

Name:

Date:

Class/Period:

The Big Picture: A Letter to His Sister

Instructions: Analyze the primary source letter from Stephen F. Austin to Mary Austin Holley, his sister. Answer the document analysis questions below.

Stephen F. Austin to Mary Austin Holley

New Orleans, Jan 7, 1836.

(1) I hope *to* have the pleasure of seeing you soon, but it is not certain, as I may not be able to visit Lexington until I return from the Eastward as we are very much pressed for time. I am bound to Washington, New York etc. in company with Doctr. B. T. Archer, and W. H. Wharton Esqr. We are commissioners for the Texan Government. Our principal object is to raise money means and men to sustain our cause.

(2) The War for Liberty goes on prosperously, so far, in Texas. It must, and will, end in Independence—a full Declaration will be made in March. That of 7th November was the first step, preparatory to the second and final one. The fact is, we have no other remedy left. By the last accounts the Central Government is established, and the Federal system totally destroyed. The Texans may, therefore, for the future, be considered an independent people, entirely separate from Mexico. We are young to set up for ourselves, but we are the sons of that great nation which has astonished the world by its deeds, and progress in the cause of liberty, light and truth. When I left Texas there was not an enemy within our limits, nor east of the River Bravo del Norte. Gen. Santa Anna, however, is marching on in person with all the force he can collect to annihilate us. We have no fears, but we must be ready for him. We need all the aid we can get in men and money, provisions, arms and ammunition.

(3) Large contributions have been made in the United States for the extension of Christianity over the South Sea Islands by means of Missionary societies. Is not our cause quite as important and sacred? We are trying to banish from our homes religious intolerance and despotism, and to establish in the place of it, liberty and freedom of conscience. How many thousands of pious families of all denominations might find a home and become the proprietors of the soil in Texas—the best soil and climate accessible to north Americans—if religious toleration were once firmly rooted there! Religion, morality, the arts and sciences, the great sources of liberty—

which is in fact, the cause of mankind—all unite in calling upon the free, the generous, the enterprising and the pious, to step forward in aid of Texas. We expect aid from the religious portion of the community, and that the pulpit will pour out its fervent prayers to a just God for his blessing on our endeavors, and send its eloquent voice to the people in the cause of all free churches—the cause of truth and justice.

(4) Our fate will probably be decided in three months. Santa Anna is making a great effort. If he fail, it must be his last. Now is the time to aid us— now is the time of salvation. We need everything—provisions and money— and men well armed, officered, and provided. Their expenses will all be refunded at the close of the war, with interest, besides donations in land, The opening is a great one, if it were only a matter of speculation—it is glorious in its cause. A new republic is about to rear its independent banner over a country but lately a wilderness— There is magnificence in the idea—prosperity freedom and glory in the results.

(5) We shall stop one day at Louisville. I should like much to visit Lexington. Some of my much cherished schoolmates and companions of happy days still reside there: John McCalla, Pierce Butler the Todds etc. please remember me to them. Tell my Cousins E_____ and H_____ I hope it will not be long before they can live in Texas with such comforts as they merit. If we weather the storm until June all will end well and prosperously. I have no doubt we shall, for we rely on aid from the people of the U. S.—but it must be prompt.

(6) There is a Louisiana Battalion; a Georgia Battalion; a Mississippi Battalion; an Alabama Battalion; and a Tennessee Battalion; why can there not be a Kentucky Battalion? It would be a fine opening for a military man of standing—a Lafayette service. They might go by land from Natchitoches, or by water from here. The former I prefer, as Mexican cruisers are on the coast. We are fitting out some to meet them, but our money is rather short.

(7) I have written hastily and must close, for I am at the end of the paper, but not at the end of the subject. It is a copious one, and I am perhaps rather enthusiastic in the view I take of it. My whole heart and soul is devoted to it. I am well.

S. F. A.

Eugene C. Barker. "The Austin Papers, 3 Volumes, Volume 3, pp. 300-301." Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1927.

Analysis Questions:

1. Based on information in the first paragraph, for what purpose is Stephen F. Austin in the United States?
2. Austin outlines his expectations for the outcome of the revolution in paragraph two and makes the statement "It must, and will, end in Independence." Based on the additional information in paragraph two, do you think he remains optimistic about the outcome of the revolution to protect his sister's emotions or do you think he truly believes Texas will win the revolution? Explain your answer.
3. In paragraph three, where does Austin suggest most of their aid should come from? Why does he believe this particular group should especially support the revolution?
4. What does Austin ask for in paragraph four? Do you think that's a realistic request? Why or why not?
5. Based on the information from this letter, do you think the Texian army was equipped for success?

6. If they had not received support from the United States, do you think the outcome of the Texas Revolution would have been different?