

# The Gold Rush

Grade: 1.6

## The Gold Rush Begins

It was 1848. James Marshall was working hard. He was near the American River in California. It was a city named Coloma. John Sutter had hired him to build a sawmill. He looked and saw shiny metal in the water. He ran to get Sutter. He needed to show him the metal. They knew that Marshall found gold. Sutter was scared of telling people. He did not want them to rush to the area. He made Marshall keep the secret. Somehow people found out. The entire world soon knew that gold was in California. Thousands of people moved to the area. This began the California Gold Rush.



A map that shows the Gold Rush

## Boomtowns

People who lived in California were the first to look. They went to the river and mined for gold. Many were families. Men and women looked for gold. Their kids would help too. Some of them found a lot of gold. Many made thousands of dollars a day. Wow!

More than 90,000 people moved to California by 1849. They came from all over the world. They wanted to know where to find gold. They would all rush to new areas when gold was found. This created boomtowns. A boomtown is when lots of people move to the same place. The boomtowns could not help all the people. Miners living there did not have good lives. They did not have houses. They did not have many normal things. Miners were okay with that. They just wanted to find one big piece of gold. That would make them rich! Most never found that.

## Questions

- What is a boomtown?

- A town that is empty
- A town where lots of people moved
- A large bomb
- A way to find gold in sand

- What are sluice boxes?

- Stores where people sell miners their tools
- Tools that miners use to break rocks
- Boxes that miners stand on to stay dry
- Boxes that send gold to the bottom and dirt to the top

- Where did miners point the hoses to find gold in a hill?

- At the hill
- Away from the hill
- Into the river
- Above the hill

- What year was the picture of the miner using a pan to find gold taken?

- 1848
- 1849
- 1850
- 1851



San Francisco during the Gold Rush, 1851.

## Searching for Gold

Miners used pans to find gold. It was easy to do. You start by filling a pan with sand. Then you shake the pan in the water. This leaves the gold at the bottom. The sand mixes with the river water. It works because gold is denser than sand. It leaves the miner with the gold in his pan. Cool!



A miner using a pan to find gold, 1850.

Big groups began to take over. They could find gold in less time. Some of the ways they did it were bad for the land. One way used water. Miners blasted water at a hill. This broke the hill down. It was sent washing away. The dirt from the hill went into a sluice box. Sluice boxes were used a lot. They sent gold to the bottom. The dirt stayed at the top. The leader of the group would then get the gold. The miners who worked did not keep the gold. Only the leader did. It was hard for a miner to get rich.



## The End of the Gold Rush

It was easy to find gold at first. There was a lot of it. That did not stay true. Over 300,000 people moved to California by 1856. There were too many people looking. Only half of them made money. Other people made a lot of money. They were merchants. They had stores that sold goods to the miners. They made more than the miners!

The Gold Rush changed California. California was not a state. It became a state in 1850. This was in the middle of the Gold Rush. Many people who moved there stayed in the area. This is why California is so diverse. Some boomtowns are big cities. San Francisco and Sacramento are two of them.

People think the Gold Rush was fun. That wasn't true for everyone. Some miners thought Native Americans were bad. They thought natives would stop them from finding gold. They killed the natives. More than 100,000 were killed by 1870. The Gold Rush was a dream for some. It was a nightmare for others.

# The Gold Rush

Grade: 2.7

## The Gold Rush Begins

It all started in 1848. A man named James Marshall was working hard. He was in a city named Coloma near the American River in California. A man named John Sutter hired Marshall to build a sawmill. He looked over and saw shiny metal in the water. He ran to get Sutter and show him the metal. They could tell that Marshall found gold. Sutter was scared of telling people. He did not want everyone to rush to the area to find gold. He made Marshall keep it a secret. Somehow people found out. The entire world soon knew that gold was in California. Thousands of people moved to the area. Thus began the California Gold Rush.



A map that shows where the Gold Rush happened

## Boomtowns

People who lived in California were the first to mine for gold. They were often families. Men and women would search for gold. They would even get help from the children. Some of these early miners found a lot of gold. Many earned thousands of dollars in a day.

There were 90,000 new people in California by 1849. They came from all over the world. They wanted to know the best place to find gold. They would rush to an area where gold was found. This created boomtowns. A boomtown is an area where many people move in a short amount of time. The areas could not support all the people. Miners living in these boomtowns did not have good lives. They did not have houses or common items. The miners were willing to live

## Questions

- Which of the words below are synonyms of 'rush'? Select all that apply.

leave  
 dash  
 hurry  
 wait

- What is a boomtown?

A town that burned down  
 A large bomb used to find gold  
 A large group that worked to find lots of gold  
 An area where many people move in a short amount of time

- What are merchants?

The people who are good at gold mining  
 The leaders of the large groups of miners  
 The people who opened stores to sell goods to miners  
 The miners who killed Native Americans

- Why does the author include a map of California at the top?

To talk about the cities he wants to visit soon  
 To show the reader where the Gold Rush happened  
 To show where people could not find much gold  
 To show where you can find gold today

- Why does the author include two images of miners looking for gold?

To teach the reader how to mine for gold  
 To make the story longer  
 To show the reader how people mined for gold  
 To show the pieces of gold they found

- What does the image of San Francisco help you understand? Select all that are true.

How many people lived in the city  
 What San Francisco used to look like in the Gold Rush  
 The type of mining that people did in San Francisco  
 The buildings you could find in a boomtown

there anyways. They just wanted to find one big piece of gold. That would make them rich forever! Most miners never found that piece of gold.



The boomtown of San Francisco during the Gold Rush, 1851.

## Searching for Gold

Many miners went gold panning. Panning for gold was an easy way to search. You start by filling a pan with sand and gravel from the river. Then you shake the pan in the water. This leaves the gold at the bottom of the pan. The sand and gravel mixes with the river water. It works because gold is denser than gravel. It leaves the miner with the gold he wanted to find!



A miner panning for gold in the American River, 1850.

Large groups began to take over the Gold Rush. They used methods that could find gold in less time. Some of the methods were bad for the land. One used water to find gold. Miners blasted water at a hill. This destroyed the hill and sent it washing away. The dirt and rocks from the hill washed into a sluice box. Sluice boxes sent gold to the bottom and left dirt at the top. The leader of the group would then collect the gold. The miners who worked in these groups did not keep the gold. Only the leader did. It was hard for a miner to get rich with these large groups.



Gold miners using water to search for gold

## Effects of the Gold Rush

It was easy to find gold at the start of the Gold Rush. That did not stay true for long. Over 300,000 people moved to California by 1856. There were too many people looking for gold. Only half of them made money. There was a group who did make money during the Gold Rush. It was the merchants. They had stores that sold goods to the miners. They made more than the miners!

The Gold Rush changed California. California was not a state when it started. It became a state in 1850. This was in the middle of the Gold Rush. Many people who moved for the Gold Rush stayed in the area. This is why California is so diverse. Some boomtowns from the Gold Rush are big cities. Two of them are San Francisco and Sacramento.

The Gold Rush is thought of as an exciting time during U.S. history. That wasn't the case for everyone. Some miners thought Native Americans were bad. They thought the natives would stop them from finding gold. They formed groups to kill the natives. More than 100,000 were killed by 1870. The Gold Rush was a dream come true for some. It was a nightmare for others.

# The Gold Rush

Grade: 3.8

## The Gold Rush Begins

It all started in January 1848. A man named James Marshall was working near the American River in California. A man named John Sutter hired Marshall to build a sawmill. This was in the city of Coloma. He glanced over and saw some shiny metal flecks in the water. He quickly went to get Sutter and show him what he had found. They could tell right away that Marshall had found gold. Sutter was scared of what would happen if people knew gold was in the area. He made Marshall swear to keep it a secret. Somehow a few people found out and soon the entire world knew that gold was in California. Thousands of people packed up their lives and moved to California. Thus began the California Gold Rush.



A map that shows the location of the California Gold Rush

## Boomtowns

Groups of people who lived in California were the first to mine for gold. These early miners were often families. Men and women would search for gold with help from the children. Some of these early gold-seekers were able to collect a lot of gold. Many were able to find thousands of dollars worth of gold in a single day.

There were over 90,000 migrants in California by 1849. These migrants came from all over the world. They were always looking for the best place to find gold. Thousands of miners would rush to an area where gold was found. This large movement of people created boomtowns. A boomtown is an area that has gone through a rapid growth in population. These areas could not support all the new people. Miners

## Questions

- What is a boomtown?
  - A town that exploded
  - A town that burned down from fire
  - A town where no gold is found
  - A town that has gone through a rapid growth in population
- Which of the words below is a synonym of 'flecks'?
  - pieces
  - silver
  - fleas
  - mountains
- What is the meaning of the word migrants, as it is used in the text?
  - people who lead companies of miners
  - people who pan for gold in rivers
  - people who move to a new area for work
  - people who sell goods to miners
- Use the image to determine where miners pointed their water hoses when hydraulic mining.
  - At the top of the hill
  - Into the river
  - At the base of the hill
  - Into the sluice boxes
- Use the image of the miner panning for gold to determine which of the following statements are true. Select all that apply.
  - Miners who panned for gold often found pieces larger than their bodies.
  - Miners who panned for gold left part of the pan out of the water and shook the part in the water.
  - Miners who panned for gold often wore hats to protect themselves from the sunlight.
  - Miners who panned for gold usually did so in deep parts of the river.
- Use the map to determine which of the following statements are true. Select all that apply.

living in these boomtowns did not have easy lives. Many did not have housing or items they needed to live well. The miners were willing to live in these poor conditions. They only wanted to find one big piece of gold. That would make them rich forever! The truth is that most miners never found that piece of gold.



The boomtown of San Francisco during the Gold Rush, 1851.

- Most of the large mining areas were north of San Francisco.
- San Francisco was a mining city on the Feather River.
- Shasta was a mining city on the American River.
- Most of the large mining areas were near water (rivers or the ocean).

## Searching for Gold

Most miners went gold panning to search for gold. You pan for gold by filling a pan with sand and gravel from the river. Then you shake the pan in the water. This separates the gold from the sand and gravel. It works because gold is denser than gravel. This makes the gold settle at the bottom of the pan. The sand and gravel mixes with the river water and the miner has the gold he or she was hoping to find!



A miner panning for gold in the American River, 1850.

Companies soon began to take over the Gold Rush. They used methods that could find more gold in less time. Some of these methods were very bad for the land. One of them was hydraulic mining. Miners would blast water at a hillside. This would destroy the hillside and send it washing away. The debris from the hillside would wash into a sluice box. Sluice boxes were tools that could separate gold from water and dirt. The company would then collect gold in the sluice box. The miners who worked for these companies did not get to keep the gold. It was very hard for a miner to get rich with the companies in the area.



Gold miners using hydraulic mining to search for gold

## Legacy of the Gold Rush

It seemed like everyone was finding gold at the beginning of the Gold Rush. That did not remain the case for long. Over 300,000 people moved to California by 1856. There were too many people searching for gold. Only half of them made money. A different group of people did make money during the Gold Rush. This group was the merchants who had stores that sold goods to the miners. They made more than the miners themselves!

The Gold Rush changed California forever. California was not a state when the Gold Rush started. It became a state during the middle of the Gold Rush in 1850. Many of the people who moved for the Gold Rush stayed in the area after it ended in 1855. This could explain why California is so diverse today. Many of the boomtowns from the Gold Rush are major cities today. Two of these cities are San Francisco and Sacramento.

California is still known as the state where people went to find gold. The Gold Rush is often considered an exciting time during U.S. history. That wasn't the case for everyone. Some miners thought that Native Americans wanted to stop them from finding gold. They formed groups to kill Native Americans. More than 100,000 natives were killed by 1870. The Gold Rush was a dream come true for many. It was a nightmare for the Native Americans.

# The Gold Rush

Grade: 5.3

## The Beginning of the California Gold Rush

It all started on a day in January 1848. A man named James Marshall was working near the American River in California. A pioneer named John Sutter had hired Marshall. He was building a sawmill for Sutter in the city of Coloma. He glanced over and noticed some shiny metal flecks in the water. He quickly went to get Sutter and show him the discovery. It was soon determined that Marshall had found gold in the water. Sutter was scared of what would happen to the area if people knew gold was in the water. There was no doubt in his mind that people from all over would rush to the area. He made Marshall swear to keep it a secret so that no one found out. People did find out eventually and soon the entire world knew that gold was in California. Thousands of people packed up their lives and moved to California, beginning the California Gold Rush.



A map showing the key locations of the California Gold Rush

## Boombowns

Groups of people who already lived in northern California were the first to mine for gold. These early miners were often families in which everyone helped. Men, women and their children would all search for gold. Some of these early gold-seekers were able to collect large amounts of easily accessible gold. Many of these families were able to find gold worth thousands of dollars in a single day.

By 1849, there were over 90,000 migrants in California searching for gold. These migrants came from all over the world. They were always looking for the right place to search for gold. When gold was found in

## Questions

- What does the author mean when he says that "there was no doubt in his mind that people would rush to the area"?

- He was unsure whether people would care about gold being found
- He doubted that the gold was worth any real money
- He knew that everyone would move to the area if they knew gold was found
- He wanted to move to a different area to find gold

- What is a boomtown?

- A community that has undergone a rapid growth in population
- A town that exploded from a mining fire
- A large corporation that mines for gold
- A militia that killed Native Americans

- What does the author mean when he says that California is a diverse state?

- It is divided into many areas
- There are lots of rivers running through the middle
- It is a very expensive place to live
- Lots of people from different backgrounds live there

- When panning for gold, where did miners usually look?

- The deepest part of the river
- Under rocks outside the river
- In a shallow part of the river near the shore
- The top of a hill overlooking a river

- Which of the following cities were important to the California Gold Rush? Select all that apply.

- Los Angeles
- Coloma
- San Francisco
- Sacramento

- Where did the miners aim the water hoses when hydraulic mining?

- away from the hill
- above the hill

a new area, thousands of miners would rush to that area. This massive influx of people created boomtowns. A boomtown is a community that has undergone a rapid growth in population. These communities were not able to support the massive number of miners. This meant that miners living in the boomtowns had a low quality of life. Many people did not have housing or materials they needed to live comfortably. The miners were willing to live in these poor conditions. They only wanted to find that one piece of gold that would make them rich forever. The sad truth is that most miners would never find that piece of gold.

- into the river
- into the base of the hill



The boomtown of San Francisco during the Gold Rush, 1851.

## Searching for Gold

Most miners used a method known as gold panning to search for gold. Gold panning required miners to fill a shallow pan with sand and gravel from the river. The pan is then shaken in the water. This separates the gold from the gravel and other material. This method works because gold is denser than gravel and quickly settles at the bottom of the pan. The other material mixes with the river water and the miner is left with the gold he or she was hoping to find!



A miner panning for gold in the American River, 1850.

Large corporations began to take over the Gold Rush as more people began flooded into California. The corporations used different methods that were better at finding gold in a shorter amount of time. One of these methods was known as hydraulic mining. Hydraulic mining did get gold from the ground, but it was extremely bad to the environment. Miners would blast water at a hillside or gravel bank. This would destroy the hillside and send it washing away. The debris from the hillside would wash into a sluice box. Sluice boxes were

commonly used to separate gold from water and dirt. The leaders of the corporation would then collect any gold in the sluice box. This left the miners who were working for these corporations with a small wage. It had become nearly impossible for a single person to strike it rich with the corporations in the area.



Gold miners using hydraulic mining to search for gold

## Legacy of the Gold Rush

It seemed as if almost everyone was finding gold and striking it rich at the beginning of the Gold Rush. That changed once word spread around the globe. Over 300,000 people would move to California by 1856. There were so many people searching for gold that only half made a modest profit. The merchants that set up stores to sell goods to the miners made more than the miners themselves.

The Gold Rush transformed the history of California. California became a U.S. state during the middle of the Gold Rush in 1850. Many of the people who moved from around the world to mine for gold stayed in the area after the Gold Rush ended in 1855. This is one of the reasons that California remains a diverse state today. Many of the large boomtowns from the Gold Rush are still major cities today. Two of these former boomtowns are San Francisco and Sacramento.

California is fondly thought of as the state where people went to find gold and get rich. The Gold Rush is often considered an exciting and fun time during U.S. history. That wasn't the case for everyone. Some miners thought that Native Americans wanted to stop them from finding gold. These miners formed militias and killed Native Americans. Only 20% of the Native American population was still alive in 1870. Finding gold was a dream come true for many. That dream should not have resulted in the deaths of more than a hundred thousand Native Americans.

# The Gold Rush

Grade: 7.8

## The Beginning of the California Gold Rush

On a day back in January 1848, a man named James Marshall was working near the American River in California. Marshall had recently been hired to build a sawmill in Coloma for a pioneer named John Sutter. As he was working, he noticed some shiny metal flecks in the water. He quickly went to get Sutter and show him the discovery. Soon after, it was determined that Marshall had indeed found gold in the water. Sutter was scared of what would happen to the area if people knew gold was in the water and made Marshall swear to secrecy. Eventually, word spread and the entire world found out that gold was found in California. It took very little time for tens of thousands of hopefuls to pack up their lives and move to California, beginning the California Gold Rush.



A map showing the key locations of the California Gold Rush

## Boombowns

When word first got out, groups of people living in northern California rushed to the nearby areas to mine for gold. These early miners tended to be families in which everyone helped to find gold. Men, women and their children would all pan for gold. Some of these early gold-seekers were able to collect large amounts of easily accessible gold. In a day, many of these families were able to find gold that amounted to thousands of dollars.

By 1849, word had spread around the world and there were over 90,000 migrants in California searching for gold. These migrants came from all over the world in the hopes of finding gold and striking it rich.

## Questions

- What does it mean when the author says that Sutter made Marshall "swear to secrecy"?
  - He made Marshall tell everyone that he found gold
  - He made Marshall put the gold back and keep working
  - He made Marshall tell him the secret about finding gold
  - He made Marshall promise not to tell anyone that he found gold
- What does the author mean by "striking it rich"?
  - Striking a piece of ground that had a lot of gold
  - Making a lot of money in a short amount of time
  - Going on strike until the corporation pays better
  - Leaving the mining area to find gold elsewhere
- What is a prospector?
  - A professional corporation focused on gold mining
  - An explorer looking for a mineral or gold
  - One who is an expert at finding gold
  - People who only searched for gold by gold panning
- How does the image of the miner panning for gold compare to the description of panning for gold? Select all that apply.
  - The image shows the position of the miner, whereas the text only describes the process.
  - The text states that miners often found very large gold nuggets, but the image doesn't show any.
  - The text states that only young children were miners, but the image shows an older man.
  - The image shows an actual miner in 1850, whereas the text describes the process as we know it today.
- How does the map of California compare to the description of where the Gold Rush happened? Select all that apply.

When gold was found in a new area, thousands of miners would rush to that area. This massive influx in people created boomtowns, which are communities that have undergone a rapid growth in population. These communities were not able to support the massive number of miners, so the boomtowns usually had a low quality of life. Many people did not have housing or access to the materials they needed to live comfortably. The miners were willing to live in these poor conditions because they only wanted to find that one piece of gold that would make them rich forever. Unfortunately, the majority of miners would never find that piece of gold.



The boomtown of San Francisco during the Gold Rush, 1851.

## Searching for Gold

Most gold prospectors searched for gold with a method known as gold panning. To pan for gold, prospectors would fill a shallow pan with sand and gravel from the river. The pan is then shaken in the water to separate the gold from the gravel and other material. This method works because gold is denser than rock and quickly settles at the bottom of the pan. The other material mixes with the river water and the prospector is left with the gold he or she was hoping to find!



A miner panning for gold in the American River, 1850.

Large corporations began to take over the Gold Rush as more people began to flood into California. The corporations used different methods that were more effective at finding gold and searching large areas in shorter amounts of time. One of these methods was known as hydraulic mining. Hydraulic mining may have been good at getting gold out of the ground, but it was extremely destructive to the environment. The basic premise was that the miners would blast water at a hillside or gravel bank. This would destroy the hillside and

- The map includes more cities than the text references.
  - Both the text and the map focus on the location where gold was first discovered.
  - The map includes more rivers than the text references.
  - The map provides the reader with context of the location, while the text assumes that knowledge.
- How does the image of San Francisco compare to the description of a boomtown? Select all that apply.
- The image only shows a few stores, while the text refers to large towns full of people.
  - Neither the image nor the text focus on the gold mining completed in San Francisco.
  - The image and the text both help the reader picture the transportation used at the time.
  - The image and text both describe the rolling hills of San Francisco.

send it washing away rapidly. The debris from the hillside would wash into a sluice box, which was a common tool for separating gold from water and dirt. The leaders of the corporation would then collect any gold found in the sluice box and take it out. This left the miners who were working for these corporations with a small wage. It became nearly impossible for a single person or small family to strike it rich because the corporations were taking over the area.



Gold miners using hydraulic jets to search for gold

## Legacy of the Gold Rush

At the beginning of the Gold Rush, it seemed as if almost everyone was finding gold and striking it rich. Once word spread around the globe, that all changed. Over 300,000 people would move to California by 1856. There were so many people searching for gold that only about half actually made a modest profit. Those who made good money during the Gold Rush were the merchants that set up stores catering to the miners.

The Gold Rush completely transformed the history of California. California became a U.S. state in 1850 when the government saw its value to the nation. After the Gold Rush ended in 1855, many of the people who traveled from around the world to strike it rich stayed in the area. This is one of the reasons that California remains such a diverse state today. Many of the large boomtowns from the Gold Rush are still major cities today, including San Francisco and Sacramento.

California is fondly thought of as the state where people went to find gold and get rich. The Gold Rush is often considered an exciting and fun time during U.S. history, but that wasn't the case for everyone. Some miners falsely saw Native Americans as people who wanted to stop them from getting rich. These miners formed militias and killed large groups of Native Americans. By 1870, only 20% of the Native American population survived. Finding gold was a dream come true for many, but it should not have resulted in the deaths of more than a hundred thousand Native Americans.