

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

- Identify the Alamo as a significant historical site in Texas.
- Name and recognize important figures from the Battle of the Alamo, such as Davy Crockett, William B. Travis, and Santa Anna.
- Discuss the concepts of bravery and sacrifice by exploring the actions of the Alamo defenders.
- Locate Texas on a map of the United States and identify the Alamo's location within Texas.
- Explain the geographical significance of the Alamo's location during the Texas Revolution.
- Discuss how the outcomes of the battle influenced the course of American 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 are going to learn about a special event in history. I am going to give each of you one letter. As a class, you will work to unscramble the letters. Once you complete the phrase, you will have a big clue about what we are learning today. Are you ready? [Give each student one letter of the phrase "Remember the Alamo!" on a notecard. Encourage students to work together creatively to unscramble the phrase.]

ASK Students

What do you know about the Alamo?

TELL Students

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]** 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?

Introduction

TELL Students 🔑

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?

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 🔑

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.

Introduction

TELL Students (continued)

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. 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 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

Star Spangled Adventures Cartoon [Ep. 32: The Alamo](#)



Lesson

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

What was the original purpose of the building known as the Alamo before it became a military fort?

TELL Students 🔑

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 move to Texas and make it a busier place, the Mexican government came up with a plan to attract settlers from the United States and other countries. They offered big pieces of land at very low prices and said that the new settlers wouldn't have to pay taxes for a while. This made many families and adventurers excited to start a new life in Texas. People who moved there were called "Texians" at first. They came from many different places, like Ireland, Germany, and England, adding to the mix of people already there. Over time, as they all lived and worked together fighting for their land, they began to call themselves "Texans," showing they were united and proud of their new home. This mix of people and the land they settled on helped shape what Texas is today.

ASK Students

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

Lesson

TELL Students

As more and more settlers moved to Texas, the area started to change a lot. Most of these new settlers came from the United States, and they had different ways of living and different ideas from the Mexican people who were already there. As the number of settlers increased, they started to fill up the land, and this made some of the original residents and the Mexican government worried and unhappy. In 1830, to control this rapid change, the Mexican government created a new rule to stop more American settlers from moving to Texas. But many Americans kept coming anyway, even though it was not allowed. This made the situation more tense, as more people were living in Texas without permission.

ASK Students

Why did the Mexican government create a new rule in 1830, and what was its effect on the settlers coming to Texas?

TELL Students

Then, in 1833, a new leader named Santa Anna became the president of Mexico. Many people hoped he would be fair and give them more freedom, but he did the opposite. Santa Anna made himself very powerful and did not listen to what the settlers wanted. He believed in strong control and put more power in the hands of the government. This upset the settlers, known as Texians, because they felt they had no say in the decisions that affected their lives. They wanted to be part of the discussions and decisions about Texas's rules and future. Because of these issues, the Texians became more and more frustrated. They felt they were not being treated fairly. They did not just want small changes anymore. They started thinking about becoming independent and making Texas a place where they could create their own rules. This was the beginning of serious disagreements that would later lead to big fights for independence.

ASK Students

How did Santa Anna's leadership style affect the Texians, and what did it lead them to consider for Texas's future?

Lesson

TELL Students

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

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!

WATCH

Patriot of the Week: [William B. Travis](#)

Patriot of the Week: [Davy Crockett](#)



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.

Lesson

TELL Students

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. In this message, he explained that the enemy was close and they needed more supplies and soldiers. He also said they would defend the fort until the end.

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, he said that they were surrounded by Santa Anna's army. He explained that they had been under attack for 24 hours but they had not lost any men. He also said they needed help quickly and that the enemy's army was getting bigger every day. In this letter, he also explained that if no help came, they would fight as long as they could and 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.

Lesson

ASK Students

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

TELL Students

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 two episodes of Learn More with Liberty to learn more!

WATCH

Learn More With Liberty: Remembering the Heroes

Learn More with Liberty: Songs and Stories





Objective

To teach third grade students about key figures from the Battle of the Alamo, such as William B. Travis and Davy Crockett, through a hands-on investigation and presentation project.

Materials

- Biography Cards: Prepared cards with information about different heroes from the Alamo, including William B. Travis, Davy Crockett, James Bowie, and others.
- Investigation Sheets: Worksheets where students can record facts and interesting information about their assigned hero.
- Art Supplies: Markers, colored pencils, construction paper, and other craft supplies for creating a visual representation of their hero.
- Costumes or Props (optional): Items that represent each hero for the students to use during their final presentations.

Introduction

- Start by reviewing the Battle of the Alamo and why it was significant. Explain that many heroes played important roles in this event and that today's activity will help them learn more about these individuals.

Hero Assignment

- Distribute the biography cards randomly among the students, ensuring each student or small group gets one hero to investigate. Hand out the investigation sheets where they will jot down key facts.

Research and Investigation

- Allow time for students to read their biography cards and use classroom resources like books or approved online sources to gather more information about their assigned hero. They should fill out their investigation sheets with details such as the hero's role at the Alamo, significant actions, and any personal stories or facts.

Create a Hero Poster

- Using the art supplies, each student or group creates a poster representing their hero. They should include a portrait, important dates, and a summary of their hero's contribution to the Battle of the Alamo.



Hero Presentation

- Each student or group presents their hero to the class. Encourage them to explain why their figure was significant to the Alamo and what they admired about them. If available, students can wear costumes or use props to make their presentation more engaging.

Class Discussion

- After all presentations, lead a discussion about the different heroes and what qualities they shared that made them stand out during the Battle of the Alamo. Discuss the importance of leadership, bravery, and sacrifice.

Reflection Activity

- Conclude the activity with a reflection where each student writes a few sentences about which hero they found most inspiring and why.

This interactive activity not only educates students about the historical facts of the Alamo but also connects them personally with the people who shaped this important event, fostering a deeper understanding and respect for their contributions.

Biography Cards

These are sample biography cards for use in the "Alamo Hero Investigation" activity. Each card contains key information about a hero from the Battle of the Alamo to help students start their research and presentations.

William B. Travis

Full Name: William Barret Travis

Born: August 1, 1809, Saluda County, South Carolina

Role at the Alamo: Co-commander of the Alamo defenders

Notable Actions: Wrote the famous "Victory or Death" letter seeking aid for the garrison.

Quote: "I shall never surrender or retreat."

Died: March 6, 1836, Alamo Mission, San Antonio, Texas

Davy Crockett

Full Name: David Crockett

Born: August 17, 1786, Greene County, Tennessee

Role at the Alamo: Famed frontiersman and defender

Notable Actions: Fought bravely and was a morale booster for the defenders.

Died: March 6, 1836, Alamo Mission, San Antonio, Texas

James Bowie

Full Name: James Bowie

Born: April 10, 1796, Logan County, Kentucky

Role at the Alamo: Co-commander before falling ill prior to the siege

Notable Actions: Known for his fierce fighting spirit and the Bowie knife.

Died: March 6, 1836, Alamo Mission, San Antonio, Texas

Biography Cards

Juan Seguín

Full Name: Juan Nepomuceno Seguín

Born: October 27, 1806, San Antonio, Spanish Texas

Role at the Alamo: Tejano leader and politician; fought in the Texas Revolution, but not present in the Alamo during the final siege

Notable Actions: Key liaison between Anglo defenders and Tejano supporters. Carried out Travis's last letter calling for reinforcements.

Quote: "Texas shall be free and independent or we shall perish in glorious combat."

Died: August 27, 1890, Nuevo Laredo, Mexico

Susanna Dickinson

Full Name: Susanna Wilkerson Dickinson

Born: 1814, Tennessee

Role at the Alamo: Non-combatant and survivor of the Alamo siege

Notable Actions: Witness to the siege and massacre, provided accounts of the battle's events to others afterward.

Died: October 7, 1883, Austin, Texas

Fill in the Blank Activity

NAME: _____ DATE _____

Instructions

Fill in the blanks with the correct words or numbers based on our lessons about the Alamo and Texas independence. Review your notes and think about the important events and figures we discussed. This will help you understand the sequence of events and the significance of the Alamo in American history.

1. In the year _____, about 200 brave Texans fought to protect the Alamo from thousands of soldiers led by General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna.
2. The Alamo was originally a _____ built by Spanish settlers around 1718, called Mission San Antonio de Valero.
3. This mission housed missionaries and Native American converts for nearly _____ years.
4. Later, it was renamed "El Alamo" after the Spanish word for _____ trees that grew around it.
5. After an 11-year revolution, Mexico won its independence from Spain in _____.
6. Coahuila and Texas, formerly Spanish _____, joined as one Mexican state.
7. To encourage settlement, the Mexican government offered large pieces of land and _____ tax breaks.

Fill in the Blank Activity

8. The people who moved to Texas were initially called "_____."

9. Over time, these settlers began to call themselves "_____, " united and proud of their new home.

10. In _____, the Mexican government created a rule to stop more Americans from moving to Texas.

11. Santa Anna became the president of Mexico in _____, and his leadership style led to increasing frustrations among the Texians.

12. The Texas Revolution began in _____ after Texians and their allies fought to control San Antonio de Béxar.

13. When Santa Anna and his army arrived at the Alamo, Travis responded by firing a _____.

14. On March 6, _____, more than 1,000 of Santa Anna's soldiers attacked the Alamo, leading to the loss of at least 189 defenders.

15. The phrase "_____ the Alamo!" became a rallying cry encouraging others to continue the fight for freedom.

Fill in the Blank Answer Key

1. In the year 1836, about 200 brave Texans fought to protect the Alamo from thousands of soldiers led by General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna.
2. The Alamo was originally a mission built by Spanish settlers around 1718, called Mission San Antonio de Valero.
3. This mission housed missionaries and Native American converts for nearly 70 years.
4. Later, it was renamed "El Alamo" after the Spanish word for cottonwood trees that grew around it.
5. After an 11-year revolution, Mexico won its independence from Spain in 1821.
6. Coahuila and Texas, formerly Spanish provinces, joined as one Mexican state.
7. To encourage settlement, the Mexican government offered large pieces of land and temporary tax breaks.
8. The people who moved to Texas were initially called "Texians."
9. Over time, these settlers began to call themselves "Texans," united and proud of their new home.
10. In 1830, the Mexican government created a rule to stop more Americans from moving to Texas.
11. Santa Anna became the president of Mexico in 1833, and his leadership style led to increasing frustrations among the Texians.
12. The Texas Revolution began in 1835 after Texians and their allies fought to control San Antonio de Béxar.
13. When Santa Anna and his army arrived at the Alamo, Travis responded by firing a cannonball.
14. On March 6, 1836, more than 1,000 of Santa Anna's soldiers attacked the Alamo, leading to the loss of at least 189 defenders.
15. The phrase "Remember the Alamo!" became a rallying cry encouraging others to continue the fight for freedom.

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>

Images

Alamo



Credit: Canva Pro.

William B. Travis



Credit: Texas State Historical Association

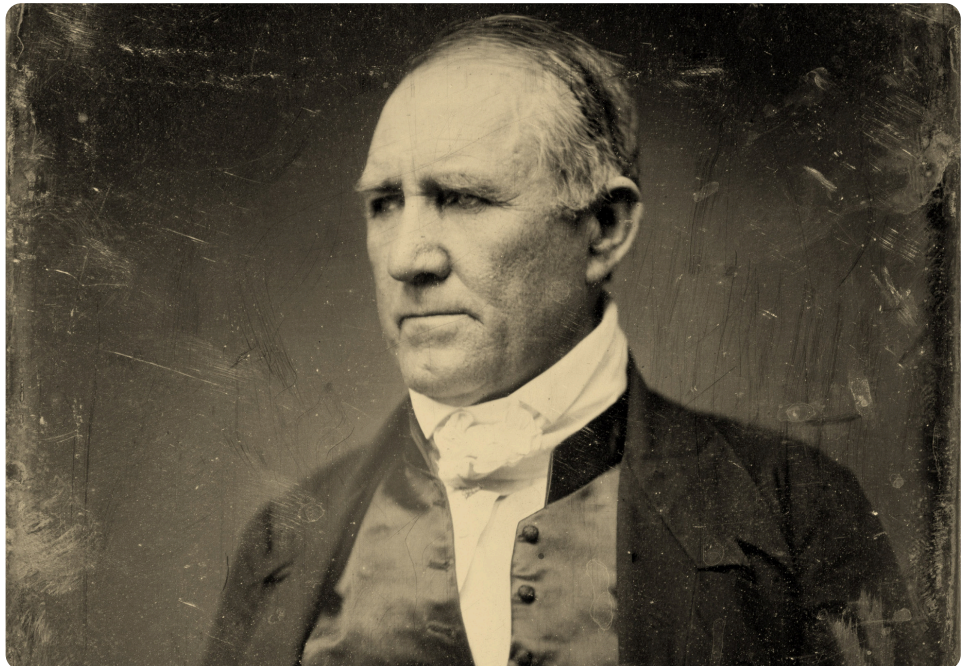
Images

Santa Anna



Credit: Wikipedia.

Sam Houston



Credit: Canva Pro.

Images

Henry Smith



Credit: Wikipedia.

James Bowie



Credit: Texas State Historical Association

Images

Davy Crockett



Credit: Wikipedia

Notes

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