DISCOVER AMERICA

Teacher Guide



Defenders of the Alamo: Courage, Sacrifice, and Heritage



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Key Themes

- Courage and Sacrifice
- Leadership and Heroes
- Community and Unity
- Geography and Strategy
- Cultural Exchange and Influence

Core Values

- Community
- Life
- Liberty



Learning Objectives

Students will be able to

- Recognize key figures involved in the Battle of the Alamo, such as Davy Crockett, William B. Travis, and Santa Anna.
- Explain why the phrase "Remember the Alamo!" became a powerful call for perseverance and determination.
- Locate Texas on a map of the United States and identify where the Alamo is situated within Texas.
- Retell the story of the Battle of the Alamo in their own words, highlighting the main events and characters.
- Relate the concepts of bravery and teamwork to their own lives and community experiences.

Key Terms

- 0 1 **artillery:** large, heavy weapons used in land battles, like cannons, which are too big to carry by hand and are often mounted on wheels for easier movement.
- 0 2 **declare:** to say something in an official or public way.
- 0 3 **province:** an area of land that is part of a country, similar to a state.
- 0 4 **revolution:** a very great change in something that causes many other things to change.
- 0 5 **revolutionary:** someone who takes part in a revolution against the government.
- 0 6 **siege:** a military act of surrounding a city or base, attacking it, and cutting off supplies.
- 0 7 **surrender:** to give up control of something to someone else.

Introduction

TELL Students

Today, we're going on an incredible journey back in time to a place called the Alamo. The word "Alamo" comes from the Spanish word for "cottonwood tree." The Alamo was a military fort and the site of a great battle, but it was originally a mission for the Catholic Church.

ASK Students

What is a military fort?

TELL Students 🚳 🧪

Imagine a fort standing tall in the hot Texas sun, defended by brave men fighting for their beliefs and their future. The Alamo is a story of courage, determination, and sacrifice. Picture yourself in 1836, where every decision and every act of bravery played a part in shaping the history of our nation. [Reference Alamo Image] To make this journey even more exciting, we are going to start with a fun activity! I have a bag full of different items here, and each item represents something important about the Alamo. I am going to pass the bag around, and I want each of you to reach in, pull out an item, and then we will talk about how it connects to the story of the Alamo. Let's see what we have here. [Please have the bag prepared in advance, and keep in mind that the introduction sequence may need to be adjusted based on the order in which items are retrieved.]

ASK Students

Who would like to go first?

TELL Students *P*

Great! Now, reach into the bag and pull out an item. Ah, you pulled out a tiny flag! This flag represents the Texan revolutionaries who fought at the Alamo. They raised their flag as a symbol of their fight for independence from Mexico. A **revolutionary** is someone who takes part in a revolution against the government. A **revolution** is when a people overthrow their government and replace it with a new one.

ASK Students

Next, who wants to go?

Introduction

TELL Students

You picked a toy soldier! This soldier represents the brave defenders of the Alamo. There were about 200 men who stood their ground against a much larger Mexican army. These soldiers showed incredible courage in the face of overwhelming odds.

ASK Students

Why do you think it was important for the soldiers to be courageous?

TELL Students

Yes! Soldiers must be courageous because battles are hard and dangerous. Now, who wants to go next? You got a small book! This book can symbolize the many personal stories and letters written by those who were at the Alamo. These letters give us a glimpse into their thoughts, hopes, and fears during the battle. It is like reading a diary from someone who was actually there!

ASK Students

What do the letters and stories written by the men at the Alamo teach us?

TELL Students **P**

Now, let's see who's next. You pulled out a small cannon! The cannon represents the heavy artillery used in the battle. **Artillery** is large, heavy weapons used in land battles, like cannons, which are too big to carry by hand and are often mounted on wheels for easier movement. Both the defenders and the Mexican army used cannons during the siege, and the roar of cannon fire was a common sound during those days. A **siege** is a military act of surrounding a city or base, attacking it, and cutting off supplies.

ASK Students

What is a siege?

TELL Students

That is right! A siege is what happened at the Alamo. Finally, we have one last item, a feather pen. This pen represents the documents that were written during the time, including a famous letter from William B. Travis, one of the Alamo's commanders.

Introduction

TELL Students (continued)

In this letter, William B. Travis wrote "to the people of Texas and all Americans in the world" asking for help and pledging to fight to the end. [Reference Travis Image]

ASK Students

Why do you think William B. Travis wrote a letter asking for help?

TELL Students

Each of these items tells a part of the story of the Alamo, and together they help us understand the bravery and determination of those who were there. Let's watch another episode of Star Spangled Adventures to learn more about the brave men who fought at the Alamo.

WATCH **D**

Star Spangled Adventures Cartoon Ep. 32: The Alamo





TELL Students

Deep in the heart of Texas in 1836, about 200 brave Texans, including Tejanos and volunteers, fought hard to protect the Alamo from thousands of soldiers led by the Mexican president, General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna. [Reference Santa Anna Image] Before we talk about the Battle of the Alamo, let's understand what the Alamo was and how Texas became part of the United States. [Show Texas on U.S. Map.] The Alamo was originally a mission built by Spanish settlers around 1718, called Mission San Antonio de Valero. Missionaries and Native American converts lived and worked there for nearly 70 years. Later, it became a military fort and was renamed "El Alamo" after the Spanish word for cottonwood trees that grew around it and to honor the soldiers' hometown, Alamo de Parras.

ASK Students

The Alamo was originally a ______.

TELL Students **P**

After an 11-year revolution, Mexico won its independence from Spain in 1821. Coahuila and Texas, formerly Spanish provinces, joined as one Mexican state. A **province** is an area of land that is part of a country, similar to a state. To encourage people to settle in Texas, the Mexican government gave land and a tax break to immigrants, mostly from the U.S. and other countries. These settlers became known as "Texians" (later shortened to "Texans").

ASK Students

What did the Mexican government do to encourage people to settle in Texas?

TELL Students

But as more settlers arrived, tensions grew. In 1830, Mexico tried to stop more Americans from coming to Texas, but people still came. In 1833, Santa Anna became president of Mexico and, instead of giving more freedom, he became a harsh leader who gave more power to the government. The Texians wanted more say in how they were governed and felt frustrated.

ASK Students

What type of leader was Santa Anna?

TELL Students

The Texas Revolution began in 1835 after Texians and their allies fought to control San Antonio de Béxar, an important town where the Alamo is located. Today, this town is called San Antonio. Let's watch another episode of Learn More with Liberty to learn more!

WATCH

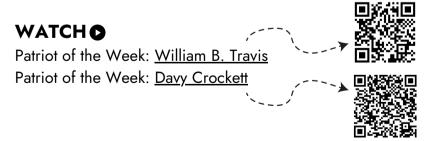
Learn More With Liberty: The Alamo & the Texas Revolution

ASK Students

What caused the Texas Revolution?

TELL Students

The Alamo was crucial because it helped warn other Texian settlements of attacks. Even though the Alamo wasn't very strong, it was important. Eventually, rumors spread that Santa Anna was coming with around 6,000 soldiers. After the battle in San Antonio, many volunteers went home, but some leaders, including General Sam Houston and Governor Henry Smith, thought the Alamo was important and needed to be defended. [Reference Houston and Smith Images] Alamo Commander Lt. Colonel James Clinton Neill worked hard to make the fort stronger, and soon more reinforcements arrived. Among them were James Bowie, Lt. Col. William B. Travis, and Davy Crockett. [Reference Bowie, Travis, Crockett Images] They all agreed that the Alamo was the "key to Texas." Let's watch two exciting Patriot of the Week videos to learn more!



ASK Students

After the battle in San Antonio, why did some men stay to defend the Alamo while others left?

TELL Students 🎤

In February 1836, when Neill had to leave the Alamo for a short time, Travis and Bowie took charge of the fort. Soon after, Santa Anna and his large army arrived and told the fewer than 200 Texians and their allies to surrender. To **surrender** is to give up control of something to someone else. Travis fired a cannonball back at them to show they would not give up. Knowing they needed more help, Travis sent a message explaining that the enemy was close. In the message, he also explained that they needed more soldiers and supplies.

ASK Students

What did Travis do to show that the defenders of the Alamo would not give up when Santa Anna and his army arrived?

TELL Students

After Santa Anna's army attacked the fort for a whole day, Travis wrote another letter on February 24, 1836, to ask for help. In the letter, Travis said that his men were surrounded by Santa Anna's army. They had been under attack for 24 hours. He said that the enemy wanted them to surrender and they needed help quickly. In his letter, Travis also said that the enemy's army was getting bigger every day. He explained that if no help came, they would fight as long as they could and they would never give up.

ASK Students

What did Travis say in his letter on February 24, 1836, about the situation at the Alamo and what he needed?

TELL Students

A few more soldiers arrived, but it wasn't enough. On March 6, 1836, at about 5:00am, more than 1,000 of Santa Anna's soldiers attacked the Alamo. In less than 90 minutes, the defenders were defeated, and at least 189 of them were killed. (Women and children who weren't fighting were allowed to leave safely.) Even though they lost the battle, the phrase "Remember the Alamo!" became a powerful call for others to continue fighting.

ASK Students

What happened at the Alamo on March 6, 1836, and what was the impact of the phrase "Remember the Alamo!"?

TELL Students **P**

While the Alamo was under siege, Texians declared their independence from Mexico on March 2, 1836. To **declare** means to say something in an official or public way. The bravery of those who defended the Alamo is an inspiring part of American history, showing us the fight for Texas independence. In 1836, a small group of brave people stood their ground at the Alamo against a much larger army. Their courage during this tough battle made many people across America admire and remember them. Even though they did not win, their spirit helped others keep fighting for freedom. This led to a big victory at the Battle of San Jacinto, which helped Texas become independent from Mexico.

ASK Students

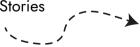
How did the bravery of the Alamo defenders impact the fight for Texas independence?

TELL Students

This story helps us see how important it is to be brave and stand up for what we believe in, even when it's hard. It teaches us that, just like the Alamo defenders, we can all show courage in our own lives. Whether it's helping a friend, trying something new, or standing up for what's right, acts of courage can inspire others and make a big difference. By learning about the Alamo, you can think about how you too can be brave every day. Let's watch another episode of Learn More with Liberty to learn more!

WATCH •

Learn More with Liberty: Songs and Stories









Objective

Students will learn about the strategies used to protect the Alamo and develop their own strategies for defending a fort through an interactive, hands-on activity.

Materials

- Large poster board or whiteboard to draw a simple map of the Alamo and surrounding area
- Building blocks or cardboard boxes to create a small model fort
- Toy soldiers or cut-out figures to represent Texian defenders and Mexican soldiers
- Markers, crayons, and stickers for drawing and decorating
- Simple props (e.g., paper cannons, flags) to enhance the model fort
- Paper and pencils for students to draw their own fort strategies

Introduction

- Briefly review the importance of the Alamo and why it needed to be defended.
- Show a simple map of the Alamo and its surroundings to give students a visual reference.

Build the Fort

- Divide students into small groups and provide each group with building blocks or cardboard boxes.
- Guide students to construct their own small model forts. Encourage them to think about how they would protect the fort from attackers.

Place Defenders and Attackers

- Give each group toy soldiers or cut-out figures to represent Texian defenders and Mexican soldiers.
- Ask students to place their defenders inside the fort and position the attackers outside the fort.

Develop Defense Strategies

- Give each group toy soldiers or cut-out figures to represent Texian defenders and Mexican soldiers.
- Ask students to place their defenders inside the fort and position the attackers outside the fort.





Present and Discuss

- Have each group present their fort and explain their defense strategy to the class.
- Discuss the different strategies and why they might be effective. Highlight the importance of teamwork and thinking ahead.

Role-Playing

- Allow students to role-play a simple scenario where the attackers approach the fort. Students can move their figures and act out their defense strategies.
- Discuss what worked well and what could be improved.

Reflection

- Gather and ask them to reflect on what they learned about defending a fort.
- Ask guiding questions such as, "What was the most important part of your defense strategy?" and "How did you work together as a team?"

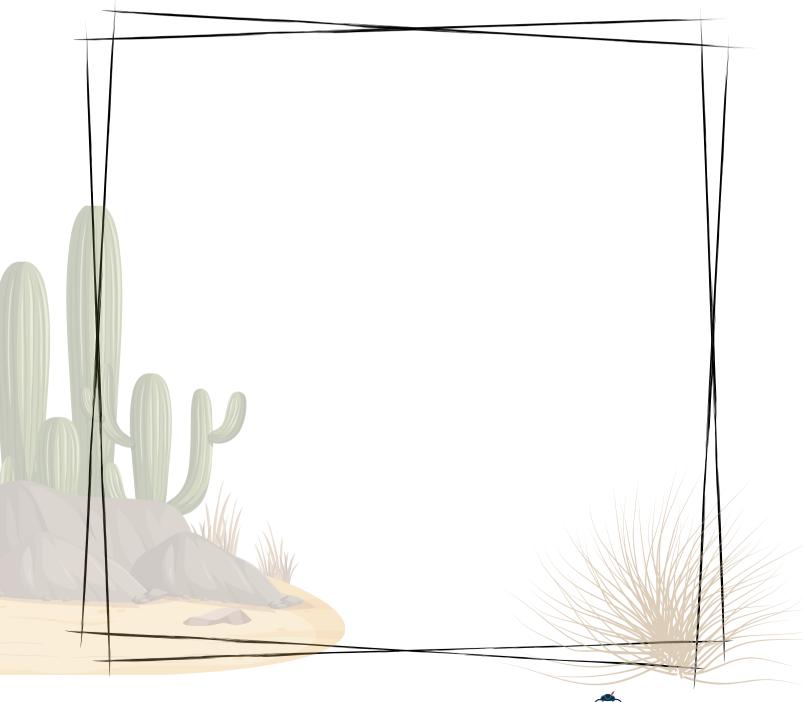
This interactive activity combines building, drawing, role-playing, and discussion to help first graders understand the strategies involved in protecting the Alamo, while also developing their teamwork and critical thinking skills.

The Alamo Adventure

NAME:	DATE	
NAME.	DAIL	

Color the Alamo!

Draw and color the Alamo. Use brown for the walls and green for the grass.



The Alamo Adventure

AME:	DATE
Match the Heroes! Draw a line to match the heroe	es with what they did.
a. Davy Crockett	Led the Mexican soldiers
b. Santa Anna	Asked for help and led the defenders
c. William B. Travis	Protected the Alamo
What Did They Need? Help Travis send a message fo	or help. Draw or write what the Alamo defenders needed.
More	
More	

Resources

- https://www.thealamo.org/remember/battle-and-revolution/defenders#sortByName
- https://www.history.com/topics/latin-america/alamo
- https://www.thealamo.org/remember/battle-and-revolution/revolution-timeline
- https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/remembering-the-alamo-101880149/
- https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/texian
- https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/alamo-battle-of-the
- https://www.thealamo.org/remember/battle-and-revolution/travis-letter

Alamo



Credit: Canva Pro.

William B. Travis



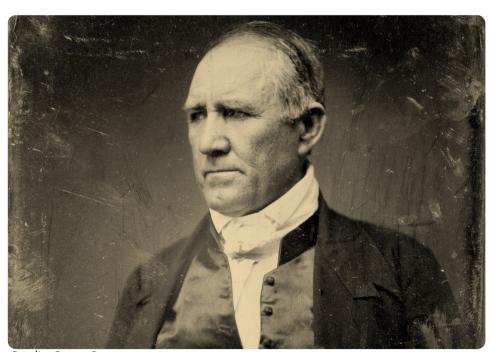
Credit: Texas State Historical Association

Santa Anna



Credit: Wikipedia.

Sam Houston



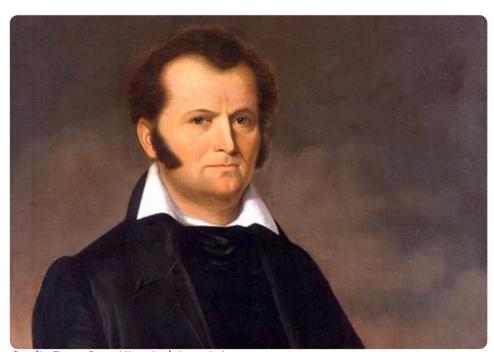
Credit: Canva Pro.

Henry Smith



Credit: Wikipedia.

James Bowie



Credit: Texas State Historical Association

Davy Crockett



Credit: Wikipedia

Notes
