

The Oldest Capital

Do you know what the oldest state capital in the United States is? It's not Boston, Massachusetts. It's not Richmond, Virginia. In fact, it's not any of the original 13 colonies.

The oldest state capital is Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Santa Fe is located in the north-central part of the state, near the Rocky Mountains and not far from the river called the Rio Grande. Spanish settlers founded the city as the capital of New Mexico in 1609—eleven years before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock.

Of course, the Spanish settlers did not find an empty land when they arrived in New Mexico. Native Americans already lived there. Spanish settlers and Native Americans exchanged goods and ideas as they built the new city called Santa Fe.

The Spanish settlers brought with them crops, such as wheat, onions, and apples. They also brought cattle, horses, and sheep – animals that changed the way of life in New Mexico forever. Native Americans gave the Spanish settlers corn and other local foods and showed the Spanish how to make *adobe*, the material Native Americans used to build their houses.

Adobe is a sun-dried brick made of mud and straw. An adobe house, with its flat roof and thick walls, is perfect for the desert climate of Santa Fe. It keeps the heat in during the winter and out during the summer. The Spanish contributed fireplaces, which could be used for warmth and for cooking.

Together the Spanish and Native Americans created the special and exciting culture of today's Santa Fe. If you walk around the city, you will see many adobe houses built in the original native style. At the *Plaza of Santa Fe*, in the heart of the city, you will find many Native American artists selling pottery, rugs, jewelry, and other handmade crafts.

At one side of the plaza is the *Palace of the Governors*, the first large building constructed in Santa Fe. That is where the local governor and other Spanish military leaders lived. It is the oldest public building in the United States, and it is still in use today. The Palace of the Governors is now a museum where you can learn about the history and the arts of New Mexico. Every year, at the end of July, an exhibition called the "Spanish Market" is held at the Palace of the Governors. Spanish and Indian artists from all over New Mexico come to the Palace to display their crafts. There you'll find many kinds of beautiful art, such as paintings done on wood and mirror frames made of tin - all done in the true New Mexican style.



The Palace of the Governors in Santa Fe, New Mexico was built in 1610.

Reading Mini-Assessment Grade 4
LA.4.1.6.3 and LA 4.1.6.9 Form A

Maybe you'll be lucky enough to be in Santa Fe when the *Festival of Santa Fe* takes place. First held in 1712, the festival celebrates the return of Spanish colonists to the city in 1962.

The festival is a weeklong party. It begins at night with the burning of a wooden figure named *Zozobra*, which represents "Old Man Gloom." Once gloom is destroyed, musicians play lively music in the plaza, and people dance in the streets. All kinds of local foods are sold in booths. Of course, lots of New Mexican food is flavored with hot chili peppers. So you'd better be careful about eating too many spicy foods, or your mouth will feel as though it's on fire. But not all the food is hot. For example, you'll find a soft fried bread called *sopapilla*. Put some honey on the sopapilla and eat the bread while it's still warm. It's a taste treat you'll remember for a long time.

If you do go to Santa Fe, be sure to see the *Loretto Chapel*. There's an unusual story about this church. It was completed in 1873, but it did not have a staircase to the loft because the architect was killed in a gunfight. Legend says that one day a stranger suddenly appeared looking for work. He built a wooden staircase. It is remarkable because it was fabricated without nails—only wooden pegs were used. The stranger then disappeared as suddenly as he came and was never heard from again. He did not even leave a bill for his work. Scientists who have studied the staircase say that the wood did not come from anywhere in New Mexico.

Who built the staircase? Where did the wood come from? No one knows for sure. It's all a mystery. It is part of the fascinating story of Santa Fe—the oldest capital in the United States—and one of the most interesting.



Loretto Chapel staircase

Reading Mini-Assessment Grade 4
LA.4.1.6.3 and LA 4.1.6.9 Form A

Name _____ Date _____

Directions: Read the passage and choose the correct answer.

1. Read this sentence from the article.

Spanish settlers founded the city as the capital of New Mexico in 1609—eleven years before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock.

What does the word *founded* mean?

- A. described
- B. established
- C. served
- D. supplied

2. Read this sentence from the article.

It is remarkable because it was fabricated without nails—only wooden pegs were used.

What does the word *fabricated* mean in this sentence?

- A. constructed
- B. introduced
- C. offered
- D. presented

3. Read this sentence from the article.

Every year, at the end of July, an exhibition called the “Spanish Market” is held at the Palace of the Governors.

An *exhibition* is

- A. a set of skills.
- B. a display of works.
- C. an arrangement of food.
- D. a collection of equipment.

Reading Mini-Assessment Grade 4
LA.4.1.6.3 and LA 4.1.6.9 Form A

4. Read this sentence from the article.

Together the Spanish and Native Americans created the special and exciting culture of today's Sante Fe.

As used in the sentence above, the word *culture* means

- A. way of life.
 - B. set of rules.
 - C. list of activities.
 - D. type of clothing.
5. Read this sentence from the article.

At the *Plaza of Santa Fe*, in the heart of the city, you will find many Native American artists selling pottery, rugs, jewelry, and other handmade crafts.

Which sentence uses the word *find* the same as it is used in the sentence above?

- A. Louis will try to find a solution to his problem.
 - B. I often find it hard to put my thoughts into words.
 - C. Our new neighbors will find that this is a nice place to live.
 - D. We hope that the judge will find the man guilty of the crime.
6. Read this sentence from the article.

At one side of the plaza is the *Palace of the Governors*, the first large building ever constructed in Santa Fe.

Which sentence uses the word *side* the same as it is used in the sentence above?

- A. My little sister likes to be right by my side.
- B. Lucy agreed with Calvin's side of the argument.
- C. There is a garden on each side of the front entrance of our school.
- D. All the players on our side lined up to meet the players on the opposing team.

Reading Mini-Assessment Grade 4
LA.4.1.6.3 and LA 4.1.6.9 Form A

7. Read this sentence from the article.

Every year, at the end of July, an exhibition called the “Spanish Market” is held at the Palace of the Governors.

Which meaning of the word *held* is the same one used in the sentence above?

- A. carried on
- B. considered
- C. contained
- D. controlled

8. Read this sentence from the article.

He did not even leave a bill for his work.

Which meaning of the word *bill* is the same one used in the sentence above?

- A. poster
- B. bird’s beak
- C. paper money
- D. list of money owed

Reading Mini-Assessment Grade 4
LA.4.1.6.3 and LA.4.1.6.9 Form A

ANSWER KEY

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Item #	Answer	Bench- mark
1.	B	163
2.	A	163
3.	B	163
4.	A	163
5.	C	169
6.	C	169
7.	A	169
8.	D	169

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