

ZORRO: the legend lives on!

For almost 100 years, Zorro has been one of the world's most popular heroes. He's a brilliant horserider and a fantastic swordfighter. He wasn't a real person, but you can follow his adventures in books, in films, on TV and in the theatre. And now you too can be Zorro in a new video game.

THE BOOKS

Johnston McCulley created Zorro in 1919 in a book called *The Curse of Capistrano*. Zorro means fox in Spanish. People loved the book and they loved Zorro. McCulley wrote more than sixty adventures about his hero.

How did Diego de la Vega become Zorro? In 2005 Isabel Allende, a famous writer from Chile, answered this question in her story, *Zorro*, about Diego's life as a boy and a young man.



THE FILMS

Zorro first appeared in cinemas in 1920. The actor Douglas Fairbanks played Zorro. Thousands of people went to cinemas to watch the man in the black mask. Since then, Zorro has been the hero of more than fifty films and TV shows. *The Mask of Zorro* is one of the most famous films. A second film starring Antonio Banderas and Catherine Zeta-Jones came out in 2005. It is called *The Legend of Zorro*. And there are plans for a third Zorro film.

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THE MUSICAL

In the musical story of his life, Zorro dances and sings to the fast guitar music of The Gypsy Kings. *Zorro: the Musical* opened in London in 2008. It will soon be in theatres in Europe, South America and the Far East.



AND THEN ... THE VIDEO GAME

In 2009, Zorro came to life in a new video game for the Nintendo Wii and the Nintendo DS. In *The Destiny of Zorro*, players become Zorro as he fights for the people of California. Now everyone can be a hero with a sword!



Diego de la Vega is a rich and quiet man. Zorro is brave and mysterious. Do you know any other heroes with two different sides? What are they like?

What do these words mean? You can use a dictionary.

legend hero mysterious to create musical brave

THE MASK OF ZORRO:



Antonio Banderas



Catherine Zeta-Jones



Anthony Hopkins

Can you swordfight in a mask? Can you ride a horse fast across the countryside? Can you speak English with a Spanish accent? The stars of *The Mask of Zorro* had to learn all these skills before they started making the film!

Antonio Banderas (Alejandro)

‘Zorro has to fight with a sword while he is wearing a mask. I couldn’t see very well. It was really hard!’

Before filming, the Spanish actor practised swordfighting for two months with the best teachers in Europe.

Antonio was already a good horserider, but he had to do some difficult things on horseback in the film. He practised very hard.

‘The horse knew when we were filming. When the director shouted “Go!” the horse lifted his head for the cameras.’



the stars

Catherine Zeta-Jones (Elena)

Catherine Zeta-Jones is a British actress. She was born in Wales. For the film, she learned to speak English with a strong Spanish accent. She also learned swordfighting.



‘The fight scene between Elena and Zorro is like a dance. It’s our love scene. It wasn’t easy to do a scene without most of my clothes! I didn’t feel comfortable, but luckily my hair is very long!’

Catherine is a great dancer. You can see her dancing in the films *Chicago* and *Death Defying Acts*. In *The Mask of Zorro*, she had to learn some Spanish-American dances for the scene between Elena and Alejandro at Montero’s party.

‘I practised the dance in Mexico. It was great fun!’



Anthony Hopkins (Diego)

‘I love Zorro. He is elegant but he is funny too.’

Anthony is a British actor and, like Catherine Zeta-Jones, he comes from Wales.

Anthony had to work hard to be ready for the film. He exercised every day and did a lot of horse riding. He also learned to use a whip. The film makers wrote a scene in Zorro’s cave just to show Diego’s skill with his whip!

Which would you most like to learn: swordfighting, Spanish dancing or horse riding? Why?



What do these words mean? You can use a dictionary.

skill actor/actress director accent scene elegant whip

CALIFORNIA

Today California is one of the biggest and most important states in the USA. But what was life like for the early Californians?

MEXICAN CALIFORNIA

• Important missions



THE FIRST EUROPEANS

Christopher Columbus travelled from Spain to America in 1492, and many people soon followed him across the Atlantic Ocean. At first, most of them were Spanish soldiers. Two soldiers called Francisco de Ulloa and Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo discovered California and claimed it for Spain. California was in two parts at that time: Alta California (today, the state of California in the United States) and Baja California (today, part of Mexico).

THE MISSIONS

The Spanish Kings and Queens wanted their new lands in America to be Catholic. Between 1600 and 1800, they sent Catholic priests there to build missions. The priests lived in the missions and started schools there. American Indians lived with them and learned to be Catholic. The priests brought new music, plants and animals to California, and Spanish ways of growing food. The lives of these Indians changed forever.

GOLD!



In 1848, after some fighting between Mexico and the United States, Alta California became part of the United States. But the same year, California became famous for something else. A man called James Marshall discovered gold! In 1849, more than 300,000 people arrived in California from other parts of the United States and abroad. They were called the 'Forty-Niners' and they all wanted to find gold. A few became very rich, but most of them made no money from gold.

BANDITS!

California was now a dangerous place. Looking for gold was hard and people were very poor. Miners from outside



Joaquín Murrieta

California had to pay the government to work there. Some became bandits. People told stories about a famous bandit called Joaquín Murrieta. Murrieta travelled around California and took other people's money and horses. We can't be sure that he was real. But many people believe that Murrieta was like England's Robin Hood – he took from rich people and gave to poor people.

CALIFORNIA TODAY

California is famous for its beaches and surfing, and of course for its films. Hollywood is in California's biggest city, Los Angeles.



In 1849, many people from outside California went to work in the California gold mines. Are there many people from abroad in your country? What work do they do?

What do these words mean? You can use a dictionary.

bandit to claim state mission priest plant