8.63 Trace major figures and events in the discovery of gold in California and its impact on the economy of the United States, including John Sutter, and 49’ers. (C,E,G,H)

Gold was found in California in 1849.

The Start of the California Gold Rush

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QxekRM5-uMU
The **California Gold Rush** (1848–1855) began on January 24, 1848, when gold was found by James W. Marshall at Sutter’s Mill in Coloma, California. All told, the news of gold brought some 300,000 people to California from the rest of the United States and abroad. Of the 300,000, approximately half arrived by sea, and half came overland from the east, on the California Trail and the Gila River trail.

The gold-seekers, called "forty-niners" (as a reference to 1849), traveled by sailing ship and covered wagon and often faced substantial hardships on the trip. While most of the newly arrived were Americans, the Gold Rush attracted tens of thousands from Latin America, Europe, Australia, and Asia. At first, loose gold and gold nuggets could be picked up off the ground. Later, gold was recovered from streams and riverbeds using simple techniques, such as panning. More sophisticated methods were developed and later adopted elsewhere. At its peak, technological advances reached a point where significant financing was required, and mining companies became important. Gold worth tens of billions of today’s dollars was recovered, which led to great wealth for a few. However, many returned home with only a little more than what they had originally started with.

The effects of the Gold Rush were substantial. San Francisco grew from a small settlement of about 200 residents in 1846 to a boomtown of about 36,000 by 1852. Roads and other towns were built throughout California. In 1849 a state constitution was written, and a governor and legislature were chosen. California became a state as part of the **Compromise of 1850**.

New methods of transportation developed as steamships came into regular service. By 1869 railroads were built across the country from California to the eastern United States. Agriculture and ranching expanded throughout the state to meet the needs of the settlers. At the beginning of the Gold Rush, there was no law regarding property rights in the goldfields and a system of "staking claims" was developed. The Gold Rush also resulted in attacks on Native Americans, who were often forcibly removed from their lands. Gold mining also caused environmental harm to rivers and lakes.

[Learn the actual routes that led to California.](http://mrnussbaum.com/san-francisco-49ers-reading-comprehension/)

[Learn the actual routes that led to California.](http://mrnussbaum.com/history-2-2/trails)
From www.kidport.com…
  http://www.kidport.com/RefLib/USAhistory/CalGoldRush/CalGoldRush.htm

YouTube -
The California Gold Rush
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pvHGex9F2qw

YouTube -
The California Gold Rush - the Story of Us
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=21z0MzLPYSw

YouTube -
California Gold Rush - the 49ers!!
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EmunvT7U28U

YouTube - America the History of Us: The California Gold Rush
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gDkqvqqjMAA
This is a map of California and the location of the discovery of gold.

John Sutter
Johann Augustus Sutter (February 15, 1803 – June 18, 1880) was a German-born Swiss pioneer of California known for his association with the California Gold Rush by the discovery of gold by James W. Marshall and the mill making team at Sutter’s Mill, and for establishing Sutter’s Fort in the area that would eventually become Sacramento, the state’s capital. Although famous throughout California for his association with the Gold Rush, Sutter saw his business ventures fail while those of his elder son, John Augustus Sutter, Jr., were more successful.

In January of 1848, a man named James Marshall innocently noticed a few shiny flecks in a California stream at Sutter’s Mill. Word spread of gold and soon people from all over California flocked inland seeking instant fortune. By autumn, word had reached the east, and once again Americans earned their reputation as a migratory people. During the year that followed, over 80,000 "forty-niners" flocked to California to share in the glory. Some would actually strike it rich, but most would not.

Life in a mining town was not easy. Often the towns consisted of one main street. It is in these towns that the mythical "Old American West" was born. The social center of these new communities was the saloon. Here, miners might spend some of their meager earnings after a hard day’s work. Gambling, drinking, and fighting were widespread, and justice was often determined by the hardest punch or the fastest draw.
This photograph of Sutter’s Mill was taken in 1852, four years after the discovery that began the gold rush.

If a nearby mine became exhausted or turned out to be a hoax, there was no reason for the town to exist. The abandoned ghost towns began to dot the region.

Although predominantly young and male, the population of California was very diverse. In addition to the white American settlers who comprised the majority of the mining populace, free African-Americans could also be found among their ranks. More numerous were Mexicans who were hoping to strike it rich. Word reached European shores and immigrants headed to America’s west. German-Jewish immigrant Levi Strauss invented trousers for the miners — his blue jeans became an American mainstay. Another significant segment of the diversity was the Chinese, who hoped to find gold and return to their homeland. Over 45,000 immigrants swelled the population between 1849 and 1854. Diversity did not bring harmony. The white majority often attacked the Mexican and Chinese minorities. The miners ruthlessly forced the California Native Americans off their lands. Laws were passed to restrict new land claims to white Americans.
Between 1800 and 1854, U.S. territory had grown from the original 13 colonies to the limits of today’s continental United States.

The California Gold Rush soon peaked, and by the mid-1850s California life stabilized. But the pattern established there was repeated elsewhere — in Colorado, South Dakota, and Nevada, among others. As in California, ambition merged with opportunity and ruthlessness — ethnic and racial discrimination was part of the legacy of the American West.

**ON THE WEB**

**California as I Saw It**

The Library of Congress has a collection of 190 eyewitness accounts and illustrations of California’s early years online at this website. Search by keyword, subject, or author to go right to the documents, or click on the link to "Early California History: An Overview" which reveals an illustrated list of several short essays.

**California’s Untold Stories: Gold Rush**

The Oakland Museum of California has created a virtual monument to the California Gold Rush. For those impressed with technology, there are QuickTime videos of many exhibits, audio files on many pages, and high-quality images of art in the Museum’s collections. But there is substance here, too, in the dozens of articles about California history and the people who made it.

**Gold Rush Sesquicentennial**

This extensive website was prepared by the Sacramento Bee newspaper in honor of the 150th anniversary of the California Gold Rush. Find its gems of information by browsing through the various sections, using the search feature, or reviewing the "Logbook" for featured articles. This could keep you occupied for hours.

**James Wilson Marshall (1810-1885)**

This biography of James Marshall who changed the character of the American West when he discovered gold in California, includes his photograph taken at Sutter’s Mill.

**The Gold Rush**
This website supports the study of the Gold Rush with several excellent articles. Don’t miss the "Fun facts."

**Thomas O. Larkin’s Letters**

Thomas Larkin had operated a store at Monterey and served as the American Consul to the Mexican government there until the United States acquired California in the Mexican-American War. On June 1, 1848, he reported the discovery of gold to James Buchanan, then U.S. Secretary of State, and detailed what was happening in California as a result. The full text of his letters can be found on this webpage.

**Women in the Gold Rush**

Excerpts from diaries by or about women during the Gold Rush are great reading, and this website leaves us wanting more. That was by design as it is the homepage of an author of two books on women in the Gold Rush! Still, it’s worth a visit.

**The California Gold Country: Highway 49 Revisited**

Gold rush towns sprung up in California like weeds in the years following 1849. Towns like "Copperopolis," "Drytown," and "Rough & Ready" came and went with the fortunes of the forty-niners. This site commemorates these villages with a wonderful, clickable map of what became known as "Highway 49." Each town has information on it’s history and some tips for the intrepid traveler looking to re-live the rush.

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7a. Art, Music and Literature
7b. Early Industrialization, Immigration and Urbanization
7c. Reform Movements and the Second Great Awakening
7d. The South: 1800 to Mid-1800s
7e. Age of Jackson
7f. Westward Expansion

**Primary Documents and Supporting Texts to Read**
excerpts from "The Declaration of Sentiments" Seneca Falls Convention
http://ecssba.rutgers.edu/docs/seneca.html

excerpts from "Nature" and "Self-Reliance," Ralph Waldo Emerson

excerpts from "Walden" and "Civil Disobedience," Henry David Thoreau

excerpts from "Ain’t I A Woman," Sojourner Truth translated by Frances Dana Barker Gage
http://legacy.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/sojtruth-woman.asp

excerpts from Eliza Bryan of the New Madrid Earthquakes
http://hsv.com/genlintr/newmadrd/accnt1.htm

excerpts from Roughing It, Mark Twain
https://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/3316922-roughing-it

excerpts from A Narrative in the Life of David Crockett of the State of Tennessee, David Crockett
http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5816/

References