

USA Studies Weekly

Ancient America to the Present

JOURNAL

The Annexation of Texas

Following the War of 1812, the Industrial Revolution was in full progress in the United States. In many cities, industry changed the way people lived and worked. For some people though, the wilderness still called, and a land named Texas seemed the perfect place to be. In the 1820s, Mexico gained independence from Spain and took control of the Texas territory. Mexican officials realized they needed more Anglo settlers to come to Texas. What might life have been like then? Imagine that in 1845, 11-year-old James Young's family had been living in Mexican-controlled Texas for many years. Read James' journal entry about the day Texas became a part of the United States of America.

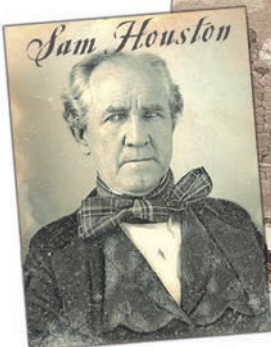
Dec. 29, 1845

Today, Pa says that the United States officially annexed (joined with) Texas, and we are now part of the United States. Texas President Anson Jones lowered the Texas flag this morning and the U.S. flag was raised high. Pa says it is what is best for us all, but I know everything has changed since he came to Texas with his parents in 1828.

Before that time, there were very few Anglos in Texas. Most people here were American Indian like the Apaches and Comanche. Pa's family lived in Virginia and wanted to own land. That would not be very easy to do in the United States. So, Pa's family came to Texas and settled on free land the Mexican government had promised them. In return, my grandfather promised to raise crops and animals on the fertile land. He also pledged, or promised, to pay taxes to the Mexican government and practice the Catholic religion. Like all the other settlers to Texas, Pa and his family promised to learn to speak Spanish and follow the Mexican laws.

By 1830, there were many Anglo families living in Texas. Soon the people weren't getting along with the Mexican government. Most of the people never learned to speak Spanish and didn't want to change religions just to please the Mexicans. The Mexicans passed new laws that made life even harder for settlers.

Pa had just married



TEXAS ENTERS THE UNION!

Mama in 1833 when the settlers asked Mexico to let Texas have its own government. The settlers were not happy with Mexico's rules. Pa said when I was just a baby, fighting broke out between the powerful Mexican government and the Texas people. I have heard the stories of the battles in Gonzales and Goliad many times.

Of course, many know the story of the Texans who fought bravely against General Santa Anna at the Alamo. I always enjoy hearing Mama tell me about how she and Pa had to run away from the cruel general when they thought his men were coming to burn down our farm. I was too young to remember it all, but it sure sounds dangerous. I'll bet Pa was very brave. I know the Texans were shouting, "Remember the Alamo!" when General Sam Houston led an attack against the Mexicans at San Jacinto in April 1836.

Pa said many people probably cheered when the Texas flag was lowered and the U.S. flag was raised. Texas needs the money and the protection the United States can give. I know Texas might not be able to stand strong on its own right now. Like many other people though, I feel sad that the Republic of Texas is no longer. I just hope the Mexicans can accept that the United States is calling Texas its own.

Less than six months after Texas became a state, Congress declared war on Mexico. Turn the page and keep reading to find out what happened!





The United States Fights Mexico for Land

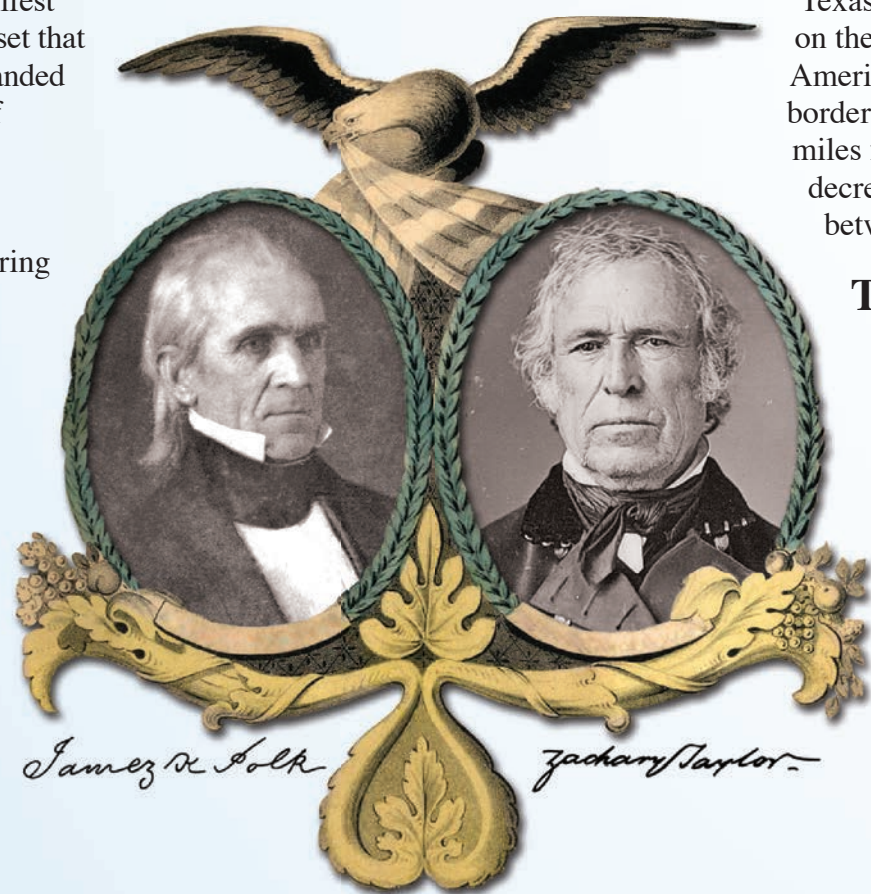
The United States Fights Mexico for Land

The idea of Manifest Destiny was not a new one for the United States by the 19th century. After the United States purchased the Louisiana territory and Lewis and Clark explored and mapped the wilderness, many Americans wanted the chance to own land. They excitedly headed into the new territory to build homes, businesses and settlements. The people thought it was their job to spread their way of life as far as they could, even if it meant pushing people aside who were there first.

By the early 1800s, Americans heard about new land that Mexico held in the Southwest. Mexico was eager to have Anglo settlers. Officials were almost giving land in Texas away. Americans began moving into Texas by the thousands and by 1830, more than 20,000 Anglos had settled in the area. Though they had agreed to become Mexican citizens, many of the settlers never let go of the idea of Manifest Destiny. They became very upset that the Mexican government demanded they give up their own ways of living.

Texas as a Republic

The Texans ended up declaring their independence, and they fought a war with Mexico. From 1836-1845, Texas was an independent republic. They had defeated Mexico, but the Mexican culture lived on through the food, the customs, the names of the cities and the architecture of the buildings. Even though it was once a source of discord (disagreement), the Spanish language and Catholic religion are still very much a part of the Texas tradition today.



To Annex or Not?

Without the ability to raise money or form a powerful army, Texas turned to the United States for help. The answer was annexation. There were great debates about whether Texas should become part of the United States. Slavery was allowed in Texas, and many Northerners did not want another slave state. Also, the United States would have to take on the debts (money owed) that Texas had piled up. In the end, the United States decided to annex (join with) Texas, and Texas became the 28th state. The United States now had a very large state with an abundance (large amount) of excellent land with many resources.

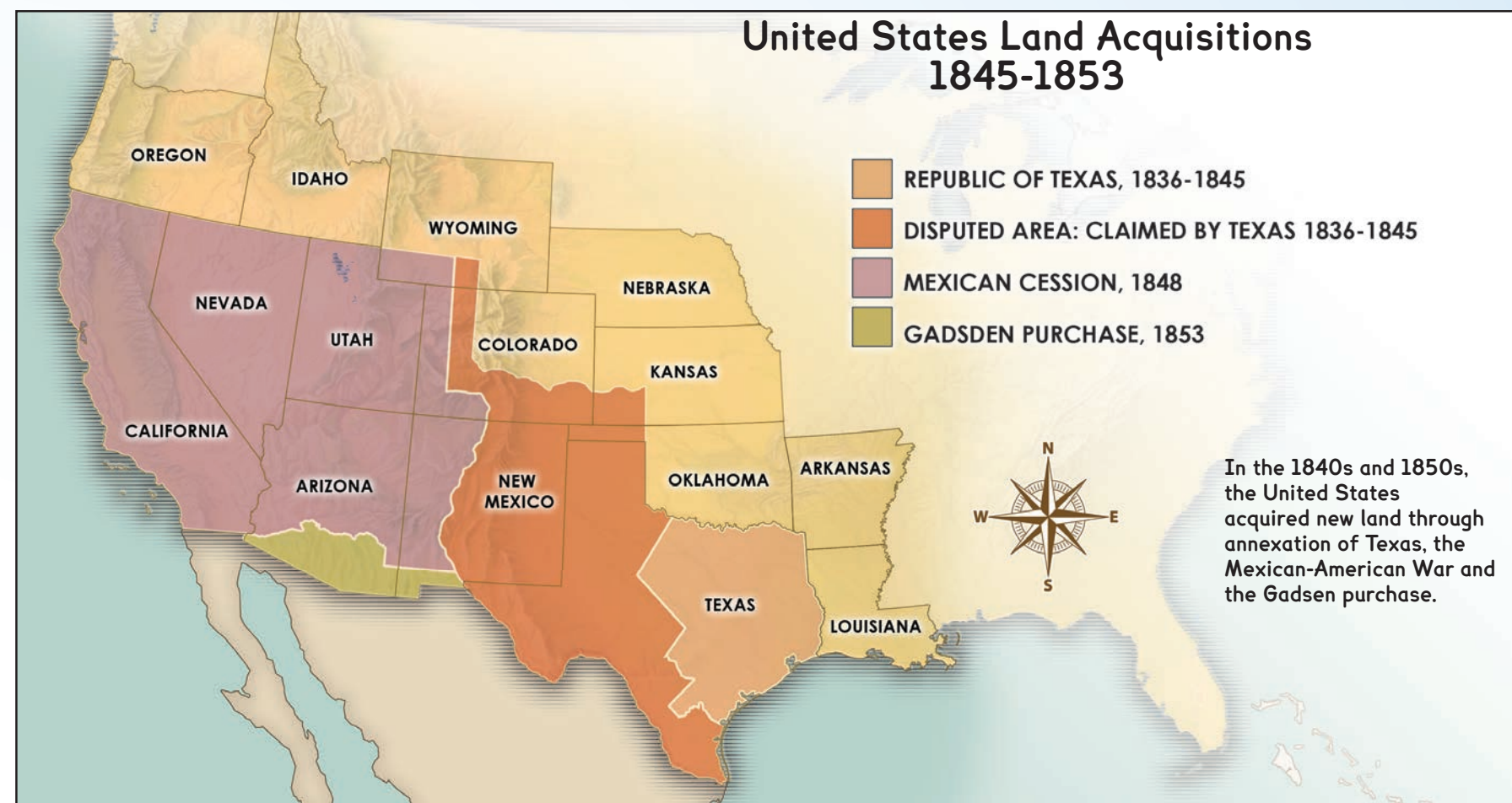
Mexico Changes Its Mind

Mexico began to rethink its decision to give up so easily on Texas. The Mexican government suddenly wanted Texas back. The two countries did not agree on the southwestern boundary of Texas. Americans wanted the Rio Grande to be the border, but Mexico wanted it to be about 150 miles further northeast. This would greatly decrease the size of Texas. Tension grew between the neighboring countries.

The War is On!

The argument over the boundary of Texas continued. In 1846, U.S. President Polk sent the Army to protect the Rio Grande. The Mexicans tried to defend the land against U.S. General Zachary Taylor and his men. There was a small battle at Palo Alto, Texas. President Polk then went before the U.S. Congress and asked the members to declare war. The Mexican-American War began two days later on May 13, 1846.

The war continued for nearly two years. Many Americans were against the war. Some people felt the annexation of



In the 1840s and 1850s, the United States acquired new land through annexation of Texas, the Mexican-American War and the Gadsden purchase.

Texas would lead to war, and now they could say, "We told you so." People felt the United States was being too greedy for land. Others supported President Polk's war. They felt that the land was their Manifest Destiny, and many people joined the army to fight against the Mexicans. They fought to take land that they believed it was their right to have.

The battles were deadly as both sides fought fiercely. General Zachary Taylor led American troops into Mexico City. Even after they captured the capital, Mexico continued to fight. Soldiers also fought battles in Texas and California.

Mexico Surrenders

Mexico finally surrendered. In February 1848, officials signed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and ended the war.

Mexico ceded (gave up) a great deal of territory. In fact, the country gave up about 55 percent of all its territory at the time. The United States now owned the entire present-day states of California, Nevada and Utah, as well as most of Arizona and New Mexico. They also got small parts of four other states. Mexico finally agreed that the Rio Grande would be the southern border of Texas. The United States agreed to pay Mexico \$15 million for the cession.

After the War

Approximately 14,000 Americans lost their lives in the war. Nearly double that number of Mexicans were killed. But the end of the war did not end the bad feelings between the two countries. For many years,

the two nations did not get along with one another and often fought in skirmishes (small battles).

The end of the Mexican-American War also brought many changes both to the nation and to people living in the Southwest. Americans poured into the new territories. They wanted to farm, ranch and mine for valuable metals and minerals. People began new settlements. Unfortunately, these newcomers did not always treat the people already living there very well. They treated many American Indians and former Mexican citizens very poorly. Sometimes Americans took over land that other people had already claimed. It's likely that not everyone agreed with the idea of Manifest Destiny. Who might have thought it was a bad idea? Why?

The Gadsden Purchase

Five years after the end of the Mexican-American war, the United States set its sights on one additional piece of land. This strip of land was just south of the Gila River in present-day Arizona and New Mexico. It was the perfect pass through the mountains. A railroad system could easily be built to reach the Gulf of California. Mexico needed the money that the sale of the land would provide, so officials from the United States and Mexico began talks.

The U.S. Minister to Mexico, James Gadsden, helped put the deal together. The U.S. Congress agreed to pay Mexico \$10 million for an amount of land that was about as big as the state of Pennsylvania. That was a lot of money for such a small area of land. Remember, Mexico got \$15 million

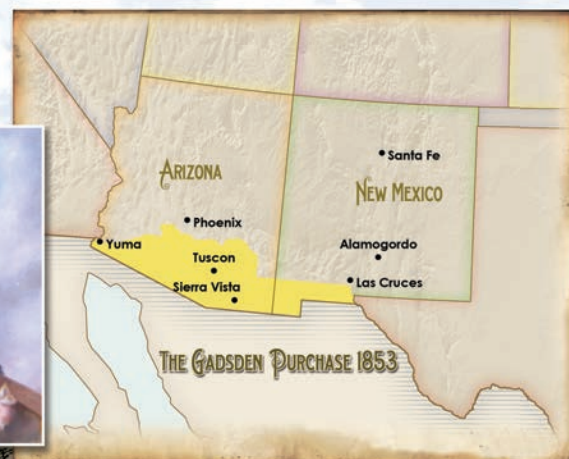
for about 55 percent of its territory it ceded to the United States after the war.

But the Gadsden Purchase made many Mexicans angry. They did not want to lose all claims to land north of the Rio Grande. The people were so angry that they removed General Santa Anna as dictator and banished him from the country. He was forced to leave Mexico forever. The Mexican people no longer trusted James Gadsden either. The United States had to replace him as minister to Mexico. Unfortunately, Gadsden died before workers completed the railroad route. But the Gadsden Purchase made it possible for railroad systems to begin crisscrossing the continent.

James Gadsden



Geography



Forty-Niners Hit the Gold Mines

In 1848, the Mexican-American War ended. At just about the same time, people discovered gold in the Sierra Nevada Mountains of California. Soon, news of the discovery spread to the United States. Even people in Europe and Asia heard about the possible chance to find a fortune. Suddenly forty-niners (people who rushed to California in 1849 to find gold) were leaving everything behind to head for the hills where they hoped to get rich quickly. The gold rush was on!

Miners found much of their treasure in rivers. They often spent long days panning for gold. First they scooped up dirt and rock from the riverbed in a large pan. Next, the miners swirled the pan around in the river water. Heavy gold would stay at the bottom of the pan while dirt and small rocks floated away.

Life for the miners was hard and lonely. Small communities began to form near large mining areas. However, miners often lived alone in tents or run-down cabins. Sometimes they did not have enough money to buy food or supplies. They often worked many days without finding any gold at all in their claims. A claim was the area of land in which each miner worked. Each miner had the right to all of the gold he found in his claim. Some of the forty-niners became very rich from the gold they found, but most of the miners gave up hope after a while. They returned home just as poor as when they had come to California.

At the end of the gold rush, many of the miners stayed in California. Some went to work for the railroads while others opened businesses or began farming. Many of them found more success after the rush ended.

History



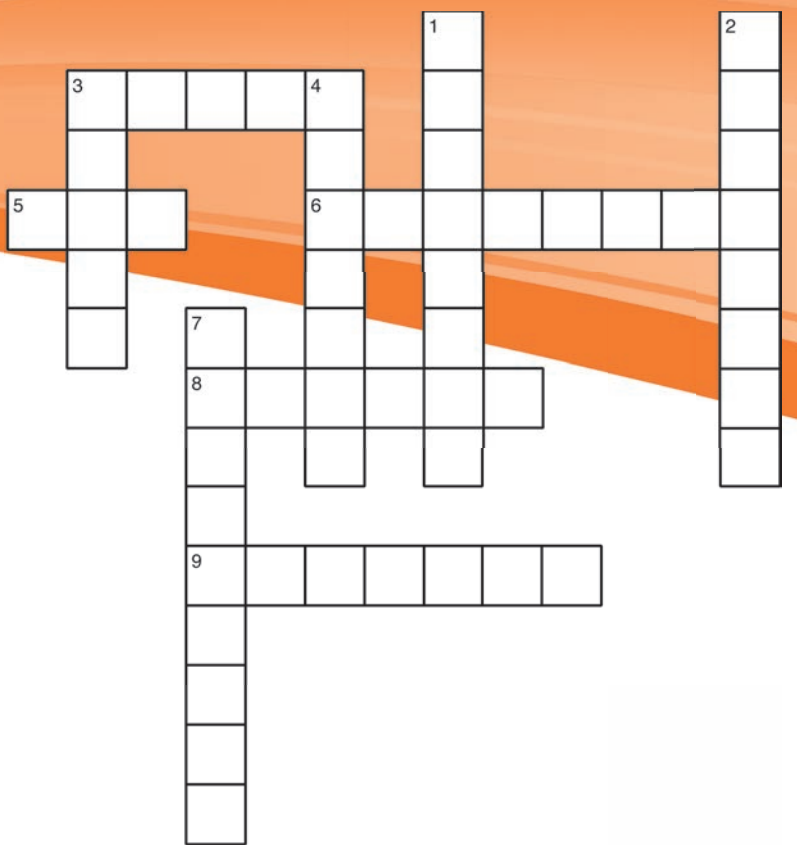
Name _____

ACROSS

- 3. gave up
- 5. forty-niner tool
- 6. small battle
- 8. boundary line
- 9. Manifest _____

DOWN

- 1. Santa Anna was _____ from Mexico
- 2. Mexico's main religion
- 3. miner's spot
- 4. disagreement
- 7. large amount



As you read this week's lesson, circle or highlight all proper nouns with any color pen or highlighter. This will help you find some of the crossword answers and get ready for this week's test.

Cause and Effect

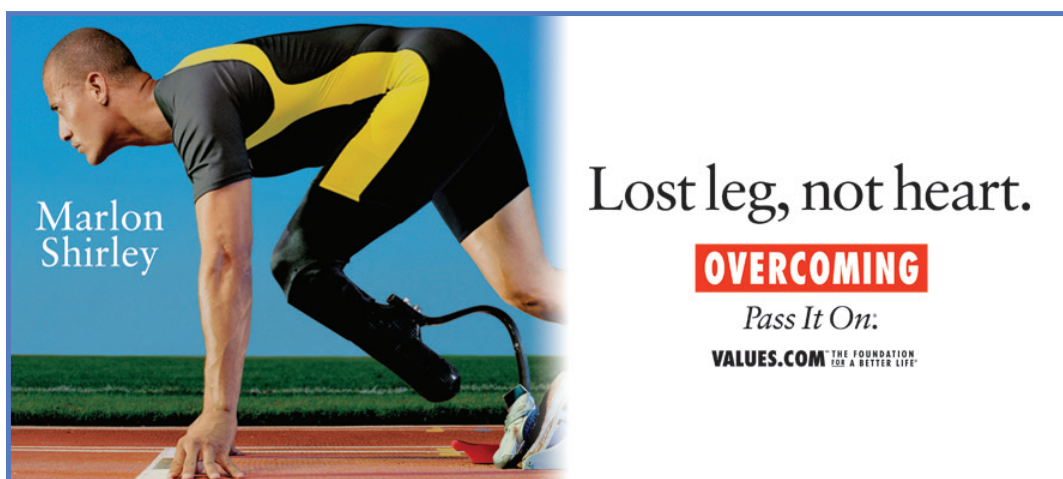
Activity

Complete the cause and effect activity below using what you learned from this week's Studies Weekly. Write in complete sentences.

Cause

Effect

The idea of Manifest Destiny becomes popular after the purchase of the Louisiana Territory.	➔	
	➔	Texas knew the only solution would be annexation by the United States.
Mexico and the United States could not agree on the boundary of Texas.	➔	
Some people thought the United States was being greedy for land.	➔	
	➔	Mexico ceded 55 percent of its territory to the United States.



Writing from First Person Point of View *Let's Write*

Writers often write in different points of view. They use first person point of view when "I" or "we" act as the narrator. Read "The Annexation of Texas" on Page 1 for an example of first person point of view. Now, pretend you lived in Texas during the time of the revolution and U. S. annexation. Write your own life story using first person point of view. Be sure to support all of your ideas with facts and details.