

# Block Party

Colonizing Texas

## Grade Level

7-12 grade

## Time Requirement

60-90 minutes

## Introduction

The prospect of colonizing Texas following Mexican independence from Spain in 1821 presented enormous challenges for those inhabiting Texas and the nascent government in Mexico City. As discussed in the overview essay by Dr. Andrew Torget, one of Spain's greatest strategic blunders in the Americas was their inability to populate Texas and provide meaningful security and stability to those living there.

Following independence, the Mexican government was beleaguered by instability and debt, and Mexican citizens in Texas lived in fear of frequent Indian raids. Both prioritized colonizing Texas in the early 1820s, but questions remained as to the best way to do so.

Anglo empresarios from the United States, notably Stephen F. Austin, and prominent Tejanos saw economic opportunity in Mexico's quandary. After achieving independence, the Mexican government ratified a colonization law in 1825 that opened Texas to foreign colonists. Following the cotton boom of the 1810s and the Panic of 1819, desirable land in Mississippi and Alabama could be as much as \$50 per acre, while land in Texas would be available for 12.5 cents per acre.

For the Mexican government, a new Anglo colony in Texas would bring its own unique complications—issues of loyalty, slavery, and adherence to the state religion—Catholicism. The incentives were enormous: national security, population stability, and economic livelihood. Powerful stakeholders agreed that colonizing Texas was a priority, but they had disagreements over why and how to do so.

In this lesson, students will examine the conditions in Texas in the immediate aftermath of Mexican independence by studying different perspectives. Students will analyze the unique and shared experiences of the Mexican citizens in Texas, the Mexican government, and Anglo colonists. Students will consider the effect of perspectives on historical narratives.

## Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Analyze the importance of understanding perspective in the construction of narratives.
- Examine the conditions in Texas following Mexico's independence from Spain in order to assess the challenges faced by various stakeholder groups at the time.
- Contextualize this moment in time following Mexican independence, explain the incentives to colonize Texas, and construct clear arguments on how the demographic transformation of the region had considerable ramifications for the future.

## Focus Question

What were the motivations for the various stakeholders who wanted to populate Texas?

# Standards

## Social Studies

7.2 (D) identify the individuals, issues, and events related to Mexico becoming an independent nation and its impact on Texas, including ... the Mexican federal Constitution of 1824, the merger of Texas and Coahuila as a state, the State Colonization Law of 1825, and slavery;

7.2 (E) identify the contributions of significant individuals, including Moses Austin, Stephen F. Austin, Erasmo Seguín, Martín De León, and Green DeWitt, during the Mexican settlement of Texas;

7.2 (F) contrast Spanish, Mexican, and Anglo purposes for and methods of settlement in Texas.

## Readiness; Anchoring English, Language Arts, and Reading

7.6 (B) ELA write responses that demonstrate understanding of texts, including comparing sources within and across genres;

7.6 (C) ELA use text evidence to support an appropriate response

7.6 (F) respond using newly acquired vocabulary as appropriate

# Procedures

1. Have students read the OVERVIEW ESSAY before the start of the lesson. Open by setting the historical context for the class. Explain, or have the students discuss, what Texas was like after Mexico won independence from Spain. After reading, ask the students what they believe were the motivations to populate Texas for the various stakeholders in the 1820s. Discuss the demographic shifts, instability, and lack of security.
2. Complete Perspective Block Party Activity.
  - a. Post primary source excerpt cards on the wall around the room. Assign students the role of Tejano resident, Mexican government official, or Anglo colonist. Each group is responsible for identifying and explaining the perspective of their assigned group based on the posted primary source excerpts.
  - b. Students have 8 minutes to walk around and fill out their assigned role on the Colonizing Texas Perspective Graphic Organizer. Encourage discussion about the quotes deeper meaning.
  - c. Students form triads where each perspective is represented. Students share quotes and insight about the excerpts and their implications for the stakeholder group's motivations. Complete graphic organizers in collaboration with their triad.
  - d. As a whole group, share ideas and questions raised by the experience.
  - e. In triads or individually, students debrief with these reflection questions:
    - How did the protocol help us understand the differences and similarities in the perspectives?
    - What similarities and differences can we identify between the various groups?
    - What potential conflicts could arise from the differences in our perspectives?
3. Conclude the discussion by asking how a change of perspective can affect the understanding of historical narratives. What major takeaways do the students have about the history of Mexican Texas, and how does that history fit into their broader understanding of Texas history?

## Assessment

Through in-class discussion and written responses, students should demonstrate the ability to analyze different perspectives on the same historical event. By looking at different viewpoints from various stakeholders, students should formulate clear arguments on the ways perspectives can affect the understanding of historical narratives. Through their analysis of the experiences of different stakeholders, students should gain a sense of the complexities that shaped a dynamic frontier, and the challenges faced by different groups. By the end of the lesson, students should be able to articulate how these experiences fit into the broader history of Texas, and how these narratives change their understanding of Texas independence.

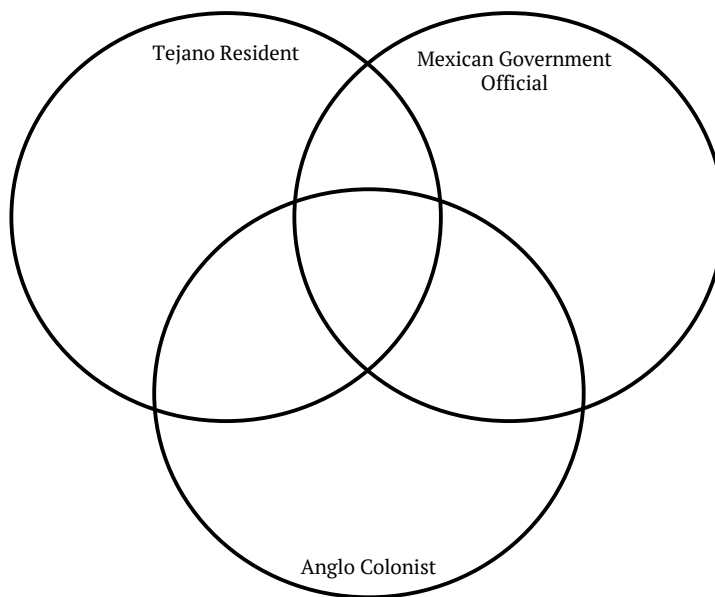
## Document Based Questions

Individually or in groups, students use the documents to answer the following questions:

1. What was the purpose of colonization in Mexican Texas?
2. What political, social, and economic factors shaped colonization in Mexican Texas?

## Perspective Triple Venn Diagram

Create a triple Venn Diagram to compare three roles or perspectives using the primary source document excerpts and online resources.



## Extension/Enrichment

- “A Day in the Life of \_\_\_\_”: Provide students with the “A Day in the Life of \_\_\_\_ after Mexican independence” writing prompt and allow them to write a narrative focusing on one of the perspectives discussed in the primary resources.
- Aftermath of Mexican Independence Illustration: Give students an opportunity to illustrate the perspective of a Tejano resident, Anglo colonists or a Mexican Government official using the assigned primary source.
- Colonizing Texas Interview: Ask students to create a list of interview questions that they may have for a Tejano resident, Anglo colonists and Mexican Government official.