

## **Introduction**

Our nation has paid a price for freedom in battles and wars around the world. But one of the most important battles for freedom-the Defense of the Alamo-was on the sweeping plains of Texas in the early spring of 1836. This was a stand to the death by fewer than 200 men against thousands of Mexican soldiers led by the dictator Santa Anna. From this act of total commitment-from the ashes of the Alamo-others stepped forward and the Texas War for Independence was won, the Mexican War of the 1840s was won, and the United States gained territory that spread its limits to the Pacific Ocean. Total land area added was approximately one-third of the nation's present territory. Whether you are in California, Iowa, Texas or Maine, the events at the Alamo-the last stand of William Barret Travis-had a direct influence on shaping our country.

Television and movies have given us a look at this story of the Alamo, but none have shown it through the eyes of a 15-year old, as is done in the video *The Cost of Freedom*. In this story, an American teenager finds out what it's like to experience history first hand. This is a unique and fresh approach that lets students feel the emotion of history as well as the facts.

Is there a cost for freedom today? Certainly. In the breakup of the Soviet Union, in Lithuania, in South Africa, in democracy movements around the world, there is a price to pay for freedom. In the homes and schools where kids say no to drugs and lose friends because they take a stand to be free of chemicals, there is a price to pay for freedom. With kids who fall and make mistakes, but pick themselves up, and with changed hearts and attitudes become better and stronger, and are free to reach their destiny, there is a price to pay for freedom.

## **Using The Video**

How can a teacher or instructor use this video? The dramatization is a springboard to launch a whole study in American history about the years of westward expansion of the United States during the 1830s and 1840s.

We recommend that a class watch the video once for drama and a second time for notes. A note sheet is provided for both teacher and student use. Also, we have included in this manual a wide variety of follow-up ideas. These include games, puzzles, dramatizations and activities for making students participants in learning history. For younger students there are hands-on projects. For older students there are both group and individual activities, and projects for student self-help.

## The Life of William B. Travis

- **Born**--William Barret Travis (WBT) was born August 1, 1809 on his father's plantation near Saluda, South Carolina, the oldest son of Mark and Jemima Travis. The Travis family came from a heritage that traced back to the Jamestown, Virginia area.
- **Boyhood**--When he was 9, his family moved to a farm near Sparta, Alabama, in Conecuh County. This was where he was educated.
- **Education**--WBT graduated from Sparta Academy, in Sparta, Alabama (he also attended one or more other schools in the area), and then studied law while working in the offices of one of the prominent attorneys of the area, James Dellet.
- **Marriage**--On October 26, 1828, at the age of 19, he was wed to Rosanna E. Cato and had two children--Charles Edward and Susan Isabella.
- **Early soldier**--He was a member of the Alabama militia, receiving a commission as Adjutant in January, 1830.
- **On to Texas**--WBT left Alabama in 1831 and went to settle in Texas. He filed his first claim for land on May 21, 1831. At this time, Texas was Mexican territory, but many Americans were allowed to settle in the area as a part of Mexican land development. The Americans had to give their allegiance to Mexico and obey Mexican laws. WBT settled in the port city of Anahuac (on Galveston Bay, along the coast east of modern-day Houston, and near the mouth of the Trinity River), and started a law practice with Patrick C. Jack. He also became good friends with "Three-legged Willie" Williamson, who was to become a Texas legend. During this time he learned Spanish and studied Mexican law.
- **The 1831 Anahuac Disturbance**--At this time there was conflict between the American settlers and the Mexican government. The dictator Santa Anna had taken over the government, and had overturned the Mexican Constitution of 1824. This constitution was supported by the American settlers, and they were angry that their liberties and freedom were no longer guaranteed. The Mexicans, in turn, were determined to stop more Americans from settling in Texas, because they were difficult to control. While in Anahuac WBT gained fame in a dispute with John Davis Bradburn, the local military leader. Bradburn was an officer in the Mexican army assigned to enforce new regulations from the central government, including the stopping of immigration of Americans into Texas. Bradburn was heavy-handed in his actions and caused resentment among the Americans. Travis was one of many who protested Bradburn's actions, and was jailed along with his law partner P.C. Jack. The situation was very volatile until Bradburn was relieved from his duties by military authorities. The Anahuac incident caused a political split in Texas: some settlers favored working peacefully with the Mexican government, while others felt there was a need to fight for independence from Mexico. True to his character, Travis was only partly involved at the beginning, but he soon moved to the center of the conflict, just as he would in a few years later when he took command at the Alamo.
- **1832-1835 in San Felipe, Texas**--WBT moved to San Felipe de Austin in 1832 after the Bradburn incident, and continued the practice of law. San Felipe was inland from the coast, west of modern-day Houston, and was a political center for

the region. The city had been founded by Stephen F. Austin, who was one of the early American leaders in the movement to bring Americans to Texas. WBT quickly became a respected member of the community and moved to the center of Texas politics and society.

- **The 1835 Anahuac Disturbance**--In the summer of 1835, Travis was again involved in a dispute that involved the port at Anahuac. The situation began with the Mexican government's attempts to enforce the collection of customs duties, which had been ignored by the Americans. Travis and other volunteers manned a vessel named the Ohio in the coastal waters and sailed into Anahuac on June 27, 1835, capturing the Mexican garrison and supplies. There was a dramatic night encounter between Travis and the Mexican commander, Captain Antonio Tenorio, who had sought safety in a thicket with his troops. Travis walked brazenly out into the open moonlight to confront the Mexicans and request their surrender. The Mexicans did surrender, and Travis became a hero, and was again at the center of the conflict.
- **The months before the Texas Revolution**--Throughout the summer and fall of 1835, events were progressing toward rebellion on the part of the Texans, and WBT was actively involved in the political and military movements. War began in late 1835 at Bejar (pronounced "Bay-er" and now known as San Antonio), with a siege of the city by angry Texans.
- **Autumn, 1835: The Battle of Bejar (San Antonio)**--Travis joined Stephen F. Austin at the Bejar siege in the fall of 1835. Bejar was held by the Mexican General Cos, who was the brother-in-law of Santa Anna. During the siege, in early November, 1835, Travis led a raiding party to capture horses from the Mexicans, and returned with some 300 animals, a feat for which he was well commended. Travis returned to San Felipe by early December for recruiting purposes and for other matters. On December 5 the Texans attacked Bejar under the leadership of Ben Milam and captured the city on December 10. The Mexican forces were sent south, but the tables were to be turned in a few short months as Santa Anna gathered an army and returned to San Antonio in February, 1836.
- **The Texas Revolution**--Beginning with the siege of Bejar and ending with the Battle of San Jacinto on April 21, 1836, the Texas settlers fought the Mexican army to win their independence from Mexico. They signed a Declaration of Independence on March 3, 1836 in the small town of Washington-on-the-Brazos, a small town on the Brazos River (west of modern-day Houston).

After the Texans captured Bejar (December, 1835), they established a garrison in the old mission named the Alamo. The soldiers there included such great American legends as Davy Crockett and Jim Bowie. This was considered an outpost to defend the southern flank of Texas. As the Mexican forces under Santa Anna moved north, their first major encounter with the Texans was at the Alamo. There was a siege of the mission by the Mexicans for nearly two weeks, and then on the morning of March 6, 1836, the Mexicans attacked in waves again and again, and finally swarmed over the battlements and engaged the surviving Texans in hand-to-hand combat. After the battle some 1600 Mexican soldiers lay dead and another 500 were wounded. The Texas garrison had been obliterated.

One of the few survivors was a woman, Mrs. Susanna Dickinson, who was released to carry the message to Americans in Texas that Santa Anna was coming.

Santa Anna then considered the Texas army defeated, and he split his soldiers into separate groups to make a sweep of Texas and remove all Americans from Mexican territory. Another Texas garrison at the town of Goliad surrendered to the Mexican forces, and many of the Texans were then executed, even though they had surrendered honorably. Santa Anna marched to the northeast looking for the remaining force of Texas soldiers under General Sam Houston. Houston retreated until he saw a favorable area for a battle at the mouth of the San Jacinto River along Galveston Bay. Houston attacked during the midday siesta across an open field with more than 800 soldiers and cavalry against a Mexican army of 1600. The Mexicans were caught by surprise, and many of them lost their lives as the Texans shouted "Remember the Alamo! Remember the Alamo!" Santa Anna was captured, and Houston forced him to sign a treaty granting Texas independence. The war for Texas was won.

### **Travis at the Alamo**

- **February 3, 1836**--Travis returned to Bejar in early February where he joined the Texas garrison at the Alamo, which was under the combined leadership of Jim Bowie and Colonel James C. Neill. Neill was in charge of the regular Texas army, and Travis reported to him on February 3. Bowie commanded a group of volunteers. Shortly after this Neill left Bejar because of a family illness and Travis was left in charge of the regular army troops. At first his authority over the garrison was split with Bowie, but Bowie became ill and Travis became the main commander.
- **February 8, 1836**--Davy Crockett arrived at the Alamo with 12 Tennessee Mounted Volunteers
- **February 24, 1836**--Santa Anna arrived at Bejar with the first part of his army and the siege of the Alamo began.
- **February 24, 1836**--Travis wrote his famous letter to "the people of Texas and all Americans of the world" requesting reinforcements (see the section entitled "A Letter to a Nation." This was but one of many requests by Travis for reinforcements.
- **March 5, 1836**--Legend has it that Travis drew a line in the sand and gave every man the choice to cross the line and join him in a fight to the death to defend the Alamo. All but one man crossed.
- **March 6, 1836**--The battle of the Alamo. Travis died during the early part of the battle with a bullet to the head. He was observed on the ramparts firing in defiance. In a matter of hours, all the American defenders were killed and the Mexicans claimed the victory.

## What Was He Like?

- **Appearances**--William Barret Travis (WBT) was tall--six feet or more--and fair, with dark, curly red hair. According to the writer T.R. Fehrenbach, he had what the Mexicans came to call "blue-grey killer's" eyes.
- **He Never Turned Back**--A single statement in WBT's diary says it all about the Travis legend. On Sunday March 9, 1834, almost exactly two years before he was to die at the Alamo, WBT wrote in his Diary: "started to Mill Creek waters all swimming & prairie so boggy--could not go--*The first time I ever turned back in my life.*" WBT was the man who would not turn back.
- **At the Center of Conflict**--WBT's personality was such that he was always at the center of a conflict. Even when the fight was not directly his, there he was in the middle, drawing the focus of the action. At the start of the first Anahuac disturbance (see the section on "The Life of William B. Travis") he was involved only as a lawyer, but he was so active in the conflict that soon he was personally threatened by the Mexicans, with guns pointed at his head; and after the battle, he was the one most historians have come to associate with the disturbance. Later at the Alamo, he arrived only as an officer reporting to others, but in the final battle he was the central figure and had become the leader of the garrison.
- **Deep Friendships**--WBT maintained friendships over long years. One of WBT's close boyhood friends was James Butler Bonham, who later joined him in the fight at the Alamo, and was his key messenger and confidant. They both were born in the area of Saluda, South Carolina, although WBT moved to Alabama when he was nine. They both died together at the Alamo.
- **A Hero**--WBT was a hero, and all sorts of places are named in his memory, particularly in Texas.
- **A Reader**--WBT loved to read, borrowing the books that were available among individuals on the Texas Frontier. His diary and records indicate that he read quickly, sometimes reading a major work in only a few days.
- **A Father**--WBT was a father. His only son, Charles Edward Travis, came to live in Texas with his father a short time before the battle of the Alamo.
- **A Young Man**--WBT was only 26 when he died.



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## **Disclaimer**

The movie *The Cost of Freedom* is a fictionalized account of an historical event. Some characters have been changed and others added for dramatic effect.

It is important to remember that the handbook and the video are part of interdisciplinary and multi-cultural studies of history, biography, literature, geography, tolerance, and intolerance and should be included in the broader scope of any curriculum.



## Group Activities

The following activities are suggested for group activities. The objective is to make the students participants in their education rather than observers.

- **American History**--The Alamo story is important in American History, because it was part of the events that led to the transfer of much of the northern territory of Mexico to the United States. The Alamo led to the eventual independence of Texas from Mexico; then 10 years later Texas became a part of the United States, which led to the Mexican War in the 1840s. This in turn led to the U.S. claiming the area from Texas west to California.

All of these events can be combined into a student study and research unit. Select topics such as the Texas Revolution, the annexation of Texas, the Mexican War, the annexation of California, and have the students find library information on the topics and report to the class. Other topics can include the great battles for Texas--the Alamo and the Battle of San Jacinto--as well as the various engagements of the Mexican War. The Teacher can assign students a state in the Southwest--Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, California, Nevada, Utah, or Colorado--and have the students find the date and circumstances under which (1) the land area of the state became a U.S. territory and (2) statehood was granted.

- **Role Playing**--Have a student take the part of WBT or any of the other individuals related to the Alamo drama. He or she can prepare a speech that dramatizes the engagement and tells of attitudes, fears and feelings about the battle. The emotional parts of the role and the character development can be interpretive on the student's part. For interest, have a student act out the role of Santa Anna talking to his troops, or have characters for Bowie and Travis act out their rivalry for leadership at the Alamo. Time can be taken to have the students write their own scripts, individually or in groups. As a suggestion, have them write a letter from the Alamo for use as a script.
- **Cameo Interview**--As an extension of role playing, a student can take the part of one of the historical characters at the Alamo, and be interviewed by others in the class. Questions asked should reflect a knowledge of the historical events and the attitudes and character of the individuals involved. Some preparation time for the student may be necessary, however. The teacher can prepare a set of questions for student research as an out-of-class assignment (20 questions are appropriate), and then the class can ask the questions as a part of the interview. Try making a video recording of the interview to play back to the class.
- **What's My Line**--This activity is based on the old quiz show in which a panel of individuals--typically three--claimed to be the same person and have the same profession. One of the three was for real, the other two were pretenders. After asking the panel various questions the participants voted on which individual was telling the truth. To apply this to a Travis history lesson, have three students agree to take the part of a person in WBT's life and times. The three students decide among themselves who will be the real character, without the remainder of the

class knowing. The real character has to tell the truth and the pretenders have to make things up, but in a convincing way by using a good bluff and confident manner. Have each question answered by all three participants. After an appropriate time of questions, the students vote on which of the three is playing the true role.

- **Wheel of History**--Wheel of History is a take-off on the television quiz show Wheel of Fortune, in which panelists try to guess the letters and words in hidden phrases. In its simplest form, a class can be divided in half, with each half electing a captain (a set of individuals can also be selected with the class as spectators, depending on circumstances). A phrase on some aspect of the Travis drama (only a few words or less) or another aspect of American history is laid out on a chalk board or overhead projection with blank spaces for the letters and with spaces between words. The starting side (select the starters by a coin flip) may guess what the phrase is or request a specific letter. If they guess the phrase, they win (or score a point). If they guess a letter and the letter is in the phrase, the teacher fills in all occurrences of the letter on the board, and the team can guess again. If they guess the phrase wrong or guess a letter that is not in the phrase, the play passes to the other team. If the game goes too quickly, it may be desirable to prohibit teams from guessing vowels.

To add some complexity, the teacher can use a spin board, which is an arrow on a swivel that spins inside a circle with multiple pie-shaped segments, each segment showing a different point total (use points 1 through 8, or any other point groupings that seem appropriate). The arrow spins and comes to a stop inside one of the segments, which gives the points awarded for that spin. Before each turn a team spins to accumulate points (one spin for each turn), and can use these points to buy additional letters. Vowels in this case should be made particularly costly.

- **Telling the Truth**--Telling the truth is a bluff game similar to What's My Line, but played in a tick-tack-toe format. To simplify the game for classroom use, select three panelists to come to the front of the room. As the game proceeds these panelists will answer questions from the teacher. The panelists need to be individuals who are particularly adept at acting. Then divide the remainder of the class into 2 teams. Have each team select a captain. As the game proceeds, one team will play "O" in tick-tack-toe, and the other team will play "X".

Draw a large tick-tack-toe grid on the board or on an overhead projection. Have the starting team (select the starter by a coin flip) indicate where their "X" or "O" will be placed on the grid if they win their round. Then ask one of the three panelists at the front of the room a question about Travis or the history of the times (do not be hesitant to intersperse questions from non-history topics, if these will increase interest or add to the fun). The panelist then answers, either telling the truth or a falsehood (if the panelist doesn't know, he or she needs to make up an answer). The team in play then tells whether the answer from the panelist is true or false. If the team answers correctly, their tick-tack-toe play is completed and the "X" or "O" is placed on the grid. If incorrect, they lose the turn. Whether

they are right or wrong, play then moves to the other team. A team wins when it has a tick-tack-toe "three in a row".

- **Twenty Questions**--Twenty questions is a family game that is adaptable to many classroom activities. The teacher thinks of something at the Alamo (or anything from American history) but keeps it secret from the class, writing it on a piece of paper. The class has to guess what it is. The only clue given is whether the secret something is (1) a person, (2) a place, or (3) a thing. The class then is allowed 20 questions to guess what it is. Note that the questions have to be phrased to allow yes or no answers. For example, if the teacher is thinking of a person such as William Travis, the students could ask "Was the in person Mexican army?" With the answer of "No," they know that this eliminates Santa Anna or any of his officers or soldiers from consideration. After the students understand the game, members of a class can then be the ones who decide on the secret (in consultation with the teacher).
- **Newspaper**--Have the students produce a newspaper dated March 6, 1836 and covering the events of the Battle of the Alamo. Just the front page of a newspaper may be enough for a small project. Allow two weeks or more of project time for development of a full paper. With a date of March 7, the newspaper can include follow-up events to the battle, including interest stories about the Mexican soldiers and interviews with early settlers. The project could actually be stretched out over 13 days to cover the time of the siege of the Alamo. For each of the thirteen days, the events that occurred could be summarized to a class, with the students taking time to relate the story in newspaper dispatch format. The daily dispatches could then be collected in a notebook. For information on each of the thirteen days, the teacher is directed to Lon Tinkle's book entitled *Thirteen Days to Glory* (McGraw-Hill, New York, 1958), or *The Texas Revolution*, by Bob Boyd (San Angelo Standard, Inc., San Angelo, Texas, 198 p.).
- **Letter Contest**--Have the students write a letter from the Alamo requesting reinforcements to defend the fort. The model for this exercise is WBT's letter of February 24, 1836, which is included in this manual. Read the letter to the class or use a student with dramatic ability to do the reading. It can be read by more than one student with each one trying to out-perform the others. Then the students write their own letters. The teacher may select some of the better letters for class presentation.
- **Dress Up Day**--On an assigned day the students can be asked to dress up like people at the Alamo. They can dress as either Texans or Mexicans--pioneers or early Mexican citizens of Texas. Keep in mind that dress-up may simply mean jeans and a stylized shirt.
- **T-Shirt Day**--Instead of costumes, there can be a T-shirt day, with students making their own T-shirts with Alamo themes. Have them use old shirts that can be painted or cut.
- **Artifacts**--Some students in a class may have artifacts of early pioneers at home that can be brought to school as a demonstration project. Take extra caution to be sure that these materials are respected by members of the class, and that nothing is damaged. In fact, if there are particularly precious artifacts, it may be best to have

them handled only by adults--parents or friends who own the materials and are willing to bring them to class. The students can also create their own artifacts, making objects of the selected historical period with a variety of artistic media. Use your library resources for books with examples of artifacts and objects.

- **The Travis Lunch**--Prepare the type of meal that Travis may have eaten in the Alamo. What did he eat? Not much information is available here, but we do know that he had bushels of corn and beef cattle, so try corn bread and a beef-based soup. For a switch, serve a meal the Mexican soldiers may have eaten--try tacos or a similar type food. Mexican food is now very popular in many parts of the country and ingredients are available in many grocery stores.

## Individualized Activities

The following activities are suggested individualized assignments for any age. The objective is to develop hands-on projects.

- **Essays**--Essays are a fine activity. Try a short essay--one to three pages. Topics can cover any of the various periods of WBT's life (see the section on the life of WBT), his actions at the Alamo, the meaning of the Alamo to American history, the events surrounding the subsequent Mexican War, and the annexation of California. What is the meaning of the sacrifice at the Alamo to us today? What revolutions are there in our world today?
- **Biographical Sketches**--For a focused essay topic have each student select a character for biographical research and write a condensed biography. For the Travis drama there is Davy Crockett, Jim Bowie, Sam Houston and Santa Anna. This can be a longer-term project to cover an entire American history study unit.
- **Alamo Diary**--Have students write a diary or log about being at the Alamo. The project can last from February 24 to March 6, which was the time the defenders were surrounded by Santa Anna's troops. Each day have the students make a log entry about their feelings that day. The students can write as though they were soldiers at the Alamo. For information on some daily activities at the Alamo, see the section entitled "The Life of William B. Travis" in this guide. Also, refer to Lon Tinkle's book entitled *Thirteen Days to Glory* (McGraw-Hill, New York, 1958), a story of the days of the Alamo battle.
- **Oral History**--The students can interview grandparents or others who have memories of older days in America. The interview process could also include experts on history, members of the Daughters of the American revolution (in Texas the Daughters of the Republic of Texas) or related organizations, experts on genealogy, etc. Of course, it is impossible to interview individuals with direct experience in the historical times of the Alamo story, but it is possible to find people who have been to war--the World Wars, the Korean War, the Vietnam war, Desert Storm. Did they have life or death experiences? What was it like to be in war? Were they afraid? Also, the students can perhaps even find those who remember grandparents who were early pioneers. Fostering communication between the generations can be an excellent educational project and can be of benefit to both the students and those being interviewed.
- **Kaleidobox**--For a construction project, students can construct a three-dimensional scene in a shoe box. A peephole in the side of the box and a light source (an open panel on the top or a Christmas tree light bulb and socket) allows viewing. The scene can be of the Alamo or any of the events surrounding the battle--the line in the sand drawn by Travis, the Mexicans breaching the walls.
- **Wagon stickers**--Everyone likes to read bumper stickers, but what types of stickers would the Texas soldiers have placed on their wagons before the battle of the Alamo? Some of the students may have creative ideas. These can be done on construction paper cut to the size of typical bumper stickers. After the exercise, display the bumper stickers around the room.

- **Battle Flags**--If you and your friends were among the soldiers at the Alamo, what would your battle flag have looked like? Some of the students may have creative ideas. Have the students prepare flags as individuals or in groups, and after the exercise, display the flags around the room. The exercise can be directed by providing the students with particular themes for the flags. As a demonstration show a sample of the flags commonly associated with the Texas Revolution, which are available in books on Texas and in some encyclopedias. The actual flag which flew over the Alamo was the Mexican flag of 1824, signifying the Mexican Constitution of 1824, which the Texas soldiers supported. The dictator Santa Anna had overturned this constitution, which upset the American settlers in Texas who believed in constitutions and liberty.
- **Word Search**--A word search puzzle is a set of letters in rows and columns. Vocabulary words are hidden among the letters and the challenge is to find the words. The words can be written backwards, forwards, vertically, horizontally, or on the diagonal.

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A D T R A V I S H I J
M S E J V O C I X E M
Z A B C J R A B C D A
C N U F R E B E L E I
I T G M S O B K S F L
L A S Y W A C E A G L
B A R I U O L K X T I
U N E D S A L A E A W
P N A T I T R A T T R
E A L M B A R R E T T
R L A L A M O M N O P
F R E E D O M Q R S T
G O I N O T N A N A S

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- Word List:
- ALAMO REBEL
- BARRET REPUBLIC
- BOWIE SANANTONIO
- COST SANTAANNA
- CROCKETT TEXAS
- FREEDOM TRAVIS
- MEXICO WILLIAM
- Computer programs are now available to automatically make these puzzles, but without access to such software, it is relatively easy to make such a puzzle by hand. Simply establish a grid with so many rows and columns. Place the words selected for the puzzle into the grid in any desired arrangement. Then fill in the remaining blank spaces with random letters. Don't forget to include in any

exercise a list of the words to be found in the puzzle; or for particularly gifted students, simply give them the number of words to be found and the topic, and let them have at it.

- As an alternative, the students can be asked to make the word search puzzles in groups or as individuals. The puzzles can then be exchanged, or the teacher can collect puzzles and use some of the better ones for the class in a later lesson. This can also be developed into a challenge match. A set of words can be given to two or more separate groups, with each group having to produce a word search puzzle with a set number of columns and rows (defined by the teacher). Each group has to use the same set of words, but the words can be hidden in any acceptable manner. The puzzles are then exchanged between groups, at a set time and in an established manner, and there is a race to be the group that cracks their assigned puzzle first.
- **Time Line**--A time line of the life of WBT would help draw the events of the Alamo drama and this time in history into perspective. Some students may note how young Travis was when he died. To prepare the exercise, draw out a line with ticks for the major events. Use the events in the section entitled "The Life of William Barret Travis in this study guide." Have a list of events to match to the ticks, either with letter codes or with short word phrases.
- **Collage**--A collage activity is always useful as a hands-on project and to develop creativity. A collage is simply a poster with many pictures and/or blocks of text pasted in an artistic manner to convey an idea or image. All sorts of themes are possible, and the collage can include pictures from magazines, student drawings, student writing, etc. If a stack of recent magazines are available, do a Travis look-alike collage. Have students cut and paste pictures of men that they think look like Travis. During the exercise show them a picture of Travis and have them discuss his facial features and what these features may indicate about his personality.
- **The Corner Fort**--Build a fort in the corner of your classroom. This can be an enclosed area with a crawl-through entry and enough space to hold a few students. Place books on history inside the fort along with other materials for browsing, and try to create the feeling that the fort is a special place. Students can go there before class or when their work is done. Also it can be used for rewarding students--a retreat where they can go when they have done well.
- **Name Tag Game**--Select an individual student to come to the front of the class. Then place a name tag with a character from history on the student's back. To learn the name, the student has to ask questions of the class--questions with yes or no answers, such as "Was this person at the Alamo: yes or no?" Once the name is guessed correctly another student is selected. For a Travis lesson, names could include Crockett, Travis, Santa Anna, etc., or other characters from American history.

The game can also be played in small groups with a set of tags for each group. In this case, a tag is placed on the back of each student in the group, and the group members then interact among themselves to guess the names. A student cannot see his or her own tag, but others can read it. To learn the name, a student has to

ask questions of others in the group-questions with yes or no answers. If the student runs out of questions, the group can be permitted to give clues.

- **Scale model of the Alamo**--An old favorite three-dimensional project is the scale model of the Alamo. The building most people associate with the name Alamo (the building shown in the small diagram in chapter heads in this book) is actually the chapel and was only one of several buildings in a walled compound. Students can reproduce this building or the entire complex if a diagram is available. Provide the students with a map or plan layout of the Alamo as it appeared at the time of the battle (plans are available in many books on Texas). The students should be encouraged to make as much of the construction as possible from scratch, rather than using prepared components (for example, have them make stick figures for soldiers rather than using store-bought figures). In fact there can be a contest category for the best construction with no ready-made materials. This is excellent for general class use, but be sensitive that creative students in a class may require greater challenges.
- **Soap sculpture of the Alamo**--As an at-home exercise, have the students prepare soap sculptures of the Alamo chapel. For older students, soap is easy to shape and work. This may work best as a optional project or as a demonstration for a "History Fair."



## Mock Trial of Santa Anna

An entire class can participate in a mock trial of Santa Anna. The defendant is accused of crimes against the state (the overturn of Mexican constitution of 1824 and making war) and crimes against the citizens of Texas (including murder). The scene is a pioneer courtroom (perhaps a frontier house) following the Battle at San Jacinto (which won the Texas Revolution and resulted in Santa Anna's capture). The participants are (1) a judge, (2) the jury, (3) a team of prosecuting lawyers, (4) a team of defense lawyers, (5) Santa Anna himself as the defendant, (6) one or more security guards to maintain order, (7) witnesses, and (7) perhaps a group of courtroom spectators. Witnesses can include soldiers in the Texas army, settlers, and both Texan and Mexican politicians.

- **Debate Skills**--This is a good opportunity to teach debate. It may be that many will not have had debate or speech training and will not understand simple skills such as speaking slowly and loud enough for all to hear, developing arguments as a list of definitive statements or conclusions, or defending a position in a positive and confident manner.
- **The prosecution**--It is not difficult for students of American history to take the prosecution against Santa Anna. The man was a tyrant who overturned the constitution of his own government to assume the powers of a dictator. He was ruthless in the handling of his opponents--summary executions, arbitrary punishments, public humiliations. There was no attempt on his part to follow the rules of honor in regard to captured prisoners--Texans captured in battle were executed as a group even though they had honorably surrendered. He used women.
- **The defense**--In any trial there must be a defense, and the defending team should try to say something positive about Santa Anna, regardless of personal sentiments. In fact, the man was a formidable Mexican leader. He pulled the nation of Mexico together, albeit by tyrannical means, during a time of great changes and instability in that country. He had a gift for motivating troops to battle on the field. He saw his duty to remove the American presence in Texas, and from his point of view, this was a sacred trust. He saw the Americans as a threat to his nation and he was true to his perceived obligation to remove the threat. In selecting defense lawyers (or a defense team) the teacher should try to select students with a gift for debate and the ability to argue either a pro or con position in an argument. Be sensitive that some students will not be able to take a debate position contrary to their personal feelings.
- **Sam Houston's Choice**--Santa Anna was captured at the Battle of San Jacinto, which was more than a month after the Alamo massacre, and was the battle which won Texas freedom. Sam Houston led the Texas forces. Houston made a wise decision with regard to Santa Anna after the battle. There were many who wanted him executed, but Houston preferred to bargain with Santa Anna and trade his life for Texas independence. A living Santa Anna could still make treaties in the name of the government of Mexico.

## Line in the Sand Play

An activity that can involve an entire class or a group of students is a presentation of the incident of William B. Travis' line in the sand. This can be a simple informal presentation with a reading of WBT's speech, or it can be extensive, with costumes, a script, and individuals representing all the major characters in the Alamo drama.

- **Characters**--Travis, Bowie, Crockett, soldiers, officers, Mrs. Dickinson, Moses Rose (the one man who legend has it did not cross the line), etc.
- **Setting**--The Alamo courtyard in the early evening or at night.
- **The Action**--Legend has it that Travis assembled the troops. At first he may have been overcome with emotion, but soon he regained his composure and made a speech telling them of the situation, admitting that likely it would be a fight to the death, and encouraging them to die fighting. He then drew a long line in the dust from one end of the troop formation to the other, and gave everyone a choice of crossing the line to show that they would stay and fight with him in the Alamo. Jim Bowie was sick, presumably on a litter, and asked others to carry him across the line.
- **Setting the Scene**--Assign students their parts and have them decide on their own defiant statements to make when they cross the line. The students can then enter in parade formation; according to legend Travis had the troops parade in single file. Bowie, who was sick and invalid at the time of the battle, should be on a makeshift stretcher, or just on the ground, and a group of students can be asked to be his escorts to carry him across the line at the proper moment. Next have Travis make an appropriate speech before the assembled troops, and then with great fanfare have him draw a line across the floor. A piece of chalk can be taped to the end of a stick for this purpose, or the line can be left imaginary. When the line is completed, Travis should make a final challenge, and then the troops can cross the line making their defiant statements. Bowie is carried across next. The one man who does not cross the line is the infamous Moses Rose.

Legend has it that a man named Moses Rose refused to stay and fight. Jim Bowie, who was his friend, then urged him to cross the line, and when he did not, Travis ordered him to be passed over the wall. Instead, Rose grabbed his bundle of belongings and climbed to the top of the wall, paused for a last look, and then jumped to the ground outside. The student playing Rose can be asked to demonstrate all these actions.

- **The Great Debate**--It should be noted that there was a great debate as to whether WBT actually drew the famous line in the sand. The story of the line was first reported in the 1873 Texas Almanac (a book of Texas facts), and was based on a letter written at that time by W.P. Zuber, the son of a Texas pioneer. Mr. Zuber's father had supposedly helped a Louis "Moses" Rose after he escaped from the Alamo and was on his way to his home in Nacogdoches, a town in East Texas. For many years there have been historians who have not accepted this story, because the information came so many years after the battle, and also because

Zuber apparently embellished the story he heard from his father, providing so-called verbatim speeches from Travis and others. However, research has shown that there was a Moses Rose, a butcher in Nacogdoches during the years after the war, who had been called upon to give testimony for claims by descendents of men who died at the Alamo. Also in 1853, descendents of Moses Rose made a claim for property promised to all veterans of the Texas Revolution; this claim was denied because Rose had been a traitor for leaving the Alamo. Mrs. Dickinson, one of the survivors of the Alamo, reported that Travis gave everyone an opportunity to leave (possibly the line in the sand incident), and that a man named "Ross" (similar to "Rose") took up his offer.

The students can be asked to debate the issue of whether the line in the sand incident actually occurred. Also there is the issue of whether Rose was a traitor, or merely a soldier who thought he had permission to leave and fight another day.

## Letter to a Nation

On February 24, 1836, the day after the Mexican Army arrived at San Antonio, William B. Travis wrote a letter asking for help and reinforcements. He had written other requests for aid, but this was different since the enemy had arrived and it was important for reinforcements to come quickly. This letter is one of the great pieces of both Texas and American history and speaks in immortal words of American courage.

This letter made its way to newspapers all across America, and the inspiring appeal helped to rally the support of the American people around the Texas cause. With this letter, WBT became a hero, and with his gallant stand to the death less than two weeks later, his heroism was given permanence.

In this text of the letter, the punctuation and words are as Travis wrote.

Commandancy of the Alamo-  
Bejar, Feby. 24th, 1836

To the people of Texas & all Americans in the world--

Fellow citizens & compatriots--

I am besieged, by a thousand or more of the Mexicans under Santa Anna -- I have sustained a continual bombardment & cannonade for 24 hours & have not lost a man -- The enemy has demanded a surrender at discretion, otherwise, the garrison are to be put to the sword, if the fort is taken -- I have answered the demand with a cannon shot, & our flag still waves proudly from the walls -- I shall never surrender or retreat. Then, I call on you in the name of Liberty, of patriotism & everything dear to the American character, to come to our aid, with all dispatch -- The enemy is receiving reinforcements daily & will no doubt increase to three or four thousand in four or five days. If this call is neglected, I am determined to sustain myself as long as possible & die like a soldier who never forgets what is due to his own honor & that of his country -- VICTORY OR DEATH.

William Barret Travis  
Lt. Col. comdt.

P.S. The Lord is on our side -- When the enemy appeared in sight we had not three bushels of corn -- We have since found in deserted houses 80 or 90 bushels and got into the walls 20 or 30 head of Beeves.

- **Vocabulary**--The more difficult words include:

- *Beeves*--presumably a general reference a head of cattle (that is, a "beef").
- *Commandancy*--a reference to the office of the commander.
- *Compatriot*--a fellow countryman.
- *Besiege*--to surround and entrap with armed forces.
- *Bombardment*--an attack with artillery (at the time of the Alamo cannon balls were shot into the fort).
- *Cannonade*--a direct reference to a bombardment with cannon.
- *Discretion*--a free choice within certain legal bounds (apparently Santa Anna was allowing the Alamo defenders an opportunity to surrender by their own choice rather than being forced to give up their position).
- *Garrison*--a military post and the troops stationed at that post.

Some of these were characteristic of the times and would perhaps not be used today. Many other words can be taken from the letter to fit the vocabulary level of a particular group of students.

- **Speech**--Have students memorize the letter and have a speech contest for the individual who can recite the letter with the best dramatic quality.
- **Letter from the Alamo**--Have the students write a letter home from the Alamo. They can use their imagination to describe the conditions, as well of their fears of the impending battle. Suggest to the students that the men in the Alamo were not completely without hope. They knew that the odds were against them, and that they were likely to die. But they were not dead yet and victory, although difficult, was still possible.
- **Questions:**

1. Why are the words VICTORY OR DEATH all in upper case letters (note that they had lower case letters, but were triple underlined in the original)?

*They are being said with defiance, as in a battle cry.*

2. What is a Beeve?

*It is presumably a general reference a head of cattle (that is, a "beef").*

3. The letter uses dashes in places to mark a new sentence. Also, there are ampersands in place of the word "and." Why did WBT use these marks and abbreviations?

*WBT commonly used these in his personal writings--in his diaries and letters. Also, in this case they add to the character of the writing, giving it a feeling of something done quickly, with urgency, as cannon balls were dropping.*

4. If you were to read this letter without having any background information, would you consider it a letter from a recent war or an ancient war?

*The reference to cannonade indicates a time when cannon were used. Also the use of ampersands and archaic words such as "beeves" gives it a feeling of something written in earlier centuries, instead of something written just last year. A case can be made that the word usage and syntax of the letter is more like our modern American speech than of the speech of Shakespeare, for example, from the 16th century, indicating a date more in the 19th century. In discussion of this question, students may note subtle cultural indicators in the letter.*

5. Would people in our modern world take a stand of victory or death? Is there a time to take a stand for what is right? Does heroism have a cost today?

*The idea of a fight to the death was perhaps as shocking to people of that time as it is to us today. Otherwise, this letter would not have had the significance that it immediately attained and there would not have been cries to "Remember the Alamo." However, in discussions of this question there may be a wide variety of opinions. Also, a teacher should be sensitive to students who relate the question to themselves and ask whether they individually would take a stand of victory or death.*

*This is an important question that relates not just to war, but to the moral choices and individual challenges that students face. There are many situations in which it is important to do what is right--not necessarily fighting to the death, but at least making choices that require courage. Is there a time to take a stand for what is right? Is there a time to just say no?*

## Letter to a Son

The last letter Travis wrote to the world outside the Alamo was a letter to his son. This boy had recently arrived in Texas from Alabama and was staying with friends. It was written to David Ayers on a scrap of paper, and is one of the famous messages from the Alamo. Here is the text of the letter.

Take care of my little boy. If the country should be saved, I may make him a splendid fortune; but if the country should be lost, and I should perish, he will have nothing but the proud recollection that he is the son of a man who died for his country.

- **Letter to Your Son**--Have the students write the letter they would compose to a son (or daughter) if they were in Travis' place. This is a good time to discuss patriotism and what it means to sacrifice for your country. There are also issues about parent-child relationships--feelings parents have for children, and feelings children have for parents.
- **Relatives Who Died in War**--In any class, some of the students may have stories of relatives who were killed in wars. Class members can be asked to share these stories on a voluntary basis. A teacher should be sensitive to the feelings of individual students about this type of information, and not press too hard for details.

# Resources

## Suggested Trips

- **The Alamo**--located in downtown San Antonio, Texas. Visit the Long Barrack museum with momentos and exhibits of the Alamo story and the Texas Revolution.
- **Alamo Village**--Located in Bracketville, Texas, 120 miles west of San Antonio, where various movies have been filmed, including John Wayne's epic, *The Alamo*. Meet the owner, Happy Shahan. This is a full-sized 19th century western town, with shops and the spirit of the old west, and a reproduction of the Alamo. Open daily 9:00 am; closed Dec. 21 through Dec. 26. For information, phone 512/563-2580.
- **IMAX Theater**--Located in San Antonio across the street from the Alamo, at the corner of Crockett and Bonham. See the movie, *The Alamo--The Price of Freedom*. For information and show times, phone 512/225-4629.

## Music of the Times

- **Remember the Alamo**--Mexican and Texian Music of 1836, an audio music tape, available from Starline Productions (P.O. Box 1571, Glendale, California 91209)
- **The Epic Adventure**--Texas, by Ann Hackney, including an audio tape, book and teacher's guide; available from Hendrick-Long Publishing Company (P.O. Box 25123, Dallas, Texas 75225) or the Jefferson Historical Foundation (P.O. Box 1088, Hughes Springs, TX 75656). The tape has an historical drama with music and readings by Ab Abernathy and Willie Nelson.

## Books

- Boyd, Bob, *The Texas Revolution*. San Angelo Standard, Inc., San Angelo, TX.
- Davis, Robert E. (ed.), 1966, *The Diary of William Barret Travis (August 30, 1833 - June 26, 1834)*. Texian Press, Waco, TX.
- Fehrenbach, T.R., 1983, *Lone Star--A History of Texas and the Texans*. Collier Books, New York.
- McDonald, Archie P., 1976, *William Barret Travis--A Biography*. Eakin Press, Austin, TX.
- Tinkle, Lon, 1958, *Thirteen Days to Glory*. McGraw-Hill, New York.
- Turner, Martha Anne, 1972, *William Barret Travis--His Sword and His Pen*. Texian Press, Waco, TX.



## Study Questions

The following questions can be answered while viewing the video entitled *The Cost of Freedom: The Story of William B. Travis*. We recommend that the class (1) watch the video once for drama, and (2) then watch it a second time for notes.

1. William B. Travis was born in \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_.
2. He was the \_\_\_\_\_ (oldest, second, third, etc.) of \_\_\_\_\_ brothers and sisters.
3. By the time he was 21, he had held various types of jobs? Name three of them. \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Travis had emerged as an \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ natural leader.
5. But he could also be \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
6. William B. Travis came to Texas because he \_\_\_\_\_.
7. William B. Travis' son was named \_\_\_\_\_.
8. As a Mexican state, Texas was granted \_\_\_\_\_ under the Mexican Constitution of 1824.
9. To enforce his rule, Santa Anna established a \_\_\_\_\_ in an old Spanish mission called \_\_\_\_\_, just outside the town of \_\_\_\_\_.
10. The Mexican leader at the Alamo was \_\_\_\_\_.
11. On what date did Santa Anna arrive at the Alamo? \_\_\_\_\_.
12. The Mexicans had about \_\_\_\_\_ soldiers at the Alamo.
13. The Texans had about \_\_\_\_\_ soldiers at the Alamo.
14. One of the women at the Alamo was named \_\_\_\_\_.
15. Travis was \_\_\_\_\_ years old when he died at the Alamo.
16. What was the date of William B. Travis' death? \_\_\_\_\_.
17. In the video, what strange thing did you notice about the librarian's watch? \_\_\_\_\_.

## Discussion Questions

The following questions are designed for group discussion following class viewing of the video.

1. Is it important to stand up for what you believe?
2. Is there a time when you should give your life for what you believe?
3. What were the important character traits of William Barret Travis?
4. What character traits are important in your life--honesty, courage, standing for your beliefs?
5. Did William Barret Travis have character traits that you would like in your life?
6. At the start of the video, Angie was sarcastic and argumentative. Do you know students like this? How do you feel about those students? At the end of the video, how had Angie's attitude changed and why?
7. The librarian seemed to be a feeble grouch at the start. What was the librarian really like? Are people really like they seem when you first meet them?
8. What is a library? Can books really take you on adventures to other places?

## **Answers to Study Questions**

1. South Carolina, 1809
2. Oldest, 10
3. His uncle Alex
4. Lawyer, newspaper editor, school teacher, businessman, officer in the militia
5. Ambitious, headstrong
6. Harsh, unforgiving
7. Killed a man in a dispute
8. Charles
9. Local rule
10. Garrison, the Alamo, San Antonio
11. Santa Anna
12. February 24, 1836
13. 4000
14. 200
15. Mrs. Dickinson
16. 26
17. March 6, 1936
18. Instead of hours, it is measured in centuries.