



Los Altos Historical Commission and Los Altos History Museum  
40<sup>th</sup> Annual Margaret Thompson Historical Essay Contest  
For 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> Graders

## 2024 Theme: Your Pathway to California – Inspired by the El Camino Real

### Essay Prompt

#### Background:

Step back in time through an important part of California's history at the Los Altos History Museum's current exhibit "El Camino Real: Changing California." Go on a journey through the rich and sometimes controversial past of this iconic "Royal Road" as you visit some Spanish Missions, learn about the impact these missions had on the Indigenous communities, and see the bells that continue to mark the road today. As you view the businesses that once lined the road, you and your family will be able to reminisce about your favorites. Finally, take a look ahead as you celebrate the past and think of ways to revitalize this road which is part of California's ever-changing story.

Come to the Museum any time before March 3, Thursday-Sunday, 12-4 p.m., to view this exhibit. For more information on this exhibit, please visit this website:

<https://www.losaltoshistory.org/exhibit/el-camino-real/>

The history of our state is the story of the people who came here- including ourselves! People are still coming here today. Even as you read this, newcomers are unpacking their bags. Our own immigration stories can help to explain why people continue to move to California and the Bay Area.

#### Writing Prompt:

**In this essay, you will write about your family's pathway to California.**

To begin, have a conversation with family members about their journey to California. You might need information from your mom/dad, a grandparent, another close relative, or you if you moved to California yourself! Think of yourself as an investigator as you discover your families' story through photographs, journals, and memories. Here are some questions to help you research your family's adventure:

*How and why did your family come to California? Where did your family originate before their move here? What form of transportation was taken? What did California offer that attracted your family to come here? Are there interesting adventures that brought your family to this area? Are there any California landmarks that inspired your journey? If your family has been in California for several generations, you could tell us what California factors have kept you here.*

Either before or after writing, do one of these activities: draw a map of your family's journey, paint or draw a picture inspired by your family's story or include a photograph, or two, that represent aspects of your travels. Your visual contribution will enhance your California story, but its inclusion is not part of the rubric.

Now, tell us about your family's pathway to California. As you write your essay, include ideas from the discussions you have had with family members. Use interesting vocabulary and communicate your ideas in a creative manner. Originality and descriptive language are encouraged. Include your map, painting, drawing, or photos with your essay when you submit it.

#### Win Prizes

1<sup>st</sup> Place - \$50    2<sup>nd</sup> Place - \$30    3<sup>rd</sup> Place - \$20  
3 Winners Per Grade Level!