

Mission Bell Guidepost



Each month The California Museum will introduce a new artifact with accompanying information and questions, which will consist of three different difficulty levels to choose from. To be used as a sponge or opening activity, you can use the artifact of the month for your students to study, question and form ideas. You can also print the image and place it on each student's desk, have them work in teams or project the image for a class activity.

Use the provided questions to help your students learn more about the artifact and its importance to California -- or make up your own questions. Most importantly, have fun!

Be sure to check out our web site, CaliforniaMuseum.org, for other interesting and unique activities for your students.

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Originally inscribed "El Camino Real 1769-1906" reflecting the founding of the first mission and the dedication of the first bell.
Cast-iron, 22" high
c. 1906

This weathered bell is a early twentieth-century replica of a mission bell guidepost that once marked the original route of the El Camino Real, The King's Highway, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These bells gave travelers the distance to the next town and directions to the missions.

Originally a footpath traveled by the Franciscan missionaries, El Camino Real reached from San Diego to Sonoma, connecting California's 21 missions. Over time, the small footpath evolved into a busy road wide enough to accommodate horses and wagons, and is considered to be the first roadway in the state. Today, large portions of Highway 101 follow the original route of El Camino Real.

In order to commemorate the route of El Camino Real, cast iron 85-pound mission bell guideposts were placed along the original route. The first bell was erected in 1906 in Los Angeles. Soon, over 400 bells dotted the roadway. Over the next several decades, most bells were lost to road reconstruction or theft. Today, many organizations are working together to reinstall the bells along the route of El Camino Real. The next time you travel on Highway 101, see if you can spot any of the mission bells.

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Elementary

- 1) What is El Camino Real?
- 2) Why were mission bells placed along El Camino Real?
- 3) How many missions are in California?

Middle

- 1) What are some other guideposts or markers you see along the highway today?
- 2) How are they similar in use to the mission bells?
- 3) Why did the missionaries choose the locations they did for the missions?

High School

- 1) Do you think it is important to commemorate the El Camino Real with mission bells? Why or why not?
- 2) Think of another important passage/trail. What would you do to commemorate its significance in history?

Word Scramble

P I O M A L N L S M N N
S I L M I I O A L I R G
N P N E S I C E E E A U
N O I L E V A R T K B I
N S N I M S G O I M I D
A D R L O M M N B I E E
N R S O N U G I E S N P
R L S A I S A M P S I O
M I S S I O N A R I E S
I L O O G O D C L O O T
S A E L A C N L S N A A
E I S R E B R E R S A D

bell
travel
guidepost

missions
missionaries
El Camino Real

road
Kings

<http://www.armoredpenguin.com/wordsearch/bin/wordsearch.cgi>

