

“The Legendary King of San Miguel Island”

Resource Summary: Thirteen reading, writing or research assignments based on the video. Poems, factual article about the island and vocabulary worksheet.

Subject Areas: English

Grade Level Range: 9-12

Standards:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.9-10.2 Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/ experiments, or technical processes.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.9-10.2.D

Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to manage the complexity of the topic and convey a style appropriate to the discipline and context as well as to the expertise of likely readers.

CCSS.ELA-WRITING.W.9-10.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-WRITING.W.9-10.1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

CCSS.ELA-WRITING.W.9-10.7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question or solve a problem.

Resource Provided By: Lucy Carleton, English/ELD, Carpinteria High School, Carpinteria Unified School District)

Resource Details:

“The Legendary King of San Miguel Island”
running time 14 minutes.

Cast :

Betsy Lester Roberti, daughter of Herbert Lester, the King of San Miguel Island, and Elizabeth Sherman

Marla Daily, president Santa Cruz Island Foundation

TC Boyle, author

Meredith Brooks Abbott, daughter of Bob Brooks, who caused Herb to want to go to the island

Bob Brooks, Junior

Don Butler, Bob Brooks son-in-law

Mike McCorkle, halibut fishermen who witnessed ranch house burning down

Ian Williams, ranger, Channel Islands national Park

Reading, Research, Writing Assignments:

What is this video about? Write a summary of "The Legendary King of San Miguel Island". The summary should be a concise, complete and accurate overview of the video. It should not include your opinions or analysis.

Write an interior monologue of what Betsy Lester thought during her plane trip to Santa Barbara and visit to State Street. Include details from the video as well as your own additions.

Write a first-hand account of Bob Brooks' accident when he was rebuilding the dock. You may write from the perspective of Bob, Herb, or one of the females who are present on the island.

What is your opinion of the story depicted in this video? Do you believe the story is tremendous or a tragedy? Provide specific examples to support your opinion.

Two works of literature are alluded to in the video. *Life Magazine* calls the family the "Swiss Family Lester", an allusion to the *Swiss Family Robinson*. Marla Daily says the family lived an incredible *Robinson Crusoe* type story. Research what these two earlier books have in common with the Lester family.

Read the novel *San Miguel* by TC Boyle. Compare this fictionalized account to the facts from the video.

TC Boyle says he portrays Herb Lester as manic depressive (in his book *San Miguel*). What is manic-depression? What evidence can you see that this diagnosis applies to Herbert Lester?

Betsy Lester Roberti states her mother went to the safe where all the important letters were kept and "she found it", implying it was her father's suicide note. Read the poem "Richard Cory" by Edward Arlington Robinson. Create a suicide note for either Herbert Lester or Richard Cory. Provide insights into their choice to end their lives.

The video begins with Betsy Lester explaining how she did not like being dubbed a princess. Why do you believe she objected to this name? Would you object to being called Prince or Princess by your parents, or any nickname? Why or why not?

San Miguel Island is known as the graveyard of ships because of the three dozen known wrecks. Research these disasters.

Betsy Lester Roberti describes playing in the island's caves, and on the beautiful white sandy beach as "heaven". Describe a place from your childhood you feel was heaven, or, if you like, was the opposite.

In the video we hear about two fathers who refuse to allow their daughters to do certain things. Elizabeth Sherman's father did not believe girls go to college. Bob Brooks did not allow his daughter to go to San Miguel Island because it was "no place for kids." Have

you ever been not allowed to do something by your parents or other adults that you felt you should be able to do? Describe the situation and how you felt. Do you think you will not allow your children to do certain things based on their sex?

Read the poem “Stenciled Memories” by Lorna Dee Cervantes. Create your own free verse poem based on your childhood or the childhood of Betsy Lester Roberti.

Additional Resources:

Stenciled Memories *for Gra'ma*

There was always fabric in your lap
and a whistle in your heart. A sweet
sap to be sucked waited in the garden.
Nymphs of newts nestled under rock,
your role as *She Who Brings the Waters*
intact. Between the trilling of the crickets
educating into the night and the sad sack
of cans in the mornings something grew,
flourished in the dark — vines as sturdy
as telephone wire writhed in the breezes.
You patched together a blanket of us,
sewed together the mismatched and lopped
off edges. And anger grew a twin, ripped
through the bermuda grass, something stubborn
and determined: Me, in a leather patchwork skirt,
the bitter lemon song returning to its beginning
over and over on the Howdie Doody phonograph,
a handful of bandages, a faceful of ghosts
delivered from the mirrors. How did you stand it?
All of it. Us crunching through your set life,
kids scuffling through the mounds of leave.
Always making do. Your sunshine eyes,
those stenciled memories where
we still live.

Lorna Dee Cervantes, "Stenciled Memories" from *Sueño*. Copyright © 2013 by Lorna Dee Cervantes.

Richard Cory by Edward Arlington Robinson

Whenever Richard Cory went down town,
We people on the pavement looked at him:
He was a gentleman from sole to crown,
Clean favored, and imperially slim.

And he was always quietly arrayed,
And he was always human when he talked;
But still he fluttered pulses when he said,
"Good-morning," and he glittered when he walked.

And he was rich—yes, richer than a king—
And admirably schooled in every grace:
In fine, we thought that he was everything
To make us wish that we were in his place.

So on we worked, and waited for the light,
And went without the meat, and cursed the bread;
And Richard Cory, one calm summer night,
Went home and put a bullet through his head.

Channel Island Facts: San Miguel Island from NPS.gov



- Located in Santa Barbara County.
 - Seventy miles from Ventura; 26 miles to the nearest mainland (Point Conception); three miles west of Santa Rosa Island.
 - San Miguel is approximately four miles wide by eight miles long; 14 square miles; 9,325 acres
 - Average rainfall-15 inches.
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- Tallest peak-San Miguel Hill, 831 ft.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Over a dozen Channel Islands endemic plants occur on San Miguel Island.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The endemic island fox and deer mouse and introduced rat are the only land mammals found on San Miguel Island.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Up to five different pinniped species and over 30,000 individuals can be found at Point Bennett, one of the largest concentrations of wildlife in the world.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• One of the oldest known American Indian archeological sites (11,600 years ago) is on San Miguel Island.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• San Miguel Island and its associated islets support one-third of the breeding seabirds in the Channel Islands.

Wind and weather constantly sweep across the North Pacific to batter the shores of the westernmost of all the Channel Islands, San Miguel. This extreme weather creates a harsh but profoundly beautiful environment. The 9,500-acre island is primarily a plateau about 500 feet in elevation, but two 800-foot rounded hills emerge from its wild, windswept landscape. Although lush native vegetation covers this landscape today, a century's worth of sheep ranching and overgrazing caused scientists in 1875 to describe the island as "a barren lump of sand."

With the grazing animals removed, vegetative recovery is in progress. Giant coreopsis, dudleya, locoweed, lupine, buckwheat, coastal sagebrush, and poppies are all recolonizing the island to their former extent, returning San Miguel to its more natural state.

Also making a comeback, after years of hunting, are the thousands of pinnipeds (seals and sea lions) that breed, pup, and haul out on the island's 27 miles of isolated



coastline. Hikers who make the all-day, ranger-guided, 16-mile round-trip hike across the island to Point Bennett will never forget seeing one of the world's most spectacular wildlife displays—over 30,000 pinnipeds and up to five different species hauled out on the point's beaches at certain times of year.

Other wildlife include the island fox and deer mouse. Both of these little creatures are endemics—they are found only on the Channel Islands. The island fox, the size of a house cat, is the largest land animal on the island. In the waters surrounding San Miguel, the marine animals get much larger. Dolphins and porpoises are often spotted along with gray whales, killer whales, and the largest animals of all, blue whales.

In the spring and summer the skies are filled with birds. Boaters entering Cuyler Harbor receive a greeting from western gulls, California brown pelicans, cormorants, and Cassin's auklets that nest on Prince Island. Black oystercatchers, with their bright red bills and pink feet, feed along the beach. Terrestrial residents include the western meadowlark, rock wren, and song sparrow, an endemic subspecies. Peregrine falcons

have recently been restored to the island and are nesting successfully once again after years of decimation by the pesticide DDT.

In addition to the variety of natural resources, San Miguel hosts an array of cultural resources as well. The Chumash and their ancestors lived on San Miguel almost continuously for nearly 12,000 years. Today there are over 600 fragile, relatively undisturbed archeological sites. The oldest one dates back to 11,600 years before the present-some of the oldest evidence of human presence in North America. Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo and his men laid eyes on San Miguel Island in 1542. Upon claiming the island for the Spanish crown, Cabrillo named it "La Posesion." Some stories say that Cabrillo wintered and died on San Miguel Island. No one knows where Cabrillo is buried, but there is a memorial commemorating the explorer on a bluff overlooking Cuyler Harbor.

Other outstanding island resources that visitors may experience on San Miguel include the caliche forest (sand-castings of ancient vegetation), fossil bones of the Pleistocene pygmy mammoths that stood four to six feet at the shoulders, 150 years of ranching history, and numerous shipwrecks. Whether you are interested in life of the past or life of the present, San Miguel Island has it in abundance.

Name:	Date:
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SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL VOCABULARY San Miguel Island

Scientific and technical terms are words with specific meanings to make writing about science and technology clear and precise.

DIRECTIONS: Write a definition for each scientific or technical term. Use a dictionary to help you. Next, write an original sentence using the vocabulary word.

Term	Definition	ORIGINAL SENTENCE
plateau		
pinnipeds		
endemics		
terrestrial		
decimation		
archeological		
caliche		