

Unit 10: Cotton, Cattle, & Railroads

7th Grade Lesson Plan: Texas Today

(45 – 60 minutes)

Objective	<p>In this one-day lesson, students will examine the origins, purpose, key details, development, and modern significance of the Texas Railroad Commission.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>We will</i> examine the origins, purpose, and development of the Texas Railroad Commission and its significance to Texas and U.S. history. 2. <i>I will</i> read a passage, identify key information, summarize main ideas, explain cause-and-effect relationships and the significance of topics in the reading.
Key Concepts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic challenges including falling cotton prices, an oversupply of cotton, and railroad price gouging caused many cotton farmers in Texas to become tenant farmers, often trapping them in cycles of debt. • Farmers established organizations like the Grange and the Farmer's Alliance to work for political reforms to benefit farm laborers. • Governor James Hogg was elected with the help of farmers' organizations by promising to establish an organization to regulate the railroads – the Railroad Commission. • The Railroad Commission's responsibilities have evolved over time to include the regulation of the oil and gas industries.
Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading for and identifying main ideas and supporting evidence. • Identifying and explaining cause-and-effect relationships between key historical topics and events. • Identifying change over time.
Essential Question	<p>What is the Texas Railroad Commission, why was it established, and how have its responsibilities evolved over time?</p>

Assignment	<p>Warm-up</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students consider a real-world scenario simulating the monopolistic nature of railroad price gouging to identify what challenges it would pose to a business owner and how the problem could be addressed. <p>Lesson</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students read a two-page passage outlining key information related to the Railroad Commission including its origins, purpose, evolution over time, and its contemporary significance. Students answer questions identifying and summarizing key information, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, and demonstrating the development and significance of the Railroad Commission over time. <p>Exit Ticket</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students respond to four true or false statements related to the readings, making corrections or edits to false statements to correct inaccurate information about the Railroad Commission.
Materials	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Slideshow (<i>Suggested use: present on the overhead; Upload to an educational platform like google classroom; print extra copies for note-taking assistance</i>) 2. Warm-up / Exit Ticket (<i>Suggested printing: 1 per student. Assignment prints two copies per page.</i>) 3. Assignment (<i>Suggested printing 1 per student</i>) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Advanced Level work b. Grade Level work c. Foundations Level work
Differentiation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Scaffolding including classwork at three different levels of academic ability 2. Visual representations of directions 3. Chunking text information 4. Key information presented in bold lettering in the reading 5. Sentence Stems and response options for short, constructed response questions 6. Reduction in answer choices for multiple-choice questions

TEKS

- **7.06(C)** Identify significant individuals, events, and issues, including the effects of the growth of railroads and the contributions of James Hogg.
- **7.06(D)** Explain the political, economic, and social impact of the agricultural industry and the development of West Texas resulting from the close of the frontier.
- **7.07(B)** Define and trace the impact of “boom-and-bust” cycles of leading Texas industries throughout the 20th and 21st centuries such as farming, cotton, and ranching.
- **7.08(C)** Analyze the effects of physical and human factors such as climate, weather, landforms, irrigation, transportation, and communication on major events in Texas.
- **7.19(C)** Analyze the effects of various scientific discoveries and technological innovations on the development of Texas such as advancements in the agricultural industries.
- **7.20(B)**: Analyze information by applying absolute and relative chronology through sequencing, categorizing relationships, comparing, contrasting, finding the main idea, summarizing, making generalizations and conclusions.
- **7.20(E)** Formulate and communicate visually, orally, or in writing a claim supported by evidence and reasoning related to a social studies topic.
- **7.23(B)** Use problem-solving and decision-making processes to identify a problem, gather information, list and consider options, consider advantages and disadvantages, choose and implement a solution, and evaluate the effectiveness of the solution.

Teacher Guide: Texas Today

Warm-up	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Students are presented with a scenario in which they run their own small business which requires them to use the postal service to ship their product. In the scenario, the post office significantly raises its prices several times. Students are asked to consider how this would affect their business, and what could be done to address the issue.Slides 2 and 3 restate the directions and provide sentence stems to guide student responses when sharing with the class.Slides 4 and 5 provide the essential question and the “We will / I will” statements for the lesson.
Lesson	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Students read a two-page passage discussing key information about the Railroad Commission.Students answer comprehension questions about the origins, purpose, development and significance of the Commission.Slides 7 – 9 present larger views of the images in the student reading passage.Advanced: Students demonstrate understanding by answering short, constructed response questions about the reading.Grade Level: Students demonstrate understanding by answering a paper-adapted version of a hot spot question, a multi-select question, and a short, constructed response question with sentence stems to guide responses.Foundations: Students demonstrate understanding by answering a paper-adapted version of a hot spot question and a multi-select question with one answer option eliminated in both, and a short, constructed response question with sentence stems and response options to guide responses.

Exit Ticket

- Students answer four true or false questions based on the reading. If the answer is false, students must write a statement that corrects the inaccurate information in the space provided.
- Slides 11 and 12 restate the directions and provide sentence stems to guide student responses when sharing with the class.

Primary Sources and Other Resources Used

- [Railroads in Longview], photograph, 1870~; (<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph191279/>; accessed November 14, 2025), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu>; crediting Longview Public Library.
- History of the Houston and Texas Central Railway. Texas State Historical Society. Original location Library of Congress. Accessed 12/4/2025. Image included in accordance with Title 17 U.S.C. Section 107. <https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/pnp/cph/3a30000/3a30000/3a30100/3a30145r.jpg>
- First flag of the Farmer's Alliance. From Dunning (ed.), *Farmers' Alliance History and Agricultural Digest*. (Washington, DC: Alliance Publishing Co., 1891); pg. iv.; Digitally edited for Wikipedia by Tim Davenport ("Carrite"), no copyright claimed, file released to the public domain without restriction. Accessed 12/4/25 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File%3AFarmers-Alliance-Banner.jpg>