

TIMELINE OF MEXICAN AMERICAN LITERATURE, HISTORY AND CULTURE

Pre-1900

- 1527 Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca becomes the first European to explore North America and leave a written record
- 1540 Explorers from Mexico first enter the Southwest
- 1598 Spain plans permanent missions, military posts, towns, and ranchos in New Mexico
- 1700 Spanish settlement of Arizona begins
- 1716 Spanish settlement of Texas begins
- 1769 Spanish settlement of Alta California begins; the first California mission is built
- 1810 Mexico's struggle for independence against Spain begins
- 1821 Mexico wins independence from Spain
William Becknell opens the Santa Fe Trail, tying the Southwest to the United States
- 1825 Mexico gives land to American land agents who bring settlers to Texas
- 1835 The Texas Revolution begins. Battle of the Alamo
- 1836 Texas gains independence
- 1842 Mexico twice attempts to reclaim Texas
- 1845 Magazine editor John L. O'Sullivan uses the phrase "Manifest Destiny" to describe American expansion.
The United States annexes Texas and offers Mexico \$5 million to recognize the Rio Grande River as Texas' southwestern boundary, \$5 million for New Mexico, and \$25 million for California
- 1846 The US-Mexican War begins
- 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo signed on February 2. Mexico cedes nearly half of its original territory to the US
- 1849 California's first constitutional convention held.
Gold discovered at Sutter's Mill, leading to a tremendous influx of Anglo prospectors
- 1850 From now through the 1870s, upper-class Mexicans in Arizona, New Mexico, Texas and California lose most of their lands
- 1851 All native Mexicans are excluded from the California State Senate
- 1852 Tiburcio Vásquez begins his raids in California
- 1853 In the Gadsden Purchase, the US acquires 30,000 acres in southern Arizona and New Mexico from Mexico
- 1855 The Bureau of Public Instruction in California orders that all schools teach exclusively in English.
California passes a law against vagrancy, known as the "Greaser Law."
Mexicans already represent 16-20% of inmates at San Quentin.
In Los Angeles, Francisco Ramírez published *El Camor Público*, a newspaper defending Mexican rights
- 1859 Juan N. Cortina leads a raid on Brownsville, Texas
- 1861 Congress creates Colorado territory out of New Mexico
- 1862 Congress creates Arizona territory out of New Mexico

- 1860s Numerous memoirs, diaries and testimonies written by US-Mexicans, such as José Arnaz, Mariano Vallejo, Apolinaria Lorenzana, Pío Pico, Miguel Antonio Otero, Eulalia Pérez (housed at Berkeley’s Bancroft Collection, discussed in Genaro Padilla’s *My History, Not Yours: The Formation of Mexican American Autobiography* and Rosaura Sánchez’s *Telling Identities: The Californio Testimonials*)
- 1872 María Amparo Ruiz de Burton writes the first English-language “Mexican American” novel, *Who Would Have Thought It?*
- 1878 Andrew García publishes his autobiographical *Tough Trip Through Paradise, 1878 – 1879*
- 1880s An active and vociferous network of Spanish-language newspapers continues in the Southwest
- 1884 Helen Hunt Jackson publishes *Ramona*
- 1885 Ruiz de Burton writes *The Squatter and the Don*
- 1890 Unionization begins in the Southwest, but is largely anti-Mexican in practice
- 1891 A court of private land claims is established in California to examine confusing land grant claims; most Californio resources shift to Anglo control
- 1894 Alianza Hispano Americano formed in Tucson, AZ
- 1892 Eusebio Chacón writes his two novelettes *El hijo de la tempestad* and *Tras la tormenta la calma*
- 1897 Wealthy Mexicans in Texas found El Colegio Altamiro to preserve Mexican culture for their children

1900 – 1930

- 1903 Mexican beet workers carry out a successful strike in Ventura, California
- 1904 Creation of the first Border Patrol, largely to keep out Asian immigrants who were passing as Mexican in order to enter the US
Mexican revolutionaries Enrique and Ricardo Flores Magón establish their newspaper, *Regeneración*, in San Antonio, TX
- 1910 Start of the Mexican Revolution; over the course of the next twenty years, nearly 900,000 Mexicans (10% of Mexico’s population) cross the border—the largest wave of migration the US has ever seen
- 1911 The first large convention of Mexicans for action against social injustice, *El Primer Congreso Mexicanista*, was held in Laredo, Texas
- 1912 Arizona and New Mexico achieve statehood
- 1913 María Cristina Mena begins publishing her short stories in mainstream US magazines such as *Century*, *Cosmopolitan* and T.S. Eliot’s *Criterion*
- 1916 Political exile Julio Arce (aka “Jorge Ulica”) begins writing his “*Crónicas Diabólicas*,” humorous columns about Mexicans living in the US, in San Francisco’s *Hispano-América* newspaper. Other *cronistas* include Benjamín Padilla (“Kaskabel”), Adolfo Carrillo and Daniel Venegas (“El Malcriado”)
- 1917 Adina de Zavala publishes *History and Legends of the Alamo and Other Mission in and around San Antonio*, writing Texas history from a Mexican American and woman’s perspective
Immigration Act passed, making literacy a condition of entry to US during WWI; Mexican farmworkers waived
- 1920s Public schools begin implementing Americanization programs to acculturate Mexican immigrants
- 1925 Fray Angélico Chávez begins writing his religious poems, collected in *Cantares: Canticles and Poems of Youth*
The first two Mexican actresses in Hollywood, Dolores Del Río and Lupe Vélez, make their debuts
Congress creates the Border Patrol, giving the agency absolute search and seizure authority over Mexicans, leading to abuses of Mexican American constitutional rights

- 1926 *La Opinión* newspaper founded in Los Angeles (still in circulation today)
 Jovita González, Tejana educator, writes *Dew on the Thorn*
- 1927 La Confederación de Uniones Obreras Mexicanos is formed and holds its first convention in Los Angeles
- 1928 Venegas writes *Las aventuras de Don Chipote, o cuando los pericos mamen*, published in installments in Los Angeles' *El Heraldo de México* newspaper
 League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) is formed in Corpus Christi, Texas
- 1929 The U.S. government requires Mexicans to obtain visas to enter the country

1930 – 1960

- 1930 Repatriation (sometimes voluntary, often illegal) of 400,000 Mexicans and Mexican Americans begins
 Mexican anthropologist Manuel Gamio writes his classic *Mexican Immigration to the United States and The Life story of the Mexican Immigrant*
- 1932 Singer Lydia Mendoza begins performing publicly in San Antonio
- 1933 The El Monte Strike, possibly the largest agricultural strike up to that point in history, led by Mexican unions in California
 Mexican and Mexican American workers in Texas organized one of the broadest unions in the history of Hispanic labor in the United States: *La Asociación de Jornaleros*, which represented everyone from hat-makers to farm workers
 College students form the Mexican American Movement and create a monthly newspaper, *La Voz Mexicana*
- 1934 Jorge Ainslie writes *Los pochos*, which sets a precedent in the structure and themes of later Chicano novels (such as Villarreal's *Pocho*, below)
 San Antonio community leader Eleuterio Escobar forms *La Liga Pro-Defensa Escolar* in response to the gross inequity in spending he discovered between Mexican American and Anglo public schools
- 1935 The New Deal's Federal Writers Project sent agents into the Southwest to collect folklore and stories from Mexican American communities; see Tey Diana Rebolledo and María Teresa Márquez's *Women's Tales from the New Mexico WPA*
 John Steinbeck writes *Tortilla Flat*, about the Mexican community of Monterey, California
 Elena Zamora O'Shea writes *El Mesquite*
- 1936 Américo Paredes writes *George Washington Gómez*
- 1937 Jovita González, with Eve Raleigh, co-authors *Caballero* (unpublished until 1996)
 Many Mexican workers join the United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing and Allied Workers of America
- 1938 San Antonio Pecan Shellers' Strike, the largest Mexican workers' strike of the decade
- 1941 Through 1945, approximately 350,000 Mexican Americans serve in World War II, suffering casualties far above their proportion in the population; they become the most decorated ethnic group, winning seventeen medals of honor
- 1942 Bracero program begins, providing for Mexican laborers to enter the United States as short-term contract workers (program ends in 1964)
 Sleepy Lagoon incident in Los Angeles
- 1943 Zoot Suit Riots take place in Los Angeles (case continues through 1944)
 Bracero Program begins
- 1945 Josefina Niggli writes *Mexican Village*

- 1947 *Mendez v. Westminster* decision prohibits school segregation on the basis of Mexican descent, setting an important precedent for *Brown v. Board of Education* (1955)
Mario Suárez publishes his first “Chicano Sketches” in the *Arizona Quarterly*
- 1948 Mexican American veterans of WWII found the American GI Forum in Corpus Christi, TX
- 1950 Between now and 1955, Operation Wetback deports 3.8 million Mexicans and Mexican Americans
- 1952 Actor Anthony Quinn is the first Mexican American to win the Academy Award for Best Actor
Marlon Brando stars in *Viva Zapata!* as the Mexican revolutionary war hero
- 1954 The film *Salt of the Earth* (blacklisted in Hollywood) is heralded by many as a true representation of Mexican Americans and their struggle
In *Hernández v. Texas*, the Supreme Court recognizes that Mexican Americans have equal protection under the Fourteenth Amendment
- 1956 Paredes writes the classic *With His Pistol in His Hand: A Border Ballad and its Hero*
- 1958 Ritchie Valens becomes first Mexican American rock star
Charlton Heston portrays a Mexican American lawyer in Orson Welle’s film noir, *Touch of Evil*
- 1959 José Antonio Villarreal writes *Pocho*, considered the first “Chicano” novel

1960 – 1980

- 1960 Viva Kennedy clubs spring up in support of the Democratic ticket of Kennedy and Johnson
- 1962 César Chávez and Dolores Huerta co-found the National Farm Workers Association, which would evolve into the United Farm Workers (UFW), in Delano, CA
- 1963 In New Mexico, Reies López Tijerina incorporates La Alianza Federal de los Mercedes (later known as the Alianza Federal de Pueblos Libres)
Bracero Program ends
- 1965 The UFW begins its grape boycott
Luis Valdez founds El Teatro Campesino in Delano, CA
- 1966 Rodolfo Acuña teaches the first Mexican American history class in Los Angeles
- 1967 The Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO) is founded in San Antonio
Tijerina takes over the Tierra Amarilla County Courthouse in New Mexico
250 students representing seven Los Angeles colleges and universities meet to form the United Mexican American Students (UMAS)
Corky González writes the epic poem, “I Am Joaquin”
El Grito: A Journal of Contemporary Mexican-American Thought first appears
- 1968 The Brown Berets form in Los Angeles and eventually become one of the largest non-student organizations in the country
More than 10,000 high school students in California and Texas stage walk-outs to protest educational and military draft policies
The Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF) is organized in San Antonio, TX
Between now and 1973, more than 50 departments, centers and institutes for Chicano studies were established in California

- 1969 González organizes the Chicano Youth Liberation Movement in Denver, CO, where participants craft the classic manifesto, “El Plán Espiritual de Aztlán”
A three day conference is organized at Santa Barbara by the Chicano Coordinating Council of Higher Education yields the formation of El Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan (MEChA)
- 1970 Jose Ángel Gutiérrez establishes the Raza Unida Party in Crystal City, TX
On August 20, the Chicano Moratorium Against the Vietnam War draws the largest demonstration of Latinos in American history up to that time; later that day, Rubén Salazar, an Los Angeles Times columnist who covered the event, is killed by a sheriff's tear-gas projectile
- 1971 Tomás Rivera writes *Y no se le tragó la tierra*
Ernesto Galarza writes *Barrio Boy*
The Chicana's Conference held in Houston, TX; it aimed to analyze women's roles in the Movement
- 1972 La Raza Unida holds its first national convention in El Paso
Patricia Rodriguez organizes Las Mujeres Muralistas in the San Francisco Bay Area, with members Consuelo Mendez, Irene Pérez, and Graciela Carillo
Peter Rodriguez inaugurates the Mexican Museum in San Francisco
Jesus Salvador Treviño's film, *Yo Soy Chicano*, is the first film about Chicano history to be televised nationally
Music group Little Joe y la Familia release *Para la gente*, which combines Tex-Mex music with jazz and rock, a style known as La Onda Chicana
Oscar Zeta Acosta writes *Autobiography of a Brown Buffalo* and, in 1973, *Revolt of the Cockroach People*
Rudolfo Anaya writes *Bless Me, Última*
Nicolás Kanellos starts *La Revista Chicana-Riqueña*, a literary and academic journal, in Gary, IN
- 1973 Rolanda Hinojosa writes *Estampas del Valle y otras obras*
- 1974 The Southwest Voter Registration Education Project is established
Artist Judith Francisca Baca founds the first City of Los Angeles Mural Program.
Jose Luis Ruiz produces *The Unwanted*, a film about undocumented immigrants in the US
Artists Harry Gamboa Jr, Gronk, Patssi Valdez and Willie Herron form the conceptual art group Asco
- 1975 The Voting Rights Act of 1965 is extended to “Hispanic Americans”
Angela de Hoyos publishes *Chicano Poems for the Barrio*
- 1976 Bernice Zamora writes *Restless Serpents*
Chicano film *Chulas Fronteras* debuts
- 1978 The Supreme Court upholds the decision in favor of *Bakke v. the UC Board of Regents* by a vote of 5-4, in an act that seriously undermines Affirmative Action
Robert M. Young directs *Alumbrista*, a film about an undocumented worker's journey across the border
- 1979 Valdez's *Zoot Suit* is the first Chicano play on Broadway, and becomes a film in 1981
Kanellos founds Arte Público Press (currently at the University of Houston)

1980 – today

- 1980 The Reagan Administration comes to power, accelerating the dismantling of most social programs initiated in the 1960s
Arturo Islas writes *The Rain God*
- 1981 Poet Lorna Dee Cervantes publishes her collection, *Emplumada*
- 1982 Floricanto Press is founded
- 1983 Gregory Nava directs *El Norte*, a film about immigration
- 1984 Lucha Corpi writes *Delia's Song*
Pat Mora publishes *Chants and, in 1986, Borders*, two collections of poetry
Ballad of Gregorio Cortéz become a film starring Edward James Olmos
- 1986 Ana Castillo writes *Mixquiahuala Letters*
- 1987 Luis Valdez directs the feature film *La Bamba*, the biopic of Ritchie Valens
Gloria Anzaldúa writes *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*
Chicano comedian and actor Cheech Marin writes, directs and stars in *Born in East LA*
- 1988 Sandra Cisneros publishes *The House on Mango Street*
- 1989 Immigration from the Americas rises from 44.3% in 1964 to 61.4%; Mexico accounts for 37.1% of total documented immigration to US
Denise Chávez writes *Face of an Angel*
- 1990 Chicano rapper Kid Frost hits the charts with “La Raza”
- 1991 Cisneros publishes *Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories*
Gil Cuadros writes *City of God*
- 1992 Cartoonist Lalo Alcaraz begins his strip, *La Cucaracha*, in the LA Times newspaper
- 1993 Castillo publishes *So Far from God*
- 1994 Filmmaker Lourdes Portillo makes *The Devil Never Sleeps*
California ballot initiative Proposition 187 seeks to deny undocumented workers social services, health care and public education; although it passes with 58% of the vote, it is overturned in federal courts
- 1995 Tejana singer Selena is tragically murdered in Corpus Christi, TX
My Family/Mi Familia is a major feature film
- 1997 Gregory Nava films *Selena*, starring Jennifer López, which tells the story of the late singer
- 1998 Rock en español gains popularity in the US
Michelle Serros writes *Chicana Falsa and Other Stories of Death, Identity and Oxnard*
- 2002 Comedian George López begins his eponymous TV show