

## **America at War from a Child’s Perspective: Differentiating Fact from Fiction**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

“History is boring!” I have listened to this complaint from friends and acquaintances all my life. My reaction (which I am usually tactful enough to keep to myself) has always been a desire to say “What’s wrong with you? How could anyone fail to be fascinated by history?” To me history is an endlessly entertaining story about all sorts of intriguing people who are not really all that different from the people we encounter today. To many other people history is a boring collection of useless and irrelevant facts and dates that they were forced to store in their brains just long enough to pass a test. And yet, historical movies (by which I mean movies set in some time period prior to that in which the movie was made) have been a staple of the motion picture business from the very beginning, from the racist *The Birth of a Nation* all the way to the current *Troy*. Some filmmakers have gone to great efforts to be as historically correct as possible while still producing a show that is entertaining enough to make money. Other moviemakers feel free to distort the facts whenever it suits their purpose, whether that purpose is political, social, or merely dramatic. The same considerations apply to historical novels.

This is a concern for me because my 7<sup>th</sup> grade students frequently refer to movies such as *Pearl Harbor* and *The Patriot* when discussing World War II or the Revolutionary War in class. It would be wonderful if watching these movies led my students to look for books to read on these topics – and it does have that effect on some of them. But too many of them never look beyond the movie. This problem is increased by the fact that many of my students are second language learners. It is only natural that they would prefer movies since speaking English is generally much easier for them than reading English. It is very important for them to understand that they cannot rely on these films as wholly accurate sources of historical information.

The theme of my curriculum unit will be an examination of the various ways that wars are presented in the movies and in historical fiction. While I believe that both movies and novels can spark an interest in history, I am also aware that these genres often distort historical facts for dramatic purposes. In addition, filmmakers and novelists may have a personal bias about a historical event or personage that leads them to emphasize certain elements of the story while ignoring or distorting facts that do not support their version of the event or their opinion of that person. It is very important for students to be aware of this and to learn to watch these films and read these books with a critical eye.

While acknowledging the potential problems with historical movies, as well as with historical novels, I feel very strongly that they can be valuable tools for engaging students in the study of history. If you can get children to feel a connection with the people that

they are studying, you are more likely to get them to learn the facts that you need for them to know. I got an example of this earlier this year when my students started talking to me about the new movie about the battle of the Alamo. Several weeks before it opened in theaters they began asking me if I planned to go see it, and were eager to tell me all about it once they had seen it themselves. When we took a field trip to the San Jacinto battleground later in the year, they made the connection between the actual site and the battle that was mentioned at the end of the movie. The events and the people involved were more real to them because they had seen the motion picture.

This curriculum unit will focus on the American Revolution, the Texas Revolution, and the Civil War, as presented in a selection of movies and novels. While only the last two topics have a direct connection with Texas history, I feel that I need to give my 7<sup>th</sup> graders an introduction to the American Revolution before they are asked to study it in earnest in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Many of my students are recent immigrants and have little or no prior knowledge of American history, but will still be expected to pass the TAKS social studies test in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. A basic understanding of the American Revolution will also help them to understand the Texas Revolution for which the earlier event was a pattern. Both revolutions and the Civil War offer a wealth of riches in historical fiction, both on film and in print. They also provide excellent opportunities to show examples of bias and dramatic license in movies and in books.

## **BACKGROUND**

One common thread of all three wars that I plan to deal with is how internally divisive each was for the participants. While anyone would expect to find a strong “brother vs. brother” theme in the Civil War, I think most people are less likely to realize that the same was true for both the American and Texas revolutions. My students need to be aware that many American colonists moved to England rather than remain in an independent United States. I also want them to understand that the Texas Revolution was about more than just a bunch of Anglo-American troublemakers who wanted to steal Texas from Mexico. There were many *Tejanos* and Mexicans who opposed Santa Anna and risked everything in the fight for Texas independence.

Another overlooked area when we study wars is the effect of the conflict on children. We look at the causes and we dissect the battles. We examine the effects on the economy, on our political life and on society. When we consider how participants were changed by their experiences, it tends to be in fairly general terms. We might break it down between men and women or the rich and the poor. Children tend to get lost in the shuffle, even though they are the most vulnerable and are likely to be profoundly affected by the trauma of war. In this curriculum unit I plan to examine war through the prism of children’s experiences whenever possible. While there are some readily available primary source documents describing events witnessed by children during wartime, I intend to rely heavily on well-written historical fiction to help my students make a connection with children in previous eras.

## **The American Revolution**

When people think of the American Revolution they usually think in terms of America vs. Britain, and to assume that American success was a foregone conclusion. The reality was much more complicated. It took a long time for the colonists to begin to think of themselves as “Americans” rather than as English citizens. In fact, it was this strong sense of themselves as being just as English as anyone born in England that helped cause the problem. The initial conflicts with Britain arose from a feeling that their rights as free Englishmen were being trampled on. The men (and women) who became revolutionaries did not want to separate from England. They were proud of being part of what they considered to be the greatest nation in the world, one that offered its citizens rights and freedoms that were denied to the citizens of other countries. This strong attachment to England and their English heritage helps to explain why the delegates to the Second Continental Congress could send Washington to lead the rebel forces with one hand, and on the other hand, could continue to try to work out a reconciliation of their differences with the mother country. This ambivalence in the rebel leaders was mirrored by society at large. In addition to this emotional attachment to Britain, Americans were aware that Britain had the military might to crush a rebellion. It may have been sentiment, pragmatism or a combination of both that led many Americans to side with Great Britain.

In the end these Tory Loyalists paid dearly for the choice that they made. Many were threatened and abused by Patriots. The incidences of such persecution increased as the war dragged on. Many Tories moved to England, leaving behind their old life, their friends and often their possessions as well (Volo, *American Revolution* 62-66). What began as a difference of opinion frequently led to permanent divisions between family members, as well as between friends. In some ways the American Revolution was a civil war as well as a revolution. It is easy to overlook this aspect of the conflict because so many of those on the “losing” side simply left American, thereby disappearing from our communal memory. In order truly to understand the American Revolution, it is important to consider the differing viewpoints.

These divisions had a profound effect on children just as they did on their elders. A young man might have to choose whether to side with his Tory father or his Patriot brother. A young girl might lose her best friend because their respective parents stood on opposite sides. Added to this are the very tangible effects of this war on children in terms of the physical privations and the losses – both human and material – that touched the lives of so many children during the American Revolution. Fathers and brothers and uncles died in battle. Both on and off the battlefield people died for lack of medicine.

The shortages of food and clothing suffered by soldiers in the field are part of a familiar story, but those who remained behind also had to find substitutes or do without. To protest the tax on tea many colonists turned to coffee and chocolate. When the war interfered with the supply of those items Americans experimented with a variety of nuts and grains as a substitute for coffee beans. There were shortages of salt that was needed

not merely for seasoning but to preserve meat in an era when there was no refrigeration. Beef generally went to feed the army. In 1777 Abigail Adams complained about the scarcity of flour, sugar and coffee. Non-food items such as medicine and pins for sewing were also in short supply (Volo, *American Revolution* 262-266).

Although the Continental Army did not allow boys under the age of 16 to enlist as soldiers, they were allowed to serve as “fifers and drummers in the army, trumpeters in the cavalry, and powder boys in the artillery” (Volo, *American Revolution* 114). Many boys as young as 10 or 12 served on both the British and American naval vessels as cabin boys, as cook’s assistants or as powder boys who carried ammunition to the guns during battles.

As the war raged up and down the Atlantic seaboard many children experienced the terrors of warfare even though they were too young to fight themselves. In later life John Quincy Adams recorded his memories of standing with his mother on a hill near their farm to watch the British burn Charlestown: “For . . . twelve months my mother with her infant children dwelt, liable every hour of the day and of the night to be butchered in cold blood, or taken and carried into Boston as hostages. . . .I saw with my own eyes those fires [in Charlestown], and heard Britannia’s thunders in the Battle of Bunker’s Hill” (Shepherd 68).

John Quincy Adams was a former president and a member of the United State Congress at the time of the Texas Revolution. If the American Revolution was not actually a childhood memory for the Texans who fought their own war of independence, it was part of their family history – a story told to them by their parents and grandparents that inevitably affected their reactions to the events that occurred in Texas in the 1830s.

## **The Texas Revolution**

Who were the heroes of the Texas Revolution? Why, the immortal Travis, Bowie and Crockett of course – courageous immigrants to Texas, risking all to bring the American ideal of freedom to Mexican Texas and to free Texas from the vicious rule of the dictator Santa Anna. Most people would also add Sam Houston to the list. While it is true that these were brave men and while it is true that Santa Anna was a vicious dictator, this is very far from being the whole story of the Texas Revolution. It is, however, the story as it has been taught in Texas schools until very recently.

I am reluctant to portray the American Texans as the good guys bringing democracy to poor uncivilized Mexican Texas, mainly because this traditional version of Texas history is simply inaccurate. The democratic ideal was not a concept introduced by Travis, Bowie and all the rest. Mexico had been trying to gain its independence for more than a decade before Stephen F. Austin brought the first American colonists to Texas. At about the time that Austin was founding his first settlement, newly independent Mexicans were writing a constitution that provided for a federal system of government similar to

that of the United States. It was Santa Anna's disregard for the Mexican Constitution of 1824 that pushed many *Tejanos* and Mexicans into an alliance with the American colonists against the dictator. Indeed, Lorenzo de Zavala was so disgusted by Santa Anna's actions that he resigned his position in Santa Anna's government and moved from Mexico to Texas to join the rebellion. He was chosen as interim vice-president of Texas when independence was declared in March 1836. Juan Seguin, a member of a respected *Tejano* family, led an all-*Tejano* unit against Santa Anna at San Jacinto. Jose Antonio Navarro helped write the Texas Declaration of Independence. So why are these men not immediately recognizable as heroes of the Texas Revolution? In large part because the American-Texan majority soon began to see their *Tejano* allies as Mexicans who couldn't really be trusted. *Tejanos* became second-class citizens, or were even forced to leave Texas.

In teaching Texas history, I try to impress upon my students the fact that *Tejanos* fought side by side with men just recently arrived in Texas in the cause of democracy and freedom. I also try to show them the divisions in *Tejano* families, as well as the fact that not all of the Americans in Texas were opposed to Santa Anna. The Navarro family is a classic example of a *Tejano* family with split loyalties. Jose Navarro was a leader in the fight for Texas independence while his brother remained loyal to Santa Anna. One niece was married to Jim Bowie and two others were in the Alamo during the siege. The story of the Esparza family is truly a tragedy – Gregorio fought and died in the Alamo; his brother was one of the soldiers in the Mexican army attacking the Alamo.

The Texas Revolution, although it was over very quickly, still had a profound effect on the children living in Texas. The most obvious effect was on those whose fathers died in the Alamo, at Goliad and during other battles and skirmishes with the Mexican army. One account of the siege of the Alamo was written by Enrique Esparza, whose father Gregorio was one of the Alamo defenders. When Santa Anna arrived on the outskirts of San Antonio in February 1836 the entire Esparza family took refuge in the Alamo. Enrique Esparza has left an eyewitness account of the siege and the final battle (Shiffrin 49-56). A teenaged German immigrant named Herman Ehrenberg wrote a book detailing his experiences including the Texans' capture of the Alamo in December 1835, his service as part of Fannin's force at Goliad, his amazing escape during the Goliad massacre and his subsequent capture by General Urrea (Ehrenberg vii-ix). Many Texas children experienced the fears and horrors of war firsthand during the Runaway Scrape, when Texans fled before Santa Anna's approaching army. One of the most famous versions of this event was written some years later by Dilue Rose Harris, a young girl living in East Texas in 1836 (Wallace 110-113). In *Lone Star Nation*, H. W. Brands records Creed Taylor's less well-known recollections of the Runaway Scrape: "I have never witnessed such scenes of distress and human suffering. True, there was no clash of arms, no slaughter of men and horses, as on the field of battle; but here the suffering was confined to decrepit old men, frail women, and little children" (415).

There are, in fact, a large number of eyewitness accounts of the Texas Revolution that have historians arguing over what really happened to this very day. Much of the controversy centers on the Alamo. Did all the Texans die fighting, or were some captured and thereafter executed? More specifically, did Davy Crockett die in battle or was he taken prisoner? This is a question that still causes tempers to flare almost two hundred years after his death. Conflicting eyewitness accounts raise the issues of faulty memories, inaccurate identifications, and outright distortion to serve a particular cause (Brands 374-378).

## **The Civil War**

This is the war that automatically makes us think of brother fighting against brother. Bloody, divisive, and almost a century in the making, the Civil War left its mark on children in more than just the generation that lived through the conflict. Not only the Reconstruction years but the subsequent decades of hardship affected children in the states that joined the Confederacy.

For the purposes of this curriculum unit I plan to focus on the effects of the war itself on children in both the Union and the Confederate states, rather than on the long-term aftermath of the conflict. Large numbers of boys ran off to fight on both sides, soon learning that war was not the glorious adventure they had imagined that it would be. The children that stayed at home faced enemy soldiers marching across their land, taking their property and destroying their homes.

Both sides expected the war to end quickly. Southerners expected the North to tire of the conflict and give up. Lincoln himself feared that he would not be reelected because the North was so worn out by the enormous loss of life (Volo, *Civil War* 3-4).

At the outset it appeared that the North held the technological advantage while the South enjoyed agricultural superiority. In other words, the North could manufacture wartime supplies but might have difficulty feeding itself whereas the South would be well-fed but might run out of guns, ammunition and other manufactured goods. As it turned out, the war motivated people in the North to start using undeveloped land for agricultural purposes. The North ended up with surplus wheat that it sold to Europe while the South suffered a variety of shortages. Most plantations raised tobacco or cotton, while food crops were grown mostly on small farms. In addition, the Confederacy's crops – food or otherwise – were ravaged by battles fought on Southern fields as well as by the eventual Union policy of taking whatever the army could use from Southern farms and destroying the rest (Volo, *Civil War* 116, 230). A Southern housewife who asked the officer in charge of foraging soldiers to leave something for her family was told, “I cannot help you, Madam; it is orders” (124). A Union officer offered this observation: “It is woeful to see how this lately prosperous region is being laid waste. Negroes and runaway soldiers roam everywhere, foraging for provisions, breaking into and plundering

the deserted houses, and destroying furniture, books and pictures in mere wantonness” (124).

Many of the Civil War shortages suffered in the South were the same as those experienced during the American Revolution – coffee, salt, flour, sugar, beef. The fact that cattle went to feed the army also produced a scarcity of butter, milk and other dairy products (Volo, *Civil War* 231-232).

While boys under the age of sixteen had not been allowed to enlist as soldiers in the Continental Army during the American Revolution, this was not the case during the Civil War. Both the Union and the Confederacy accepted minors under sixteen in both the army and the navy. In *Daily Life in Civil War America*, Volo estimates that more than 40,000 such underage soldiers took part in the war, many under the age of fourteen. Union records indicate that there were approximately two dozen boys in the federal army who were ten years old or younger. Most of these children held jobs such as water carriers, orderlies, drummers, buglers, messengers, and kitchen and hospital helpers. Although most of these roles would have kept the younger boys off the battlefield, the main purpose for having drummers and buglers was to convey orders over the noise of battle – which means that these particular boys would have been in the thick of the fighting. Amazingly, most of these underage soldiers appear to have survived the war (106-107).

When these soldiers returned home many found their lives irrevocably changed. For Northern soldiers this change might have been primarily the loss of friends and loved ones. In the South the alteration in circumstances was more widespread – the loss of individuals in battle or from disease, homes damaged or destroyed, the workforce decimated by death and by emancipation. For everyone – soldier and civilian, North and South – the war left physical and emotional scars that lasted for decades.

## **TEACHING STRATEGIES**

This unit is intended for use as part of the social studies curriculum in my seventh grade Texas history class. The lessons will address the HISD Project CLEAR objectives listed in Appendix C.

I intend to combine traditional written resources with historical fiction and motion pictures in teaching this unit. There is a large selection of historical fiction that presents a view of various wars from the standpoint of adolescents. I will provide my students with a list of novels from which they can choose for the fiction lessons. I have also chosen two movies for each war that will be used to teach a variety of lessons about watching movies critically. I will show some films in their entirety and use DVD versions to facilitate showing selected scenes from others. Although there is a wide selection of documentaries about each of the wars covered in this unit, I do not plan to use them as part of the lessons because they tend to use language that is difficult for my second

language learners. The one exception is a recent documentary about the Alamo that reexamines both the battle and the ways that it has been presented on film up to and including the 2004 movie. I showed this to my students this year and found that it held their interest quite well. It is an excellent resource for teaching students to be more aware of the filmmaker's agenda.

In designing this curriculum unit I have to consider the varying needs of my students. Each year I have classes of gifted students (some of whom are also second language learners), as well as students who have just recently moved out of ESL classes. Unlike most curriculum units, this one will not be taught over a period of two or three consecutive weeks. Given the nature of the topic, the unit will be spread out over the course of the school year and these specific lessons will be incorporated into my overall lesson plan as we study each of these wars. At this point I believe that seventeen class periods of ninety minutes each, spread over the year, should be adequate to teach this unit. One lesson will require the students to compare two different versions of the Texas Revolution and to determine if each movie gets the facts correct. Another lesson will require students to write a journal entry from the point of view of a child during the Texas Revolution. Additional lessons will require students to work in groups to present both sides of the American Revolution and the Civil War, drawing on both fiction and non-fiction written materials. The film lesson for the American Revolution will ask students to critique one for realism and to consider the use of primary source material in the other. Students will complete a compare and contrast exercise after watching the Civil War movies.

I plan to make wide use of Scholastic's "Dear America" series of books. Written in the style of a journal kept by older children or teenagers, these books could have been designed specifically for use with this curriculum unit. There is a wide selection of books set during both the American Revolution and the Civil War which present aspects of these conflicts from both viewpoints – Tory and Patriot, Union and Confederacy. In addition, many of these books have sections at the end describing life in America during the period covered by the book and historical notes that put the story in context, as well as pictures, drawings and maps that contribute to a fuller understanding of that time period. These books are very well done, and have the added virtue of being very popular with my students. One requirement that I have for all of my students is that they do a book report each six weeks on some type of historical book – fiction, non-fiction, or biography. I have found that the Scholastic books are frequent choices. While the reading level might be beyond the abilities of some second-language learners, most 7<sup>th</sup> graders should be able to handle these stories with few difficulties. There are not as many resources for the effect of the Texas Revolution on children but there are enough choices for the purpose of this lesson. Because my students' reading ability does vary widely, the book list that I provide them will include fiction suitable for lower-level and advanced readers as well as the books in the "Dear America" series.



The use of motion pictures in a classroom can be tricky. Recent movies pose a particular difficulty because of the free use of profanity and graphic violence. Obviously violence is an integral part of war, but I must be careful about my choices because some of my students are refugees from war-torn countries. This is not a major problem for the lessons that I have planned because all but one of the films I plan to show were made thirty or more years ago. Of the six shows that I will discuss, one movie is rated PG-13, one is rated PG, one is rated G and the other three are unrated. Since there are also school district policies on permissible movie ratings that must be taken into account, I would advise any teacher wanting to use a movie to watch it carefully for problem areas. You must get permission from your various administrators for some of the movies discussed in this unit due to their ratings. You may also need to have permission slips signed by their parents before showing some films. None of these movies should pose comprehension problems for middle school students if you provide them with background knowledge prior to viewing the film. Two movies are short enough to show in only one class period. For some lessons I will use only selected scenes which are relevant to the lesson. I prefer to use DVDs for this purpose since it is much easier to jump from scene to scene.

For the American Revolution I plan to use *Johnny Tremain* and *1776*. *Johnny Tremain* was made in 1957 before the advent of the movie ratings system and is based on a Newbery award-winning novel of the same name. At eighty minutes long, it can be shown in one class period. As a Disney product it tends to be upbeat and somewhat stage-y, but should still be interesting to 7<sup>th</sup> graders. Set in Boston, it presents the events leading up to the American Revolution through the eyes of a young apprentice who becomes involved with the Sons of Liberty, including such notable leaders as Sam Adams, Paul Revere and Joseph Warren. *1776*, which is rated PG, picks up the story about a year after the point where *Johnny Tremain* ends. I have shown *1776* to my classes in the past and they have truly enjoyed it, to the point of asking to watch parts of it a second time. I really like this film because it humanizes the founding fathers, presents both sides of the arguments about independence without making villains of either side, and includes an explanation of why slavery was allowed to continue in the new nation. There is also a very poignant scene in which an army courier tells how his friends died at Lexington and Concord, which makes an interesting counterpoint to the rather jaunty portrayal of these battles at the climax of *Johnny Tremain*. There is some mild profanity, as well as some instances of bawdy humor in *1776*, especially in the scenes about Jefferson's supposed mental block due to his desire to be reunited with his wife. I simply skip over the "lustful Jefferson" scenes since they add nothing to the educational value of the movie. *Johnny Tremain* can be shown in its entirety without any qualms, but any teacher using *1776* should watch it first to decide whether some scenes are inappropriate and/or unnecessary for the lesson being taught.

In studying the Texas Revolution I will introduce the film lessons with selected scenes from the History Channel documentary *Remember the Alamo* which focus on misconceptions about the Alamo and the Texas Revolution. I will then show the students

the 1960 and 2004 movies about the Alamo. Like *Johnny Tremain*, the 1960 film came out before the rating system took effect. Some scenes that do not advance the story can be skipped in order to save time, but there is nothing in this film that should be offensive. On the other hand, it has numerous inaccuracies and I use it specifically to illustrate the need for healthy skepticism when watching historical movies. The 2004 film takes a broader view of the revolution, including scenes of the convention at Washington-on-the-Brazos and of the prelude to San Jacinto. This version also gives some recognition to the role of *Tejanos* as leaders in the fight for independence. Both the profanity and the violence are much milder than I had feared they would be, earning the film a PG-13 rating. Because of the efforts made by the filmmakers to produce an even-handed and relatively accurate film, it is worth the effort to get permission to show it in class.

For the Civil War lesson, I plan to use two very old films. *The Red Badge of Courage* is another movie that is unrated because of the year that it was made. This is a very short film that is useful primarily because it focuses on the battlefield experiences of a young Union soldier and provides the Northern perspective for a compare and contrast lesson. For some reason *Gone With the Wind*, unlike other old movies, has acquired a G rating. As long as you point out the extreme Southern bias first, this film can be a very valuable lesson on the Civil War. It shows life in the South before and after the war. It also offers an excellent example of Southern attitudes and expectations shortly before the start of the war. I usually show the film up to and including the scene with Scarlett and her sisters working in the fields but on occasion have continued on to the point where Scarlett goes to Atlanta to see Rhett. These additional scenes demonstrate Southern feelings about Reconstruction policies. While I have some concerns about the interest level of *The Red Badge of Courage*, I know from past experience that *Gone With the Wind* always holds my students' attention.

One of the purposes of this curriculum unit is to encourage my students to question the historical accuracy of historical movies and historical novels. To this end, they will be required to do a certain amount of research to check the validity of the various stories. The "Homefront and Battlefront Letters" series is particularly useful for the American Revolution and the Civil War because each book contains background information as well as a selection of excerpts from primary sources. The reading level of these books is also appropriate for most of my students. Students will also be allowed to use the Internet for research. Checking the accuracy of stories about the Texas Revolution is another matter altogether. As was mentioned above, there are conflicting reports of events, especially about what really happened at the Alamo. This ambiguity can also provide a teaching opportunity, however. By comparing various eyewitness accounts of events during the Texas Revolution, I will be able to illustrate the types of considerations that influence how people record events.

## CONCLUSION

My primary goals in teaching this curriculum unit are to teach my students to use critical thinking skills when reading or watching historical fiction and to change their perception of history as boring and irrelevant to their lives. By using a variety of lessons and by combining written and visual materials I plan to keep my students engaged in these topics. Keeping the focus on the experiences of young people like themselves will make these lessons more relevant to my students and enhance their learning experience. At the end of this unit I want my students to have a better understanding of these wars and of the fact that almost any event can be viewed from at least two different perspectives. I hope that these lessons will also stimulate their interest in the fascinating true stories behind the fiction.

## LESSON PLANS

### Lesson Plan 1: Children during the American Revolution

In this lesson each student will read a fiction book about a child or a teenager during the American Revolution. Half of the students will read a book from the Patriot perspective and the other half of the class will read a book written from the Tory viewpoint. The students will then work in small groups to create a presentation explaining the position of each side. This lesson will require four ninety-minute class periods.

#### *HISD Objectives*

- SS.7.21.d. Identify points of view from the historical context surrounding an event and the frame of reference that influenced the participants.
- SS.7.21.f. Identify bias in written, oral, and visual material.
- SS.7.21.g. Evaluate the validity of a source.
- SS.7.22.d. Create written, oral, and visual presentations of social studies information.

#### *Materials Needed*

Pencil and paper

Poster board, markers, colored pencils

LCD projector and computer for PowerPoint presentations

#### *Procedure*

I will introduce this lesson with a short overview of the founding of the English colonies and of the events that led to the break with England. I will then explain that each student will read a book written from the viewpoint of either a Patriot or a Tory child and will write a book report on that book. In addition, they will work in groups to research the effects of the war on children as a project to present the Patriot and Tory positions to their classmates. By the end of the first class period each student will have chosen a side and the other members of their team. I will also give them a list of novels related to their position.

During each of the next two class periods the students will work with their team to research the facts about their side and prepare for their presentation to the class. The presentation can be in the form of a poster or a PowerPoint.

The teams will make their presentations to the class during the fourth period. The individual book reports will also be due on that day.

### **Lesson Plan 2: *Johnny Tremain* and *1776***

In this lesson the class will look for inaccuracies in two movies about the American Revolution and will consider the use of primary sources in writing a script. This lesson requires three ninety-minute class periods.

#### ***HISD Objectives***

- SS.7.21.d. Identify points of view from the historical context surrounding an event and the frame of reference that influenced the participants.
- SS.7.21.f. Identify bias in written, oral, and visual material.
- SS.7.21.g. Evaluate the validity of a source.
- SS.7.22.c. Transfer information from one medium to another including written to visual and statistical to written or visual using computer software as appropriate.
- SS.7.22.d. Create written, oral, and visual presentations of social studies information.

#### ***Materials Needed***

*Johnny Tremain* video (only on VHS at this time)

DVD of *1776*

Primary sources handout (Appendix A)

#### ***Procedure***

Since the class will have acquired background information in Lesson 1, we will begin Lesson 2 by watching *Johnny Tremain*. While watching the film the students will be expected to make notes about anything in the movie that seems unrealistic to them. Two possible answers include the Sons of Liberty singing as they march through the streets after the Boston Tea Party and the upbeat attitudes after Lexington and Concord.

At the start of the second class period we will take approximately fifteen minutes to discuss their impressions of *Johnny Tremain* and to brainstorm reasons for choices made by the filmmakers. I will then explain to them that *1776* is a musical so they should expect some singing and dancing, but the movie is based on fact. I will give them a handout with quotes from letters between John and Abigail Adams (see Appendix A) to illustrate ways in which primary source material can be incorporated into popular entertainment. I will also instruct them that they have to choose one of the characters in

the film and research their actual involvement in the fight over independence as a homework assignment.

During the third class period we will finish watching *1776*. The students will use the last fifteen minutes of class to write one or two paragraphs comparing what they learned from their research with the way that person is portrayed in the film.

### **Lesson Plan 3: Two Versions of the Texas Revolution**

This lesson will involve watching the 2004 movie about the Alamo and some part of John Wayne's *The Alamo*. The students will answer questions based on the "facts" as portrayed in each movie and will then give their opinion as to whether each film got the story right or wrong. This lesson requires three ninety-minute class periods.

#### ***HISD Objectives***

- SS.7.07.c. Identify the contributions of significant individuals including Moses Austin, Stephen F. Austin, and Juan Seguin during the colonization of Texas.
- SS.7.07.d. Identify the impact of the Mexican federal Constitution of 1824 on events in Texas.
- SS.7.07.f. Describe events that led to the Texas Revolution.
- SS.7.08.a. Identify significant individuals and their contributions to the Texas Revolution.
- SS.7.08.b. Describe and sequence major issues and events of the Texas Revolution.
- SS.7.21.g. Evaluate the validity of a source.

#### ***Materials Needed***

DVDs of John Wayne's *The Alamo* and of Disney's *The Alamo*.  
Graphic organizer answer sheet (Appendix B)

#### ***Procedure***

I will begin this lesson by showing the "Introduction" and "Popular Misconceptions" chapters of the History Channel documentary *Remember the Alamo* as an introduction for the type of discrepancies that I want my students to look for. After handing out the graphic organizer, I will show selected scenes from John Wayne's *The Alamo*. I will finish this movie and begin the 2004 version during the second class period. After finishing the 2004 film during the third class, we will discuss the differences between the two movies and brainstorm possible reasons for the differing approaches to the same historical event.

#### **Lesson 4: What If You Had Been There?**

This lesson will require each student to write a journal entry from the point-of-view of a participant in the Runaway Scrape or in the Battle of San Jacinto. This lesson will take one ninety-minute class period.

##### ***HISD Objectives***

- SS.7.08.b. Describe and sequence major issues and events of the Texas Revolution.
- SS.7.21.a. Differentiate between, locate, and use primary and secondary sources such as computer software, databases, media and news services, biographies, interviews, and artifacts to acquire information about Texas.
- SS.7.22.d. Create written, oral, and visual presentations of social studies information.

##### ***Materials Needed***

Pencil and paper

Textbook and class notes

Examples of primary source accounts of Texas Revolution events

##### ***Procedure***

I will begin the lesson with a quick review of the reasons that people keep journals and the type of information that they record in them. I will then hand out examples of conflicting stories about the Alamo and have the class work in small groups to discuss the differences and to choose which account they consider more credible. We will conclude with a class discussion of the conflicting stories, including concepts of bias, faulty recollections and deliberate attempts to rewrite history. Their homework assignment is to pretend that they were living in Texas during the Texas Revolution. Each student is to write a journal entry describing his or her experiences during a major event in the Texas Revolution. They can choose between being a settler who took part in the Runaway Scrape or being a soldier (Texan or Mexican) at the Battle of San Jacinto. They will be allowed to use their textbook and their notes from previous classes to help provide details for their journal entry that will be due at the start of the next class.

#### **Lesson 5: The Civil War on Film**

The students will watch the first half of *Gone with the Wind* and all of *The Red Badge of Courage* in order to view aspects of the Civil War from both sides. This lesson will take two ninety-minute class periods.

##### ***HISD Objectives***

- SS.7.11.a. Explain reasons for and the involvement of Texas and Texans during the Civil War and Reconstruction.
- SS.7.11.b. Analyze the political, economic, and social effects of the Civil War and Reconstruction on Texas.
- SS.7.21.d. Identify points of view from the historical context surrounding an event and the frame of reference that influenced the participants.

- SS.7.21.f. Identify bias in written, oral, and visual material.

***Materials Needed***

DVDs of *The Red Badge of Courage* and of *Gone With the Wind*  
Pencil and paper

***Procedure***

At the start of the first class I will instruct the students to draw a Venn diagram on a piece of paper and to label one circle “North” and the other circle “South.” As they watch *The Red Badge of Courage*, they are to fill in the “North” circle with attitudes toward the war and experiences during the war that are shown in this film. During the second class period we will watch approximately the first half of *Gone With the Wind* and they will fill in the “South” circle with the attitudes and experiences that they see in this movie. They will fill in the overlapping area of the Venn diagram for homework.

**Lesson 6: War or Compromise?**

The class will debate the issue of secession, drawing on what they have learned about the effects of the war to decide whether they would have chosen to go to war. This lesson will require four ninety-minute class periods.

***HISD Objectives***

- SS.7.11.a. Explain reasons for and the involvement of Texas and Texans during the Civil War and Reconstruction.
- SS.7.11.b. Analyze the political, economic, and social effects of the Civil War and Reconstruction on Texas.
- SS.7.21.a. Differentiate between, locate, and use primary and secondary sources such as computer software, databases, media and news services, biographies, interviews, and artifacts to acquire information about Texas.
- SS.7.21.d. Identify points of view from the historical context surrounding an event and the frame of reference that influenced the participants.
- SS.7.21.f. Identify bias in written, oral, and visual material.
- SS.7.21.g. Evaluate the validity of a source.
- SS.7.22.d. Create written, oral, and visual presentations of social studies information

***Materials Needed***

Pencil and paper  
Research materials – library, Internet and textbook

***Procedure***

I will begin this lesson by reading *Pink and Say*, the true story of two boys who meet on a Southern battlefield and end up in a Southern prison where only one survives. We will continue with a review of the causes and outcomes of the Civil War. Based on what they have already learned, I will ask the students to choose sides to prepare for a debate.

Rather than basing the debate on the opposing positions of the Union and the Confederacy, the class will argue the issue of secession and war vs. some form of compromise. The teams will be able to draw on historical fiction as well as library, Internet and textbook sources to construct convincing arguments for their side. Each team will be expected to include information about the wartime experiences of both the North and South to bolster their position. The teams will have the first three class periods to research and prepare their arguments. The debate will take place during the fourth class period.



## APPENDIX A

### Watching 1776 with a Critical Eye

You are about to watch selected scenes from the movie *1776*, which tells the story of the writing of America's Declaration of Independence. Listen carefully to see if any of the lines in the film sound like something from the letters that John and Abigail Adams wrote to each other. Put a check by any excerpt below that matches a line from the movie.

\*\*\*\*\*

In her letter dated July 16, 1775 Abigail complained about the type of letters she was getting from John:

“All the letters I receive from you seem to be written in so much haste that they scarcely leave room for a social feeling. They let me know that you exist, but some of them contain scarcely six lines. I want some sentimental effusions of the heart.”

Later in the same letter she talks about the shortages of various goods that she has to deal with:

“You can hardly imagine how much we want many common articles, which are not manufactured amongst ourselves; but we will have them in time; not one pin to be purchased for love or money. I wish you could convey me a thousand by any friend travelling this way.”

In her letter of April 5, 1776 Abigail responds to a question from John:

“You inquire of me whether I am making saltpetre. I have not yet attempted it, but after soap-making believe I shall make the experiment. . . . I know of but one person in this part of the town who has made any. . . . I have lately seen a small manuscript describing the proportions of the various sorts of powder fit for cannon, small-arms and pistols.”

In his letter dated July 3, 1776 (the day after the Continental Congress approved the resolution to declare independence) John described to Abigail how he thought the event should be celebrated:

“It ought to be solemnized with pomp and parade, with shows, games, sports, guns, bells, bonfires, and illuminations, from one end of this continent to the other, from this time forward forevermore.”

In the same letter John acknowledged the difficulty of actually winning independence:

“I am well aware of the toil and blood and treasure that it will cost us to maintain this Declaration and support and defend these States. Yet, through all the gloom, I can see the rays of ravishing light and glory.”

## APPENDIX B

### Movies About the Texas Revolution

There have been many movies and television shows about the Texas Revolution, and especially about the Battle of the Alamo. Some of those shows are more true to history than others. You are going to watch two versions of the Texas Revolution – John Wayne’s 1960 movie *The Alamo* and Disney’s 2004 movie *The Alamo*. Although both of these movies focus on the Battle of the Alamo, they differ from each other in several ways. They also contain information about people and events of the Texas Revolution that are not directly connected with the Alamo. As you watch each movie I want you to look for information about several historical events and persons. Some of the events and persons may appear in only one of these movies. You have to pay attention if you want to get the answers correct.

Answer each of the following questions based on the information in each movie. If the movie ignores that person or event, write “No Info” in the box for that movie.

	<b>1960 Movie</b>	<b>2004 Movie</b>
1. How was Juan Seguin involved in the Texas Revolution?		
2. What happened at Goliad?		
3. Which fell first – the Alamo or Goliad?		
4. Did the final battle at the Alamo begin in the dark or during the day?		
5. How did Davy Crockett die?		

## APPENDIX C

The following is a list of HISD Project CLEAR objectives implemented in this curriculum unit:

- SS.7.07.c. Identify the contributions of significant individuals including Moses Austin, Stephen F. Austin, and Juan Seguin during the colonization of Texas.
- SS.7.07.d. Identify the impact of the Mexican federal Constitution of 1824 on events in Texas.
- SS.7.07.f. Describe events that led to the Texas Revolution.
- SS.7.08.a. Identify significant individuals and their contributions to the Texas Revolution.
- SS.7.08.b. Describe and sequence major issues and events of the Texas Revolution.
- SS.7.11.a. Explain reasons for and the involvement of Texas and Texans during the Civil War and Reconstruction.
- SS.7.11.b. Analyze the political, economic, and social effects of the Civil War and Reconstruction on Texas.
- SS.7.21.a. Differentiate between, locate, and use primary and secondary sources such as computer software, databases, media and news services, biographies, interviews, and artifacts to acquire information about Texas.
- SS.7.21.d. Identify points of view from the historical context surrounding an event and the frame of reference that influenced the participants.
- SS.7.21.f. Identify bias in written, oral, and visual material.
- SS.7.21.g. Evaluate the validity of a source.
- SS.7.22.c. Transfer information from one medium to another including written to visual and statistical to written or visual using computer software as appropriate.
- SS.7.22.d. Create written, oral, and visual presentations of social studies information.

## ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Works Cited

Brands, H. W. *Lone Star Nation: How a Ragged Army of Volunteers Won the Battle for Texas Independence – and Changed America*. New York: Doubleday, 2004.

An excellent background source for the Texas Revolution and a fascinating read.

Ehrenberg, Herman. *With Milam and Fannin: Adventures of a German Boy in Texas' Revolution*. Austin: The Pemberton Press, 1968.

This is a fascinating eyewitness account of various incidents during the Texas Revolution. Ehrenberg was one of the few Texans to survive the Goliad Massacre. While this book is probably too long to hold the interest of most middle school students, some higher level readers might enjoy it. In any event, it is a valuable resource for teachers, both for background information and as a primary source that can be incorporated into lessons.

Shepherd, Jack. *The Adams Chronicles: Four Generations of Greatness*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1975.

This book combines general information on four generations of Adams men with quotes from their letters and diaries.

Shiffrin, Gale Hamilton. *Echoes from Women of the Alamo*. San Antonio: AW Press, 1999.

This is a source of information about the women and children who survived the Alamo and includes some primary source material.

Volo, Dorothy Denneen and James M. Volo. *Daily Life during the American Revolution*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2003.

This has information about the causes of the war, Patriots and Tories, soldiers and civilians, wartime shortages, fashion, entertainment and just about anything else that would constitute part of everyday life.

Volo, Dorothy Denneen and James M. Volo. *Daily Life in Civil War America*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998.

This book also discusses the background of the war, the attitudes of both sides, military and civilian life, clothing, and even has a chapter on mourning during this era.

Wallace, Ernest, David M. Vigness and George B. Ward, eds. *Documents of Texas History*. Austin: State House Press, 1994.

This contains an excellent collection of primary source material dating back to Cabeza de Vaca and continuing up to the mid-1990s. For this curriculum unit it

offers accounts of the Runaway Scrape, the Goliad Massacre, the Battle of San Jacinto and the scene at the Alamo after the battle was over.

## **Supplemental Resources**

### ***Resources for Teachers***

#### *American Revolution*

Adams, John, et al. *Familiar Letters of John Adams and His Wife Abigail Adams, During the Revolution with a Memoir of Ms. Adams*. Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1970.

A selection of letters between John and Abigail Adams beginning in 1774 and continuing through 1783, this is an excellent compilation of primary source material.

Herbert, Janis. *The American Revolution for Kids: A History with 21 Activities*. Chicago: Chicago Review Press, Inc., 2002.

A good overview of the Revolution with interesting sidebar articles and suggested activities for students to help make the time period come alive.

Rappaport, Doreen and Joan Verniero. *Victory or Death! Stories of the American Revolution*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2003.

While students could read the various short stories on their own, this is probably more useful for teachers who could choose an appropriate story to read to the class to introduce a lesson. These stories are particularly valuable because there is a decidedly multicultural approach, ranging from Abigail Adams to a Jewish South Carolinian to a Virginia slave.

#### *Civil War*

Silverthorne, Elizabeth. *Plantation Life in Texas*. Texas A&M UP, 1986.

A comprehensive explanation of a part of Texas history that tends to be overlooked, including a section on the aftermath of the Civil War and of Reconstruction as it affected Texas.

### ***Resources for Students***

#### *American Revolution*

Beller, Susan Provost. *Letters from the Homefront: The Revolutionary War*. Tarrytown, NY: Benchmark Books, 2001.

This is part of a series that combines background narrative information with excerpts from letters and journals written by people on both sides of the conflict,

- regular citizens as well as the leaders. It includes pictures, a map, a timeline, a glossary, a bibliography and suggested books and Internet sites for further research.
- Collier, James Lincoln and Christopher Collier. *My Brother Sam is Dead*. New York: Scholastic, Inc., 1974.  
A Newbery Honor book which focuses on the divisions in many families over the choice between fighting for independence and remaining loyal to Britain.
- Denenberg, Barry. *The Journal of William Thomas Emerson, a Revolutionary War Patriot*. New York: Scholastic, Inc., 1998.  
The story of a twelve-year-old tavern worker in Boston who sides with the rebels during the year before fighting begins.
- Forbes, Esther. *Johnny Tremain*. Yearling Books, 1944.  
A Newbery Award winning classic which presents events of the American Revolution through the eyes of a teenage apprentice in Massachusetts.
- Gregory, Kristiana. *Five Smooth Stones: Hope's Diary*. New York: Scholastic, Inc., 2001.  
A view of the Tory vs. Patriot conflict told through the eyes of a young girl in Philadelphia.
- Gregory, Kristiana. *The Winter of Red Snow: The Revolutionary War Diary of Abigail Jane Stewart, Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, 1777-1778*. New York: Scholastic, Inc., 1996.  
The title refers to the bloody footprints left by Washington's soldiers in the snow. This is the story of a young Patriot girl who observes the hardships suffered by the army during the winter in Valley Forge.
- Moore, Kay. . . . *If You Lived at the Time of the American Revolution*. New York: Scholastic, Inc. 1997.  
A small book with a lot of illustrations, this would be less intimidating for lower-level readers.
- Schomp, Virginia. *Letters from the Battlefield: The Revolutionary War*. Tarrytown, NY: Benchmark Books, 2004.  
This is one of a series of books that combines background narrative information with excerpts from letters and journals written by people on both sides of the conflict, regular citizens as well as the leaders. The book includes a lot of pictures, a map, a time line, a glossary, a bibliography and suggested books and Internet sites for further research.

### *Texas Revolution*

- Hoff, Carol. *Johnny Texas*. Dallas: Hendrick-Long Publishing Company, 1992.  
The story of a ten-year-old German immigrant boy whose family was part of the Runaway Scrape.
- Love, D. Anne. *I Remember the Alamo*. New York: Dell Yearling, 1999.  
A view of the Texas Revolution through the eyes of an eleven-year-old girl who lives through the siege of the Alamo and the Runaway Scrape, and whose father dies at Goliad.
- Rice, James. *Victor Lopez at the Alamo*. Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing Company, Inc., 2001.  
The story of a fourteen-year-old Mexican boy forced to join Santa Anna's army on its way to Texas.
- Rogers, Lisa Waller. *Remember the Alamo! The Runaway Scrape Diary of Belle Wood, Austin's Colony, Texas, 1835-1836*. Texas Tech UP: 2003.  
In addition to telling the story of the Runaway Scrape through the experiences of a teenage girl, the story also provides a view of plantation life in Texas in the 1830s.
- Templeton, R. L. *Alamo Soldier: The Story of Peaceful Mitchell*. Austin: Eakin Publications, Inc., 1976.  
The true story of a seventeen-year-old Tennessee boy who died at the Alamo as one of Crockett's volunteers, written as a novel.

### *Civil War*

- Denenberg, Barry. *When Will This Cruel War Be Over?: The Civil War Diary of Emma Simpson*. New York: Scholastic, Inc., 1996  
The Civil War through the eyes of a girl from Virginia in 1864 as the tide is beginning to turn against the Confederacy.
- Hesse, Karen. *A Light in the Storm: The Civil War Diary of Amelia Martin*. New York: Scholastic, Inc., 1999.  
The Civil War through the eyes of a girl from Delaware, which was officially a slave state but chose not to secede from the Union.
- Moore, Kay. . . . *If You Lived at the Time of the Civil War*. New York: Scholastic, Inc. 1994.  
A small book with a lot of illustrations, this would be less intimidating for lower-level readers.

Murphy, Jim. *The Journal of James Edmond Pease, a Civil War Union Soldier*. New York: Scholastic, Inc., 1998.

This story is told by a young man who, after surviving Gettysburg, finds himself serving with the Union army in Virginia in 1863 and 1864.

Osborne, Mary Pope. *My Brother's Keeper: Virginia's Diary*. New York, Scholastic, Inc., 2000.

The story of the battle of Gettysburg as told through the eyes of a young girl in Pennsylvania.

Pinkney, Andrea David. *Silent Thunder: A Civil War Story*. New York: Scholastic, Inc., 1999.

The Civil War as viewed by a young female slave in Virginia.

Polacco, Patricia. *Pink and Say*. New York: Philomel Books, 1994.

This is a picture book that tells the true story of Sheldon "Say" Curtis and Pinkus "Pink" Aylee. Say was a fifteen-year-old soldier from Ohio and Pink was a teenage slave from Georgia who had run away and joined the Union army. They meet when Pink carries the wounded Say away from a battlefield. After hiding out for a short time with Pink's mother at his old home, both boys are captured and taken to Andersonville prison. Pink died in prison but Say survived to pass this story down to his descendants, one of whom wrote this book.

Schomp, Virginia. *Letters from the Battlefield: The Civil War*. Tarrytown, NY: Benchmark Books, 2004.

Another in this series of books, it also combines background narrative information with excerpts from letters and journals written by people on both sides, but this time focusing almost exclusively on the common soldier rather than the leaders. The book includes drawings and photographs, a map, a time line, a glossary, a bibliography and suggested books, Internet sites and videos for further research.

Schomp, Virginia. *Letters from the Homefront: The Civil War*. Tarrytown, NY: Benchmark Books, 2002.

This book belongs to a companion set that focuses on the experiences of non-combatants. Both the background information and the primary source material illustrate the differences between life in the North and life in the South as the war progressed. This book also has drawings and photographs, a map, a time line, a glossary, a bibliography and suggested books, Internet sites and videos for further research.



## **Videos**

### *American Revolution*

*1776*. Dir. Peter H. Hunt. Columbia/Tristar Studios, 1972.  
A delightful movie, with a fairly accurate portrayal of the debate over independence.

*Johnny Tremain*. Dir. Robert Stevenson. Disney Studios, 1957.  
Also fairly accurate, but somewhat dated.

### *Texas Revolution*

*The Alamo*. Dir. John Wayne. MGM/UA, 1960.  
A lot of historical inaccuracies, but useful to illustrate the need to watch historical movies critically.

*The Alamo*. Dir. John Lee Hancock. Touchstone Pictures, 2004.  
Mostly accurate, with the added benefit of giving some recognition to the role of *Tejanos*.

*Remember the Alamo*. A&E Television Networks, 2003.  
An excellent History Channel documentary that includes information about misconceptions and various film versions.

### *Civil War*

*The Red Badge of Courage*. Dir. John Huston. MGM, 1951.  
Based on a novella by Stephen Crane, this is the story of a young Union soldier and how he learns to face his fears during the Civil War.

*Gone With the Wind*. Dir. Victor Fleming. MGM, 1939.  
The classic tale of the South during and after the Civil War, but with an obvious Southern bias.