

Name:

Date:

Class/Period:

## Voices: Women in the Texas Revolution

Susanna Dickinson

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

### Document A

**Background:** Susanna Hanning Dickinson recounts events that transpired during the final siege of the Alamo during an interview in 1874. Note: *All of Susanna Dickinson's recorded accounts of the events of the Alamo come from multiple interviews that took place over years and, most of them, decades after the fall of the Alamo. Susanna did not keep a personal diary because she could not read or write.*

"The Mexicans Numbered several thousands while there were only one hundred and eighty-two Texans.

"The struggle lasted more than two hours when my husband rushed into the church where I was with my child, and exclaimed: 'Great God, Sue, the Mexicans are inside our walls! All is lost! If they spare you, save my child.'

"Then, with a parting kiss, he drew his sword and plunged into the strife, then raging in different portions of the fortifications."

"Soon after he left me, three unarmed gunners who abandoned their then useless guns came into the church where I was, and were shot down by my side. One of them was from Nacogodches and named Walker. He spoke to me several times during the siege about his wife and four children with anxious tenderness. I saw four Mexicans toss him up in the air (as you would a bundle of fodder) with their bayonets, and then shoot him. At this moment a Mexican officer came into the room, and addressing me in English, asked: 'Are you Mrs. Dickinson?' I answered 'Yes.' Then said he, 'If you wish to save your life, follow me.' I followed him, and although shot at and wounded, was spared.

Morphis, James M. "Susanna Hanning (Dickinson) Interview." In *History of Texas from Its Discovery and Settlement...*, pp. 174-177. New York: United States Publishing Co., 1874.

Hansen, Todd. *The Alamo Reader: A Study in History*. Stackpole Books, 2003, pp. 47-48.

### **Analysis Questions**

1. When Alamar Dickinson makes the statement to Susanna, “all is lost,” is he only referring to the Alamo? Explain your reasoning.
2. Reflecting on the moment that Susanna was told by the Mexican officer “If you wish to save your life, follow me.” In your opinion, do you think Susanna felt safe and trusted the officer? Explain your reasoning.

### **Document B**

**Background:** Enrique Esparza, (son of Tejano, Georgio Exparza, who fought with the Texian volunteers and was killed in the Alamo) was a survivor of the Alamo and 11 years old at the time of the battle, recounts the moment when all the women and children who survived the battle were taken to be interviewed by Santa Anna.

*Note: In this account Susanna Dickinson is spelled ‘Dickerson.’ Throughout various primary and secondary sources historians have noted that her last name is spelled differently, however ‘Dickinson’ is the most commonly used spelling.*

“When it was broad daylight, the families were sent to the home of Don Musquiz at the southwest corner of Main Plaza. A servant there gave us coffee and tamales. We were very hungry. That afternoon we were taken before Santa Anna. He had his headquarters on the Plaza. I saw a pile of silver on the table where he sat.”

“Mrs. Dickerson was more excited than any of the other women. My mother was very quiet and very sad, but not afraid of Santa Anna. I was scared. The Texans had told me that he would cut off my ears if he ever caught me. I did not cry out, but I clung to my mother. Santa Anna, I remember, was dressed up very fine and he had a pleasant voice; but he looked angry. He thought us traitors. He was kind to Mrs. Dickerson, at least his voice sounded different when he spoke to her.”

“He asked the Mexican women, ‘Why do you fight your countrymen?’

“They are not our countrymen,’ my mother answered; ‘we are Texans.’

“I suppose if I let you go you will raise your children to fight Mexico.’

“‘Yes,’ my mother said. Her sorrow over the death of my father had made her not afraid to die, I think.”

“You ought to have your ears cut off,’ he replied.”

“This made me and the other children scream.”

“‘Get the mob out!’ Santa Anna said. ‘Give each woman two dollars and a blanket.’

“Mrs. Dickerson sat there before Santa Anna when we left. She was crying. Señor Travis had a negro slave named Joe, who was also standing there, We heard afterwards that Santa Anna sent Mrs. Dickerson on a horse to Gonzales with Joe to help her along. Deaf Smith and some of Houston’s scouts met her on the way. After hearing the sad story from her, some of them hurried on to Gonzales with the news.”

Driggs, Howard R., and Sarah S. King. “Enrique Esparza Interview.” In *Rise of the Long Star; a Story of Texas Told by Its Pioneers*, pp. 213-231. New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co., 1936.

Hansen, Todd. *The Alamo Reader: A Study in History*. Stackpole Books, 2003, pp. 118-119.

### **Analysis Questions**

1. Was Enrique Esparza’s mother loyal to Mexico or Texas? Support your response using text evidence.
2. Enrique’s account shows that Santa Anna’s attitude toward the Tejano women and children was different than his treatment of Susanna. Why do you think Santa Anna may have acted differently toward Susanna? Use text evidence to support your answer.

### **Document C**

Susanna gives an account of her interaction with Henry Wornell, Texian volunteer, during the later days of the siege of the Alamo. This is one of the only accounts of conditions inside the Alamo during the Siege.

“...I was in the Alamo prior to, and at its fall, on 6th March 1836, and knew a man there by the name of Henry Wornell; and recollect distinctly having seen him in the Alamo about three days prior to its fall; and as none escaped the massacre, I verily believe he was among the unfortunate number who fell there, so bravely in the defence of thor country. I recollect having heard him remark that he had much rather be out in the open prairie, than to be pent up in that manner. Said Wornell, was a man of rather small stature, light complexion and I think red or sandy hair.”

Subscribed by making her mark ‘Susannah X Hunneck’

And sworn to before me, this

8th March 1860.

W. J. Hotchkiss

Com. of Claims

Susanna Hanning, formerly Dickinson, deposition, March 8, 1860. Warnell, Henry. Court of Claims File C-8490.  
Archives and Records Division, Texas General Land Office, Austin

### ***Analysis Questions***

1. Susanna’s account of Henry Wornell includes his remark that he would “much rather be out in the open prairie, than to be pent up in that manner.” What do you think he means by that statement?

This account took place around the tenth day of the siege of the Alamo. After ten days of constant bombardment from the Mexican army, what do you think the overall mood was in the Alamo? Explain your reasoning?