



Grade 4

## Write a Diary Entry: The Indigenous Massacres of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century

California is known as the “Golden State” because in 1848, white Americans began to learn of the great amount of gold present in California. Many white settlers began moving to California to take advantage of this golden opportunity. This was known as the “Gold Rush” and it created many problems for **indigenous** people, or Native Americans of California. California became a state in 1850 and the first governor of California, Peter Hardeman Burnett, was in office at that time. He was quoted in 1851 saying, “That a war of extermination will continue to be waged between the races until the Indian race becomes extinct must be expected,” (Blakemore, 2019). In other words, he meant that white and indigenous people in California would continue to fight each other until white people completely erased indigenous populations in California. However, it’s important to understand that the indigenous people of California were peaceful and did not want to fight the white settlers, though their land was suddenly being invaded and taken away from them. Also, no official war had been declared between indigenous Californians and the California government. Sadly, the California government allowed white settlers and even sent its own troops to kill indigenous Californians. In the end, it is estimated that between 9,000 and 16,000 indigenous Californians lost their lives to the several massacres that took place in California between 1850 and 1870 (Blakemore, 2019).

**Activity:** Imagine you are an indigenous person living in California at that time. Write a diary entry. Think about what your emotions, experiences, and thoughts might be as an indigenous person from that time. Are you scared, angry, or confused? What might you think about this “Gold Rush” that these settlers are so excited about, when you’ve never needed or wanted gold and neither has anyone in your life? What would you want the settlers to know? How do you wish they had acted instead? How do you feel about people coming to your land?

**Source:** Blakemore, E. (2019, July 1). California's Little-Known Genocide.  
<https://www.history.com/news/californias-little-known-genocide>.