

# Distance Learning for Middle School Social Studies Lesson

**Instructions:** Read the following article and complete the Q.U.A.C.K. Reading Response chart that follows.

## 1 **Bracero Program Bolstered Nevada Workforce During WWII**

By Alicia Barber, March 13, 2019 (Listen [here](#))

2 By the summer of 1942, the United States was fully engaged in the Second World War, and millions of  
3 Americans were involved in some form of military service. With so many people and resources dedicated to  
4 the war effort, the home front was beginning to feel the impact, and certain industries were being hit especially  
5 hard.

6 During the war, Armando Martini, known as “Barney,” was a teenager living on his family’s ranch at Vista,  
7 just outside of Sparks, Nevada. Interviewed in 2005, he explained how the massive deployment of men  
8 overseas had begun to affect the region’s agricultural community.

9 “A lot of the farm boys that were working the ranches were in the service,” Martini said. “It was during the  
10 war, and we were raising potatoes and onions and grain, and you needed help to harvest all of that.”

11 The labor shortage was serious enough that the federal government decided to step in. At first, they tried to  
12 recruit workers from cities to help out the farms, but that didn’t pan out. After intensive negotiations with  
13 Mexico, the U.S. government introduced the Mexican Farm Labor Agreement as an emergency measure to  
14 bring in temporary contract workers from south of the border.

15 It was informally known as the Bracero Program, using a Spanish term for a manual laborer. The workers’  
16 contracts lasted for a number of months and were renewable. Five hundred workers were sent from Mexico to  
17 the Central Valley of California in September 1942, and the following summer, several hundred arrived in  
18 western Nevada. The effort was coordinated on the state level by the University of Nevada’s agricultural  
19 extension service.

20 “The Farm Bureau used to bring in quite a few of the Mexican workers, and they’d assign so many to each  
21 ranch that needed help, and we’d have to cook and supply living quarters for them,” Martini said. “We always  
22 had four or five men.”

23 In addition to providing housing, the host ranchers were also responsible for paying their guest workers the  
24 region’s prevailing wage for the work they did. That made the contracts especially appealing to the Mexican  
25 citizens who signed up, and to Mexican government officials, who hoped that the money the workers earned  
26 could help strengthen their own country’s economy when they returned.

27 It was for many on both sides, their first time interacting with someone of each other’s nationality. But as  
28 Martini explained, they all made an effort to overcome the language barrier:

29 “We gradually learned. They learned some of ours [language], we learned theirs [Spanish], and we made out.  
30 But it was a little bit confusing at first. Sometimes we’d have to call the Farm Bureau office to send an  
31 interpreter to find out what was going on.”

32 In addition to farm labor, the program also brought 2,000 Mexican citizens to work on Nevada railroads. When  
33 the war ended in 1945, so did the domestic labor shortage, and the wartime contracts were not renewed. But

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the Bracero program continued in some form until 1964, employing approximately 4.6 million Mexican citizens and filling a critical need for some major American industries.

# Q.U.A.C.K. Reading Response

<b>Q.U.A.C.K.</b>	<b>Line #s)</b>	<b>Thoughts</b>
<b>Question:</b> What questions do you have about the article?		
<b>Us:</b> What aspect of the reading relates to us as a community?		
<b>Aspire:</b> Is there something that connects to a goal you have, something you are hopeful about, or something you wish for?		
<b>Connection:</b> What does the author say that connects with you?		
<b>Key Points:</b> Break it down. What are the top three points to remember from the article?		1. 2. 3.