



**Pacific  
Standard  
Time: LA/LA**  
Latin American  
& Latino Art in LA

Teacher Resource Guide  
History/Social Studies Theme

# LOS ANGELES



## Essential Question

How has social transformation shaped life in Los Angeles?



Presenting Sponsors





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### Essential Question

How has social transformation shaped the character of Los Angeles? Explore this question with students using the artwork reproductions, art historical descriptions, and student discussion prompts provided. Then, transition from talking about art to writing about it using the following student reflection prompts:

1. What is a society?
2. How do ideas, beliefs, and events connect or unite a society?
3. How can ideas, beliefs, and events divide a society?
4. How do people, communities, and societies respond to change?
5. How do societies, in turn, change over time?

### Classroom Activity

Get a team together to propose a solution to a social climate issue at your school or in the community.

First, consider the definition of social climate. What aspects of the school or community are important to highlight? Focus on one condition to document and problem solve.

Next, what form will your solution take? What information or data will you need for development? Consider how team members can lend their knowledge and skills to the development. Think about an opportunity for each person to take a “leader” and a “learner” role and how pairs of team members will work together to design your solution.

Then, consider the form your proposal and accompanying presentation will take. What supplies and materials will you need in order to create and facilitate your presentation?

After presenting your work as a team, gather feedback and critique from classmates and community members.

### Vocabulary List

Society, belief, community, transformation, Chicano, journalism, injustice

### California State Content Standards for History/Social Science

Grade 8	Standard 8.12.7	Identify the new sources of large-scale immigration and the contributions of immigrants to the building of cities and the economy; explain the ways in which new social and economic patterns encouraged assimilation of newcomers into the mainstream amidst growing cultural diversity; and discuss the new wave of nativism.
Grade 11	Standard 11.8	Students analyze the economic boom and social transformation of post-World War II America.

### California Common Core State Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies

History/Social Studies: Text Types and Purposes

Grades 6–8	Standard 6–8.7	Integrate visual information (using, for example, charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.
Grades 11–12	Standard 11–12.7	Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (for example, visually, quantitatively, as well as in words), in order to address a question or solve a problem.





Actor and director Edward James Olmos as El Pachuco in a scene from *Zoot Suit* (1981).  
Courtesy of Universal Studios Licensing LLC



## LOS ANGELES

### Actor and director Edward James Olmos as El Pachuco in a scene from *Zoot Suit*

World War II brought on an era of economic austerity. Resources, everything from food to fabric, were rerouted to the war effort and rationed to American citizens. The amount of fabric needed to create the zoot suit (a flamboyant men's suit with an exaggerated silhouette) made the outfit a luxury item. In 1930s Los Angeles, the zoot suit became a point of contention between white servicemen stationed in the area and Mexican-American youth.

Originally made popular by jazz musicians, young Mexican-Americans appropriated the zoot suit as part of their pachuco culture. The media began to associate pachucos with gangs through their reporting of juvenile delinquency and rampant crime. Soon, whites began to see pachucos as a threat and servicemen, in particular, saw their outfits as unpatriotic. In 1943 the tension came to a head when servicemen assaulted young zoot suit-clad Latinos (and African Americans) across downtown and East Los Angeles. After the event, known as the Zoot Suit Riots, the suit was officially banned by the Los Angeles City Council.

The riots served as inspiration for Luis Valdez, actor, writer, director, and founder of El Teatro Campesino, a guerilla theater troupe that merged art with activism in the 1960s. His play *Zoot Suit*, which found a home at the Mark Taper Forum and later on Broadway, brought him critical acclaim in the 1970s. The play made the 1981 film of the same name possible, and here Edward James Olmos as the narrator, Pachuco, is heroically composed in a publicity portrait.

### Discussion Prompts for Students

- What do you see?
- How would you describe this man's style of dress?
- What can the details in the background tell us about him?
- Based on how the photographer has captured this portrait, what words would you use to describe him and why?
- How are physical appearance and social perception connected?

### See the film *Zoot Suit* at the Samuel Goldwyn Theater, presented by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences presents a series of film screenings, conversations with filmmakers, and online content exploring the shared influences of Latino and Latin American filmmakers and the work they created or presented in Los Angeles during the past half century. *From Latin America to Hollywood: Latino Film Culture in Los Angeles, 1967–2017* is centered on a period that began with the social, cultural, and political environment of the 1960s, which sparked the Chicano and New Latin American cinema movements and extends to the present day. The Academy's programming is grounded in its extensive series of oral histories with notable Latino and Latin American filmmakers. Their films are presented together with public conversations about filmmaking and, in some cases, premiere new Academy Film Archive restorations. The Academy's programs offer a rare opportunity for audiences to experience firsthand the perspectives of filmmakers including Gregory Nava, Lucrecia Martel, Edward James Olmos, and Alfonso Cuarón.





Photograph by La Raza Photographic Staff  
East L. A. High School Walkouts, 1968  
La Raza Newspaper & Magazine Records, Coll. 1000  
Courtesy of the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center



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### **East L. A. High School Walkouts**

La Raza Photographic Staff

The 1960s were a time of social unrest. In Lincoln Heights, the fight for equal justice and civil rights came directly into the classroom when students of Lincoln High School (among others) walked out of class in protest of the inequitable conditions of their schools. The staff of *La Raza* newspaper captured these and other protests, which shaped life in Los Angeles during a social revolution.

*La Raza* began as a basement operation at the Church of the Epiphany in Lincoln Heights. First printed on September 4, 1967, its monthly editions were produced by a staff of committed volunteers, young and old, bilingual and Spanish speakers, and covered such topics as immigration, education, police brutality, the Vietnam War, the plight of farm workers, and economic injustice. They worked together and taught one another—writers, photographers, and artists—using the newspaper as an organizing tool to record and disseminate information and to foster civic participation. The articles added a diversity of opinions and approaches to local media, at a time when no publications (English or Spanish) were discussing such topics. The newspaper, which eventually evolved into a magazine, provided a forum not only for writers and photographers but visual artists, poets, and musicians as well, giving rise to a multimedia expression.

The 25,000 negatives documenting the newspaper's history from its founding to its transformation into a magazine, and its ultimate demise in 1977, are now housed in the collections of the Chicano Studies Research Center at UCLA.

### **Discussion Prompts for Students**

- What do you see?
- What details help describe the action taking place in this photo?
- How would you describe the man's participation in the event?
- What purpose might have brought this man and photographer together?

### **See this artwork in the exhibition *LA RAZA* at the Autry Museum of the American West**

Published in Los Angeles from 1967 to 1977, the influential bilingual newspaper *La Raza* provided a voice to the Chicano Rights Movement. *La Raza* engaged photographers not only as journalists but also as artists and activists to capture the definitive moments, key players, and signs and symbols of Chicano activism. The archive of nearly 25,000 images created by these photographers, now housed at the Chicano Studies Research Center at UCLA, provides the foundation for an exhibition exploring photography's role in articulating the social and political concerns of the Chicano movement during a pivotal time in the art and history of the United States. *LA RAZA* is the most sustained examination to date of both the photography and the alternative press of the Chicano movement, positioning photography not only as an artistic medium but also as a powerful tool of social activism.





Carlos Almaraz (Mexico, 1941–1989).  
*Crash in Phthalo Green*, 1984.  
Oil on canvas

Los Angeles County Museum of Art, gift of the 1992 Collectors Committee  
© The Carlos Almaraz Estate



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### **Crash in Phthalo Green**

Carlos Almaraz

Artist Carlos Almaraz came of age in Los Angeles. Born in Mexico City in 1941, his family moved first to Chicago then to Los Angeles, where he attended Garfield High School, Los Angeles City College, and California State University, Los Angeles. During the 1970s, he was a leading figure in the Chicano rights movement, protesting alongside Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers and working as a backdrop painter for Luis Valdez's *El Teatro Campesino*, a 1960s guerilla theater troupe that merged art with activism. He also founded the artist collective Los Four with fellow painters Gilbert "Magu" Luján, Beto de la Rocha, Frank Romero, and, later, Judithe Hernández. His work as a Chicano activist, artist, and muralist brought him critical acclaim early on, but he quickly became disillusioned by his involvement in political activism.

Almaraz's work from the 1980s can be classified into a number of themes. He painted idyllic landscapes in his series of Echo Park landmarks; in contrast, he also painted an arresting series of car crashes—a theme he returned to again and again. *Crash in Phthalo Green* depicts the fiery moment when speeding cars collide, one of which skids and hops along the freeway while the other is tossed off the second-story ramp. The intensity of the vivid pigment phthalo green, referenced in the artwork's title, aptly describes the energy of the scene.

During this period in his life, Almaraz wavered between themes of tranquility and disruption. Perhaps the frenetic approach to his work was a response to an inner turmoil he dealt with about his identity and sexuality, at a time when Chicano culture (and culture at large) was not accepting of identities across the spectrum of sexuality. His untimely death at the age of forty-eight cut short his career, but important works exemplifying the evolution of his artistic practice are, for the first time, memorialized in the exhibition *Playing with Fire*.

### **Discussion Prompts for Students**

- What do you see?
- What action is taking place?
- What details did the artist include to describe the nature of what is happening?
- What might have driven the artist to paint this work?

### **See this artwork in the exhibition *Playing with Fire: Paintings by Carlos Almaraz at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art***

*Playing with Fire: Paintings by Carlos Almaraz* is the first major retrospective of one of the most influential Los Angeles artists of the 1970s and 1980s. Arguably the first of the many Chicano artists whose artistic, cultural, and political motivations catalyzed the Chicano art movement in the 1970s, Almaraz began his career with political works for the farm workers' *Viva la Causa* and cofounded the important artist collective Los Four. Although he saw himself as a cultural activist, Almaraz straddled multiple—and often contradictory—identities, which drew from divergent cultures and mores, and his art became less political in focus and more personal, psychological, dreamlike, even mythic and mystical, as he evolved artistically. The first to focus predominantly on Almaraz's large-scale paintings, the exhibition features more than sixty works and includes pastels, ephemera, and notebooks, mostly from 1967 through 1989, the year of the artist's untimely death at the age of forty-eight.