

# Past is Prologue

## Timeline Activity

### Grade Level

7-12 grade

### Time Requirement

90-120 minutes

## Introduction

The War for Mexican Independence (1810–1821) and the age of the empresarios (1820s – 1830s) both had an enormous influence on the conflict that evolved into the Texas Revolution. The Mexican Independence movement planted seeds for a democratic, representative government in the hearts and minds of those living in Texas.

The war was devastating for San Antonio. Nearly half of its population perished during the struggle for independence. Frequently the target of raids by indigenous people and never having received appropriate government support, San Antonio's existence was not guaranteed.

Furthermore, colonists immigrating to Texas in the age of the empresarios brought with them similar notions of representative government. In contrast to their Mexican counterparts, Anglo's coming to Texas were more philosophically informed by the United States own struggle for independence fifty years before.

The Texas Revolution might seem like an isolated event, but it is deeply rooted in the intersectional histories and events of a diverse group of stakeholders in the decades that preceded the short-lived Republic of Texas (1836–1845). Historians are tasked with synthesizing complex histories into comprehensible narratives. They must decide what information is worthy of inclusion.

In this activity, students step into the shoes of historians and collaboratively construct a timeline of events leading up to the Texas Revolution.

## Materials

- Past is Prologue Event Cards
- Instructional Slides

## Objectives

Timelines can be an effective tool to help students organize events, identify relationships, and explore causality. Texas Independence was not a foregone conclusion, and it didn't happen in isolation. In this lesson, through a collaborative activity and group discussion, students should critically assess the events that led to the movement for Texan independence. Through a collaborative protocol, each student has an opportunity to have their ideas, understandings, and perspective enhanced by hearing from others. Using this lesson, students can explore the holistic historical narrative of the period leading up to the Texas Revolution and question why certain events are considered important and why others are lesser known.

## Focus Question

Explain the causal relationship between the different events that led to the Texas Revolution.

## Standards

### Social Studies

7.1(A) identify the major eras in Texas history, describe their defining characteristics, and explain the purpose of dividing the past into eras, including... Mexican National; Revolution and Republic;

7.1(B) Explain the significance of the following dates: ... 1821, Independence from Spain; 1836, Texas independence;

7.2(C) Identify important events and issues related to European colonization of Texas

7.2(D) Identify the individuals, issues, and events related to Mexico becoming an independent nation and its impact on Texas, including Texas involvement in the fight for independence, Jose Gutierrez de Lara, the battle of Medina, the Mexican federal Constitution of 1824, the merger of Texas and Coahuila as a state, and the State Colonization Law of 1825, and slavery

7.2(E) identify the individuals, issues, and events related to Mexico becoming an independent nation and its impact on Texas, including Father Miguel Hidalgo, Texas involvement in the fight for independence, José Gutiérrez de Lara, the Battle of Medina, 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(F) 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

7.3(A) describe the chain of events that led to the Texas Revolution, including the Fredonian Rebellion, the Mier y Terán Report, the Law of April 6, 1830, the Turtle Bayou Resolutions, and the arrest of Stephen F. Austin

7.3(B) explain the roles played by significant individuals during the Texas Revolution, including George Childress, Lorenzo de Zavala, James Fannin, Sam Houston, Antonio López de Santa Anna, Juan N. Seguín, and William B. Travis

7.6 (F) respond using newly acquired vocabulary as appropriate

## Procedures

1. Begin with a group discussion about causality. History doesn't happen in isolation. Historical events
2. have a cause and effect. Use examples and ask students to identify potential causes of major events in history they may already be aware of. Examples might include: The American Revolution, the Mexican War for Independence, the American Civil War, the civil right movement, etc.
3. Assign an event card to each student or group of students.
4. Students take 5-10 minutes to walk around the room, talk with other students about their events, and
5. form a line that places the events in chronological order. Encourage students to talk about their events with other groups. Alternatively, students can post their event cards on a wall in chronological order.
6. Once the line is formed, students read their event cards in order from beginning to end.
7. Back in small groups, or as a class, ask students to discuss any of the following questions:
  - a. How did surrounding events impact other events in the timeline?
  - b. How similar or different were the Mexican and Texan wars for independence?
  - c. How do these events appear to be connected?
  - d. Which are the most consequential events in the timelines? Why?
  - e. Are there any events that should be added to the timeline? Why?

8. Remind students that history is complicated, and rarely, if ever, do historians include every possible cause, effect, event, or perspective. Inform students that they must remove the three least important events from the timeline. Have students discuss why certain events are more or less important than others. Once they have removed the three events, continue the class discussion with some of the following guiding questions:
  - a. Was there a turning point in the Texan call for independence?
  - b. Are there any recurring themes or values represented in the events leading up to the revolution?
  - c. How should historians decide which events to include or exclude when creating historical narratives?

## Assessment

Identify an event from the timeline activity and outline how it impacted the movement for Texan independence.

## Extension/Enrichment

- **Biography Project:** Give students a biography card from the lesson and have them create a poster or multimedia project that would help others understand the chosen individual and their contribution to Texas Independence.
- **Event Card Artwork:** Allow each student to create an illustration for their chosen event card. Use an index card or presentation of choice to create the illustration.
- **Primary Resource Match:** Give students an opportunity to match the event cards to the correct biography card, artifact or map that is associated with the event.
- **Mexican and Texan Independence:** Give students a chance to compare the causes of the Mexican and Texas wars for independence using a Venn diagram or sheet of paper.
- **Time Machine:** Have students in small groups or whole group take an event card out of the timeline. Ask students to explain the effects of removing this event from the timeline and why.