Texas War for Independence

Who lived in Mexican Texas?

In the early 1820s an American named Stephen F. Austin settled 300 families in the Mexican territory of Texas. Mexico had given him a large land grant to settle Americans who were willing to become citizens of Mexico. As an emigré, Austin had to convince potential settlers that the land in Texas was fertile and that the laws of Mexico would provide them with certain rights and freedoms. By 1830 about 20,000 white Americans and 2,000 black slaves lived in Texas, greatly outnumbering the Tejanos, or Mexican Texans, who lived there.

What were the causes of the Texas's war for independence?

- **Cultural differences**—English-speaking Texans outnumbered Tejanos by about five to one. Few of these American settlers adopted local customs or learned to speak Spanish.

- **Anti-immigration law**—Many American settlers violated Mexican laws, so the Mexican government prohibited further American immigration to Texas.

- **Lack of local political control**—By the early 1830s the Mexican government began taking power from the Mexican state governments. In 1833 Stephen Austin went to Mexico City to argue for more local control and Mexico put Austin in jail for a year without trial.

- **Lack of democracy**—Mexico was a democracy when most of the American settlers came to Texas. However, in 1834, General Antonio López de Santa Anna declared himself dictator of Mexico and abolished the constitutional federal government.

What were the major events of Texas's war for independence?

Rumors reached Texas that Santa Anna would try to force all the American settlers to leave Mexico. Both English-speaking settlers and many Tejanos disliked what Santa Anna was doing in Mexico City and threatening to do in Texas. In 1836, Texans revolted and Santa Anna personally marched 6,000 troops into Texas to crush the rebellion.

- **The Alamo**—In February 1836 Santa Anna marched into San Antonio and attacked 187 soldiers and about 30 townspeople who had fortified themselves in the Alamo, a former Spanish mission, for protection. After nearly two weeks, Santa Anna finally defeated the defenders and ordered that everyone inside be killed, except for women, children, and Mexican civilians.

- **Massacre at Goliad**—While Santa Anna was laying siege to the Alamo, a second Mexican army captured the town of Goliad and executed 371 of its rebel defenders. News of events at the Alamo and Goliad made the Texans more determined to win their independence.
• Creation of the Republic of Texas—On March 2, 1836, the leaders of the rebellion finally declared Texas an independent republic. They set up a temporary government and appointed Sam Houston commander of the Texas army.

• Battle of San Jacinto—For a while, General Houston led his Texas army eastward in retreat from Santa Anna's forces. But on April 21, 1836, at San Jacinto, the Texans turned to fight back. Shouting “Remember the Alamo! Remember Goliad!” Houston's army attacked a force of about 1,400 Mexican soldiers. In just 20 minutes the Texans killed more than 600 soldiers and soon afterward captured Santa Anna. Houston gave Santa Anna his freedom in exchange for signing a treaty giving Texas its independence.

What was the result of Texas's war for independence?

Having won its independence, Texas set up a permanent government. Sam Houston, who had once been governor of Tennessee, was elected the first president of the Republic of Texas, and Lorenzo de Zavala, a Tejano, was elected vice president. One of the first things that the new government did was apply to the United States for statehood.

When did Texas become part of the United States?

Even though U.S. President Andrew Jackson, a friend of Sam Houston's, wanted to annex Texas right away, he didn't. He knew that northerners would protest against a new slave state entering the Union. Later presidents also hesitated to annex Texas, but in 1845 Texas was finally admitted to the United States.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

Directions: Read each statement below. Write ‘T’ if the statement is TRUE or write ‘F’ if the statement is FALSE. Then change all FALSE statements to read TRUE.

____ 1. Americans moved into Texas to gain the fertile land for farming.

____ 2. One issue that led to Texans wanting independence was the violation of Mexican laws by the Texans.

____ 3. The problem that Texans had with General Fernandez was that he made himself the elected president of Mexico and began to take away the freedom and rights of Texans.

____ 4. The first battle in the war for Texas independence occurred at Gonzales.

____ 5. Stephen Austin was appointed general of the Texas army and eventually the president of Texas.

____ 6. Texas gained its independence after Santa Anna exchanged it for his personal freedom after the Battle of San Jacinto.

____ 7. After the Texas War, Texas immediately became a state in the U.S.

____ 8. Texas was not annexed into the United States, at first, because it was a slave owning state.