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Date _____

The Alamo

"Remember the Alamo!"

Learn more about this topic! Each section gives more detail on one of the lyrics from the song. Read each section, and then respond by answering the question or taking notes on key ideas.

1. In 1821, Mexico became an independent republic, free from Spain. At the time, Texas was known as Tejas. Tejanos were people of Mexican and Latin-American descent who lived there. Texas was a largely unsettled part of Mexico. San Antonio, originally established by Spanish missionaries in the early 1700s, was the largest settlement. However, the Mexican government wanted to further populate the land. Leaders of the new nation invited Anglo-American settlers to San Antonio. They were called Texians and were welcomed at first because they swore loyalty to Mexico. However, as the population grew, tension increased. The Mexican government wanted Texians to better assimilate to Mexican culture. The government was dissatisfied that American settlers would not adopt Catholicism, learn Spanish or free their slaves. The Mexican government soon set up laws prohibiting further American immigration to Texas.

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General Santa Anna

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In 1833, General Antonio López de Santa Anna was elected president of Mexico. He soon set up a centralist dictatorship and declared himself "president for life." Some Mexican states rebelled, including Tejas. Many Texans

and Tejanos were angered by Santa Anna's rule. In 1835, Stephen Austin supported the cause for independence and appealed to the US for their support too. Austin was a successful colonist and Texan politician who is known today as the "Father of Texas." Sam Houston, an American politician, was appointed as the leader of the Texan forces. The first skirmish of the war came when Mexican soldiers attacked a garrison at Gonzales. They tried to force settlers to return a cannon they had been given for self-defense. The Texans resisted, and the Mexicans retreated. In December of 1835, volunteer troops took over the Alamo, a former Roman Catholic mission. They had help from a group of about 40 Tejanos led by Juan Seguín. These troops had little supplies or training, yet they stood their ground against Santa Anna's men.

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3. In January 1836, Houston sent James Bowie to the Alamo to help in its defense against the incoming Mexican forces. Bowie had a reputation as a strong fighter. He is also known for inventing the Bowie knife. The Alamo defenders were determined to stop Santa Anna from moving on to confront Houston miles away. The Alamo was in a strategic position that blocked one of the main roads into Texas from Mexico. In February 1836, about 1,500 Mexican troops surrounded the Alamo. The mission was fortified by only about 200 men under the joint command of Bowie and William B. Travis. When Santa Anna's formidable forces arrived, Travis wrote to the new Texan government for help. He explained the situation and requested reinforcements. Travis's now famous letter rallied for support, which did not come.

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4. The Alamo was very important to the defense of Texas. Its defenders were ready to give their lives rather than surrender their position to General Santa Anna. One defender was David Crockett, a Tennessee native and famed frontiersman who was an expert rifleman. For almost two weeks, he and the other 200 defenders stood their ground. On March 6, 1836, Santa Anna finally overran them. He ordered his men to take no prisoners. Susanna Dickinson was one of the few survivors of the Alamo. She was freed because she did not fight in the battle. Santa Anna wanted the survivors to tell the story of the Mexican victory at the Alamo. The story did spread, but not as he'd like; it mobilized more Texans against Santa Anna.

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5. Though the Texans lost the battle, the Mexican siege at the Alamo was a turning point in the revolution. After this massacre, Texans were outraged. Santa Anna's bloodthirsty reputation caused more people to unite against him. The final decisive battle of the Texas Revolution came when Texans, lead by Sam Houston, surprised Mexican forces at San Jacinto in April 1836. Santa Anna was captured, and Texans negotiated a treaty for independence. The Lone Star Republic was established. Houston became the first president of the Republic of Texas. Most Texans wanted to join the US because they worried that the Mexican government might try to recapture their land. However, Texas remained an independent country for nine years.

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6. The Battle of the Alamo is remembered as a heroic stand against daunting odds. It shaped the course of Texas history. Though the Texans were defeated, the battle led to victory in the Texas Revolution. Texian and Tejano rebels felt a sense of unity after their loss at the Alamo, and they ultimately won their freedom from Santa Anna's regime in Mexico. In their final battle, they shouted "Remember the Alamo!" Then, ten years later in 1845, war broke out between the US and Mexico. It began over disputes about the Texan border when the US annexed the Lone Star Republic. During the Mexican-American War, US soldiers took up the old battle cry and shouted "Remember the Alamo!" while fighting Mexican forces. The rallying call commemorates the sacrifice the Texan revolutionaries made for liberty. Today people still remember the Alamo as a brave and desperate struggle for freedom.

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