

Andrew Ramirez

A. Andrade

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Sem2Chapter\_Chapt3-4\_Analysis

### Chapter 3 Analysis

While the first two chapters of the book covered the early history of conquistadors and European colonization of New Spain, the third chapter is more about how Mexico actually broke off and became what it is today. This covers the political causes of Mexican independence, and how it affected the northern parts of Mexico such as California, New Mexico, Arizona, and Texas. Texas is a key point throughout the chapter because it is an important time where Americans flocked into the territory and began to outnumber the Mexicans. This lead would eventually lead to the Texas Revolt where Anglo-Texans would win independence. From here the chapter goes into the expansionist mindset of the newly independent Texas, and how it leads to the Mexican War.

I was genuinely very interested reading this chapter. While the last chapter had a lot of stories and facts related to events I had no idea about, this chapter was all related to events that I still remember learning in school. After reading the chapter, my first impression was that there was a lot of modern history that I was not aware of. Similar to the previous chapters, I found that chapter three was very factual and wasn't based purely in opinion. I thought it was a good read and I am very glad to have been able to read it.

Something that really got my attention was the focus on Texas, how it gained its independence, and the subsequent expansion by America into the other Mexican territories. Growing up I have always learned about these events from an American point of view, so it was interesting to read about these events from a different viewpoint. I would go as far as to say that this book offered a more neutral explanation as to what really happened. A specific point of interest for me was reading about how Americans essentially overran the Mexican population in Mexico and had little desire to assimilate into Mexican culture. I found this surprising because it was basically a group of foreigners letting themselves in to a country that wasn't theirs, then demanding independence. Of course there will always be two sides to the story, but I liked reading about the other side for once.

I began to become very familiar with the information in the book once it started to overlap with American history. While this wasn't as true with California or Arizona, I feel that many Americans are aware of what happened in Texas. I was generally aware of what happened at the Alamo and Texan independence, but largely from a point of view that favors the Texans. Something that I was also aware of was the extreme dislike Anglo-Texans had for Mexicans.

I feel that I was able to learn a lot of details about events I thought I knew a lot about. For example, I am aware of the American contributions at the Alamo, but I didn't know much about the contributions of the eight Mexican martyrs who died there. Generally, a lot of what I didn't know was always in the details. From high school I know what generally happened in all the Border States, but if I were to be asked about anything, or anyone, specific I wouldn't have been able to say anything before reading this chapter.

I feel that this portrayal was very neutral and accurate. I feel that Gonzales tries to set the record straight with certain facts and events, but he also makes a lot of concessions about what

the Mexican government did wrong or how they were indeed a bit aggressive in certain cases. Overall, I truly believe Gonzales' historical portrayal because it doesn't seem overwhelmingly biased. Similar to the previous chapters, there was a lot of evidence behind any claims that were made. Perhaps most importantly, nothing in this chapter ran against what I have learned up until this point. Piecing together what I learned from this book with what I already know was very simple, and nothing was completely unbelievable.

I feel that Gonzales' interpretation of Spanish contact with Mesoamerican society is legitimate and accurate because I think it is based in reality. While his point of view of the Mexican War and Texas Revolt tended to favor Mexico, he had the relevant facts to make the assertions he made. Furthermore, he wasn't above stating facts and opinions that didn't really favor the Mexican government. In my opinion, his neutral tone is what gives his interpretations legitimacy.

#### Chapter 4 Analysis

Chapter four delves into a much more modern history between America and Mexico, with some events being as early as the early 1900's. Much of the chapter is about anti-Mexican attitudes at their height, as well as how each of the Border States became American territory. The Mexican government was in dire need of money, which is what resulted in the sale of their territory. This all came at a time where Mexicans were heavily discriminated against, and stood divided among themselves. It was at this time where Mexicans began to be viewed as lazy and irresponsible in the eyes of Americans. Darker skinned Mexicans were also viewed in a much harsher light. These problems were only compounded during conflicts involving land ownership during the California gold rush.

One of my first impressions of chapter four was that it seemed to be a long longer than the previous chapter. I don't write this to complain, but what I mean is that I feel this chapter had a lot more information to absorb. The previous chapter touched largely on topics that I was much more aware of, as where this one I learned a lot more because I was more unfamiliar with it. Still, my overall impression with chapter four is very positive and I really feel like the book continues to offer information that is both necessary and interesting.

What caught my attention in this chapter, as well as the previous one, was reading the section about Texas. I find these parts so interesting because I know so little about Texas, and anything I do know is more than likely one-sided. So while reading this book I find it extremely enjoyable to learn more about Texas, especially from a view that tries to be a bit more critical than anything I would probably hear in an American school. What I found most interesting, for no particular reason, was the slow decent of Mexicanos in Texas for a variety of reasons. One such reason being that Anglos were beginning to migrate to all corners of Texas. Another reason being that ranching was no longer a profitable profession. This left many Tejano ranchers to turn to farming, a profession which many were unprepared for.

Compared to all the previous chapters I have read, I knew relatively little information that was in this chapter. Admittedly, the only thing I can say that I knew for sure was the name of the American states and maybe a few towns, such as El Paso. It was for this reason that I felt that this chapter seemed so much longer than the rest of the book so far. There was so much that I didn't know I found myself absorbing every part of every page. Once again, I do mean this in the most positive way because I really enjoy learning about this kind of thing. However, if there was one thing that I had to say I was already aware of, I would say that I was already aware of the dislike and discrimination against Mexicans in Texas. It is one of the topics that has been

covered in classes I have previously taken, but I undoubtedly learned a lot more details about the interactions between Mexicans and Anglos in this chapter.

What I did learn from this chapter is probably too numerous to put in this reflection. It would be much easier probably copy and paste the entire chapter itself. However, there were a few things I definitely enjoyed reading about more than others. One such thing I enjoyed learning about was how Mexican women played a notable role in commercial expansion in New Mexico. According to Gonzales, this is a fact that hasn't been widely recognized until fairly recently. It was very enlightening to learn that many women entrepreneurs were rather successful, and even one of the wealthiest persons in New Mexico was a woman, La Tules, who owned a casino and invested in Missouri trade. In a world where men dominate the history books, it was very nice to read about the success and role of women.

Once again, I feel that the historical portrayal is very accurate and factually based. So far this has given me a very neutral impression of events, although at times I can feel the emotion behind certain events and treatment of Mexicans. Overall, the portrayal of events by the Gonzales makes for a very enjoyable read.

I feel that the portrayal of Spanish contact with Mesoamericans was very sobering and truthful. Much like the rest of the book, the plethora of hard facts and dates gives this chapter a lot of credibility. It is difficult for me to go against the book so far because it is so factually based, and anything that isn't backed by facts is clearly stated as speculation.