have you seen "A League of Their Own?" The story about the William Wrigley's All-American Girl's Professional Baseball League (1943-1954). Well, Wilma Briggs lived the story. Wilma was born and raised in Rhode Island, one of eleven children. Wilma's father was a dairy farmer who happened to have a baseball team. So Wilma and her brothers would field and pitch balls everyday around milking cows, and doing school work. By the time Wilma was thirteen she played on her father's team, the only girl, but no one seemed to mind. Of course, Wilma was not your typical girl. She was the only girl to wear dungarees to school (everyday), and the only girl to play on the high school boys' summer league and the boys' interscholastic baseball and bas-

ketball teams.

In 1948 Wilma had to make a decision whether to make a tryout in Newark at 9 a.m. on June 12th or to go to her high school graduation at 8 p.m. on June 11th in Rhode Island. Wilma knew the importance of her high school graduation (and wanted the gold watch her parents had promised her if she graduated), and assumed she had missed her baseball opportunity. However, a sports writer pleaded her case to the president of AADPBL and got her a tryout 1,000 miles away in Ft. Wayne, Indiana. After a successful tryout, including the manager pitching to her (note a girl had pitched to everyone else, but Wilma wasn't intimidated, as she later pointed out she had never faced a woman

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In This Issue...

Mexican Repatriation; George McJunkin; Hubbub; Wilma Briggs; Literature

**Women in
combat—a recent
controversy?**

Not really. For example, Deborah Sampson grew strong & learned how to shoot as an indentured servant, and at age 21 disguised herself as a man, and fought in the Revolutionary War. At 5'7" she was seen as a short "young" man, who did not have to shave. She served for three years, was injured twice without detection, but when she came down with a fever she was discovered and discharged. Later she became a teacher and war lecturer & Congress ultimately granted her a pension for her service.

(Wilma Briggs—Cont'd from page 3)
pitcher, only men. She played outfield, most often left field. While with the Indiana Daisies she helped them win back-to-back league championships. In 1951 she had the best fielding percentage by an outfielder in the league, .987; and her overall homerun total earned her the third best lifetime in the women's "hardball" league. When asked what was the highlight of her baseball career, she said hitting a grand slam with her parents in the audience; leading the league in homeruns in 1953, and playing with two Hall of Famers. But her 23 year career as an elementary teacher was also highly rewarding.



(Expatriation—Continued from page 1)
was taken away from her home, school, family and friends, and sent to Mexico, even though she knew very little Spanish, where she was forced to live outdoors. Many stories include husbands and fathers who were deported and never seen again.

One story is of a 23 year-old woman, and her three-year-old American son, who responded with her family to a meeting about a famous Mexican painter, Diego Rivera. However, at the meeting they were told it was not about the painter, but was to inform them that they needed to go back to Mexico because the United States could not afford to keep them. They were told that Mexico had lots of open land for them. When they got to Mexico they found neither land nor food. And their belongings which had been packed on a train in the U.S. were never seen again.

They had been duped by both the Mexican and U.S. governments.

FDR ended federal support of the program under his administration, but many states and local governments continued the program on their own. The deportations, while primarily from the southern states reached all around the country, including as far north as Illinois and Michigan. Over the last couple of years legislation in California has been proposed to remove the statute of limitations for survivors to make claims against California for their unconstitutional deportation.

Even today, many Americans of Mexican descent live in fear of being stopped. They fear leaving their homes without proof of citizenship, even though they were born here. Why are they stopped? Often simply because of the color of their skin.