Perspective in the Battle of the Alamo


Big Idea: Students will use a variety of print and electronic resources to consider the perspectives from which the story of the Battle of the Alamo is told. They will identify the historical figures mentioned in each resource and consider why Tejanos are or are not included. An extension of this lesson allows students to retell stories about the Alamo and other major events in the Texas Revolution from non-dominant/popular perspectives, such as from the point of view of females, Tejanos, and children.

Social Studies TEKS Addressed:
4. 3 History. The student understands the importance of the Texas Revolution, the Republic of Texas, and the annexation of Texas to the United States. The student is expected to:
(A) analyze the causes, major events, and effects of the Texas Revolution, including the Battle of the Alamo, the Texas Declaration of Independence, the Runaway Scrape, and the Battle of San Jacinto;
(B) summarize the significant contributions of individuals such as Texians William B. Travis, James Bowie, David Crockett, George Childress, and Sidney Sherman; Tejanos Juan Antonio Padilla, Carlos Espalier, Juan N. Seguín, Plácido Benavides, and José Francisco Ruiz; Mexicans Antonio López de Santa Anna and Vicente Filisola; and non-combatants Susanna Dickinson and Enrique Esparza;
(C) identify leaders important to the founding of Texas as a republic and state, including José Antonio Navarro, Sam Houston, Mirabeau Lamar, and Anson Jones;
4.16 Citizenship. The student understands important customs, symbols, and celebrations of Texas. The student is expected to:
(A) explain the meaning of various patriotic symbols and landmarks of Texas, including the six flags that flew over Texas, the San Jacinto Monument, the Alamo, and various missions;
4.19 Culture. The student understands the contributions of people of various racial, ethnic, and religious groups to Texas. The student is expected to:
(A) identify the similarities and differences among various racial, ethnic, and religious groups in Texas;
(C) summarize the contributions of people of various racial, ethnic, and religious groups in the development of Texas such as Lydia Mendoza, Chelo Silva, and Julius Lorenzo Cobb Bledsoe.

Time Length: One and a half to three weeks (with extensions).

Day 1: What happened at the Alamo? Students will watch the History Channel video Alamo Deconstructed (http://www.history.com/topics/texas/videos#alamo-deconstructed), focusing specifically on the portion that discusses the Battle of the Alamo. Who is the audience for this short film? What were the key pieces of information that it delivered? After discussing these questions and any posed by students, complete the first column on the perspective chart about this resource. Point out the statement that “Americans wanted independence” - is this a true statement? Is it inclusive of all the groups that wanted Texas independence from Mexico? Why or why not?
Day 2: Beyond Davy Crockett  Provide students with background knowledge about the Battle of Béxar (p. 27-29 and 35-39 of Remember the Alamo provide many details for teachers to discuss) and Santa Anna’s march to San Antonio. Read pages 1-9 of Texas Tales and complete the second column on the perspective chart. Emphasize that this resource describes Tejanos as defenders of the Alamo and addresses the presence of boys, women and children at the Alamo. Label the historical figures on the Who’s Who page and write short descriptions for Almonte (p. 11-12 of Remember the Alamo) and Cos (17-27).

Days 3: The Battle  Refer to Remember the Alamo p. 29 to describe the significance of Santa Anna’s red flag of no quarter. Reference illustration on page 36 during read aloud to demonstrate Texan actions against the Mexican army. Read The Battle of the Alamo and complete the third and final column on the perspective chart. Add descriptions about William Travis, James Bowie and Santa Anna onto Who’s Who chart.

Days 4: The Revolution Ends & Reflection  Finish reading Texas Tales and take notes on Goliad Massacre and Battle of San Jacinto. Compare the events and deaths of the Alamo to Goliad, and review other major battles of the Texas Revolution. Given the greater number of deaths at Goliad and the significance of San Jacinto as the final battle of the revolution, why is the Battle of the Alamo the most famous event in Texas history? Students write their responses independently as a reflection.

Day 5: Perspective  Why is it important to consider perspective when learning about history? What did the different resources demonstrate about perspective? How can perspective affect how history is told? How can students use their newfound knowledge to offer different perspectives on the events they learned about? Brainstorm ideas or present extension activities.

Days 6-10: Extensions  Students can work independently or in small groups to complete extension projects that require them to retell an event from the Texas Revolution from a nonstandard/alternative perspective:

• Read Susanna of the Alamo by John Jakes, then write the story of the Alamo and the aftermath from the perspective of Ana Esparza (wife of Gregorio Esparza)
• Act out “Time Warp Alamo” reader’s theater (https://www.tsl.state.tx.us/ld/projects/trc/2002/manual/scripts/timewarp.html by Gayle Travis), then write a traditional or modern reader’s theater that describes the Tejano experience at the Alamo
• Using the computer software ComicLife or comic strip templates, create a short comic or graphic novel about one of the following events/figures:
  • The Battle of the Alamo from Enrique Esparza’s perspective (son of Gregorio)
  • The Angel of Goliad (Francisca Panchita Alvarez) - summary in Texas Tales
  • Tejanos at the Battle of San Jacinto (led by Juan Seguín) - summary in Texas Tales
  • Gonzales Mounted Rangers - summary in Texas Tales
• Podcasts about any of the above figures