DISCOVER AMERICA

Teacher Guide



Defenders of the Alamo: Courage, Sacrifice, and Heritage



Table of Contents

3	Themes & Values
	Learning Objectives
4	Key Terms
5	Introduction
8	Lesson
12	The Alamo Adventure
14	Help Travis Send a Message for Help
15	Resources
16	Images
20	Notes

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

- Identify the Alamo as a historical place.
- Recognize key figures associated with the Alamo, such as Davy Crockett and James Bowie.
- Locate the Alamo on a map of Texas.
- Understand that the Alamo is a significant event in the history of Texas.
- Begin to understand that events like the Alamo are part of their heritage and contribute to their community's history.

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, surrounded 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 a very great change in something that causes many other things to change.

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 asking for help and pledging to fight to the end. [Reference William B. 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

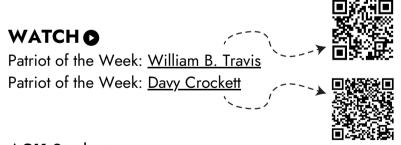
The Texas Revolution began in 1835 after Texians and their allies fought to control San Antonio de Béxar, an important town where the Alamo is located. Today, this town is called San Antonio.

ASK Students

Where is the Alamo located?

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 Sam Houston and Henry 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.

Tell Students (continued)

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 this letter, Travis explained that they were surrounded by Santa Anna's army. He said they had been under attack for 24 hours and the enemy wanted them to surrender. Travis said they would not surrender but they needed help. In this letter, he explained that if no one came to help, his troops would fight as long as they could and would not 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 the Alamo defenders helped inspire the fight for Texas independence, leading to their eventual victory over Santa Anna at the Battle of San Jacinto. Let's watch two episodes of Learn More with Liberty to learn more!

WATCH

Learn More With Liberty: Key Figures of the Alamo

Learn More with Liberty: Songs and Stories









Objective

Students will learn about the historical significance of the Alamo through interactive play, focusing on concepts of bravery, teamwork, and history.

Materials

- Large sheet of paper or poster board with a simple drawing of the Alamo fort
- Toy figures or cut-out characters (e.g., Texian defenders, Mexican soldiers, women, and children)
- Miniature flags (or paper flags) to represent the Texian and Mexican forces
- Building blocks or cardboard boxes to create a small fort
- Crayons, markers, and stickers for decorating

Introduction

- Briefly review what the Alamo was: a fort in Texas where a famous battle took place. Highlight the bravery and teamwork of the people involved.
- Explain that students will be building and acting out their own version of the Alamo story.

Create the Alamo Fort

- Spread out the large sheet of paper or poster board with the outline of the Alamo fort.
- Encourage students to help decorate the fort using crayons, markers, and stickers. This activity helps them develop fine motor skills and creativity while understanding the appearance of the Alamo.

Build and Play

- Using building blocks or cardboard boxes, guide students in constructing a small model of the Alamo fort. Discuss the importance of working together as they build.
- Place the toy figures or cut-outs around the fort. Assign roles to different students (e.g., Texian defenders, Mexican soldiers, women, and children). This helps them understand different perspectives and roles.





Role Play

- Facilitate a simple role-playing activity. Explain that some students will be defenders protecting the fort, while others will play the soldiers approaching the fort.
- Use the miniature flags to represent the Texian and Mexican forces. Encourage students to act out scenarios, such as defending the fort or asking for help.

Discuss and Reflect

- Gather students in a circle and discuss what they learned from the activity. Ask guiding questions like, "What did the Texian defenders do to protect the fort?" and "Why is the Alamo important?"
- Highlight the concepts of bravery and teamwork.

Craft Time

Provide materials for students to make their own mini flags or simple paper crafts related to the Alamo theme. This craft activity reinforces the lesson and allows students to express their understanding creatively.



Help Travis Send a Message for Help!

IAME:	DATE

Instructions:

- Discuss with students what might be needed, such as "more people" or "more food."
- Encourage students to draw pictures of what the Alamo defenders need.



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



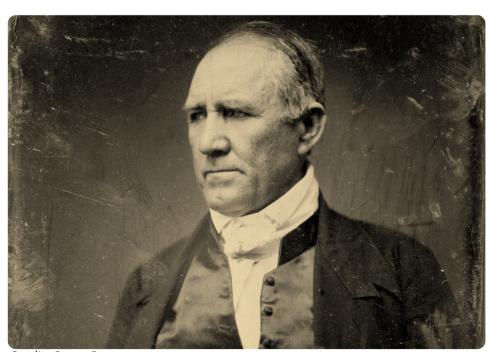
Credit: Texas State Historical Association

Santa Anna



Credit: Wikipedia.

Sam Houston



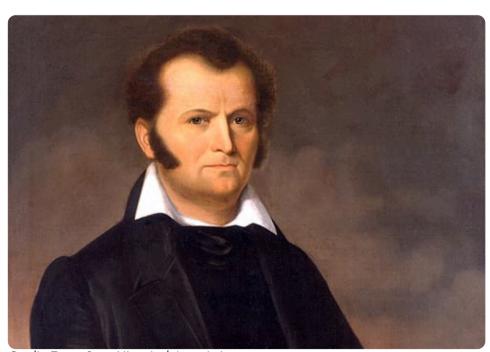
Credit: Canva Pro.

Henry Smith



Credit: Wikipedia.

James Bowie



Credit: Texas State Historical Association

Davy Crockett



Credit: Wikipedia

Notes
