

Texas

The territory that we now know as Texas was mapped in 1519 by Spanish explorers looking for gold. For the next 300 years, it was part of the Spanish empire. However, after the Louisiana Purchase, Americans believed that they had acquired all, or at least part of, this giant territory. They were excited to have it, too, because the climate and soil were ideal for growing one of the South's most *lucrative* crops -- cotton. Spain wasn't willing to give up such a potentially valuable territory, though, and they began negotiations with the United States to determine the official boundary lines between American and Spanish lands, trying to preserve as much of their territory as possible. **1**

General Andrew Jackson's takeover of Florida changed everything. Because America had taken Florida from Spain (typically, an act of war), they now had to "walk on eggshells" with Spain in regards to other land disputes, including the Texas Territory. Therefore, as part of an 1819 peace treaty, America gave up all legal rights to the territory, thus making Spain happy and avoiding a war. **2**

Spain's happiness was short-lived, though; Mexico soon declared its independence from Spain and took the Texas Territory as part of their new country. The Mexican government wanted to make sure there were people living in their Texas Territory -- that way, no other country could come in and take it -- so they invited a young American named Stephen Austin to establish a farming colony there, allowing him a generous portion of land to do so.

As it turned out, Austin was a good recruiter, attracting almost 300 American families to come and be a part of this new colony by 1827. Gaining an ever-positive reputation, more and more Americans settled in the area. By 1830, nearly 25,000 Americans were living in the territory (about 6 times more than the number of Tejanos, people of Mexican descent). **3**

Mexico tried to govern the Texas Territory through a strategy called "salutory neglect", choosing not to strictly enforce Mexican laws and to ignore certain issues in an attempt to keep the *allegiance* of the people living in such a far-off part of their country. The fact was, it would be extremely difficult for the Mexican government to do anything else. However, they did make Austin and the other American colonists promise to (a) convert to the Catholic religion and (b) pledge to pursue Mexican citizenship. **4**

When Mexico outlawed slavery in 1829, the colonists (many of whom were slave owners) began to resent being governed by such a far-off government and leader; they wanted to make Texas a separate Mexican state so they could govern themselves. The Mexican government, feeling it was losing control of the territory, sent military troops to Texas to enforce Mexican laws. By 1835, tensions had grown to the point that Mexico's leader, General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna led an army of 6000 soldiers to put down what he saw as a rebellion. **5**

When the troops arrived in San Antonio, Texas, they discovered a group of about 200 rebels who had taken over an abandoned mission called "the Alamo". After a standoff, Santa Anna raised a black flag (a symbol understood to mean that he would show no mercy) and demanded that the rebels immediately surrender. In response, the Texans shot a cannon at Santa Anna's troops. The fight was going to happen. Over the next few days, Santa Anna's troops slowly surrounded the Alamo. Next, they fired

cannons into the mission for 12 days, and finally, the troops stormed the old mission and killed every last one of the rebels inside (including American legends, James Bowie and Davy Crockett). The lopsided battle only lasted an hour-and-a-half. **6**

When word got out about Santa Anna's cruel treatment of the defenders of the Alamo, the people of Texas decided it was time for a revolution. Led by Sam Houston, the commander of the Texas Revolutionary Army, troops gathered and lured Santa Anna to chase them. This turned out to be a great strategy because it (a) wore out Santa Anna's troops, and (b) pulled the Mexican Army further from home, making it more and more difficult to provision them with food and supplies.

In April of 1836, Santa Anna's Mexican Army finally caught up with Houston and the Texas Revolutionary Army. That's when Santa Anna made a critical mistake. He fully expected Houston and his army to attack, so he kept his Mexican troops awake and prepared all night long. In the morning, when Santa Anna's men were finally letting their guard down and going to sleep, Houston had his troops make a surprise attack. Yelling, "Remember the Alamo," they crushed the Mexican Army. In the fight, Santa Anna escaped, but he was caught the next day. In exchange for his freedom, Santa Anna promised to pull all his Mexican Army troops out of Texas. **7**

The American government saw this as a great time to annex the Texas Territory, now known as the Lone Star Republic. However, many feared that taking it would lead to a war with Mexico (who had backed off, but still considered Texas as part of their country). Others feared that Texas, a slave territory, would add fuel to the fire of the ever-increasing debate over slavery. When James Polk, an avid believer in Manifest Destiny, became president, he convinced Congress to go ahead and annex Texas. In 1845, Texas was added to the Union as the 28th state. **8**

Texas -- engagement guide

1. Based on the context of the sentence it's in, what would you guess is the meaning of the word, "lucrative"?
 - a. I think the word, "lucrative", means _____ because _____.
 - b. Look up the word, "lucrative" in the dictionary. Write the definition here:
 - c. List three activities that could be described as "lucrative":
 -
 -
 -
2. (T or F) Andrew Jackson improved the relationship between America and Spain. _____
 - a. Give two pieces of textual evidence that support your answer.
 -
 -
3. Do the math. How many Tejanos lived in Texas at this time?
4. Using what you know and looking back at the context of the sentence, guess the meaning of the word, "allegiance".
 - a. I think the word, "allegiance", means _____ because _____.
 - b. Look up the word, "allegiance", in the dictionary. Write the definition here:
5. Boy, this sounds familiar... Where have we heard a similar story before?
6. Using symbols and simple pictures, diagram what happened at the Battle of the Alamo:

7. What might've been a better move on Santa Anna's part?

Why?

8. If you were an American citizen in 1845, would you have wanted to annex Texas and make it a state?

Why or why not?

9. *OPTIONAL (3pts of extra credit)

a. Hand-draw a map of Texas.

b. Place dots on the map that represent the locations of the 5 cities in Texas that are named for people in the events in this article

c. Label all 5 cities