

Name: _____

The Battle of Palo Alto: Sounds, Sensations, Smells, and Sights

Directions: During the Battle of Palo Alto, U.S. and Mexican soldiers experienced a variety of sounds, sensations, smells, and sights.

Historians learn about what soldiers experienced by reading their letters, diaries and reports. These documents are called primary sources. Primary sources are first-hand accounts made by people who saw or were part of an event.

Another way historians learn about battles is by reading secondary sources. Secondary sources are records of an event written by someone who did not see or was not part of an event.

Read the primary and secondary quotes below.

When you are finished, use these quotes to fill out your graphic organizer.

The Soldiers' Experiences: Primary & Secondary Sources

The fire of cannon did much damage in our rank. – Mexican General Arista, Official battle report

The fire of artillery was now most destructive; openings were constantly made through the enemy's ranks by our fire, and the constancy with which the Mexican infantry sustained this severe cannonade was a theme of universal remark and admiration. Captain May's squadron . . . suffered severely from the fire of artillery.

As already reported in my first brief dispatch, the conduct of our officers and men was everything that could be desired. Exposed for hours to the severest trial, a cannonade of artillery, our troops displayed a coolness and constancy which gave me, throughout, the assurance of victory. – U.S. General Taylor, Official battle report

Instantly another [curl of smoke], and then another rich curl of smoke arose, succeeded by a booming sound, and the shot [cannonball] came crashing toward us. The enemy [Mexican army] fired very rapidly, and their [cannon]balls knocked the dust about us in all directions-some went over our heads, others struck the ground in front and bounded away.

We were ordered to lie down in the grass to avoid the [cannon] shot; this puzzled the enemy, and they could not bring their guns [cannon] to bear upon us, making our loss very small. Many were the narrow escapes; one ball came within six inches of my left

side. The force of the shot was tremendous . . . I watched the shot as it struck the roots of the grass, and it was astonishing how the dust flew. – Sergeant C.M. Reeves

The [cannon] fire was now destructive and deadly. . . The artillery of the Americans, much superior to ours, made horrid ravages in the ranks of the Mexican army. – Apuntes del Otro Lado (Notes from the Other Side) by Ramon Alcaraz, a secondary document

Vocabulary

Rank: A line of soldiers standing side by side

Ranks *plural*: The group of enlisted persons in an army

Bear upon: To go in the indicated direction

Artillery: Large weapon that uses gunpowder to fire shots, such as cannon

Constancy: Strength of mind that lets a person meet danger, pain, or hardship with courage

Squadron: A group of soldiers moving and working together

Dispatch: Message

Assurance: The state of being sure or confident

Ravage: Destructive action or effect