How To Use This Lesson:

This lesson is divided into 5 parts including a PowerPoint, an art project, a group activity, vocabulary and thought-provoking discussion. It could be used for a week long instruction or broken into individual parts.

Overview:

Students will learn how early Hispanic settlers used the resources available for protection in the territorial days of New Mexico.

Background:

Many of the early settlers in the Rio Bonito Valley arrived in the 1850s and came from the Socorro and Manzano areas of New Mexico. Safety was one of the first concerns settlers had to contend with when they arrived in a new area. Apache tribes already lived in this area and they did not want new people moving into their land, hunting where they hunted, diverting water from the river or disturbing sacred sites.

Upon arriving in the place they called La Placita, (which means village by the pretty river), the Hispanic settlers first built a round, rock and adobe structure, called the torreon, for protection from Apache attacks.

The torreon is thought to have been 4 stories tall and had several interior levels. There was almost always someone on watch for trouble and when the sentry sounded the alarm, the men would occupy the upper levels of the torreon while the women and children huddled together on the ground level. The torreon had a fireplace for warmth and the families mostly stayed there at night. They only brought food for the children, but during the day, they would come out to go to their jacales.

The torreon was surrounded by a wall, possibly as high as 10 feet, and this became the plaza for the beginning of the community. Once the settlers had a place to go in case of trouble, they could begin to build their homes. The homes were very basic, simply wooden posts driven into the ground with the gaps

NM Standards:

Strand: History

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- II-A – Describe how contemporary and historical people and events influenced New Mexico communities and regions.
- II-C1. – Explain how geographic factors have influenced people, including settlement patterns and population distribution in New Mexico, past and present.
- II-C2. – Describe how environments, both natural and man-made, have influenced people and events over time and describe how places change.
- II-E – Describe how economic, political, cultural and social processes interact to shape patterns of human populations and their interdependence, cooperation and conflict.
filled in by mud. These mud homes were called jacaless (/hāˈkäl/) and were built in close proximity to the torreon. The villagers then dug trenches from their jaca to the torreon so that they could go to the safety of the tower without being exposed as they ran between their homes and the torreon. If they had time, they would also drive their livestock inside the plaza walls of the torreon compound, because their livestock was usually their most valuable possession.

The torreon in Lincoln was built by Enrique Trujillo, with the help of other early settlers in La Placita (now Lincoln). The Lincoln torreon played an important role in protecting Lincoln’s citizens during the Horrell and Lincoln County Wars. By the early 1900s, however, it was already in disrepair. In 1935, the Chaves County Historical Society took on reconstruction of the torreon under the Federal Reconstruction Act.

**Vocabulary**

natural features – things in the environment that are created by nature such as rocks, water, plants, trees, mountains, and soil

manmade features – things in the environment created by humans such as buildings, bridges, roads, pipelines and wells. Sometimes manmade features can look like natural features, but would not have happened without human intervention.

Adobe – a common building material using mud, clay and straw, which can be sun-baked into bricks or daubed on like plaster

mortar – a substance used between or stones to hold them together

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**Day 1**

**Anticipatory Set:**

Questions:

- Why do we have lockdown procedures?
- Ask the students to recall the school procedures for lockdown.
- Now ask students to imagine they are out in the open (on the playground or commons area) when danger arrived. What would they do?

**Learning Activity:**

- Explain that when settlers first arrived in the west, they needed to live near water, but living near a river sometimes meant that their homes were on wide-open landscapes with few places to hide in case of danger.
- Ask for examples of the different natural features in New Mexico (mountains, plains, hills, high desert).
- Discuss natural features of the landscape where people might have hidden from danger upon first arriving in an undeveloped landscape and the benefits and drawbacks for each.
  - caves
    - protected on 3 sides, but typically only one way out
  - trees
    - hard to climb fast enough, especially for children
    - dangerous to sleep and no way to escape
    - few trees on the plains and in the desert
  - hills & mountains
    - hard to outrun the danger on steep terrain
    - advantage – height (this will lead into discussion about why the torreon was built so tall, possibly 4 stories high)
• Discuss the difference between natural and manmade features in the environment. Use specific examples nearby (school building, playground equipment, bridges or overpasses, trees, etc.)

• Ask the students to imagine there was no Lowes, Home Depot or Wal Mart. Without a place to buy building supplies, what would people in the southwest use?

• Discuss adobe as a building material. Explain how it has been used by Southwest people for centuries because it takes only 3 ingredients (dirt with clay, water and straw), it can as mortar or be formed into bricks and bakes naturally in the sun, stays cool in the summer and retains heat from a fireplace in the winter.
SWBATD comprehend the purpose of the historic Lincoln torreon by explaining how it served as a defensive structure.

Materials:
- computer with PowerPoint presentation
- projector
- white board or screen

Day 2~
Anticipatory Set:
Questions:
- “Did anyone’s house get invaded by aliens last night? If your house had been invaded by aliens, where would you have gone?
- Now imagine you didn’t have a house, in fact, there were no houses or buildings around. Did you see any natural features in your environment where you could have hidden from the aliens?”

Discussion:
- Ask “if aliens did suddenly show up, what might we speculate brought them here?” (Our planet’s resources such as water, food, minerals.)
- Discuss how we might feel about these creatures coming into our world and the fear that they might take the things that we need to survive.
- Explain how it is a human instinct to want to protect our basic survival necessities. Sometimes a culture will invade another culture to acquire things that aren’t necessities, such as gold or other precious metals. But through most of human history, battles and wars were fought over food, water and land.

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Lockdown In Lincoln, Part II

Learning Activity:
Torreon Power Point. The following is covered in the PP presentation, but if unable to show PP presentation:

- Many of the early Hispanic settlers who came to the Rio Bonito Valley came from the Monzano and Socorro areas of New Mexico territory. They were farmers and shepherders who had lived near the Rio Grande. **What do you think made them move?** (Raids by Native American Tribes? Drought? The search for better land and a better life?)

- To the Hispanic settlers, valleys to the southeast appeared perfect for settlement. The soil was fertile for planting, game was abundant in the hills and mountains and a river flowed through the valleys providing water.

- Unfortunately, the water that had created the fertile valley and filled the river was from “The Sacred Mountain,” Sierra Blanca. The Apache people did not want settlers moving in and scaring off the game, diverting water from the river or trespassing on their sacred, ancestral sites.

- Despite concerns of Apache retaliation, a few families moved into the valley. They called their new home La Placita del Rio Bonito, which means “village by the pretty river.” **Placita** is Spanish for “little plaza.”

- **What do you think was the first structure the settlers decided to build?**

- Led by Enrique Trujillo, the families worked together to build a **torreon**. Torreons were common in early New Mexico settlements. They served as a place of safety and defense for the settlers.

- The torreon in La Placita may have originally been four stories tall, with interior levels like a layered cake, and surrounded by a 10 foot wall.

- Once the settlers had a place to go for safety, they could build their individual homes. There were no Home Depot, Lowe’s Home Improvement or WalMart stores in the 1850s. **What could the settlers use for building materials?**

- The settlers used what was available to build **jacals** (*huh-kahls*). First they would drive wood posts into the ground at intervals. Then smaller horizontal branches would be woven or tied between the vertical posts for support.

- Then mud or adobe was used to plaster the wood posts which made the jacal weatherproof. **Adobe** is made by mixing clay soil, water and straw. It stays cool in the summer and holds in heat when a fire is built in the winter.

- The jacals were built in close proximity to the torreon. The villagers then dug trenches from their jacal to the torreon so that they could go to the safety of the tower without being exposed as they ran between their homes and the torreon.

- A **sentry**, or person who keeps watch, would sound an alarm at the first sign of danger. If there was time, the villagers would herd their animals inside the wall surrounding the torreon. The animals were often the most valuable possessions that the people had.

Vocabulary

torreón – a round, tower-like, fortified building, used as a defensive structure

sentry – a person strategically placed to watch for danger

placita – Spanish for “little plaza” as in a town square

jacal - *häh-käl/- a housing structure made of close-set poles tied together; then filled with mud, clay and grasses.
Learning Activity cont.

- Once inside the safety of the plaza compound, the men took their weapons and occupied the upper levels of the torreon. The women and children huddled together on the ground level.
- The torreon had a fireplace for warmth and the families mostly stayed there at night. The women only brought food for the children, but during the day, the villagers would come out and go to their jacals.
- **Can you imagine squeezing into a small space with all of your family and neighbors?** You had no way to know how long you were going to be in there!
- The torreon had several advantages that made it an effective defensive structure. **What do you think those advantages might have been?** (Height for a 360 degree view. Thick, rock walls for strength. Small windows to safely aim and fire.)
- The La Placita torreon played an important role in protecting the citizens of Lincoln (formerly La Placita) during the Horrell and Lincoln County Wars. Sadly, by the early 1900s, the torreon had almost disappeared. In fact, very few of New Mexico’s original torreons still exist.
- In 1935, the Chaves County Historical Society took on reconstruction of the torreon under the Federal Reconstruction Act. Today, the Lincoln torreon still stands as a symbol of the challenges of life in early New Mexico.

**Closure:**

- **Exit Ticket:** Write down 3 reasons that the torreon worked well as a defensive structure. (Possible answers: height, made of rock, thick walls, small holes for shooting, 360 degree view.)

**Homework:**

“Tonight, think about ways that your family defends the home from intrusion.” (Locked doors, dog, security/alarm systms, shrubs under windows, etc.)
**Lockdown in Lincoln, Part III**

**Safety and Security in La Placita**

**Social Studies Lesson Plan**

**Grades 4, 5 & 7**

**SWBATD** application of the knowledge acquired about torreons in New Mexico by experimenting with a physical model representing a torreon-type structure.

**Materials:**
- sidewalk chalk (if doing the group activity outdoors)
- open end boxes

**Day 3**

**Anticipatory Set:**
- Ask students to look out the window (or imagine) what the town would look like if they woke up one morning and there were no houses, no stores, no office buildings or any other man-made structures. After getting over the shock, what would be the first things they would need to do to survive? (Locate water, shelter and food.)

**Discussion:**
- Once water and food have been located, what would be available for shelter? (Remember that many of the trees that we see in desert communities were planted as part of the landscaping and are would not be there otherwise.)
- Discuss how long humans can live without water, food, shelter, clothing.
  - Water – 3 days if you have shelter (some have made it 8 to 10 days without water, but in the desert, this would be unusual.
  - Food – 3 weeks (if you have water and shelter)
  - Shelter – depends on the climate, but if it’s harsh conditions like snow, it may be as little as 3 hours.
  - What might be some of the problems that the people might have experienced while in the torreon? (Lack of food, water, firewood, bathroom, food and water for livestock. Living in close quarters with other families and people.)

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**Group Learning Activity:**

This activity can be performed indoors (move desks into a circle to simulate a cylindrical torreon shape) or outdoors (use sidewalk chalk to draw a circle). There should be minimal teacher guidance or instruction to encourage the students to problem solve.

- Have students move their desks into a circle, with all students inside the circle. Once the circle is complete, ask students the advantage to a circular defensive structure.
- Then ask students to place their open-ended boxes on the desks and take turns looking through the “windows” of their defensive structures.
- Have another student go outside the circle to see how much can be seen through the opening of the box.

**Discussion:**

- Explain that although the men guarding the windows had limited visual perspective, the men on top of the torreon had a 360-degree view.
- Discuss the disadvantages of being atop the torreon (exposure to the heat, cold, weather, and the upper half of their body when firing weapons.)
- Discuss that when the citizens of Lincoln took cover in the torreon, they may have had little warning or time to gather supplies and had no idea how long they would be in there. What are some of the problems that the people might have experienced while in the torreon? (Lack of food, water, firewood, bathroom, food and water for livestock. Living in close quarters with other families and people.)

**Closure:**

- **Exit Ticket:** Write down 3 reasons that the torreon worked well as a defensive structure. (Possible answers: height, made of rock, thick walls, small holes for shooting, 360 degree view.)
SWBATD synthesis of their knowledge by creating a small replica torreon using natural and man-made materials.

Materials:
- plastic to cover work tables or chairs
- empty soup cans (1 per student)
- hot glue (teacher prepared) or Elmer’s glue (student)
- air-drying clay
- bowls with small amount of water (1 per student)
- small gravel
- cardboard (one 4"x4" square per student)
- tealight candles
- marker (to write names on bottom of cardboard)

Teacher Preparation:
Using hot glue to affix soup cans to cardboard is recommended. (For safety reasons, students should not be allowed to handle a hot-glue gun.) If preferred, students can use regular glue to affix their can to cardboard, however, the cans should be allowed to dry overnight.

Day 4
Anticipatory Set:
Ask students “who can remember what natural materials the early settlers used to build their homes and structures?” (adobe made from clay soil, water and straw, rock, juniper & cedar posts, lumber, etc.)

Activity
1. Demonstrate for students the technique for covering the exterior of their soup can with clay.
   - Roll out clay to form a coil and circle around soup can from bottom to top
   or
   - pinch off pieces of clay and affix edge-to-edge until soup can is covered
2. Use small amounts of water to create “slip” (thin, watery clay substance to smooth edges and keep pieces together.
4. Allow clay to dry completely.
5. Place tealight inside soup can to create a torreon candleholder.

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Closure

“What is the shape that we created when we made our torreon candleholder? Who can remember what the advantage was to round walls?”

Homework

Offer a prize to the student who can think of another example of round walls that was used in the past for defensive purposes. (Answer: castle towers)
**SWBAT** synthesis of their understanding by designing a map of his/her own home and determining the best safe place for themselves and their family.

**Materials:**
- butcher paper (1 piece per student)

**Day 5~
Anticipatory Set:**
“Guess what? Your house has just been designated as the “safe place” for all of the families on your street!”

**Activity**
1. Demonstrate for students how to draw a simple aerial map of their home.
2. Once the students have designed a map of their house, ask them to decide what room might be the best safe place for their family in the event of something happening outside the house.
3. Mark an “X” on the place that the family will go for safety.
4. On the reverse side of the map, the student should explain why they chose their “safe place.”
   Considerations:
   - Which room has enough space to accommodate the entire family and pets?
   - How many points of entry (windows and doors) does the room have?
   - What is in the room that could be used for defense on short notice?

**Closure**
“What would be one item that they you would take with you if you had to run quickly to the community garage and you didn’t know how long you would be there?”