

Name:

Date:

Class/Period:

## Perspectives on Slavery during the Texas Revolution: The Expansion and Fight to Maintain Slavery in Texas

**Instructions:** Analyze the primary source documents by answering the questions using supporting evidence.

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### Background Essay

Early in Texas history the growth of cotton in Texas was driven primarily by the desire for the economic prosperity of Texas and for personal gains by both Tejanos and Stephen F. Austin during the colonization of Texas. The growth of cotton in the early nineteenth century across North America was the central reason for the growth of slavery in Texas. Cotton began to expand in the 1790s with inventions to increase the processing such as the cotton gin, a device that speeds up the removal of the cottonseed from the fibers mechanically. The cotton gin now made cotton very profitable, and within a decade the cotton production in Mississippi increased 3,529%. “When the market price for cotton doubled to nearly thirty cents per pound during the mid 1810s, it made the crop more valuable than almost any other commodity in the Atlantic World. The result was one of the largest migrations in North American history, as hundreds of thousands of Americans hurled themselves into the Gulf Coast territories to establish cotton farms and plantations.”

“Austin saw his colonies as a natural extension of the ex-panding cotton frontier.” With Tejanos support, Austin had to convince Mexico of his grand idea. “Austin outlined three measures he believed necessary for Mexico to adopt in order to overtake the United States in supplying the British textile market: promote the rapid population of Anglo colonies in Texas; allow for duty-free [no taxes] importation of cotton gins and baling equipment, and establish a trade agreement with England favorable to the interests of the cotton farmers.” Moses Austin recognized early on that “Texas shared the same long growing season, rich soils, and ready access to the Gulf Coast shipping ports”, which made Texas acreage so appealing.

Stephen F. Austin believed “nothing would be more central to establishing a cotton empire in Texas than the institution of slavery. The principal product that will elevate us from poverty is Cot-ton,” Austin explained to a Tejano friend, “and we cannot do this without the help of

slaves." For many southern whites, they believed that slavery was necessary in order to be successful in growing and harvesting cotton. This document will show how Stephen F. Austin and other Tejanos in Texas were fighting to keep the institution of slavery.

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Torget, Andrew J. *Seeds of Empire: Cotton, Slavery, and the Transformation of the Texas Borderlands, 1800-1850*. University of North Carolina Press, 2018.

**Document A, *Austin's perspective on the impact slavery had on the economic success of Texas.***

Slavery in Texas was ingrained within the economic, political, and social fabric of the Anglo-American emigrants that were arriving in Texas in 1836. Early in the 1820s, Stephen F Austin noted, "The primary product that will elevate us from poverty is cotton and we cannot do this without the help of slaves." Austin spent considerable time convincing the Tejanos in Texas of his plan for economic prosperity.

Torget, Andrew J. *This Corner of Canaan (University of North Texas Press, 2013), 107-128.*

**Analysis Questions:**

1. What does Stephen F. Austin mean when he says "The primary product that will elevate us from poverty is cotton?" Please cite textual evidence from this document and the Background Essay.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Explain why Austin "spent considerable time convincing the Tejanos in Texas of his plan?" Please use textual evidence to justify your response.

## Document B: Background

Decree No. 412 was passed in the Mexican National Congress in July 1824. The decree prohibited forever the commerce and traffic in slaves in Mexico under any pretense whatsoever. It also “declared all slaves free by virtue of merely setting foot on Mexican soil.” Stephen F. Austin writes a letter to the state legislature protesting and argues the law “will be considered by all as an act of bad faith by the Gov’t.” Below is a letter from Erasmo Seguin to Austin.

“but my friend in my congress they did not even want to hear solicitations [asking for something] of that nature to the contrary [opposite viewpoint], at the mention of slavery the entire congress became electrified [great excitement] at the consideration of the state [condition] of the unhappiness of that part of humanity [African Americans]”

Tijerina Andrés. *Tejanos and Texas under the Mexican Flag, 1821-1836*. Texas A & M University Press, 2010. Pg. 110

### **Analysis Questions:**

1. Considering the perspective of the Mexican people, and the reason why Mexico fought for independence from the Spanish, why is important to them to pass laws banning slavery?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Considering the perspective of the Anglo colonists, why are they so opposed to this decree? Explain what impact they might face.

### **Document “C”**

**Background:** History has plenty of primary source accounts that Austin supports the institution of slavery. In this primary source account, you will see a personal side of Austin and his motives to promote slavery in Texas.

“Austin did not personally like what he called the demoralizing influence of slavery, it had already allowed his colony to surpass [grow] proportionally [as a result of] the labor supply [greater than] of any other town in Coahuila y Texas. In slavery, Austin believed he offered Coahuila y Texas its economic future.” But according to historian Randolph B. Campbell, Austin “backed away from slavery only when it threatened his colonization project, and who ultimately “did more than any other individual to establish slavery in Mexican Texas.”

A good example that Austin put his colony over his morals is Austin “put incentives aimed directly at slaveholders into his land distribution policy and advertised them widely across the Southern United States. The head of each family settling in his colony would receive a large tract of land but the specific number of acres would change. A Man could get an additional 200 acres for bringing his wife, 100 for every child, and 50 for every enslaved person he transported into Texas.” Austin provided a premium for slaveholders to immigrate into Texas.

Torget, Andrew J. *This Corner of Canaan* (University of North Texas Press, 2013), 107-128.

### **Analysis Questions:**

1. What type of colonists did Austin favor and why? Please use text evidence to support your response.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Why does Austin say “the demoralizing influence of slavery” but he continues to promote slavery in Texas?