**The Santa Fe Trail for Rayado**

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Feel free to email or message on Twitter any questions you may have over the summer, or any insights into the camps and roles that you play.

The Santa Fe Trail is one of the most significant routes in the U.S. As your camp profile indicates, the trail opened in 1821 when Mexico became independent of Spain. As an empire, Spain practiced a version of mercantilism, coined by Adam Smith to denote system of empire with the goal of promoting a favorable balance of trade through economic protectionism and self-sufficiency. Under such a system, colonies must trade with, and receive imported goods through, the mother country to ensure that hard currency is not traded away through the colonies.

Part of the American and Mexican revolutions embraced free trade as a liberal idea that produced the best outcomes, according to Adam Smith. Give people liberty to trade and the economy will gravitate towards optimum equilibrium. In other words, prior to 1821 Santa Fe and New Mexico were closed to trade with the outside world; after 1821 it was free to trade.

The Santa Fe Trail brought something that was profound for New Mexico: American commercial influence. In 1846, it brought an American army to seize the territory during the Mexican-American War. After the region was firmly in U.S. control, the trail became a supply and migration highway.

The Santa Fe Trail differed from its more famous cousin, the Oregon Trail, in that it was primarily commercial and not for emigration. The Oregon Trail produced a library of diaries and accounts of the journey, as most people who did it were making a permanent change and knew it would alter their lives. The Santa Fe Trail was more about business.

This also meant that the Santa Fe Trail was more often targeted by Indian raiders, particularly the Kiowa and Comanche. The wagons on the Santa Fe Trail were large and loaded with trade goods that Native Americans could use, as opposed to the Oregon trail with its parade of what amounted to the family mini-van. Which would you rather raid: a family car or a Best Buy semi truck?

A famous story, and one worth looking up in Kit Carson’s autobiography or Hampton Sides’ *Blood and Thunder*, is that of Ann White. She was kidnapped and Carson accompanied the dragoons that chased the Apache band to the east, around Tucumcari. The found their camp abandoned and White had just been killed. Caron found among her possessions a dime novel by Charles Avaral. These books were called “blood and thunder” for their wild portrayals of frontier life; the hero of this book was non other than Kit Carson.