

AROUND THE WORLD



MATEO BACKS THE BLUE



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Welcome to Los Angeles

Welcome to Los Angeles, the second most populous city in the U.S. and the heart of sunny southern California. Known for its warm climate and natural beauty, Los Angeles is a sprawling metropolis located on the Pacific coast.

Nicknamed "L.A.," Los Angeles is home to Hollywood, center of the famed movie industry, and many well-known neighborhoods such as Beverly Hills, Santa Monica, and Venice Beach. Its residents, known as Angelenos, enjoy the city's beaches, hiking trails, museums, theme parks, sports venues, and acclaimed universities.

Los Angeles has long been home to many different people and cultures. For centuries, the area's inhabitants included the Tongva and Chumash Indians. Beginning in 1542, Spaniards began to explore the area. In 1781, settlers officially founded El Pueblo de Nuestra Señora la Reina de los Ángeles de Porciúncula ("The Town of Our Lady the Queen of the Angels of Porciúncula"), later shortened to "Los Angeles."

In 1848, during the Mexican-American War, gold was discovered in California. During this Gold Rush, thousands of people (who became known as "49ers") moved west across the United States' vast frontier to try to "strike it rich." Two years later, California became the 31st U.S. state. At the time, the remote village of Los Angeles was known as a rugged frontier town with very few people. However, with the arrival of railroads in the 1870s, Los Angeles quickly expanded to accommodate thousands of new residents. Over the next 150 years, Los Angeles developed into a world-class metropolis in the Golden State.

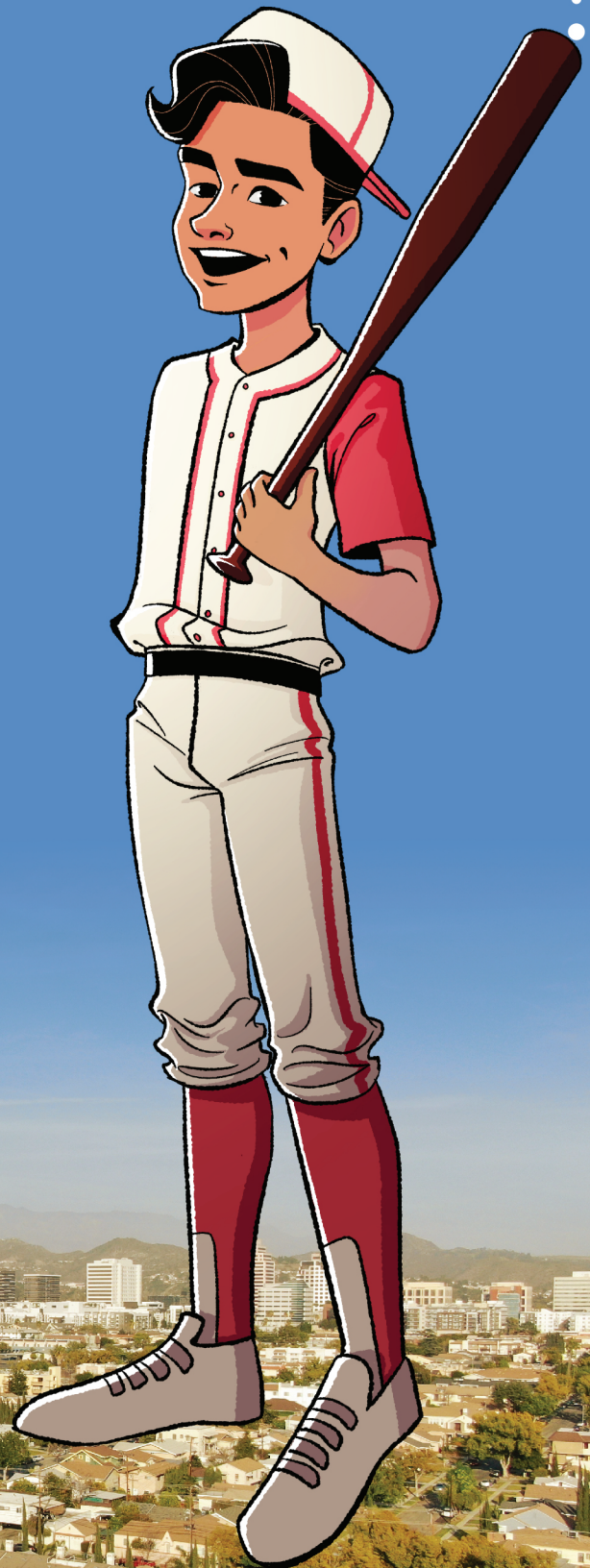
By 2022, Los Angeles County boasted nearly 10 million residents. With such rapid growth, Los Angeles has experienced its share of growing pains and issues, such as heavy traffic, smog, poverty, and crime. Despite these challenges, the city has remained a beacon for growth, offering opportunity for millions of residents.



Meet Mateo

This is Mateo, the 13-year-old son of Mexican immigrants. He lives with his family in a large region of Los Angeles known as the San Fernando Valley, or “the Valley,” for short. Mateo’s parents, Juan and Lucy, moved to the Valley just a few years before he was born. There, they operate a small convenience store that serves a largely immigrant neighborhood.

Mateo attends the local public middle school where his favorite subjects are math and P.E. (Physical Education). After school, he helps out at his parents’ store, restocking shelves and sweeping the floors. On Sundays, he attends Mass with his family at the nearby Catholic church. In his free time, Mateo enjoys playing baseball, hanging out with his friends, and playing video games.



Mateo's Parents, Juan and Lucy

At home, Mateo's parents speak Spanish so that he and his younger sisters can be **bilingual**, or fluent in two languages. Knowing both English and Spanish allows them to easily communicate with their large family who mostly still reside in Mexico. Mateo's mother is also an excellent cook of traditional Mexican food, and he especially enjoys her homemade tortillas and pico de gallo (salsa).

Before moving to Los Angeles, Juan and Lucy ran a small general store in Mexico. They worked hard to make their business successful, but it came with a price. **Cartel** members harassed Juan periodically, demanding money for "protection." Juan knew that he couldn't go to the police for fear that the cartel would find out and harm his family. He was frustrated but left with no choice except to quietly pay the money and hope that his problem would simply go away.

Juan had dreamed of emigrating to America ever since his eldest brother Enrique had moved to California for work. Every year, Enrique would return to Mexico to visit his family and tell them about all the amazing opportunities for new immigrants to the U.S., especially in Los Angeles.

As the situation with the cartel worsened, Juan and Lucy decided to make a move. They needed to find a place with safety and opportunity, where they could work hard and finally raise a family — a place like America. Scraping together all their savings, Juan and Lucy applied for a U.S. Green Card. The process was long and expensive and required a lot of paperwork and even an interview; but with dedication and a lot of patience, their application was finally approved. Enrique met Juan and Lucy at the airport and welcomed them to Los Angeles, their new home. There, they found a large community of immigrants from Mexico, just like them. In fact, Los Angeles has more Mexican immigrants than any other city in the United States.

Juan found work at a local convenience store and was soon promoted to the position of manager, while Lucy worked as a housekeeper. Working extra hours enabled Juan and Lucy to save enough money so that they could open their own small grocery store in the San Fernando Valley. Soon after the store opened, the couple welcomed their first child, Mateo, followed by two daughters, Camila and Elena. Juan and Lucy were hopeful that their decision to start a new life in Los Angeles would serve as an investment for their children's future.



Bilingual: The ability to speak two languages fluently.

Cartel: A group of individuals who cooperate in a secret or unlawful way with each other to increase their profits and dominate a market.

Black Lives Matter



In May 2020, George Floyd, a black man who resisted arrest, died while in the custody of Minneapolis police. A bystander recorded the disturbing event, showing Floyd gasping for air as a policeman knelt on him for nine minutes.

Protests and riots erupted in other cities around the United States in response to Floyd's death. Activists claimed that the police were targeting the black community and purposefully killing unarmed black men. Data actually revealed that there were more fatal police shootings of unarmed white people than unarmed black people in the previous year. Despite the facts, the false claims of racial targeting spread, and so did the anger and violence, eventually reaching all the way to Los Angeles, California.

Throughout the summer, Mateo and his family were stunned as they watched on the news where neighborhoods around L.A. were being burned and looted. By neither naming nor condemning the violence, reporters and city officials seemed to condone it as an appropriate solution to alleged racial injustice and frustration.

Politicians, activists, celebrities, and major corporations quickly embraced the **Black Lives Matter** (BLM) movement and demanded reform or complete **abolition** of the police force.

Many activists demanded that the city should "defund the police." Mateo wondered who would keep his neighborhood safe if there were less police. After all, he had just watched protestors smash store windows, run out with unpaid merchandise, and even set those same stores on fire. He also saw videos of angry protestors stopping traffic on freeways, threatening police, and intimidating restaurant patrons. How would fewer cops put a stop to this type of behavior?

Mateo helped his father, Uncle Enrique, and other business owners in the neighborhood board up their store windows to keep them from being smashed during the riots. Several store owners spray painted "Black Lives Matter" on the boards to appease would-be **anarchists**, but Juan couldn't bring himself to do so. He remembered handing his hard-earned money to Mexican cartel members and did not want to be bullied by BLM rioters now. He couldn't believe what was happening — not just in his new city, but in America, of all places.

In large cities all over the U.S., similar violence was taking place. In some cities, police precincts, themselves, were under siege by angry and violent mobs. During the summer of 2020, 8,700 protest events took place nationwide, resulting in the injury of at least 2,000 police officers.



A photograph of a street at night. A person wearing a patterned beanie and a t-shirt is breaking a large glass window of a brick building. Debris is scattered on the sidewalk. Another person with a backpack is visible in the background, also on the sidewalk. The scene is illuminated by streetlights and building lights.

Black Lives Matter: A political and social movement using protests and demonstrations to bring awareness to perceived incidents of racial discrimination against black people.

Abolition: The act of officially ending or stopping something completely.

Anarchists: A political group of people who promote a state of disorder due to absence or non-recognition of authority.

Defund the Police



During the protests, BLM supporters demanded that city leaders “defund the police” to end what they saw as police violence against minority communities. They wanted to use the money that normally went to law enforcement for community resources instead, such as mental health experts, housing, and social workers.

In November 2020, Los Angeles voted in a measure requiring that at least 10% of the county’s unrestricted general funds be moved from prisons and policing towards social services labeled “direct community investment” and “alternatives to **incarceration**.”

Then, in February 2021, the Los Angeles Unified School District voted to cut \$25 million from its school police department, eliminating 133 school police positions in efforts to “reimagine public safety.” However, a district-sponsored survey

showed that most parents and students actually felt that police on campus make schools safer.

When Mateo considers safety at school, his middle school’s **resource officer**, Officer Suarez, immediately comes to mind. Tall and smiling, Officer Suarez has a high-five, a handshake, or a fist bump for each student as he walks down the hallway. During their first conversation, Mateo quickly found out that, like himself, Officer Suarez is a huge fan of the Los Angeles Dodgers, L.A.’s own professional baseball team. Later, when Mateo revealed that he enjoys playing baseball too, Officer Suarez remarked that someday he hoped to see him on deck to bat with the “Blue Crew” at Dodger Stadium, which made him smile. Even though he didn’t know him very well, Mateo was glad Officer Suarez was not among the percentage of policemen cut from the school police department program.



Incarceration: The state of being confined in prison.

Resource Officer: A sworn law enforcement officer responsible for safety and crime prevention in schools.



Officer Suarez's daily presence makes a difference in the atmosphere at school. Last year, when tempers flared and punches were thrown in the cafeteria, Mateo observed Officer Suarez spring into action. With a strong voice, he first ordered the two students to stop fighting. Mateo noticed that he didn't place himself between the students while they continued to argue, but rather began by specifically telling the other students who were looking on that they needed to go to class. As Mateo emptied his cafeteria tray and hurried down the hall, he glanced over his shoulder and breathed a sigh of relief when he saw that both students had separated, and the situation had seemed to de-escalate.

Since this incident, Mateo has observed Officer Suarez doing daily bookbag checks at the front door to the school to make sure nothing unsafe was sneaked onto school property. He also regularly visits class to talk with students about his role and discuss how he can be helpful to them. Once, Mateo even watched as he escorted someone that he didn't recognize off of school property. Mateo understands that Officer Suarez is there to keep the students safe so that they can focus on their schoolwork without fear. He and his friends view Officer Suarez as a guide, a mentor, and a protector; not how they had seen the police characterized in the news: as a mean-spirited bully.

This perspective makes Mateo wonder why people would want fewer police, or none at all. He also wonders what would have happened in the cafeteria if Officer Suarez had not been there to help, or if Officer Suarez had not reacted so wisely. Mateo decides that he agrees with his family – they believe that improving police tactics would be beneficial, but they did not want to eliminate the police in their schools or in their communities.

Not in My Backyard

In the past, Mateo had observed an occasional shoplifter in his parents' store, but they were usually kids sneaking candy. His father confronted would-be shoplifters by reprimanding them and asking them to pay up — or return the stolen goods.

Lately, however, Juan has seen adults brazenly exit his store carrying armfuls of goods. The first time Juan confronted the culprits, they dropped the groceries and ran out of the store. The second time, a man threatened Juan with a knife, so he backed down. He determined that his life was more important than \$500 worth of stolen goods. When the police finally arrived several hours later, they filed a report but said there was nothing else they could do to help.

Unfortunately, this was not an isolated incident, and Juan began wondering how the store would remain profitable if the theft crimes continued. Lucy pleaded with Juan and Mateo not to confront shoplifters directly because she was worried for her family's safety.

Juan was growing more and more concerned for his business and especially the safety of his family. Crime seemed to be erupting everywhere, leaving Mateo and his family to wonder why law enforcement had seemingly abandoned local business owners in favor of criminals. Fortunately, Mateo knew someone who might be able to help him with some answers.



Seeking Truth

As baseball practice ended, Mateo was grabbing his bookbag from the dugout when he noticed Officer Suarez heading out the side door of the school, arms full of boxes to load into his police car.

"I got you, Officer S," he said, jogging over to shift the boxes so that the officer could unlatch his keys from his belt.

"Thanks, Mateo," he smiled. "You were in the right place at the right time. I appreciate it!"

Mateo grinned broadly as he gathered his things, but then paused for a moment.

"Officer Suarez, can I talk to you for a sec?" He pulled off his worn Dodgers cap and clutched it in his hands.

True to character, Officer Suarez smiled and nodded, "Sure, Mateo, what is it?"

Mateo wasn't accustomed to feeling shy around adults; after all, he regularly helped at his parents' store with customers all the time. Warmth spread over his face and his words poured out of his mouth faster than he could follow them.

"My papa runs a store in the Valley, and lately, we've had several..." He paused thoughtfully and swallowed hard as he finished his sentence. "... break-ins." Glancing up at Officer Suarez, who nodded in affirmation, he began again. "My Dad is really upset by what we've seen on the news about BLM and Defund the Police. We've lost a lot of things from our store to thieves who just walk out the front door. I don't understand, and I really don't know what I can do to make a difference. Is there ANYTHING I can do to help?"





The skin around Officer Suarez's eyes crinkled with understanding. "I'm glad you asked me, Mateo," he replied, closing the car door. "Let's go back inside for a bit so we can talk."

Pulling up two chairs in the front office, Officer Suarez sat across from Mateo and looked him squarely in the eyes. "So, Mateo, what do YOU think about what you've seen on the news?"

"It's so strange. I do feel sorry for the family of Mr. Floyd. I know they must be sad about what happened. But I can't understand why some people seem to think that destroying other people's property helps his family feel better. I mean... Mr. Rodriguez, who owns a TV shop just down the street from our store, lost nearly everything during those BLM riots. Papa and I had helped him board up his windows, but it was no use. Once his shop was looted, the rioters even lit it on fire. He and his wife go to church

with us and they may have to return to Mexico if his insurance doesn't cover the damages. I feel bad for them, too."

"I see," Officer Suarez nodded. "And you don't want to see that happen to your family?"

Mateo shook his head assuredly. "Definitely not. My papa has told me stories of the cartel in Mexico and how he and Mama had to pay money for protection for their store there before they came to the U.S. but it wasn't REALLY protection. They still had break-ins, even though they were paying the cartel a huge amount of money every month. If they hadn't given them that money, they would have hurt both him and Mama. That's NOT protection."

"So, what do you think the purpose of the police actually IS, Mateo?" Officer Suarez sat back in his chair. "To protect?"





Mateo nodded. "Well, I've seen you protect us here at school. Like last year, when that fight broke out in the cafeteria. You knew just what to do to calm everyone down. And I've seen you check bags at the door. You visit us in class and talk about what you do... And I've even seen you take people off campus who weren't supposed to be here."

Officer Suarez chuckled. "I didn't know you were so observant, Mateo. Yes, those are ALL things that I do here. Some of the things, though, you don't see or even realize that I do."

Mateo's eyebrows rose at this news. What had he NOT seen? "Oh? Like what?"

"Well," Officer Suarez began, "sometimes students may be struggling with situations at home. I'm here to counsel them and help them think about what they're going through. Kind of like what we're doing right now. And I also serve

the school by attending meetings with parents and do a lot of unseen work here in the community, helping students make better choices and know the rights and responsibilities that come with being a U.S. citizen."

"So," Mateo puzzled, "your job is to protect us AND to serve?"

"I guess you could say that," Officer Suarez smiled, glancing at his watch. "I've got to head home now, Mateo," he replied, extending his hand for a fist bump, "but let's chat more tomorrow at school, all right? We can think through some answers that may help you help your family, too."

Mateo nodded and tapped his fist with his own. Finally, he might find some answers about how he could make a difference for both himself and for his family.



Truth Takes Action

The next day, Mateo was heading to fourth period when Officer Suarez waved him down in the hallway. After checking with his teacher to make sure it was a good time to talk, they walked together to the room he used for conversation in the front office.

"I just want to start by saying thanks," Mateo began. "It's really great to have someone to talk to about what's going on."

"Absolutely. I've been giving a lot of thought to what you asked yesterday, Mateo. You said my job is to protect and serve. And you're right," Officer Suarez said as Mateo leaned back in his chair with satisfaction, "but it's not just MY job. It's your job, too."

Mateo's eyebrows rose and he shook his head as he pondered that statement. "What? Me? No, I'm just a kid... I can't protect anybody, Officer Suarez!" He shook his head at the thought of being like a superhero, protecting his father from the rioters or the thieves who brazenly walked out of the store with goods.

"Since you seem to think that idea is pretty impossible, let's start there," Officer Suarez chuckled. "What if I said you begin by protecting YOURSELF? Does that seem more realistic?"

Mateo laughed at the simplicity of the thought. "Well, of course...But what do you mean?"

"Protect yourself by doing the things you know you should. First, do your best in school. Sharpen your mind and your skills."

HOW TO PROTECT & SERVE:

1. SHARPEN YOUR MIND
AND SKILLS

2. KEEP OUT OF TROUBLE
AFTER SCHOOL

3. SERVE YOUR
COMMUNITY

BRAINSTORM:

Write down some ideas of how you can sharpen your mind and skills, keep out of trouble after school, and serve your community below.

Mateo groaned inwardly as he thought about his math quiz he completed earlier in the day – probably not his BEST effort. He reflected on the fact that he had chosen to play video games rather than studying the quiz chapter last night, and he was certain his score would reflect that when Mrs. Fleming returned papers tomorrow in class.

“You can also protect yourself by keeping out of trouble during and after school. When you see kids hanging out in places they shouldn’t or hear them talking about doing things you know are wrong, you need to let an adult know. And don’t hang around with those types of kids at all.”

“I understand that. Mama and Papa need me after school to stock cans in our store, so after baseball practice, I head right over to help. So far, so good.”

Officer Suarez smiled. “That’s great, Mateo. That’s a fantastic way to ensure that you protect yourself from things that could happen. Besides protecting yourself, there are lots of ways for you to serve within your community.” Mateo, interested, leaned in to listen closely.

“Here in the Valley, we have what is called a **Neighborhood Watch** program. There are similar programs in communities all over the U.S. It’s basically everyone looking out for everyone else, kind of like what you and your father did when you helped board up those windows during the riots. Each neighborhood has a **block captain** who helps organize meetings with neighbors and serves as a **liaison** between the people in the neighborhood and the police.”

“Liaison? What’s that?”



Neighborhood Watch: A program of local awareness by residents of a neighborhood to discourage crime, especially burglary.

Block Captain: The key person in a Neighborhood Watch group whose goal is to keep the block actively involved in crime prevention efforts together.

Liaison: A person who communicates and facilitates a close relationship between two groups of people or organizations.



"A liaison is a person who acts as a go-between. He can talk with both sides to communicate and work out solutions." Mateo immediately thought of his father and Uncle Enrique, who knew every shop owner on the street. They would be perfect for a role like that.

"Can you give me more information on that?" Mateo asked, "I think I know someone who might be just right for that job." As he watched Officer Suarez jot down the web address for him, Mateo's mind began to spin. What were some other ways he could help protect and serve in his neighborhood? He would be on the lookout for volunteer opportunities to get to know the other shop owners on the street, as well as look into the Neighborhood Watch program, but could there be more he could do?

"One more thing, Mateo," Officer Suarez remarked, handing over his business card with the web address written down. "Right now, many police officers feel discouraged by the wave of negativity toward them in the media. For certain, there are bad officers; just like there are bad baseball players." He glanced at Mateo knowingly. "I will say this, though," he continued, "statistics show that the good ones far outweigh the bad ones, Mateo. When you see police officers working, just stop and say 'thank you'. It's so simple and easy, but it means the world to

them." He paused, searching Mateo's expression. "Now, do you feel that we've answered your question?" Mateo nodded in affirmation.

"Yeah, Officer S, I think I have a great place to start. Do you mind if we meet again sometime soon if I have more questions about this?"

"Absolutely! You can count on it."

As Mateo grabbed his books to head to class, he paused thoughtfully and turned back. "Officer Suarez, I have one more thing to tell you."

"Oh?" he replied, glancing up.

"Thank you. Thanks for being here at school... for keeping us safe... for serving and protecting us. I really appreciate you."

Officer Suarez smiled at Mateo and held up his fist for a bump, but Mateo opted for a handshake instead. He had lots of thinking to do, but at least now he felt armed with a plan. Later that weekend, as he knelt during Mass beside his sisters and parents, he prayed to God to give him wisdom to know how to help in his neighborhood. He smiled inwardly as he thought about the new "Blue Crew" that he had chosen to support, and now he felt he could TRULY make a difference.



HOP



Crossword



Across:

3. a person who communicates and facilitates a close relationship between two groups of people or organizations

4. a political group of people who promote a state of disorder due to absence or non-recognition of authority

7. the state of being confined in prison

9. the ability to speak two languages fluently

Down:

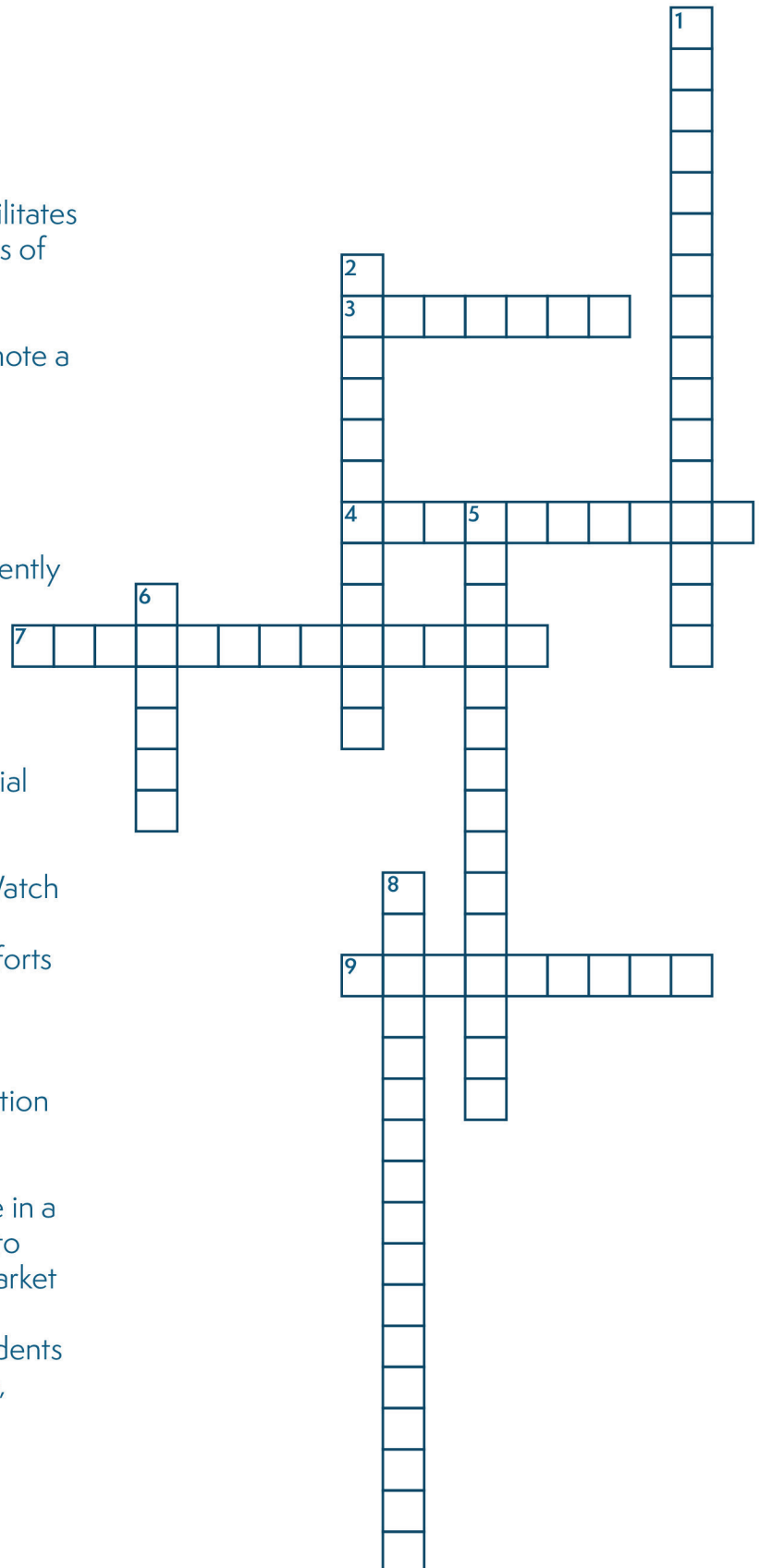
1. a political and social movement using protests and demonstrations to bring awareness to perceived incidents of racial discrimination against black people

2. the key person in a Neighborhood Watch group whose goal is to keep the block actively involved in crime prevention efforts together

5. a sworn law enforcement officer responsible for safety and crime prevention in schools

6. a group of individuals who cooperate in a secret or unlawful way with each other to increase their profits and dominate a market

8. a program of local awareness by residents of a neighborhood to discourage crime, especially burglary





Guacamole

Mateo's mama is an excellent cook of traditional Mexican food. Prior to moving to Los Angeles, she learned to make pico de gallo and homemade tortillas in Mexico. Now that her family are residents of California, she also has learned how to make delicious homemade guacamole. Hass avocados, the main ingredient to her guacamole, have been grown in sunny Southern California since the mid-1920s. To make guacamole like Mateo's mama, you need the following:

Ingredients:

- 3 avocados, ripe
- ½ onion, medium-sized and chopped
- 1 Roma tomato, finely sliced
- 1 lime, cut in half then juiced
- cilantro, 3 tbsp. chopped
- salt
- pepper
- garlic powder

Supplies:

- mixing bowl
- knife
- cutting board
- fork

Instructions:

First, slice your avocados in half, remove the pits in their centers, and then scoop the middles (called flesh) out into a mixing bowl. You can discard the outer shells into your trash or compost bin. (Note: If you compost your skins, make sure to cut them up into smaller pieces as they are slow decomposers.)

Using a fork, mash up the avocado flesh to the consistency you want: either chunky or smooth.

Next, stir in the onions, tomatoes, cilantro, and lime juice. Sprinkle salt, pepper, and garlic powder to taste.

Serve with tortilla chips or veggies (such as carrots, celery, or cucumbers) for dipping. Simple, healthy, and delicious!



Cooking tip:

To make guacamole, you will need to choose ripe avocados for the best flavor. You can tell if an avocado is ripe because it will give in slightly to pressure under your fingers and have a deep purple hue. If an avocado is dark green and firm, you may need to wait 1-2 days for the best flavor and texture for your guacamole.

If your avocado is black and mushy, it is probably overripe and not suitable for this recipe.

Grow Your Own Avocado

Did you know that, with the pit from the avocado you used for your guacamole, you can grow your own avocado plant at home? To do this, you need to gather the following:

Supplies:

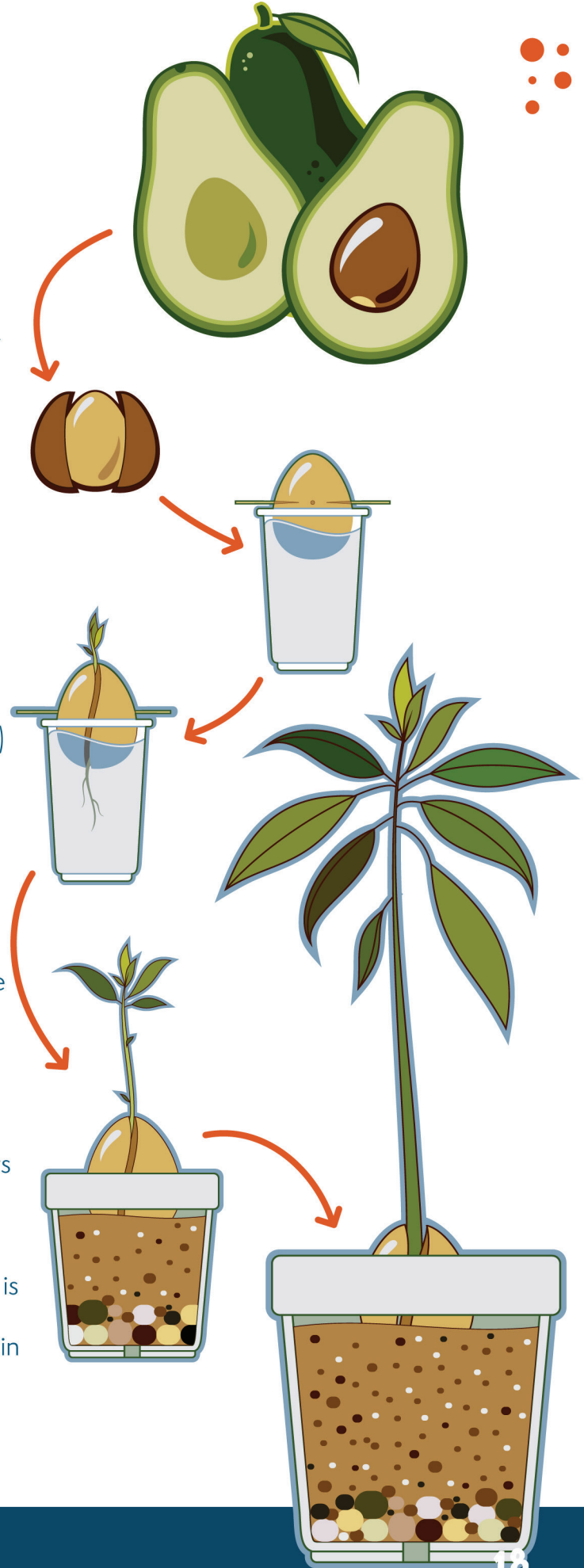
- avocado pit
- paper towels
- water
- glass or jar
- toothpicks
- 10-inch pot
- potting soil
- trowel or large spoon, for digging

Save an avocado pit (without cutting into or breaking it) and wash off any residue on the pit. Dry it with a paper towel, and insert 3-4 toothpicks about halfway up the side of the pit. You will need to press firmly to break through the outer portion.

Suspend the pit with the broadest end of the pit facing downward in a drinking glass or jar. Fill the container with enough water to submerge the bottom third of the seed. Do not cover the entire seed with water for best results.

Place the glass or jar in a warm spot (not in direct sunlight) and change the water regularly, keeping the bottom third of the seed wet. Within 2 to 4 weeks, roots and a sprout should appear. If not, you may need to begin another seed.

Once your avocado plant grows roots (and a sprout), it is ready to be planted. Choose a pot which allows for water drainage to avoid root rot, and plant your sprout in new soil. Your new avocado plant will happily soak up the sun as long as you continue to water it lightly and frequently.



Mateo's List

Mateo has been brainstorming ideas to help support his local police department. Help him complete his list by adding your own ideas below his:

- WRITE A THANK-YOU CARD FOR OFFICER SUAREZ.
- TELL MY DAD ABOUT THE NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH PROGRAM.
- THINK MORE ABOUT WAYS I CAN MAKE GOOD CHOICES IN AND AFTER SCHOOL.
- GIFT THE NEIGHBORHOOD POLICE OFFICERS A TREAT OR A GIFT CARD FROM MAMA AND PAPA'S STORE.

Law Enforcement Timeline

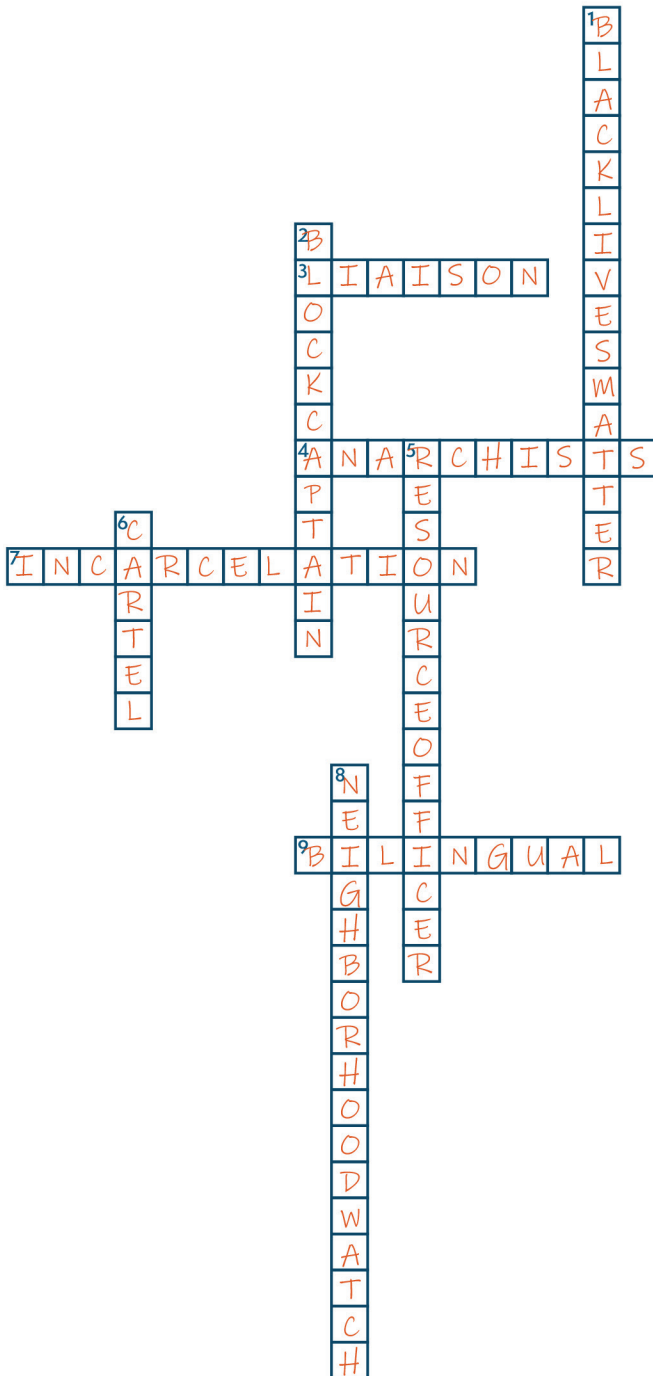
A timeline is a tool we can use to help organize information by describing events in the order in which they happened. The following timeline contains important dates related to the formation of the United States Law Enforcement.

Do your own research and draw a line between the event and the year that it happened.



Answer Key:

Crossword:



Timeline:





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An illustration of five diverse cartoon characters standing in front of a stylized world map. From left to right: a man in a dark grey military uniform with a peaked cap and medals; a boy in a blue and white athletic jersey with the number 30; a girl with long brown hair in a blue top and yellow skirt; a girl with dark skin and braided hair in a yellow tank top and patterned skirt; and a boy in an orange t-shirt and grey shorts. The background is a solid blue color with white outlines of the world's continents.

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