

What might have happened?

1. Do you think the stand at the Alamo helped the cause of Texas independence even though it was a defeat for the Texans? Explain.
2. Did history take a different course because of the decision to defend the Alamo? Explain.

Mexico. Stephen F. Austin traveled to Mexico City with the Texans' demands, which were to remove the ban on American settlers and to make Texas a separate state.

Santa Anna agreed to the first request but refused the second. Austin sent a letter back to Texas, suggesting that plans for independence get underway. The Mexican government intercepted the letter and arrested Austin. While Austin was in jail, Santa Anna named himself dictator and overthrew Mexico's constitution of 1824. Without a constitution to protect their rights, Texans felt betrayed. Santa Anna reorganized the government, placing greater central control over Texas. This loss of local power dismayed many people.

 **Reading Check** **Explaining** What role did empresarios play in colonization?

The Struggle for Independence

During 1835 unrest grew among Texans and occasionally resulted in open conflict. Santa Anna sent an army into Texas to punish the Texans for criticizing him. In October some Mexican troops tried to seize a cannon held by Texans at the town of **Gonzales**. During the battle the Texans decorated the front of the cannon with a white flag that bore the words "Come and Take It." After a brief struggle, Texans drove back the Mexican troops. Texans consider this to be the first fight of the Texan Revolution.

The Texans called on volunteers to join their fight. They offered free land to anyone who would help. Davy Crockett and many others—including a number of African Americans and Tejanos—answered that call.

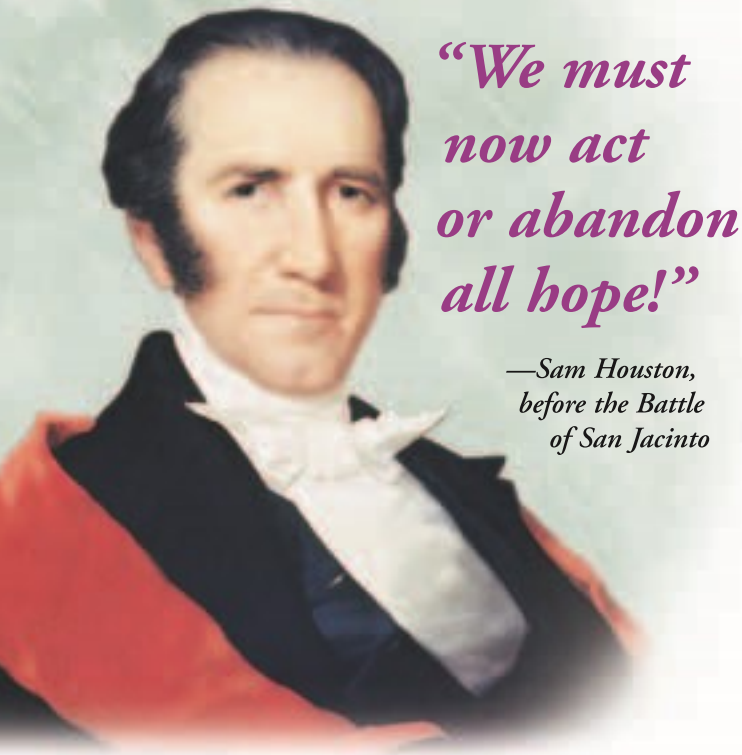
In December 1835, the Texans scored an important victory. They liberated **San Antonio** from the control of a larger Mexican force. The Texas army at San Antonio included more than 100 Tejanos. Many of them served in a scouting company commanded by Captain Juan Seguín. Born in San Antonio, Seguín was an outspoken champion of the Texans' demand for independence.

Despite these victories, the Texans encountered problems. With the Mexican withdrawal, some Texans left San Antonio, thinking the war was won. Various groups argued over who was in charge and what course of action to follow. In early 1836, when Texas should have been making preparations to face Santa Anna, nothing was being done.

The Battle of the Alamo

Santa Anna marched north, furious at the loss of San Antonio. When his army reached San Antonio in late February 1836, it found a small Texan force barricaded inside a nearby mission called the **Alamo**.

Although the Texans had cannons, they lacked gunpowder. Worse, they had only about 180 soldiers to face Santa Anna's army of several thousand. The Texans did have brave leaders, though, including Davy Crockett, who had arrived with a band of sharpshooters from Tennessee, and a tough Texan named Jim Bowie. The commander, William B. Travis, was only 26



*“We must
now act
or abandon
all hope!”*

—Sam Houston,
before the Battle
of San Jacinto

years old, but he was determined to hold his position. Travis managed to send messages out through Mexican lines. He wrote several messages to the people of Texas and the United States, asking them for assistance. In his last message, Travis described the fighting that had already taken place and repeated his request for assistance. He warned that

“the power of Santa Anna is to be met here, or in the colonies; we had better meet them here than to suffer a war of devastation to rage in our settlements.”

Travis concluded with the statement that he and his troops were determined to hold the Alamo.

For 12 long days, the defenders of the Alamo kept Santa Anna’s army at bay with rifle fire. The Mexicans launched two assaults but had to break them off. During the siege, 32 volunteers from Gonzales slipped through the Mexican lines to join the Alamo’s defenders.

On March 6, 1836, Mexican cannon fire smashed the Alamo’s walls, and the Mexicans launched an all-out attack. The Alamo defenders killed many Mexican soldiers as they crossed

open land and tried to mount the Alamo’s walls. The Mexicans were too numerous to hold back, however, and they finally entered the fortress, killing William Travis, Davy Crockett, Jim Bowie, and all the other defenders. Only a few women and children and some servants survived to tell of the battle.

In the words of Santa Anna’s aide, “The Texans fought more like devils than like men.” The defenders of the Alamo had killed hundreds of Mexican soldiers. But more important, they had bought Texans some much needed time.

Texas Declares Its Independence

During the siege of the Alamo, Texan leaders were meeting at Washington-on-the-Brazos, where they were drawing up a new constitution. There, on March 2, 1836—four days before the fall of the Alamo—American settlers and Tejanos firmly declared independence from Mexico and established the Republic of Texas.

The Texas Declaration of Independence was similar to the Declaration of the United States, which had been written 60 years earlier. The Texas Declaration stated that the government of Santa Anna had violated the liberties guaranteed under the Mexican Constitution. The declaration charged that Texans had been deprived of freedom of religion, the right to trial by jury, the right to bear arms, and the right to petition. It noted that the Texans’ protests against these policies were met with force. The Mexican government had sent a large army to drive Texans from their homes. Because of these grievances, the declaration proclaimed the following:

“The people of Texas, in solemn convention assembled, appealing to a candid world for the necessities of our condition, do hereby resolve and declare that our political connection with the Mexican nation has forever ended; and that the people of Texas do now constitute a free, sovereign, and independent republic....”

HISTORY
Online 

Student Web Activity
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Student Web Activities
for an activity on the fight
for Texas independence.

With Mexican troops in Texas, it was not possible to hold a general election to ratify the constitution and vote for leaders of the new republic. Texas leaders set up a temporary government. They selected officers to serve until regular elections could be held.

David G. Burnet, an early pioneer in Texas, was chosen president and Lorenzo de Zavala, vice president. De Zavala had worked to establish a democratic government in Mexico. He moved to Texas when it became clear that Santa Anna would not make reforms.

The government of the new republic named **Sam Houston** as commander in chief of the Texas forces. Houston had come to Texas in 1832. Raised among the Cherokee people, he became a soldier, fighting with Andrew Jackson against the Creek people. A politician as well, Houston had served in Congress and as governor of Tennessee.

Houston wanted to prevent other forts from being overrun by the Mexicans. He ordered the troops at **Goliad** to abandon their position. As they retreated, however, they came face to face with Mexican troops led by General Urrea. After a fierce fight, several hundred Texans surrendered. On Santa Anna's orders, the Texans were executed a few days later. This action outraged Texans, who called it the "Goliad Massacre."

The Battle of San Jacinto

Houston moved his small army eastward about 100 miles, watching the movements of Santa Anna and waiting for a chance to strike. Six weeks after the Alamo, he found the opportunity.

After adding some new troops, Houston gathered an army of about 900 at **San Jacinto** (SAN juh•SIHN•toh), near the site of present-day Houston. Santa Anna was camped nearby with an army of more than 1,300. On April 21 the Texans launched a surprise attack on the Mexican camp, shouting, "Remember the Alamo! Remember Goliad!" They killed more than 600 soldiers and captured about 700 more—including Santa Anna. On May 14, 1836, Santa Anna signed a treaty that recognized the independence of Texas.

 **Reading Check** **Identifying** Who was commander in chief of the Texas forces?

The Lone Star Republic

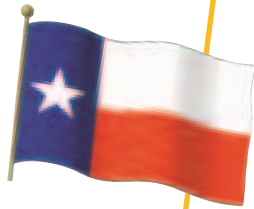
Texans elected Sam Houston as their president in September 1836. Mirabeau Lamar, who had built a fort at Velasco and had fought bravely at the Battle of San Jacinto, served as vice president. Houston sent a delegation to Washington, D.C., asking the United States to **annex**—take control of—Texas. The nation's president Andrew Jackson refused, however, because the addition of another slave state would upset the balance of slave and free states in Congress. For the moment Texas would remain an independent country.





America's Flags

Texas Republic, 1839 For its first six years, this Lone Star flag symbolized the independent nation of the Republic of Texas. Texans kept the Lone Star banner as their official state flag after joining the Union in 1845.



The Question of Annexation

Despite rapid population growth, the new republic faced political and financial difficulties. The Mexican government refused to honor Santa Anna's recognition of independence, and fighting continued between Texas and Mexico. In addition Texas had an enormous debt and no money to repay it.

Many Texans still hoped to join the United States. Southerners favored the annexation of Texas, but Northerners objected that Texas would add another slave state to the Union. President Martin Van Buren, like Jackson, did not want to inflame the slavery issue or risk war with Mexico. He put off the question of annexing Texas.

John Tyler, who became the nation's president in 1841, was the first vice president to become president upon the death of a chief executive. He succeeded William Henry Harrison, who died in April, just one month after taking office. Tyler supported adding Texas to the Union and persuaded Texas to reapply for annexation. However, the Senate was divided over slavery and failed to ratify the annexation treaty.

Texas Becomes a State

The situation changed with the 1844 presidential campaign. The feeling of Manifest Destiny was growing throughout the country. The South favored annexation of Texas. The North demanded that the United States gain control of the Oregon country from Britain. The Democratic candidate, James K. Polk, supported both actions. The Whig candidate, Henry Clay, initially opposed adding Texas to the Union. When he finally came out for annexation, it lost him votes in the North—and the election.

After Polk's victory, supporters of annexation pressed the issue in Congress. They proposed and passed a resolution to annex Texas. On December 29, 1845, Texas officially became a state of the United States.

Reading Check **Identifying** Who was president of the Texas Republic?

SECTION 2 ASSESSMENT



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Checking for Understanding

- Key Terms** Write a short history about events in Texas using the following terms: **Tejano, empresario, decree, annex.**
- Reviewing Facts** Name the four things that American settlers agreed to do in exchange for receiving land in Texas.

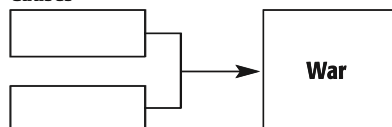
Reviewing Themes

- Geography and History** Why did Northerners and Southerners disagree on the annexation of Texas?

Critical Thinking

- Analyzing Information** How did the fall of the Alamo help the cause of Texas independence, even though it was a defeat for the Texans?
- Categorizing Information** Re-create the diagram below. In the boxes, describe two causes of the war between Mexico and Americans in Texas.

Causes



Analyzing Visuals

- Sequencing** Study the map on page 367. Place these battles in order, starting with the earliest: Gonzales, San Jacinto, the Alamo, Goliad.



Interdisciplinary Activity

Descriptive Writing Look at the painting of the Battle of the Alamo on page 365. Write one paragraph that describes what is happening in the picture.