

Name:

Date:

Class/Period:

Voices: Tejanos in the Texas Revolution: Juan Seguín a Historical Account of his Military Career

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

Background Essay

Juan Nepomuceno Seguín grew up in Texas during the end of the Spanish Empire and the beginning of Mexico as a nation. His father, Erasmo Seguín, was a prominent leader among San Antonio's Tejanos and helped to write Mexico's Constitution of 1824. Juan Seguín was only 15 years old when Stephen F. Austin began bringing Americans into Texas. Because Juan's father worked closely with Austin, Juan became very familiar with the Americans and supportive of Anglo-American colonization in Texas. Like his father, Juan Seguín believed that the Constitution of 1824's promise to give states in Mexico authority to settle many of their own affairs (known as "federalism") was important for developing Texas. During the years leading to the Texas Revolution, Juan Seguín established himself in the commercial trade between Texas and New Orleans, worked closely with the Anglo colonies in east Texas, and became involved in Texas politics. In 1834, he was named the political chief of San Antonio.

As political chief, Seguín saw firsthand the transition of the Mexican government from the federalists policies of the Constitution of 1824 to "centralism" when President Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna helped overthrow the 1824 Constitution. Santa Anna's centralists supported a strong national government that offered additional privileges to the military and the church, but also took power away from the states. Seguín and many Tejanos remained federalists, advocating strong state governments and greater local control, and so they openly opposed Santa Anna and the centralists. After the Battle of Gonzales, on October 2, 1835, Seguín and many Tejanos decided to join Anglo-Americans in the fight against Santa Anna. Juan Seguín was commissioned a "Captain of the Federal Army of Texas" and organized a company of 37 Tejanos. The primary sources documents that follow highlight Juan Seguín's perspective while during the era of the Texas Revolution.

Seguín, Juan Nepomuceno and Teja, Jesus F. de la. *A Revolution Remembered: The Memoirs and Selected Correspondence of Juan N. Seguín*. Austin: State House Press, 1991.

Document A, Background:

In 1833-34, the Coahuila state capital was moved from Saltillo to Monclova as centralists aligned with Santa Anna took overpower in the state government Federalists in Coahuila tried to resist, and Seguín wanted to support federalists in both Texas and Coahuila In 1835, Seguín took a small force of men to Monclova to support federalists resisting centralists in Coahuila, which helped convince him to oppose Santa Anna.

Seguín, Juan Nepomuceno and Teja, Jesus F. de la. *A Revolution Remembered: The Memoirs and Selected Correspondence of Juan N. Seguín*, pp. 22. Austin: State House Press, 1991.

“In October 1834 I was political chief of the department of Bexar. Dissatisfied with the reactionary designs of General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna, who was at that time president of the Republic of Mexico and endeavoring (trying) to overthrow the federalist system, I issued a circular (notice) in which I urged every municipality (city) in Texas to appoint (select) delegates to a convention that was to meet at San Antonio to consider the impending dangers and to devise means to avert (stop) them.”

“In April 1835 the governor of Coahuila and Texas, Don Agustin Viesca, called for assistance from the various departments to resist the aggressions of Santa Anna against that state. I volunteered my services and received from the political chief, Don Angel Navarro, the command of a party of national guards sent from San Antonio to Monclova. In our encounters with the troops of Santa Anna, I was efficiently (skillfully) assisted by Colonel Benjamin R. Milam and Major John K. Allen. On our withdrawal from Monclova, disgusted with the weakness of our governor who had given up the struggle, we pledged ourselves to use all our influence to rouse (stir) Texas against the tyrannical government of Santa Anna.”

Seguín, Juan Nepomuceno and Teja, Jesus F. de la. *A Revolution Remembered: The Memoirs and Selected Correspondence of Juan N. Seguín*, pp. 75. Austin: State House Press, 1991.

Analysis Questions:

1. Cite and explain what are the “impending dangers” Seguín was talking about?

2. Describe what was happening from the perspective of Juan Seguín. Please use text evidence to support your response.

3. Based on this primary source, in your opinion, was Juan Seguín considering whether Texas should become independent from Mexico?

Document B, Background:

During the Revolution, Tejanos served in many roles in the fight against Santa Anna and centralism and their deep knowledge of the territory around San Antonio proved particularly valuable once Santa Anna invaded Texas. With several other Tejanos, Juan Seguín had joined the Texas rebels in the Alamo on when Santa Anna arrived in San Antonio with an army on February 23, 1836. Because they knew the terrain around San Antonio so well, Tejanos were often asked to sneak messages out of the Alamo. Seguín was selected to take a letter from the Alamo to James Fannin, the commander at Goliad, to ask for reinforcements. On the night of February 28, 1836, he managed to get the message to the Texans at Goliad. Seguín then rode to Gonzales, where he began raising another company of Tejanos to oppose Santa Anna. After the war, Seguín wrote about his mission from the Alamo.

Document D, Background:

The Battle of San Jacinto, the final battle of the Texas Revolution, took place on April 21, 1836. After learning that Santa Anna was marching with a small part of this army, the Texas Army under Sam Houston had marched hard toward Santa Anna's men. They met each other on a broad field between the San Jacinto River and Buffalo Bayou. On the afternoon of April 21, at around 3:30pm, the Texans lined up in battle formation and began marching toward Santa Anna's lines. As they advanced, the movements of the Texans were "screened by trees and the rising ground, and evidently, Santa Anna had no lookouts posted." Juan Seguín and his Tejano cavalry unit rode into battle on the left side of the Texas lines, wearing cards in their hats to make sure the Anglo-Americans did not mistake them for Santa Anna's troops. The battle itself lasted only eighteen minutes, although many of Santa Anna's soldiers were killed afterward as they tried to surrender. Some of Santa Anna's officers surrendered to Juan Seguín. Below is Seguín's memoir of his fighting during the Battle of San Jacinto.

Kemp, L. W. "San Jacinto, Battle Of." TSHA, Texas State Historical Association, www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/san-jacinto-battle-of

"My company was in the left-wing, under Colonel Sidney Sherman. We marched out onto the prairie and were met by a column of infantry, which we drove back briskly [quickly]. Before engaging that column, we had dispersed [stopped] an ambuscade [ambush] that had opened fire against us within pistol shot [close range]. The entire enemy line, panic-struck, took to flight [ran]. We were already on the bank of the river in pursuit of the fugitives when my attention was called to a Mexican officer who, emerging from the river where he had kept himself concealed, gave himself up to me and requested me to spare his life. Protected by weeds and grass, he seemed afraid to leave his shelter because of the fire which was being maintained against the fugitives. I ordered those who were close to me to cease firing, an order which was extended along the line to a considerable distance. Then the officer who had addressed me came out, followed by Colonels Juan Maria Bringas, Juan N. Almonte, Dias, and quite a number of other officers."

Seguín, Juan Nepomuceno and Teja, Jesus F. de la. *A Revolution Remembered: The Memoirs and Selected Correspondence of Juan N. Seguín*. Austin: State House Press, 1991.

Analysis Questions:

1. How do you think Juan Seguín felt during the very beginning of the battle? Explain using evidence.

2. When Juan Seguín discovered the Mexican officer he "gave himself up to me and requested me to spare his life." Why do you think Seguín spared his life? Considered all other documents when answering this question.