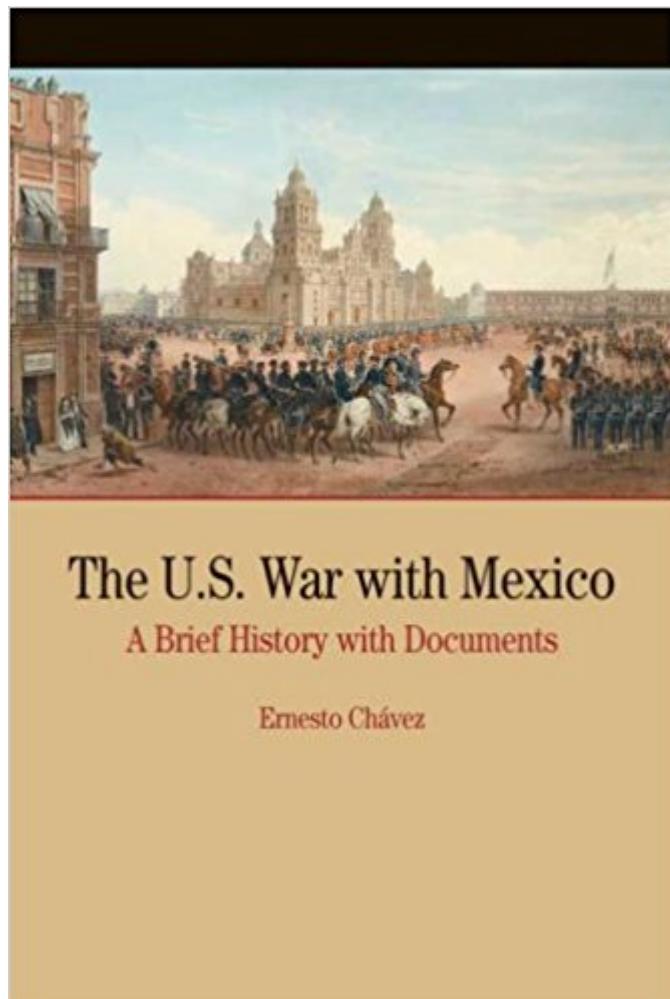


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The U.S. War With Mexico: A Brief History With Documents (Bedford Cultural Editions Series)



Synopsis

The U.S. war with Mexico was a pivotal event in American history, it set crucial wartime precedents and served as a precursor for the impending Civil War. With a powerful introduction and rich collection of documents, Ernesto Chávez makes a convincing case that as an expansionist war, the U.S.-Mexico conflict set a new standard for the acquisition of foreign territory through war. Equally important, the war racialized the enemy, and in so doing accentuated the nature of whiteness and white male citizenship in the U.S., especially as it related to conquered Mexicans, Indians, slaves, and even women. The war, along with ongoing westward expansion, heightened public debates in the North and South about slavery and its place in newly-acquired territories. In addition, Chávez shows how the political, economic and social development of each nation played a critical role in the path to war and its ultimate outcome. Both official and popular documents offer the events leading up to the war, the politics surrounding it, popular sentiment in both countries about it, and the war's long-term impact on the future development and direction of these two nations. Headnotes, a chronology, maps and a selected bibliography enrich student understanding of this important historical moment.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The 1846-1848 Mexican-American War may be interpreted as a bald-faced adventure in conquest; it may also be interpreted as an unfolding of "Manifest Destiny" in which the U.S. is bringing the "blessings of liberty" to the benighted peoples of the American Southwest. There are a range of

interpretations in between and beyond these two poles. This short general history emphasizes the racism of American invaders over the Mexican people and the imperialism that the author believes motivated the war. Ernesto Chavez, a professor of history at the University of Texas at El Paso, offers a brief introduction that ranges widely in time and space to fashion a narrative that suggests the racist tendencies in American society as predominant in this war. One example of this is in the discussion of the manner in which the Polk administration dealt with the British in negotiating the Oregon boundary at 49 degrees latitude when the president had campaigned on the slogan 54° 40' or fight. They didn't fight and ended up compromising. Not so with Mexico; the U.S. went to war and conquered that nation. It imposed its own settlement annexing what is now the American Southwest, including parts of California, Arizona, Utah, Nevada, and New Mexico. Chavez insists that this was because of the U.S.'s racialized outlook (p. 15). I would never conclude that the U.S. is not a racist nation, clearly it is, but fighting Mexico is quite a lot different than fighting the greatest empire on Earth at the time. It would be an easy decision in 1846 not to fight a two front war, and to negotiate a settlement with the stronger of the two antagonists regardless of a racialized outlook. I'm not sure I would assign racism as the fundamental reason for these divergent ways of dealing with Great Britain and Mexico.

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