

Nancy Bonds
Brentwood Middle School
Brentwood

Unit: A Changing Nation

Lesson Title: Victory or Death-Mexican-American War

Grade Level: 8th

Era: 4 -- Expansion and Reform (1801-1861)

Essential Question related to Vital Theme:

To what extent did the heroes of the Alamo defend this mission which resulted in the U.S. obtaining more land?

Lesson Time: one class period (55 minutes)

Curriculum Standards:

- 6.01 Recognize the impact of individual and group decisions on citizens and community
- 8.5.14b Identify the factors that led to territorial expansion and its effects
- 8.5.15d Explain the events that led to the Mexican-American and the consequences of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo
- 8.5.spi.6 Classify the characteristic of major historical events into causes and effects

Technology:

Computer –To design PowerPoint to display William Travis’s letter to Sam Houston, portraits and biographies of key men involved in the Battle of the Alamo and the questions that correspond with analyzing primary sources.

Video projector—to project the PowerPoint and video to be viewed on screen for easy readability for the entire class.

VCR connected to video projector

Materials:

PowerPoint (not included)

Volunteer Voices primary sources (www.volunteervoices.org)

Images referenced:

Alamo pipe (from The Hermitage Collection)

<http://idserver.utk.edu/?id=200800000000364>

(0045_000050_000223_0000-file name)

Sam Houston daguerreotype (C.M. McClung Historical Collection)

<http://idserver.utk.edu/?id=2008000000001541>

(0023_000065_000200_0000-file name)

Handout with letter/transcript—<http://www.lsjunction.com/docs/appeal.htm>

Handout of Written Document Analysis worksheet

http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/written_document_analysis_worksheet.pdf

Handout of questions

The Battle of the Alamo—Discovery Channel School video

Activity description and overview of instructional strategies:

1. The lesson is begun with the teacher presenting background of the Alamo mission and the reasons why the Texans were defending it. The teacher will present a PowerPoint with portraits (primary sources) of the key men and biographies who participated using the text and other resources (secondary sources) of each one to explain the reasons why these men were involved.
2. Divide class into groups of four. Give every student a copy of the handouts.
3. The students will use the analysis chart provided by the National Archives and Records Administration to analyze a letter written by William Travis (primary source) to Sam Houston in a desperate attempt get reinforcements to help in defending the Alamo.
4. There will be an additional questioning handout that will help students to analyze this primary source to infer the conditions by which this letter was written.
5. The conclusion of the letter will encourage dialogue among the students on their findings.
6. Finally, the Battle of Alamo video will be viewed by students and notes taken from one of four perspectives:
 1. William Travis
 2. Davy Crockett
 3. James Bowie
 4. Santa Anna
5. Constructionist teaching strategy is very effective in getting students to connect with this event.

Supporting Assignments:

Students will read material in textbook giving background of the actual battle of Alamo timeline and results. Students will take notes on this reading material using one of three methods of note-taking:

1. outlining
2. graphic organizers
3. 2-column notes (Cornell)

Pretest: KWL chart

Formulative Assessment-Analysis of letter

Post Assessment: Chapter Test

Background:



[William Barret Travis](#) and almost two hundred other defenders found themselves surrounded at the Alamo Mission in San Antonio in late February of 1836. Refusing to surrender, they held off the invading armies of Mexican Dictator Antonio Lopez de [Santa Anna](#) for almost two weeks.

On March 6, the courageous Texans were overrun and slaughtered by well over 2000 Mexicans. The resulting delay of Santa Anna's eastward movement gave other Texans more time to organize, both politically and militarily, and to ultimately defeat and capture Santa Anna at the [Battle of San Jacinto](#), fought April 21, 1836.

The letter below was written by Travis soon after the Mexicans first appeared in the area around San Antonio. It is often referenced as a supreme example of the virtues of courage and self-sacrifice.

The Letter (transcribed):

Commandancy of the Alamo Bexar, Fby. 24th, 1836

To the People of Texas & all Americans in the world Fellow Citizens & Compatriots. I am besieged by a thousand or more of the Mexicans under Santa Anna. I have sustained a continual bombardment & cannonade for 24 hours & have not lost a man. The enemy has demanded a surrender at discretion, otherwise the garrison are to be put to the sword if the fort is taken. I have answered the demand with a cannon shot, and our flag still waves proudly from the walls. I shall never surrender nor retreat.

Then, I call on you in the name of Liberty, of patriotism, & of everything dear to the American character, to come to our aid with all dispatch. The enemy is receiving reinforcements daily & will no doubt increase to three or four thousand in four or five days. If this call is neglected, I am determined to sustain myself as long as possible & die like a soldier who never forgets what is due to his own honor & that of his country.

*Victory or Death
William Barret Travis
Lt. Col. Comdt.*

P. S. The Lord is on our side. When the enemy appeared in sight we had not three bushels of corn. We have since found in deserted houses 80 or 90 bushels & got into the walls 20 or 30 head of Beeves.

Commanding of the Fleet -
Savannah July 24th / 1836 -

To the People of Georgia &
all Americans in the world -

Follow Liberty & Independence -

I have besieged, by a ~~force~~
of more of our American army
Savannah & have sustained
a continual Bombardment &
cannonade for 24 hours & have
not lost a man - The enemy
has surrendered a surrender at
discretion otherwise they ^{had} passed on
our to the foot of the wall of
the fort is taken - I have ordered
the demand with a cannon
shot & our flag still waves
proudly from the wall - I
will never surrender in return
then, I call on you in the
name of Liberty, of patriotism &
everything dear to the American
Character, to come to our ^{aid}

with all dispatch - The enemy is
receiving reinforcements daily &
will no doubt increase to three or
four thousand in four or five days.
If this call is neglected, I am deter-
mined to sustain myself as long as
possible & die like a soldier
who never forgets what is due to
his own home & that of his
country -

Victory or Death

William Basset Tracy
M. Col. Comd

P.S. The land is on our side -
When the enemy appeared in sight
we had not three barrels of cannon -
The land mines found in the woods
weigh 80 or 90 bushels & got into
the woods 20 or 30 loads of powder -

W. B. Tracy

Name_____

Date_____

Class Period_____

An Appeal for Aid from the Alamo

Questions

1. Who is the author (what can you tell about him)?
2. When was the letter written?
3. Where was the letter written?
4. Who was the letter addressing (who is the audience)?
5. What is the author's motivation for writing a letter? Essentially, what is his purpose?
6. What emotion(s) do you think this person feeling while crafting this letter? What makes you think that way?
7. Would you consider the author of this letter a leader? What about a hero? Why?
8. Would you consider this letter an example of courage? What about self-sacrifice? Why?
9. How was the situation that the author was in going to improve? (Hint: This is something that you must infer!)
10. What is the main point (or points) that the author of the letter is trying to make?