



## Follow-up activities

### Activity 1:

Die Schüler\*innen wählen eine der folgenden Schreibaufgaben:

- You are John Sutter. When you went to America, you left your family behind in Switzerland. Yesterday your foreman James Marshall showed you some pieces of gold he found in the river near your sawmill. Write a letter to your wife in which you
  - tell her about the gold find
  - write about your hopes (you could become a rich man) and fears (what will other people do when they hear about the gold find?).
- You are a journalist for the *San Francisco Chronicle*. Write a short article about life in San Francisco in 1850: How has the gold rush changed life in the town? What will life be like in San Francisco in 1880?
- You are a 15-year-old boy/girl and you have been on the California Trail together with your parents and your eight-year-old brother for three weeks now. Write a diary entry (what happened today? Dangers and problems? How do you feel – are you optimistic? Looking forward to settling in California? Are you scared or desperate? ...).

### Activity 2:

Bei dieser Sprechaktivität arbeiten die Schüler\*innen paarweise zusammen. Jede\*r Schüler\*in liest zunächst seine\*ihre Rollenbeschreibung und erhält dann ca. fünf Minuten Zeit, um Ideen zu sammeln und über sprachliche Formulierungen nachzudenken. Dann wenden sich die Partner\*innen einander zu und Partner\*in A beginnt mit dem Rollenspiel.

#### A

You have just arrived in San Francisco and want to dig for gold. Your uncle Joshua owns a shop in San Francisco, so you want to ask him for advice on e. g.

- how to get a claim
- which equipment you need
- which dangers and problems you will have to face.

You start the conversation: Greet your uncle politely, make some small talk, then talk about your problems.

#### B

You have been in San Francisco for five years. You sell equipment for gold-seekers and you know a lot about life and work on the goldfields. Your nephew Samuel has just arrived in San Francisco and has entered your shop. He wants to try his luck as a gold-seeker and asks you for advice.



## “What’s this?”

It was late afternoon on a sunny day in January 1848 when Jeremy O’Connor went back to Mr Sutter’s house. He had been working all day to finish building the sawmill (*Sägewerk*) on Mr Sutter’s estate (*Anwesen*) and now he was tired and hungry. The foreman (*Vorarbeiter*), James Marshall, had already left an hour earlier, and rather quickly, which Jeremy thought was strange because Mr Marshall was always the last to stop working.

When Jeremy was close to the house, he heard Mr Sutter’s and Mr Marshall’s voices through a half-open window. They were whispering, so he could understand only some of what they were saying.

Mr Marshall: But I told you, I found it near ...

Mr Sutter: Are you sure it’s ...?

Mr Marshall: Let’s try and ...

Jeremy heard a strange sound.

Mr Sutter: Yes, it really is ... Oh, my God ...

Mr Marshall: What? But this is fantastic! It’ll change our lives completely!

Mr Sutter: It’ll certainly change our lives, that’s true. But what will happen to ...?  
Have you thought about that?

**What had James Marshall found that made him happy, but made Mr Sutter worried? Why did the two men react so differently?**

### What to do:

1. Read out all the cards aloud.
2. Arrange the cards in groups of different aspects. Which aspects are related to (*sich beziehen auf*) each other? Structure the cards accordingly.
3. Read the headlines and match them with the fitting cards or groups of cards.
4. Glue (*kleben*) everything onto the poster and answer the question.
5. Discuss with your partner(s): What would you have done after the gold find if you were Mr Sutter? – Then ask classmates from at least three other groups about their ideas.

### Headlines

“Damned gold!”

“It was hell along the way!”

“Just look what I found!”

“You wouldn’t believe what’s going on here! It’s crazy!

“I went west and became rich!”

“Life on the goldfields – that’s what it’s really like!”

Diese *headlines* beziehen sich auf die Inhalte der Erweiterungskärtchen:

„Just imagine, people from all over the world ...“

“Oh, so this is the place where it all happened more than 150 years ago!”

“Oh, that’s a lot of gold!”



San Francisco became an important town during the Gold Rush. In 1848, before the Gold Rush, it was a small town with only about 1,000 people living there. When it became well-known that gold had been found, it became a ghost town for a while because sailors left their ships and people gave up their businesses and homes to go to the goldfields.

But when thousands of gold-seekers arrived at San Francisco, the population rose to 25,000 people in 1850. As many of them lived in tents and simple wooden houses, the town partly looked like a camp of refugees (*Flüchtlinge*). As these people needed food, equipment and places to live, many businesses opened.

The merchants (*Händler*) made much more money than the gold-seekers during the Gold Rush. Most of the gold-seekers who arrived in the 1850s made little money, or even lost money, as gold was no longer so easy to find and equipment was getting more expensive.

Samuel Brannon was a merchant (*Händler*) and ran a newspaper in San Francisco. He told everyone about the gold find by walking through the streets of San Francisco shouting "Gold! Gold from the American River!" Before this, he had quickly opened a store which sold equipment for gold-seekers.

Later Brannon opened many more stores in the area which sold everything the gold-seekers needed: tents, clothes, food, shovels, things you need for living outside and camping etc. Thus he became the richest man in California during the Gold Rush.

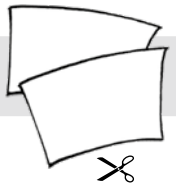
Another successful businessman was Levi Strauss, who first made tents for the gold-seekers and then began to make jeans and overalls. Now everybody knows the work pants he invented: blue jeans.

At the beginning of the Gold Rush the gold-seekers "staked claims" wherever they wanted, i. e. they claimed (*Anspruch erheben auf*) a piece of land as theirs, and drove stakes (*Pfähle*) into the ground to show that this was their piece of land. Often they argued about claims, which sometimes ended with someone getting killed.

In the early years of the Gold Rush the gold-seekers used "panning" to find gold in places like rivers. They put some sand into the pan (= a flat iron bowl) and moved it carefully until the gold sank to the bottom of the pan because gold is heavier than sand.

On the search for new goldfields the gold-seekers drove the Indians out of their traditional hunting and fishing grounds. As the gold-seekers also needed a lot of food, they started building more farms and ranches on Indian territory. The Indians and the white people fought a lot and many people died on both sides. This is how the Californian Indian Wars began, which lasted until 1880.

The settlers (*Siedler*) often caught Indians and forced them to work for them. They attacked Indian villages, took some of the Indians – especially children – with them and killed the people they left behind in the villages.



Some of the early gold-seekers were called the “forty-eighters” or “forty-niners” as they had arrived in 1848 or 1849. They found a lot of gold which was then easy to find in and around the river. Some of them found thousands of dollars of gold each day. But most of the gold-seekers were not so lucky.

It is difficult to say how much gold was found during the California Gold Rush. Some scientists (*Wissenschaftler*) guess that about 370 tons of gold were found between 1848 and 1853. Compare: In 2014 211 tons of gold were dug up (*ausgraben*) in the whole of the USA.

Most of the gold-seekers were Americans, but there were also immigrants from Britain, France, Italy, Germany, Mexico, China and many other countries who had heard about the goldfields in California. There was often a lot of conflict among these different groups. The Chinese especially were the victims (*Opfer*) of racist attacks by white gold-seekers.

Coloma was a very small town close to Sutter’s Mill. When the gold-seekers arrived, Coloma quickly grew into a big town with stores, hotels, saloons and casinos. Now only 300 people live in Coloma, and so many houses are empty that it partly looks like a ghost town.

Coloma is part of the Marshall Gold Discovery State History Park, which is named after James W. Marshall. Tourists can visit the old post office, James Marshall’s cabin and a modern reconstruction of Sutter’s Mill.

In Coloma you can also see a statue of James W. Marshall which marks his grave (*Grab*). The statue points to the place where Marshall discovered gold.