

# Summary: Mexico Wins Independence

## Fighting for Freedom

In the 1800s, Alta California was part of the colony of New Spain. The King of Spain governed his colony through a viceroy, or governor. Many people were unhappy with Spanish rule. Unfair laws gave most of the power to the rich people from Spain. People born in Mexico, especially Mexican Indians, had few rights.

In 1810, a priest named Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla gathered an army of 50,000 to fight against Spain. Hidalgo was soon killed. But José María Morelos and Vicente Guerrero led the Mexican War for Independence to victory. By 1821, the Spanish were forced to leave Mexico. Although there were many battles, the war was not fought in Alta California. Mountains and deserts cut off the region.

## The Republic of Mexico

After the war, Alta California became part of the new country called Mexico. The first Mexican government was similar to Spain's. Agustín de Iturbide, the emperor, was soon driven out of office because his rule was too harsh. Instead, a republic was set up, a government in which lawmakers are elected. In 1824, Mexico's leaders wrote a constitution and created a congress elected by voters. They also created the office of president and a system of courts similar to the United States.

## Trade in California

People of Spanish descent living in Alta California were called Californios. Before the war, they could not buy goods from countries other than Spain. During the war, they could not get supplies from Spain, so they began trading with Americans and Russians. The first trading post was set up at Fort Ross. Californios from San Francisco bought imports, such as cloth and tools. They traded wheat, salt, and other food to the Russians at Fort Ross. These were their exports. Californios sold cow hides and tallow, or fat, to Yankees. Hides were used to make leather goods. Tallow was used for candles.

### Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

**constitution** *noun*, written plan for a government

**republic** *noun*, a government in which citizens elect lawmakers

**import** *noun*, a good brought from another country

**export** *noun*, a good sent to another country

### After You Read

**REVIEW** Why did some people in New Spain want to take over the government? Draw a box around three sentences that explain why people were unhappy with Spain.

**REVIEW** Why did Mexicans create a new government in 1824? Highlight the sentences that explain why Mexicans changed their government.

**REVIEW** What was one effect of the Mexican War for Independence on life in Alta California? Underline the sentences that explain how trade changed in California after the war started.