THE SOUTHWEST UNITED STATES:

AN *AMERICANA SERIES* TOOLKIT FOR AMERICAN SPACES

This Americana Series Toolkit is designed for programming at American Spaces. The information here is designed to broaden knowledge of specific regions of the United States and their local cultures and customs..

CURRENT ISSUES

Two key issues in the Southwest are climate change and water scarcity. These are the issues covered in the video, "Scorched Earth: The repercussions of Lake Mead's water shortage."

Click image above for the YouTube video.

INTRODUCTORY MATERIALS

- The Great Southwest (Video, 8:30)
- Southwest United States: Facts for Students

WHAT DEFINES THE SOUTHWEST?

The southwestern United States is a place of amazing geographic and cultural diversity. Geographer and essayist D.W. Meinig said, “The Southwest is a distinct place in the American mind but somewhat blurred on American maps.” Exact geographic borders of what is referred to as the Southwest vary. However, it generally refers to the states of New Mexico and Arizona along with Nevada and Utah, and the occasional inclusion of Oklahoma, southeastern California and/or west Texas.

The region has a warm, dry climate with clear blue skies almost every day. However, it can get cooler during winter at higher elevations. The region is located along the United States-Mexico border, which is nearly 2,000 miles (or 3,000 km) long. The border stretches from the Pacific Ocean in California to the Gulf of Mexico in Texas. The region is known for its stunning physical beauty with many National Parks including:

- The Grand Canyon
- Arches National Park
- Bryce Canyon
- Saguaro National Park
- Monument Valley
- White Sands
- Antelope Canyon
- Carlsbad Cavern

American Spaces

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT *of* STATE

Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs

Created October 2022

DISTINCTIVE CULTURE

The people of the Southwest were originally indigenous Americans who lived on the land for thousands of years. Spanish explorers and missionaries began arriving in the 1500s and European-American settlers by the early 1800s. Today, the Southwest is a rich fusion of many cultures.

SOUTHWEST NATIVE AMERICAN HERITAGE

- Native people of the Southwest - informational resource
- Artisans of the southwest are known for their turquoise and silver jewelry (Video, 9:00)
- Generations of Acoma potters inspired one artist to experiment with traditional design (Video, 7:38)

PLACES & ROUTES

- **The Navajo Nation's Monument Valley: A scene-stealing Movie Star** (Video, 7:00)
- **Santa Fe, New Mexico: Lowrider Day** (Video, 2:30)
- **Hatch, New Mexico: The Chile Capital of the World** (Video, 7:26)
- **Route 66: The Mother Road** - This National Park Service website provides information about iconic Route 66, which traverses much of the U.S. southwest. It holds an elevated place in American consciousness and tells diverse stories of a mobile nation on the road. Includes teaching resources!

KANOPY FILM:

Log in and search for "SONGS OF THE HOMELAND: THE HISTORY OF TEJANO MUSIC"
(58 minutes)

SOUTHWEST SPANISH MISSIONS

Built by Spanish missionaries from the 1500s to the 1800s, some are still active religious congregations today.

- National Park Service Mission Travel Itinerary
- Mission San Xavier del Bac is the finest example of Spanish Colonial architecture in the U.S. (Video 2:30)

FOR READING AND VIEWING

Share America: Arizona!

Global Public Affairs Photo Albums

- Arizona
- New Mexico
- Utah
- Arches National Park

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- The Spanish settlers gave the Native Americans horses.
  - How did horses change their culture?
- The Southwest is a blend of many cultures.
  - How is this diversity reflected in the region?
- Westerns. It is said that the Southwest region is a 'character' in these films.
  - How did Hollywood and the Southwest create an image of America for the world?
  - Is the independent, frontier spirit accurate?
  - Why or why not?