

Name:

Date:

Class/Period:

The Importance of San Antonio de Béxar and the Alamo

Instructions: Reading like a historian, review each passage's question(s). You must annotate as you read, doing so will help you answer each question correctly. Each response should be 3-6 sentences in length. You can use information from the passages to support your response, please make sure the quote is placed inside quotation marks and you have removed any highlighting.

In Their Own Words: The Importance of Alamo Letters Primary Source Extension

Document A, Excerpt to a letter from James Bowie to Governor Henry Smith

Tuesday, February 2, 1836

“The salvation of Texas depends in great measure in keeping Bejar out of the hands of the enemy. It serves as the picquet guard and if it were in the possession of Santa Anna there is no stronghold from which to repel him in his march towards the Sabine. Colonel Neill and myself have come to the solemn resolution that we will rather die in these ditches than give up this post to the enemy. These citizens [at Bexar] deserve our protection and the public safety demands our lives rather than to evacuate this post to the enemy. — again we call aloud for relief.”

Bowie, James, to Henry Smith. February 2, 1836. Adjunct General (RG-401), Army Papers, Texas State Library and Archives.

Analysis Question:

1. What is James Bowie willing to do? Why?

Document B, Excerpt letter from William B. Travis to Governor Henry Smith

Friday, February 12, 1836

“COMMANDANCY OF BEXAR: You have no doubt already received information, by Express from La Bahia, that tremendous preparations are making on the Rio Grande & elsewhere in the interior, for the Invasion of Texas — Sant Ana by the last accounts was at Saltillo, with a force of 2500 men & guns, Sesma was at the Rio Grande with about 2000 — He has issued his proclamation denouncing vengeance against the people of Texas — and threatens to exterminate every white man within its limits — This being the Frontier Post nearest the Rio Grande, will be the first to be attacked — We are illy prepared for their reception, as we have no more than 150 men here and they in a very discouraged state — Yet we are determined to sustain [undergo] it as long as there is a man left; because we consider death preferable to disgrace, which would be the result of giving up a Post which has been so dearly won, and thus opening the door for the invaders to enter the sacred Territory of the colonies.”

Travis, William B., to Henry Smith. February 12, 1836. Secretary of State (RG-307), Records—Domestic Correspondence, Texas State Library and Archives.

Analysis Question:

1. What does Travis mean by “giving up a Post” which has so dearly won?

Document C, Excerpt letter from William B. Travis to Governor Henry Smith

Sunday, February 14, 1836

“From all of the information, we have received there is no doubt but that the enemy will shortly advance upon this place, and that this will be the first point of attack we must therefore urge the necessity of sending reinforcements, as speedily as possible to our aid.”

Travis, William B., to Henry Smith. February 15, 1836. Secretary of State (RG-307), Executive Record Book, 236, Texas State Library and Archives.

Analysis Question:

1. Based on this letter, what was the mood of Travis and the men inside the Alamo?

Document D, General Antonio López de Santa Anna

Wednesday, February 17, 1836

“Comrades in arms, our most sacred duties have brought us to the uninhabited lands and demand our engaging in combat against rabble or wretched adventures.... Our comrades have been shamefully sacrificed at Anahuac, Goliad, and Bexar, and you are those destined to punish these murders. My friends: we will march as the interest of the nation that we serve demands.”

Santa Anna, Antonio Lopez, to the army of operations under his command. February 17, 1836. *Mercurio*, Matamoros, Mexico, February 26, 1836.

Analysis Questions:

1. Using this letter only, how did Santa Anna and the Mexican Government feel about the Texans' declaring independence?
2. What was Santa Anna promoting? A sense of what?
3. Using this letter only, was Santa Anna justified doing what he did? Why or why not?

Instructions: Read three eyewitness accounts of the Battle of the Alamo and events afterward. As you read consider just these three eyewitness accounts. Which one is more believable?

Document E, Mexican Soldier letters to brothers of the heart San Antonio de Bexar

Sunday, March 6, 1836

“After a long wait, we took our places at 3 o’clock A.M. on the south side, a distance of 300 feet from the fort of the enemy. Here we remained flat on our stomachs until 5:30 (Whew! It was cold). General Cos cried “forward” and placing himself at the head of the attack, we ran to the assault carrying scaling ladders, picks, and spikes. I can tell you the whole scene was one of extreme terror.... After some three-quarters of an hour of the most horrible fire, there followed the most awful attack with hand arms... Poor things – no longer do they live – all of them dead, and even now I am watching them burn – 257 corpses of those who vainly sought safety in flight. Their leader named Travis died like a brave man with his rifle in his hand at the back of a cannon, but that perverse and haughty James Bowie died like a woman, in bed, almost hidden by the covers. Our loss was terrible in both officers and men.”

El Mosquito Mexicano, translated by John Wheat. April 5, 1836. 2:108. Mexico.

Document F, Jose Juan Sanchez Navarro Diary Entry

Sunday, March 6, 1836

“Today at five in the morning, the assault was made by four columns...reached the top of the wall, jumped within, and continued fighting with sidearms. By six-thirty, there was not an enemy left. The women and children were saved. Travis, the commandant of the Alamo died like a hero. The enemy have suffered a heavy loss; the Two hundred fifty-seven of their men were killed; I have seen and counted their bodies.”

Hunnicut, Helen, ed. And trans. Summer 1951. “A Mexican View of the Texas War: Memoirs of a Veteran of the Two Battles of the Alamo.” *Library Chronicle of the University of Texas* 4:59-74.

Document G, Report of Francisco Ruiz, alcalde of San Antonio

Sunday, March 6, 1836

“On the north battery of the fortress lay the lifeless body of Col. Travis on the gun carriage, shot only through the forehead. Toward the west and in a small fort opposite the city, we found the body of Colonel Crockett. Col Bowie was found dead in his bed in one of the rooms on the south side.”

“Santa Anna, after all of the Mexicans were taken out, ordered wood to be brought to burn the bodies of the Texans. He sent a company dragoons to burn the bodies of the Texans. About three o’clock in the afternoon they commenced laying the wood and dry branches upon which a pile of dead bodies was placed... about five o’clock in the evening it was lighted.”

“The men burnt numbered one hundred and eighty-two. I was an eyewitness.”

“The dead Mexicans of Santa Anna were taken to the graveyards, but not having sufficient room for them, I ordered them to be thrown into the river... Santa Anna’s loss was estimated at 1600 men.”

Ruiz, Francis Antonio. 1860. Fall of the Alamo, and massacre of Travis and his brave associates. *Texas Almanac*. 80-82.

Analysis Questions:

1. Consider each eyewitness account, which one is more believable to you? Why and please cite specific reasons from the primary sources.