

Jovocme



An Yrgin Girl at Mission San José (composite)

1806

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Storybook Summary

Teacher Introduction

Jovocme is a composite character from the Mission Era of California history. She represents the thousands of native people who made the change from a traditional indigenous life to life in a Spanish mission. This change came about by choice for some, by force for others, and for most because they had no other option.

Her name comes from the baptismal records at Mission San Jose. It is known to mean “the shell bead.” Jovocme entered into mission life at 5 years old in the year 1803 and died there in 1832. She was a member of the Yrgin tribe, who lived in the San Lorenzo Creek Watershed. We know nothing else about her, yet we can suggest a story of her childhood at the mission.

The use of primary source materials from the missions, the presidios, and pueblos has allowed scholars to reconstruct a likely history of the migration of native people to the missions. Additionally, family histories, archaeological evidence, and oral histories taken from elder mission Indians in the 1800s provide more information. Ohlone descendants today also help us learn about their ancestor’s past. We are grateful to Dr. Randall Milliken, an anthropologist who is widely recognized as an authority on Bay Area tribal people, Beverly Ortiz, a staff member at Coyote Hills Regional Park, and Andrew Galvan, curator at Mission Dolores and Ohlone tribal member, for advising us on this story.

From the research, it is clear that the destruction of Bay Area tribal life was nearly complete by the 1830s. The earliest recruitment of native people to Mission Dolores and Mission Santa Clara began in the late 1770s. The first people to be initiated into mission life were typically the young and the curious – teenagers and newlyweds seeking new adventures in life. They were drawn to the material culture of the Spaniards.

But over time pressure from the missions and the military led to a breakdown of the tribal system and environmental degradation in the region forcing people to move to the missions. Village social life and the trade economy weakened. Conflicts arose between the tribes that resisted the Spanish intrusion and those that were more accepting of the new power structure. The once plentiful sources of food were being depleted by the overgrazing of mission livestock and the introduction of invasive plant species. Overall, traditional life for the native people was over.

Jovocme

Mission San Jose was founded in 1797. Tribes living in the San Leandro and San Lorenzo Creek watersheds began moving there between 1799 and 1805 (mostly in 1802 and 1803). These were the Yrgins and Jalquins (which may have actually been one group according to Milliken). The Jalquins, and most successfully, the Saclans (east of present day Oakland and the Lafayette area) resisted the Spaniards for many years. But by 1802, their localized power was crushed. The population of Mission San Jose also included people from all along the East Bay and the Livermore Valley.

In 1806, a massive measles epidemic swept the Bay Area missions. At Mission San Jose, between March and April, 30% of the population there died. This included $\frac{3}{4}$ of the children under the age of 5.

The story that Jovocme tells of the special dance holiday that happened later that April, is based on accounts from the Russian traveler George von Langsdorff. While the foreigner assumed their dance depicted battle between people, Milliken suggests the enemy in the dance represented their battle with the measles. Again, there is no way to know for sure, but certainly, the native people at that time had many foes.

In relating the Mission era to young children, it is easy to only tell the practical side of the story – who lived at the missions and what they did. However, telling students the full story, complete with its violence, disease, disempowerment, and death, is difficult in elementary education. When working with Jovocme's story, be mindful of how we have constructed her words. We have attempted to illustrate her life in terms of change. The story is both tragic and hopeful – reflecting the experience of native people who were faced with epic challenges, yet remain vital to this day.

Jovocme

Introduction



Hello, my name is Jovocme. My name means “the shell bead” in my language.

Jovocme = ho-voke-may

I lived at Mission San Jose with my family and many people from other villages. **Padre Cueva** was in charge of the **mission**.

The King of Spain wanted many lands like ours to be part of Spain. So the mission was set up to teach my people how to be like Spanish people.

Let me tell you about how we came to live there and what it was like.

Strangers in the Land

When I was a little girl, my family lived along the creek with many other families. I was very young but I remember playing with my sisters and cousins as our mothers made baskets. Sometimes Mother would let us help her pick the special plants she needed to make the baskets. Our family was happy.



One day, we heard a story about strange men with light skin who came from the south riding four-legged animals. What kind of men would use animals to get around we wondered.

More stories about these men were shared by the men who traded with other tribes and villages. Soon, it was learned that some **tribes people** were helping the white strangers build strong buildings and homes.

The elders in our village spent many hours discussing this. They wondered why the strangers came, what they wanted, and when they would leave. Over time, we understood that the strangers were not leaving. In fact, they wanted us to live with them and learn their ways.

Jovocme

Some of the grown-ups from our village went to see for themselves. They went to the place called Mission San Jose. Some of them were so interested that they stayed. Over time, more moved to live this new life. But many others did not want to go. Sometimes our people fought with the strangers, because they did not want to go to the mission.

My Family's Move

The elders in our village were very sad, because many of our people went to live at Mission San Jose. There weren't enough people to do the work.

The hunters could not find as many animals for our food. This was because the animals from Mission San Jose were roaming all over eating too much grass. But our hunters were not allowed to hunt the Mission San Jose animals.



Image Credit: Mission San Jose by Chesley Bonestall

Life was becoming hard.

So the elders in our village decided that we should go to Mission San Jose too and join with the rest of our people. My parents were sad to move. So was I.

We packed up all of our rabbit blankets, cooking baskets, and tools. Mother made us a big breakfast and we took **deer jerky** to eat along the way.

All the families left the village in the morning and headed south for Mission San Jose. I was so little then that Father carried me on his shoulders for most of the trip. My older sisters had to walk. We walked all day and arrived there in the evening.

When we arrived at Mission San Jose we saw big buildings. They weren't made of tule or willow like our homes. They were tall and smooth and white. There were so many people there, all working at different jobs.

The elders from our village were greeted by people from nearby villages. Mother and Father were happy to see so many people they knew. But they were also nervous about meeting the white men in charge.

The chiefs at Mission San Jose are called Spaniards. Some of them were priests and some of them were warriors. Our elders had a long talk with the Spanish chiefs and other tribes' chiefs. Soon we went to our new home.

Jovocme

One of the men from our village had been living at Mission San Jose. We followed him to an area where there were many **tule** houses, just like ours back home. I was happy to see something familiar.

Life at the Mission

Life at the mission was very different from our life along the creek. There was much more work to do. We could not do many of the **traditions** we used to. We didn't even eat the same food anymore.



Adobe bricks were made by hand. They were used to build the mission and other buildings. It was hard work to mix the dirt, water, and straw to make adobe.

Many people got sick from the food. Our bodies were not used to it. There were other sicknesses that took many lives. This made us very sad. When someone died, we said a special prayer for them in our language, even though Padre Cueva wanted us to pray like him.

We went to the Spanish church every morning. We sang and prayed in the Spanish language. But at night, the elders made sure we also sang and prayed in our own language and honored our own traditions.

Father worked with other men from our village doing many jobs. Mostly they tended to the animals. These animals were different from the deer and the elk that we knew. Cows stood around all day and ate grass. They didn't even run away. This made it easy for the men to kill them. The meat tasted different too. But I learned to like it.

Mother and the other women weaved blankets on **looms**. Because they were such good basket makers, the women made very good loom weavers. The blankets and the leather from the cows were sold to trading ships from other parts of the world.

When I was old enough to work, I helped in the garden. Some of the other children and I picked weeds. This was a very strange thing to do. Why were some plants more important than other plants in the garden? The elders taught us that all plants and animals were important. But the Spaniards didn't think so.

One day a week – called Sunday – we got to rest. Every so often, Mother and some of the other women were able to pick plants for basket making. Mother taught me to make a basket. I was very proud of my basket.

Jovocme

A Day for Dance

One day we had a special festival. Padre Cueva told us that we needed to get ready for a feast and dance. So all day we did not have to do our chores. Instead, we prepared lots of food.

The elders made things that they would need for the dance. One thing they made was a pretend person made out of **tule** reeds.

Padre Cueva gave the elders their **ceremonial objects** that he kept locked up. The elders were so happy to have these treasures. They put on their dance costumes, jewelry, and headdresses. They even got their **bows** and **arrows** to use in the dance.

The reason that we did the dance was to welcome some special guests from a far away country called Russia. The Spaniards were very excited to have these people visiting. But I know that the elders were more excited just to do the dance.



Credit: Courtesy of The Bancroft Library

During the celebration each tribe got to do their own dances and sing their songs. It was wonderful to hear the music. Music is so important to my people. The Spaniards like music too, but theirs is different.

One of our dances was about warriors. The big tule reed doll was placed in the center of the dancing area. The dancers pretended to fight with it and finally won the battle. This was exciting!

After the dancing and singing, we had a big feast. I think that the Russian guests liked the celebration. We sure did!

It was hard to fall asleep that night after all the excitement of the day.

Jovocme

Vocabulary

arrow – a long thin piece of wood with a sharp rock (an arrow head) at the end used to hunt

bow – a thin piece of wood with string tied to each end used for shooting an arrow into the air

ceremonial objects – special items used during ceremonies and celebrations

deer jerky – dried deer meat to eat

honored – to show how important something is

loom – a frame used for weaving

mission – a church with a farm and small village

padre – the Spanish word for “father,” a leader of a church

traditions – an important activity that people do time after time

tribes people – members of a tribe or group of people who share the same culture

tule – type of plant that grows along the shoreline, a reed.

Jovocme

Lesson Plans

People: Jovocme
Timeline: European Exploration and Settlement
Pathways: Ohlone Trails, El Camino Real
Classroom Kit: Alta California



1 - Life at Mission San Jose – Agriculture

Activity Goals

- ✓ To show students how life for the Ohlone changed with the coming of new settlers
- ✓ To introduce students to what life

Setting the Context

Settlement in the East Bay by Spanish Missionaries began in 1797 with the founding of Mission San Jose, now in present-day Fremont. The land claimed by this mission stretched from present-day Concord in the North to present-day Milpitas in the South and included San Leandro, San Lorenzo, Hayward, and parts of Castro Valley. Native people who were relocated to Mission San Jose included the Ohlone, as well as valley Yokuts and coastal Miwoks. The site where Mission San Jose was established was called Oroysom by the native people.

The bulk of the work at the missions was done by native people. However, most of this work required training. In the early years of Spanish colonization, Spain sent about 20 artisans from Mexico to train the native people in stone and brick masonry, carpentry, pottery, tanning, blacksmithing, shoemaking, and loom weaving. Even agriculture was a new skill for people who had previously gathered and hunted their food. Padres oversaw the work and tended to church matters, and a handful of soldiers (mostly at the presidios and pueblos) provided security and captured laborers who tried to escape.

Activity Instructions

After reading Jovocme’s story, students can complete this worksheet.

Jovocme



<i>People:</i>	Jovocme
<i>Timeline:</i>	European Exploration and Settlement
<i>Pathways:</i>	Ohlone Trails, El Camino Real
<i>Classroom Kit:</i>	Alta California

In Jovocme's story, she talks about her move to Mission San Jose and what it was like to live there. Her people had to learn new skills. Two new things they had to do were:

- Tend to the animals
- Grow plants in a garden

Tend to the animals

1. What kind of animals lived at Mission San Jose that were new to Jovocme?

2. Whose job was it to tend the animals? (circle) Men Women

3. Why do you think cows were raised at the mission? What were they used for?

All the cows had to be branded. A brand showed that the cow belonged to Mission San José.

This is what the brand looked like:



Pretend that your school owns a herd of cattle. Design a brand for these cows.

Jovocme



<i>People:</i>	Jovocme
<i>Timeline:</i>	European Exploration and Settlement
<i>Pathways:</i>	Ohlone Trails, El Camino Real
<i>Classroom Kit:</i>	Alta California

Grow plants in a garden

The adults had to do most of the work in the garden. But children like Jovocme helped by picking weeds.

1. Why did Jovocme think it was strange to pick weeds?

2. Look at this list of crops grown at Mission San Jose. Draw a picture of a meal that you could make using these ingredients. Don't forget a drink and dessert.

pear peach apple lime fig grape quince pomegranate olive squash corn bean tomato grain honey
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Jovocme

Lesson Plan

People: Jovocme
Timeline: European Exploration and Settlement
Pathways: Ohlone Trails, El Camino Real
Classroom Kit: Alta California



2 - Life at Mission San Jose – Music

Activity Goals

✓ To show students how life for the Ohlone changed with the coming of new settlers











Setting the Context

Life at every mission included music. Father Narcisco Duran is the most well-known of the Spanish padres for his musical devotion at Mission San Jose. Discuss different types of musical instruments and styles which the students are familiar and the types of instruments used by Father Duran and the mission musicians. Talk about when, where, and why we listen to music today. Ask the students about their own musical preferences.

Activity Instructions – Rap It

1. Begin by looking at the sheet music samples. Students will notice that music has both words and musical notes. Notice that the hymns are written in Latin, the original language used by the Catholic Church.
2. Have students create two or three sentences that make a rhyming poem (lyrics) which will then be turned into a song. Have students choose a topic that fits in with this unit (working in the fields, tending the livestock, learning a new language, etc.).
3. Once their poem is complete, students will create a “beat” for their lyrics. During the Mission era, musical beats were given different names depending on their length.

<i>doblado</i>	= whole note	= 2 beats
<i>breve</i>	= half note	= 1 beat
<i>semi-breve</i>	= quarter note	= ½ beat
<i>minima</i>	= eighth note	= ¼ beat

ITEM	NOTE	REST	VALUE (number of beats)
Whole note/rest			4
Half note/rest			2
Quarter note/rest			1
Eighth note/rest			1/2
Sixteenth note/rest			1/4

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4. Using the Free Metronome Online (<http://www.metronomeonline.com/>), have the students practice humming or clapping the lengths of the beats. For example, to practice *doblado*, have students hum for two whole beats; to practice *semi-breve*, have students hum two times per beat. Challenge students to practice both simple and complicated beats along with the metronome. You can change the speed of the beats as well, to demonstrate how a faster or slower speed changes the feel of the rhythm.
5. Using these notes, have students make a simple rhythm to go with their poem. Use the blank sheet music found in Appendix 10 to write down their new song.
6. Students can perform for the class, but also encourage them to take their poems home and share them with their families.

Name: _____

Jovocme

Lesson Plan

People: Jovocme
Timeline: European Exploration and Settlement
Pathways: Ohlone Trails, El Camino Real
Classroom Kit: Alta California



3 - Ohlone Indian Life – At the Village and in the Mission

Activity Goal
✓ To compare past and present ways of life

Instructions:

Fill in the chart comparing their lives with those of Huimucse, Jovocme and yourself.

Question	Huimucse	Jovocme	Me
My home is made out of:			
My favorite kinds of food are:			
I wear clothing made out of:			
I have these chores to do each day:			
For fun, I like to:			

Jovocme

How to Play Staves

This was a popular game played by Ohlone and other California Indians.

Players

Staves can be played by 2 or more payers. Each player will take turns tossing the staves.

Materials Needed:

The game requires six staves and ten to twelve counters. The staves are usually flat and undecorated on one side and rounded with a painted or burned design on the other. These designs are decorative and have nothing to do with the scoring. Materials used for making staves are elderberry or dogwood and counters are usually made out of willow.

Instructions

- Toss the staves on the ground
- Count the number of staves that are face up (rounded side).
- Count number of staves that are face down (flat side).

Scoring

Scoring depends on the number of staves that are face up. For each point, a counting stick is awarded.

3 round + 3 flat showing = 1 counter

All flat or All round showing = 2 counters

Any other combination = 0 counters

When a player scores, (s)he goes again. If the rolling player does not score, the other player goes. The person with the most counting sticks wins.

Storybook Summary - *Huimucse & Jovocme*

Home to Medicine Mountain

By Chiori Santiago, Illustrated by Judith Lowry

Children's Book Press, San Francisco, 1998

This richly illustrated book, set in the 1930s, is based on a true story of a boy and his cousin who grow up living between their home in Northern California and an Indian boarding school in Riverside. Benny Len and Stanley are Maidu boys, who like hundreds of other native people, were shipped away to school so that they could “unlearn Indian ways.”

Their experiences at boarding school are typical of all the children who attended these government-sponsored schools. The book brings up nuances of life that the boys encountered such as learning through scholastics versus storytelling as is the way in their culture, and going by time on the clock rather than by the sun and the seasons. Benny Len makes observations about food, clothing, and relationship between people.

After the boys first year at school, they realize that they will not be going home for summer break because no one will be paying for the trip. So Benny Len promises Stanley that they will find a way home to Susanville. The boys end up jumping the train and riding the several hundreds of miles between school and home, seeing many things along the way. They will repeat this journey each year.

- Written and illustrated by Native Americans and recommended by the Indian press
- Winner of the American Book Award
- A Notable Book by the Association for Library Service for Children

Discussion Topics

- Indian boarding schools
- Changes in lifeways for Indian people as society changed around them
- Differences in the boy's life between home and at the boarding school
- Riding the rails
- Similarities between the story of Benny Len and Stanley with the *Crossroads* children:
 - Jovocme and her family moved to Mission San Jose and had to learn the lifestyle of the Spaniards, and in many ways gave up their traditional ways. What new customs and skills were learned by the Indian children in both stories?
 - Jovocme, Mary, and Francisco had to learn English. What were the ways that each of these children learned to speak a new language?
 - The stories of Benny Len and Stanley and that of John Campbell are set in the 1930s, during the Great Depression. How were the lives of these boys the same and how were they different?

Storybook Summary - Huimucse & Jovocme

Ooti- A Child of Nisenan

The American River Natural History Association, Carmichael, 2000

The main character, Ooti, is from a tribe on the American River. There are many similarities to the lives of the native people who lived in the Bay Area. Ooti, a girl of 9 summers, shares information about many aspects of her life. She describes her village, home, and chores and talks about other members of her family and tribe. The story culminates with Big Time.

This book has been recommended by the Indian press. One reason may be something that stands out from other books about native people – Ooti is drawn with a smile. This small detail draws the reader into the life of this child as a *real* person. It gives her a personality and helps us relate to her.

About half of the book is comprised of photocopy-able activities: reading comprehension, word games, worksheets, and crafts. It also includes Ooti’s favorite story – the Creation myth from her culture.

Discussion Topics

- Reliance on the land for sustenance
- Family unit includes grandparents
- Distinct gender roles
- Importance of age (coming of age, the “adult world”)
- Importance of Big Times for tradition, community, socialization, trade
- Compare Ooti’s story with that of the *Crossroads* children Huimucse and Jovocme

Storybook Summary - *Jovocme*

Missions of San Francisco Bay

By Tekla N. White

Lerner Publications Company, 1996

This book gives an overview of the missions in the San Francisco Bay area, including Mission San Jose where the *Crossroads* child “Jovocme” lived in the early 1800s. It begins with a glossary and pronunciation guide of Spanish words. There is a succinct preface that gives meaning to California Indian culture before and during the Mission Era.

Because of the reading level, this book is probably best read aloud by the teacher. It has good images and maps throughout. An introduction to the Spanish missions is followed by four parts. Part 1 is a description of the Bay Area tribes, including the Ohlone (page 18). On page 20 there is a short list of some of the very few known Ohlone words – mostly animal names. Next is an overview of Spanish exploration and settlement at the missions. Mission San Jose is highlighted on page 38. Part 3 takes a brief look at secularization, the subsequent Mexican rancho era, and California statehood. The final part features information about modern times at the missions. Page 76 provides a short chronology of the Mission Era.

Discussion Topics

- Impacts of Spanish colonization on the native California people
- Differences and similarities between the Bay Area peoples
- Differences and similarities between the various Bay Area missions
- Discuss what the *Crossroads* child Jovocme’s life must have been like at Mission San Jose