

Texas Independence Lesson Plan

Central Historical Question:

Why did Texans declare independence from Mexico in 1836?

Materials:

- United Streaming Video Segment: 1835-1836 Revolution in Texas (a segment of The Mexican War):
<http://player.discoveryeducation.com/index.cfm?guidAssetId=AF61AE4D-CEBA-41F8-865B-FD7A3EF47557&blnFromSearch=1&productcode=US>
- Copies of Texas Independence Documents A-D
- Copies of Texas Independence Graphic Organizer

Plan of Instruction:

1. Introduction: Have students watch United Streaming video segment: 1835-1836 Revolution in Texas (a segment of The Mexican War):
<http://player.discoveryeducation.com/index.cfm?guidAssetId=AF61AE4D-CEBA-41F8-865B-FD7A3EF47557&blnFromSearch=1&productcode=US>

(Optional) Mini-lecture that lays out chronology of Texas Independence:

- Mexican Independence—1821.
- Immigration of Anglos into territory—throughout 1820s, 1830s.
- Americans agreed to uphold Mexican Constitution of 1824.
- Mexico outlawed slavery in 1829.
- Santa Anna took over—1833—overthrew the Constitution of 1824 and instituted some major changes.
- War in Texas began as a Civil War between Federalists (Mexicans and Americans who wanted the Constitution back) and Santa Anna.
- But then Texans declared independence—1836—they didn't just want the Constitution of 1824, they wanted to be their own country.
- Ultimately, Texans won and Texas became its own country. In 1845, the U.S. annexed Texas and it became the 28th state.
- This caused major problems with Mexico and started the Mexican-American war. The U.S. won that war and annexed a huge swath of land.

2. TRANSITION: Introduce inquiry question:

Why did Texans declare independence from Mexico in 1836?

Elicit student hypotheses based on the video segment (i.e., Texans were angry that Mexico closed border to further Anglo settlement; Texans wanted slaves; Texans wanted to join U.S.).

3. Hand out Texas Independence Documents A-D. Students use graphic organizer to read documents and answer inquiry question.
4. Discussion questions:
 - Why did Texans declare independence?
 - Were Texans justified in declaring independence?
 - Were these honorable men, fighting for freedom, or greedy slaveholders?
 - What evidence from the documents supports your position?
 - Which of these pieces of evidence do you find more/less trustworthy? Why?
 - Why do historians still debate this question?
 - Once Texas declares and wins its independence, is the U.S. free to annex it? Why would Mexico object to the American annexation of Texas?

Citations:

Texas Declaration of Independence (March 2, 1836).
http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/texdec.asp

de la Teja, Jesus F. (1997), "The Colonization and Independence of Texas: A Tejano Perspective", in Rodriguez O., Jaime E.; Vincent, Kathryn, *Myths, Misdeeds, and Misunderstandings: The Roots of Conflict in U.S.–Mexican Relations*, Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources Inc., pg. 89.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mexican_Texas#Rising_racial_tension

Juan Seguin, Alamo Defenders' Burial Speech, April 4, 1837.
<http://www.tamu.edu/ccbn/dewitt/tejanopatriots.htm>

Benjamin Lundy, *The War in Texas in 1836*, <http://www.tamu.edu/ccbn/dewitt/lundy.htm>

Document A (Modified)

Texas Declaration of Independence (March 2, 1836) [Adapted]

When a government has ceased to protect the lives, liberty and property of the people . . . it is the right of the people to abolish such government, and create another one that will secure their future welfare and happiness.

General Santa Anna, has overturned the constitution of his country, and now offers us the cruel option either to abandon our homes, or submit to the most intolerable of all tyranny.

The Mexican government has failed to establish any public system of education...

It denies us the right of worshipping the Almighty as we want to...

It has demanded that we give up our arms, which are essential to our defense...

It has invaded our country both by sea and by land, with intent to lay waste our territory, and drive us from our homes...

It has encouraged the merciless Indians to massacre the inhabitants of our defenseless frontiers....

We, therefore, do hereby resolve and declare, that our political connection with the Mexican nation has forever ended, and that the people of Texas do now constitute a free, Sovereign, and independent republic...

Document B (Modified)

We cannot trust the Anglo-American colonists because they are continually demonstrating that they refuse to follow our laws, unless it is convenient for them. We will have many problems if we do not stop their disrespectful behavior by stationing soldiers and a Mexican judge in each settlement. They have been using their own colonists as judges and practicing their own laws, forgetting that they swore to obey the laws of Mexico.

Source: The letter above was written by Rafael Antonio Manchola, a Tejano (Mexican living in Texas). He wrote this letter about the Anglo-Americans in 1826 to a military commander.

Document C (Modified)

Colonel Juan Seguin's
Alamo Defenders' Burial Speech, April 4, 1837

Companions in Arms!! These remains which we have the honor of carrying on our shoulders are those of the brave heroes who died in the Alamo. Yes, my friends, they preferred to die a thousand times rather than submit themselves to the tyrant's yoke. Yes, soldiers and fellow citizens, these are the worthy beings who, by the twists of fate, delivered their bodies to the ferocity of their enemies. I invite you to declare to the entire world, "Texas shall be free and independent or we shall perish in glorious combat."

Source: Colonel Juan Seguin's Alamo Defenders' Burial Speech, April 4, 1837. Seguin was a Mexican who supported the Texas Revolution and fought with the American settlers against General Santa Anna. This speech was given at the burial of the men who died at the Alamo.

Document D (Modified)

We have been asked to believe that the inhabitants of Texas have been fighting to maintain the sacred principles of Liberty, and the natural, inalienable Rights of Man:---whereas, their motives have been exactly the opposite. The immediate cause and main goal of this war—led by the slaveholders of this country, (with land speculators and slave traders)---has been to grab the large and valuable territory of Texas from the Mexican Republic, in order to re-establish the SYSTEM OF SLAVERY; to open a vast and profitable SLAVEMARKET; and, ultimately, to annex it to the United States.

Source: Benjamin Lundy became active in the antislavery movement in the 1820s. He organized abolitionist societies, lectured extensively, and contributed to many abolitionist publications. He wrote this pamphlet called The War in Texas in 1836. Lundy argued that the Texas revolution was a slaveholders' plot to take Texas from Mexico and to add slave territory to the United States.